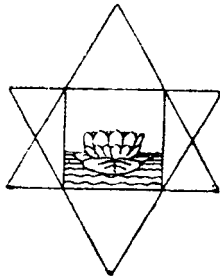


# MOTHER INDIA

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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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# THE CAUSE OF CULTURE

K. D. Sethna

We are a Monthly Review of Culture. But it is not our specific purpose to cast a recording and critical eye on all cultural phenomena during each month. We do not aim at giving a serial picture of contemporary developments in art or philosophy or science. Surely, we shall pick out several current manifestations of the creative mind and scrutinise them—the work of an Eliot or an Einstein, a Schweitzer or a Sorokin, a Marcel or a Henry Moore will be within our ken—but we are mainly concerned with bringing to the receptive reader through diverse cultural channels what we consider to be most directly and integrally “spiritual”: that is to say, what is most directly and integrally significant or evocative or expressive of man’s aspiration to be more than man and of his actual or possible union with the Divine, the Eternal, the Infinite.

In our belief Culture has its finest fulfilment in such “mysticism”. For, a proper understanding of the cultural activity points to a spiritual origin of it and a spiritual objective. In Culture, considered deeply and not as a mere inventive exercise for the adornment or aggrandisement of common life, we have two movements—the unfoldment of man’s power of the True, the Beautiful and the Good and the lifting of that power to its highest realisable creativity. Now, a purely naturalistic view of this power is bound to be inadequate. The pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness, however carried on and with whatever differences in different places and ages, has an inherent idealism in it. It is a pursuit of Values, of Ends regarded as worthy in themselves irrespective of circumstances and persons. There is a sense of Absolutes: there is an impulse of self-consecration in face of them: there is a passion of self-sacrifice in relation to their presence. In a naturalistic view of the world we can have no Values, no Absolutes: the useful, the expedient, the opportune are all we can conceive of: the idealist is either an impossibility or a freak. If Culture is to have a rationale and be deemed not a brilliant aberration rather than a desirable glory, then we must discern a spiritual origin to it

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—an origin in some marvellous secret Being impelling us to manifest in our own terms Its Perfection.

The second movement of Culture—the lifting ever higher of our power of unfolding the True, the Beautiful and the Good—directs attention beyond the intellect which seeks to catch the whole of complex Reality in logically consistent formulas, the aesthetic faculty which strives to seize in delightful patterns all the affinities and contrasts of existence, the ethical nature which longs to turn the varied conditions of life into equal occasions for striking into unegoistic shapes the interrelations of individuals. The second movement does not only testify to the idealist in the thinker, the artist and the moral man: it also gives evidence of a gradation in Values. Truth is seen as of many planes—outer, inner, inmost, highest. Beauty is visioned as of several degrees—gross, subtle, supernatural, beatific. Goodness is beheld as of numerous poises—impulsive, intelligent, inspired, enlightened. And an urge is felt to rise from stage to stage, refine and largen one's capacity, merge one's initiative with some in-dwelling and over-brooding Mystery that is the All-True, the All-Beautiful, the All-Good. This urge is the implicit or explicit religious tension in the phenomena of Culture. It suggests a spiritual objective inherent in cultural activity—the objective of a hidden illimitable Being calling on us to be aware of the real Soul within, be in tune with its evolutionary *élan*, transcend ourselves constantly and convert our own terms into those of a perfect, a divine supermanhood.

Main concern with the most directly and integrally spiritual is, therefore, not only justifiable in a cultural Review but should also render that Review cultural in the intensest manner. Such concern on our part, however, must not be taken to be in the least coloured by obscurantism or fanaticism. It is nothing jealous or narrow—it has no desire to substitute Cult for Culture. Nor does it want any impoverishment of world-values for the sake of an entrancing Beyond. Wide and vigorous is its sweep, for it draws its scope and its movement from the philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The Aurobindonian philosophy and Yoga carry as their central motif the evolutionary fulfilment of man. This automatically ensures at the same time a many-aspected march forward and an emphasis on the earth-scene where the complex travail of evolution began, proceeds and must find its success.

Here a few points need some clarification. All Yoga involves evolution of consciousness—not a mere development of surface faculties but an ascent with a basic change. The change is brought about by an increasing realisation of the inner and inmost as well as highest self of man. Something that is as yet not frontally present in its genuine form but is glimmeringly there *in-potentia*, something not openly organised as yet but

occultly operative with a bright shadow, as it were, of itself on organised faculties, has to be experienced by means of a special inward process of detachment, concentration, meditation, self-dedicated attitude and profound passion for the Divine

*who is all and one*

*And yet is no one but himself apart.*

As a result, an ascent is effected into the Infinite and the Eternal, both in an immanent universality and in a transcendent supra-cosmicity. This is genuine evolution—as basic as the *saltus* from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind. But while in man Matter, Life and Mind are intertwined and have to take fundamental account of one another the spiritual status has often a strong dissociating action, and a gulf seems to be made between Nature and Spirit. At its extreme this action gives rise to a world-shunning asceticism. Even otherwise, there is always a stress on the Hereafter, the Yonder, the Heaven after death or the Nirvana above birth. The evolutionary ladder by which consciousness climbs to the Spirit is sought to be kicked away or else looked down upon as a convenience of no ultimate value.

Evidently, evolution is not really fulfilled by such a procedure. The positing of a world of Matter, as the scene of Life's emergence and Mind's disclosure and Soul's revelation from behind all three, appears irrational and excessive if the aim of evolution is only to pass for ever out of that world and away from the various powers at play in it. No doubt, we may find some satisfaction in regarding that world as a sink of evil and error from which man's being has to struggle free or as a school of probation and trial in which it prepares itself to deserve post-mortem bliss or at best as a game of diverse hide-and-seek between it and God. But such an outlook leaves finally that world very much in the void and one wonders why at all the Eternal took up the labour of so multitudinous, so vicissitudinous a creation if a Beatitude beyond this creation were the sole thing to be realised through it, a Beatitude to which the creation adds really nothing

Evolutionary fulfilment can come only when, together with the ascent of the human consciousness to the Divine, there is a descent of the Divine's consciousness into the human and some answer here and now is discovered to the age-old cry of earth-existence for its own perfection. A mind dealing with cosmic multiplicities not gropingly but as part of a plenary Truth-awareness, a life-force meeting the challenge of time and change with a self-measured omnicompetence born of the Power that has made the world, a body-form radiant with a health and beauty fountaining from the automatic immunity of the supreme Ground of all being—such must be the triple nature of man led by the soul in him to the eternal Bliss which.

according to the Upanishad, is the secret source, substance and support of the whole universe. And the divinised individual must be no solitary wonder but the forerunner of a divinised society. A collective perfection must be the gradually realised goal: a new race living in a new and superhuman consciousness and working out the inexhaustible harmonies of a supramental Infinite. It is towards this perfection that the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is directed and it is towards the formation of a nucleus of it that the Ashram at Pondicherry is moving by a complex inner and outer process under the guiding eye and organising hand of Sri Aurobindo's co-worker, the Mother.

Naturally, the Aurobindonian Yoga, most directly and integrally spiritual, bent upon consummating the travail of evolution, encourages and fosters every species of Culture. Art, philosophy, science—whatever manifests the creative urge in man finds here its field and a novel inspiration which can be utilised for bringing into each cultural activity a wealth of significance and image and rhythm from "planes" that are supernormal and that no one except a developed Yogi can command or be commanded by with sustained frequency and in abundant purity. Not that this inspiration gets through in all cases. To be always its medium is a most difficult task. But it is always there ready to be tapped. And to present some of the successful tappings of it, together with pointers to it of whatever kind of authentic quality and with other prose and poetry touched by the spiritual ideal or else intellectual and imaginative expression not out of sympathy with it—this is intended to be our principal service to the cause of Culture.

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### Mere of Dream

The Unknown above is a mute vacancy —  
 But in the mere of dream wide wings are spread,  
 An ageless bird poising a rumour of gold  
 Upon prophetic waters hung asleep.  
 The veils of vastitude are cloven white,  
 The burden of unreachable blue is lost:  
 A ring of hills around a silver hush,  
 The far mind haloed with mysterious dawn  
 Treasures in the deep eye of thought-suspense  
 An eagle-destiny beaconing through all time.

K. D SETHNA

THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN\*  
(READINGS IN THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD)

Sri Aurobindo

The knower of Brahman reacheth that which is supreme.  
This is that verse which was spoken; "Truth Knowledge,  
Infinity the Brahman,  
He who knoweth that hidden in the secrecy in the supreme  
ether,  
Enjoyeth all desires along with the wise-thinking Brahman."

This is the burden of the opening sentences of the Taittiriya Upanishad's second section, they begin its elucidation of the highest truth. Or in the Sanskrit,

brahma vid āpnoti param—  
tad eshābhyuktā—satyam jñānam anantam brahma—  
yo veda nihitam guhāyām—parame vyomān—  
so' ṇute sarvān kāmān saha— brahmanā vipaṇchiteti.

But what is Brahman?

Whatever reality is in existence, by which all the rest subsists, that is Brahman. An Eternal behind all instabilities, a Truth of things which is unplied, if it is hidden, in all appearances, a Constant which supports all mutations, but is not increased, diminished, abrogated,—there is such an unknown x which makes existence a problem, our own self a mystery, the universe a riddle. If we were only what we seem to be to our normal self-awareness, there would be no mystery; if the world were only what it can be made out to be by the perceptions of the senses and their strict analysis in the reason, there would be no riddle; and if to take our life as it is now and the world as it has so far developed to our experience were the whole possibility of our knowing and doing, there would be no problem. Or at best there would be but a shallow mystery, an easily solved riddle, the problem only of a child's puzzle. But there is more, and that more is the hidden head of the Infinite and the secret heart of the

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\* Republished for the first time from Sri Aurobindo's philosophical monthly "Arya" which ran from 1914 to 1921.



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Eternal. It is the highest and this highest is the all; there is none beyond and there is none other than it. To know it is to know the highest and by knowing the highest to know all. For as it is the beginning and source of all things, so everything else is its consequence; as it is the support and constituent of all things, so the secret of everything else is explained by its secret; as it is the sum and end of all things, so everything else amounts to it and by throwing itself into it achieves the sense of its own existence.

This is the Brahman.

If this unknown be solely an indecipherable, only undefinable x, always unknown and unknowable, the hidden never revealed, the secret never opened to us, then our mystery would for ever remain a mystery, our riddle insoluble, our problem intangible. Its existence, even while it determines all we are, know and do, could yet make no practical difference to us; for our relation to it would then be a blind and helpless dependence, a relation binding us to ignorance and maintainable only by that ignorance. Or again, if it be in some way knowable, but the sole result of knowledge were an extinction or cessation of our being, then within our being it could have no consequences, the very act and fructuation of knowledge would bring the annihilation of all that we now are, not its completion or fulfilment. The mystery, riddle, problem would not be so much solved as abolished, for it would lose all its data. In effect we should have to suppose that there is an eternal and irreconcilable opposition between Brahman and what we now are, between the supreme cause and all its effects or between the supreme source and all its derivations. And it would then seem that all that the Eternal originates, all he supports, all he takes back to himself is a denial or contradiction of his being which, though in itself a negative of that which alone is, has yet in some way become a positive. The two could not co-exist in consciousness; if he allowed the world to know him, it would disappear from being.

But the Eternal is knowable, He defines himself so that we may seize him, and man can become, even while he exists as man and in this world and in this body, a knower of the Brahman.

The knowledge of the Brahman is not a thing luminous but otiose, informing to the intellectual view of things but without consequence to the soul of the individual or his living, it is a knowledge that is a power and a divine compulsion to change; by it his existence gains something that now he does not possess in consciousness. What is this gain? It is this that he is conscious now in a lower state only of his being, but by knowledge he gains his highest being.

The highest state of our being is not a denial, contradiction and annihilation of all that we now are; it is a supreme accomplishment of all

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRAHMAN

things that our present existence means and aims at, but in their highest sense and in the eternal values.

To live in our present state of self-consciousness is to live and to act in ignorance. We are ignorant of ourselves, because we know as yet only that in us which changes always, from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from period to period, from life to life, and not that in us which is eternal. We are ignorant of the world because we do not know God; we are aware of the law of appearances, but not of the law and truth of being

Our highest wisdom, our minutest most accurate science, our most effective application of knowledge can be at most a thinning of the veil of ignorance, but not a going beyond it, so long as we do not get at the fundamental knowledge and the consciousness to which that is native. The rest are effective for their own temporal purposes, but prove ineffective in the end, because they do not bring to the highest good: they lead to no permanent solution of the problem of existence

The ignorance in which we live is not a baseless and wholesale falsehood, but at its lowest the misrepresentation of a Truth, at its highest an imperfect representation and translation into inferior and to that extent misleading values. It is a knowledge of the superficial only and therefore a missing of the secret essential which is the key to all that the superficial is striving for, a knowledge of the finite and apparent, but a missing of all that the apparent symbolises and the finite suggests; a knowledge of inferior forms, but a missing of all that our interior life and being has above it and to which it must aspire if it is to fulfil its greatest possibilities. The true knowledge is that of the highest, the inmost, the infinite. The knower of the Brahman sees all these lower things in the light of the Highest, the external and superficial as a translation of the internal and essential, the finite from the view of the Infinite. He begins to see and know existence no longer as the thinking animal, but as the Eternal sees and knows it. Therefore he is glad and rich in being, luminous in joy, satisfied of existence.

Knowledge does not end with knowing, nor is it pursued and found for the sake of knowing alone. It has its full value only when it leads to some greater gain than itself, some gain of being. Simply to know the eternal and to remain in the pain, struggle and inferiority of our present way of being, would be a poor and lame advantage.

A greater knowledge opens the possibility and, if really possessed, brings the actuality of a greater being. To be is the first verb which contains all the others: knowledge, action, creation, enjoyment are only a fulfilment of being. Since we are incomplete in being to grow is our aim, and that knowledge, action, creation, enjoyment are the best which most

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help us to expand, grow, feel our existence.

Mere existence is not fullness of being. Being knows itself as power, consciousness, delight; a greater being means a greater power, consciousness and delight.

If by greater being we incurred only a greater pain and suffering, this good would not be worth having. Those who say that it is, mean simply that we get by it a greater sense of fulfilment which brings of itself a greater joy of the power of existence, and an extension of suffering or a loss of other enjoyment is worth having as a price for this greater sense of wideness, height and power. But this could not be the perfection of being or the highest height of its fulfilment; suffering is the seal of a lower status. The highest consciousness is integrally fulfilled in wideness and power of its existence, but also it is integrally fulfilled in delight.

The knower of Brahman has not only the joy of light, but gains something immense as the result of his knowledge, *brahmavid āpnoti*

What he gains is that highest, that which is supreme; he gains the highest being, the highest consciousness, the highest wideness and power of being, the highest delight, *brahmavid āpnoti param*

The Supreme is not something aloof and shut up in itself. It is not a mere undefinable, prisoner of its own featureless absoluteness, impotent to define, create, know itself variously, eternally buried in a sleep or a swoon of self-absorption. The Highest is the Infinite and the Infinite contains the All. Whoever attains the highest consciousness, becomes infinite in being and embraces the all.

To make this clear the Upanishad has defined the Brahman as the Truth, Knowledge, Infinity and has defined the result of the knowledge of Him in the secrecy, in the cave of being, in the supreme ether as the enjoyment of all its desires by the soul of the individual in the attainment of its highest self-existence

Our highest state of being is indeed a becoming one with Brahman in his eternity and infinity, but it is also an association with him in delight of self-fulfilment, *aṅnute saha brahmanā*. And that principle of the Eternal by which this association is possible, is the principle of his knowledge, his self-discernment and all-discernment, the wisdom by which he knows himself perfectly in all the world and all beings, *brahmanā vipaśchitā*.

Delight of being is the continent of all the fulfilled values of existence which we now seek after in the forms of desire. To know its conditions and possess it purely and perfectly is the infinite privilege of the eternal Wisdom.

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Nitodbaran

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Reports were reaching us from Calcutta that some people who had stayed in the Ashram for a number of years, but had at last to leave it for committing acts of treachery were now spreading calumnies against us and were even going to the length of saying that they would destroy the whole Ashram! One of these unbalanced vilifiers had been given refuge in the Ashram, not because of his Yogic capacity, but on the intercession of a sincere sadhak who happened to be his relative. This man was now trying to bite the hand that fed him. We were very indignant at such a brazen manifestation of ingratitude and at the same time amused by his presumptuous utterances. His instance brought in the general subject of our talk in today's *sōtrée*.

"Is there no justice?" asked an irate voice. "Surely such people will have to pay the penalty of their actions? But how is it they are the ones who succeed in life?"

Sri Aurobindo answered in a calm tone, "Justice in this life? May not be, most probably not. But what is justice? It is not what most people believe it to be. The common idea about justice seems to be that people who are virtuous will be rewarded with happiness and prosperity in the next life while wicked natures will have opposite results. In that case, the people you speak of must have led a virtuous life in their previous birth in order to merit success in this. No, that is not my idea of justice. There is justice in the sense that virtuous and honest people advance towards a sattwic nature while people with contrary characters and dispositions go down the scale of humanity: they become more and more Asuric. That is what I have said in the *Arya*."

At this moment the Mother came in. It was the time for her to go downstairs to the Meditation Hall and give a general meditation. Every evening before going down, she used to come and sit for a while in Sri Aurobindo's room, sometimes taking part in the conversation, sometimes meditating. Naturally during her meditation we used to keep quiet.

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As soon as she entered, she asked Sri Aurobindo with a smile, "Are they again making you talk?"

"No, Mother, no," said Dr. Manilal promptly. "We want him to take rest." All of us including Sri Aurobindo burst into laughter. When the noise had subsided, the Mother, seated on her usual sofa, inquired, "What is the talk about?"

Sri Aurobindo replied on our behalf, "They are asking if justice exists."

The Mother opened her eyes very wide and we all laughed. Sri Aurobindo then narrated in brief the incidents which had prompted our talk, after which the Mother remarked, "Of course there is justice. Do you think these people can have an easy and comfortable life? They can't, they suffer, are tormented; they are not happy within."

"But that unhappiness does not seem to change them," some one chipped in; "they go from bad to worse."

"Probably, but in some cases as the Divine pressure goes on acting on them, at one period or another, especially during some impending catastrophe, a sudden change takes place in them. We have seen numbers of cases like that; for example, among those who were trying to persecute Sri Aurobindo when he first came here.

"Among those people whom you mention, one may be a scoundrel, but if he has capacity and cleverness, he will surely succeed in life, for it is these qualities that meet with success, not virtue or piety alone."

Not quite satisfied with the answer someone asked, "But . . . for example, to know how to cheat people and get their money—is it cleverness?"

"Of course it is," said the Mother, "or you may say it is a misuse of cleverness. I don't say that this kind of cleverness will not have its consequences, but it can't be denied at the same time that people with such qualities succeed in life."

"You have said in your *Prayers and Meditations* that justice exists and one can't avoid the law of Karma except by the Divine Grace . . ."

"Why doesn't one believe in the Grace?" was the interrupting question.

The Mother looked far away for some time with deep meditative eyes and then replied, "Because the human mind arranges and combines things, accepts or eliminates them according to its own notion and judgement. It does not leave any room for the Grace. For instance, X is cured of a disease or passes an examination; he attributes it to medical remedies or to his own effort; he does not see or realise that behind these factors the Grace has been acting on him. Isn't that so?" she suddenly asked Sri Aurobindo who had been till then a silent listener to the talk. Now he said with a smile, "He would call it luck, I suppose," which drew out a

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

chorus of laughter.

The Mother went on, "If one does not recognise the Grace, how can it work? It is as if one had shut one's door against it. Of course, it can work from below, underneath, so to say."

"Doesn't it act unconditionally?" one of us inquired.

"It does. Grace is unconditional; otherwise it is not Grace; but at the same time how can it work effectively if a man throws it away or does not recognise it? It would be like constantly spilling from a cup in which something is being poured. Apart from that, Grace acts unconditionally especially on those people who have been predestined for some definite role in life, but if one recognises and expresses one's gratitude, it acts more quickly and more powerfully."

"Isn't it because of our ignorance that we don't recognise the Grace?"

"No, I know many ignorant people who having received the Grace have expressed a deep gratitude welling up from their heart."

"We would want the Grace to act like a mother feeding her infant when it is hungry and supplying things when needed."

"And who is this infant?" put forth Sri Aurobindo with a tinge of humour.

The Mother continued, "But the Grace does not work according to human standards or demands. It has its own way and own law. How can it act otherwise? Very often, what seems to be a great blow or calamity at the present moment turns out after ten years to be a great blessing and people say that their real life began only after that mishap."

After a short pause, she said in a half-withdrawn mood, taking up the thread of our original subject, "I am interested to see what will be the reactions on these people. The results may be different in each, but I can't say just now in what way."

"Will it be a difference of degree?"

"No, difference of quality also; for one may be more stupid and blind than another who may be conscious of what he is aiming at. So the former has less power to harm."

"Perhaps one may change for the better?" asked somebody in a hesitant voice.

"In what way?"

"Turn to the divine life again."

"That is romance!" said the Mother with such an inimitable expression characteristic of her that we all enjoyed it immensely.

"But," insisted another, "S especially may come to the Ashram again." Before the Mother had time to ask "Why?" he hastily added, "since he was here a good number of years."

The Mother simply smiled at his reasoning and his belief, then added

in a slight tone of irony, "Do you think so?" We all waited for her to continue. "When a man," she said, "being given a chance deliberately turns his back on the Divine and takes up a hostile attitude, he has no further chance, no further possibility. On the other hand, if one is given a chance, it means that he has a possibility."

With these words she left for the meditation and we formed our usual belt around Sri Aurobindo. Dr. Manilal started the talk. He began by describing at length the Jain Law of Karma most of which was too deep for some of us. He was, by the way, very fond of quoting Jain Shastras whenever an opportunity presented itself and seemed to be quite an adept. Terms like *Jwa*, *Tirthankara*, *Uthkata Karma*, etc. used to flow frequently from him and Sri Aurobindo also used to show interest in his declamations, sometimes joking at his theories and putting him into tight corners out of which he tried to wriggle out somehow. At times he used to take Sri Aurobindo's arguments and cross-questions very seriously. Looking far towards the horizon, with eyes slightly narrowed as if he went into the times of Mahavira and recollected the past history of Jainism, he would begin, in one of his characteristic manners, "Jainism says, sir..." But before he had time to indulge his eloquent fervour, we would sometimes shout, "There, there, the Doctor with his Jainism," and there would be heard chuckles all over the room. As I am very ignorant of Jainism, I shall just touch upon the relevant portions of the talk and I beg to be excused if thereby I do any injustice to the theories themselves.

Dr. Manilal began to expound the Jain law of Karma and ended by saying how even the Tirthankaras could not escape this rigorous law: they also had to pay in exact mathematical measures.

"It seems to be a great thing!" said Sri Aurobindo, "but too wonderful and mathematical to be true. There was an illustration of this mathematical theory in the example of a son who after costing a good deal of money to his father because of bad health died a slow death. It was explained that the father had been the debtor of the son in his previous life and the son had realised by these expenses exactly the same amount of money he had lent to the father! Well, what do you say?"

We felt very much amused and turned our gaze towards Dr. Manilal. Slightly embarrassed he pursued, "No, sir! that can't be the real explanation. Somebody must have cut a joke or exaggerated. There is what is called, sir..."

"Yes?" said Sri Aurobindo.

"*Nikachit karma* or *uthkata karma*, a karma which can't be avoided. It is like a knot which can't be untied."

Now it was our turn to be uncomfortable, for we were not prepared for another lecture on Jainism. Fortunately, Sri Aurobindo came to our

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rescue by asking, "It may be then this *uthkata karma* that caused my accident?" We at once sensed that something interesting and revealing might follow; so we were all attention.

"Why is this unmerited suffering in your case?" somebody asked before the Doctor had time to reply.

"How do you know it is unmerited? Perhaps it happened in order to give me knowledge of intense pain. Hitherto the pain I had experienced was of an ordinary nature which I could transform into ananda. But this was intense. And since it came suddenly and abruptly, I could not change it to ananda. But when it settled down into a steady sensation I could. Besides, we shall see afterwards its full significance . . . Of course I accept it as a part of the battle."

"When will you be cured, sir?"

"I can't say, and even if I could, the hostile forces would at once rush up to prevent it. That is why I don't want to prophesy about anything. Not that things are not known beforehand or possibilities not seen. There are things about which I have definitely pronounced in advance. But where it is a question of possibilities, I don't accept any, I don't tie myself to any; for if I do that, I commit myself in advance to certain lines of movement and the result of it may not be what I wanted. Consequently I would not be able to bring down what I was striving for. Do you understand? A bit difficult?" he asked with a smile.

After a short pause he continued, "But plenty of people can prophesy and among Yogis that capacity is very common. When I was arrested my maternal grand-aunt asked Vishuddhananda, 'What will happen to our Auro?' He replied, 'The Divine Mother has taken him in her arms: nothing will happen to him. But he is not *your* Auro, he is the world's Aurobindo and the world will be filled with his perfume.' Narayan Jyotishi also, who did not know me, foretold about my three trials, white enemies and my release. When my horoscope was shown to him, he saw that there was some mistake about the time of my birth. When it was corrected, he remarked, 'Ah, the lead is turned into gold now.'"

Then Sri Aurobindo turning towards the Doctor asked him, "Have you had any prophetic dream?"

"Not personally, as far as I remember, but I remember Ambegaukar's daughter-in-law once telling me that she saw him being carried to the cemetery and exactly two hours later he died."

"Yes, that's a good example."

"But even without knowing the person (as in the case of Vishuddhananda's prophecy) can one prophesy like that?"

"Why not? It is an intuitive power. One can know or see things or persons by clairvoyance. I once tried to see a man whom we wanted to



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get appointed as Governor. I saw a figure seated in the Office, but a person totally unknown and quite different from the one we wanted. I was rather puzzled and could not account for it. After some time, there broke out a quarrel between my brother-in-law Bose and a Government official. He was summoned to the Office, but the letter addressed to him bore, by mistake, the title of Ghose instead of Bose. So I had to go and I found to my utter surprise the very man of my vision sitting as the Governor.

“On another occasion, a friend of C.R. Das was coming to see me; I wanted to have a vision of the man: I saw a man with a clean-shaven head and a bull-dog face, but when he turned up, it was rather a man quite different—a man having regular South Indian Brahmin features. But curiously enough, after about two years, when I met him again, I found that he had completely changed to what I had seen in my vision. These things are thrown out in this way from the subtle world to the surface consciousness and their truth is sometimes manifested much later.

“Take another instance. I was in the past a great tea-addict; I could not do any work without my usual cup of tea. Now, the management of the tea was in the charge of my brother-in-law. He used to bring it up any time he woke up from his sleep. One day I had a lot of work to do, but could not get into it without the tea. I began to think, ‘When will he bring it, why doesn’t he come?’ and so on. So far I had never asked anybody for anything for myself. Suddenly I found that a particular hour was written on the wall before me and at that very time the tea was brought up. And henceforth every day the hour used to be written in this manner. There you are, then! These are some of the supraphysical phenomena which can come within a Yogi’s range or occur to anyone who has a natural opening to them.”

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### Note by Nirodbaran on “Conversations with Sri Aurobindo” in the February Issue

“It seems some readers have been puzzled by the use of the word ‘theoretical’ in relation to Sri Aurobindo’s realisations before the advent of the Mother. What is meant is that his realisations were personal, they were not yet given an expression in the exterior world or nature. It is the Mother who has been giving them a practical form and an earthly manifestation.”

## PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

### The Unpublished Correspondence of Sri Aurobindo

#### COMPILER'S NOTE

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

## THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND (II)

As stated in the first instalment of this Series, the subject of the descent of the Supermind, its action on the entire being for its transformation, and its effect on the outside world, has always greatly interested the disciples of Sri Aurobindo. They have seldom missed an opportunity of questioning him about it.

At the end of 1934 there was a general feeling in the Ashram that Sri Aurobindo had brought down a great descent on 24th November, and the story went round that the Supermind had touched the earth. When Sri Aurobindo came to know of this, he inquired why some people had come to such a conclusion. A sadhak TS, who was among those who had first started the talk about the descent, wrote to him explaining how just before the November Darshan he had begun to have the feeling that the descent of the Supermind had been imminent. His account as well as Sri Aurobindo's comment on his letter are given below. These will give the reader an idea of the tremendous Yogic-spiritual action Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been carrying on all these years.

The Sadhak's account. "The early thirties, and the periods immediately before and after, were years of very intensive sadhana in the Ashram. Descents of the various Divine aspects, like Peace, Power, Light, Harmony, Ananda, were brought down on different occasions so as to build up a general atmosphere and a firm wide base in the earth-consciousness for the Supramental descent; there was practically an all-enveloping Divine Presence. Except for a few, almost all the sadhaks were experiencing these great descents brought down from the Higher spiritual planes. In the year 1934 such were the conditions, and from the general run of the sadhana it could be felt that things were different and far better than during the previous years. Add to that the fact of the preparations made for Darshan days when special descents were brought down, and one can have some idea of the intense atmosphere prevailing at that time. The experiences we had were abnormally great.

"Because of all this I felt, together with some other sadhaks, that the Supramental descent would take place on the day of the November Darshan. I spoke about my feeling only to one or two friends, but somehow the talk soon spread. Soon Sri Aurobindo came to know of it. As my name was mentioned in this connection, I wrote to him all this and explained the reason for my speculations."

Sri Aurobindo sent a reply pointing out that definite dates for the descent could not be fixed beforehand in this way, and that there must be an interval between the first coming down of the Supermind and its full

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descent, when it will finally be established here. This is his reply:

"There is no doubt a considerable difference as you say, but still much has to be done.

"So it is not possible to say that the Supramental will make a general descent at the time suggested. It will come only when things are ready and the descent may not be in one day but take time between its first touch in the earth and the full descent." (23-11-34)

This reply does not state much about what was actually taking place during this period; it refers more to the full descent he was preparing to bring down than to what actually had happened during the year. It is only in some other letters that a fuller explanation is given. To have a right idea of the work that was being done in the spiritual field at this time, all the letters must be read. Sri Aurobindo knew that each sadhak writing to him had his own way of understanding the spiritual action he carried on with regard to the Supermind; so when he replied to them, he attuned his statements to their way of seeing and understanding things. Consequently, only by taking all the relevant letters together and studying them side by side can one have some idea of what Sri Aurobindo was doing at that time.

Two months before he made the above statement, another sadhak PN had already written to him about the same subject. Because of certain experiences he had been having, he wanted to know if the Supermind was descending. He asked Sri Aurobindo: "When Mother comes on the terrace and sometimes during Pranam too. I see the play of lights around her, white, blue, pink and others, and she looks extremely beautiful—with a beauty greater than this earth's. Is it mere imagination—this seeing of lights and colours? There is a feeling that something stupendous is being worked out behind the veil; the action of the Force in many ways—the seeing of lights etc being only one—is felt to be more powerful than ever and of a *different quality*. I would like to be a little enlightened on these things. Is it something greater than Overmind, some initial action of Supermind as it touches our inner parts?"

Sri Aurobindo's reply to this letter, given below, explains what the exact position was in September—two months before he commented on the letter sent by TS.

"It is true that there is an increasingly powerful descent of the Higher Force. Many now see the lights and colours around the Mother and her subtle luminous forms—it means that their vision is opening to supra-physical realities, it is not a phantasy. The colours or lights you see are from various planes and each colour indicates a special force.

"The Supramental Force is descending, but it has not yet taken possession of the body or of matter—there is still much resistance to that.

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It is supramentalised Overmind Force that has already touched and this may at any time change into or give place to the Supramental in its own native power." (14-9-34)

Some other sadhaks also corresponded with Sri Aurobindo on this subject. His replies to their queries throw further light on the matter. A sadhak NB, to whom Sri Aurobindo often used to write in a humorous vein, asked: "Why not try one more descent?" Sri Aurobindo replied: "No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them; the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of the subconscious mud." Another sadhak, hearing of this, sent a letter asking, "The descent to which you referred in NB's letter—what exactly was this descent?" Sri Aurobindo's reply clarified matters and indicated how things exactly stood at that time. He wrote: "The general descent of the Supermind into Matter was the subject on which I was writing." (6-11-35)

This correspondence should help the reader to see the question of the bringing down of the Supermind in the right perspective. Some casual readers of Sri Aurobindo's published letters do not seem to understand correctly his position regarding the Supermind; when they learn from these letters,—most of which were written in the thirties,—that he has not established it in the earth-consciousness and transformed matter, they erroneously conclude that dynamically it has been all this time remote to his life and being—something only glimpsed from afar which he was trying to draw nearer. It must be realised that the establishing of the Supermind is a gradual process, and consequently there must be an interval of years between the first contact with it on the heights of Being and its subsequent embodiment here in matter, between its attainment in personal consciousness and its manifestation in terrestrial life. It is the failure to make a right distinction between the Supermind's gradual descent from the heights and its ultimate stabilisation on earth as an operative power that has created in many minds a wrong conception about it. Sri Aurobindo has been in direct contact with the Supermind since years, but he found that when he attempted to fix it in the earth-consciousness the latter resisted it; he saw that it could not be established here without first creating suitable conditions for its descent and preparing human receptacles who would be able to receive it and hold it. That is why, though he attained to the Supramental Consciousness, he found it necessary to carry on a controlled action on the earth, to bring it down gradually and systematically through the Overmind—the next plane in the hierarchy of existence.

Then the same sadhak asked: "Are our greater difficulties, struggles, attacks, etc. due to the result of the descent?"

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Not of the descent, but of the resistance

to it."

After some time the sadhak asked: "Is there at present any kind of direct Supramental action on the earth-consciousness, and if so, is that the reason why the resistance has increased? The earth-consciousness seems to be too inert and obstinate. I gather that you started bringing down the Supramental into it in 1923."

Sri Aurobindo wrote back. "Why not 1623? Or since the beginning of the evolution?" (7-2-36)

The sadhak explained in his next letter why he had got this impression. He wrote: "I gave 1923 as the year only because I have read that in 1923 you said that you were bringing down the Supermind. How can we presume that you started bringing it down much earlier unless we definitely know that you have yourself spoken to this effect?"

To this Sri Aurobindo replied: "But who said that? Started in 1923? The aim of bringing down the Supramental was there long before. The effort to bring it down to the physical is on the contrary quite recent—during the last few years only."

Some other interesting questions put to Sri Aurobindo during this 1934-36 period and his comments on them are given below.

Sadhak: "Some say that they see Sri Krishna playing the flute, some just hear him playing, some have visions of the Supermind—is all this true?"

Sri Aurobindo with characteristic humour replied: "Visions of the Supermind? What's that? I never had any." (5-6-35)

Sadhak: "Z wrote to you that he saw some light of the descending Supermind into the earth-consciousness. You wrote to him in reply that his vision and feeling were justifiable. But before the Supermind's descent into the earth-consciousness, have not the planes between Mind and Overmind to descend first into it?"

Sri Aurobindo: "They descended long ago. It does not mean that they are available to everybody or developed anywhere in their full power—only that they can be counted among the things to which one can reach by *tapasya*. For Supermind, it may be descending, but it may take long before it is available to the race" (7-5-36)

Sadhak: "When the Supermind descends into the earth-consciousness will all the sadhaks be aware of it—the descent into the earth, I mean, not in themselves?"

Sri Aurobindo: "It would not necessarily be known by everybody. Besides, even if the descent were here one would have to be ready before one could get the final change."

Sadhak: "After hearing of your letter to NB, people have begun to think that there is some implication in it that six souls are ready to make

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a first batch of the Supermen. Are these six A, B, C, X, Y, and Z?"

Sri Aurobindo: "... I don't know of any six souls ready for the S.D. (Supramental Descent)."

Sadhak: "If you say that you do not know of any such six souls, then all this talk about your having written to this effect to NB or anybody else must be untrue."

Sri Aurobindo: "I suppose so—it hardly seems possible that I should have perpetrated such an absurdity, as there are no such six souls here and never were."

Sadhak: "Is it true that the nearer the descent of the Supermind the greater will be the difficulties of those in whom it is to come down first?"

Sri Aurobindo: "It is true, unless they are so surrendered to the Mother, so psychic, plastic, free from ego that the difficulties are spared to them."

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## HYMN TO THE MOTHER

Goddess Supreme, Creator of the worlds, Nourisher of the worlds,  
Benefactor of the worlds! Mother!

Goddess Supreme, infinite Mother of the Gods, universal Goddess! The  
Home of the worlds, Thy gracious feet'

Rays of thy immeasurable light, descending from the divine family of  
the gods, we shall take birth as the new race, spreading wide thy force of  
light by our valour.

A new humanity, a new race of beauty, they bear in their eyes the  
tranquillity of thy eyes.

Train all thy children. Mother, under thy training, give them thy own  
initiation.

We shall pin thy words upon our flag and march on from peak to peak,  
firm in heart, towards the goal. Ever shall we hold in front our ideal.

We are seekers who seek to lay themselves at thy feet. ever shall we  
seek refuge in thee.

Sun Goddess, O Mother! Origin that has no origin and no end! On  
thy forehead shines the glorious heaven, at thy feet lies the Path freed of  
darkness!

New lights shine in thy limbs, new lightnings flash in thy glances; thy  
steps measure out the rhythm eternal; thy smile bewitches our prone heart  
to surrender. Thy touch pours abroad thy supreme blessing, thy face  
irradiates thy overflowing grace. Thy arms stretch forth casting out fear,  
giving all boons. O, thy feet, the wide open eternal refuge for all!

Mother of the worlds! Without thy upholding strength the universe  
is a helpless orphan. With thy Presence upon earth, dispel all evil, all  
untruth.

Victory, victory to the giver of victory, we bow down to the Supreme  
Ruler of the worlds, the Mother!

*(Translated from Sehana's Bengali by Nolini Kanta Gupta—sung  
in the original by the children of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram  
on February 21)*



# THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

## COMPILER'S NOTE

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

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

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

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 SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

the difficulty comes directly through an inner contact. Sri Aurobindo himself has written about this in one of his letters: "What I write usually 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

ESTABLISHING THE INMOST SILENCE

By "AB"

*Continued from previous issue*

21-3-35.

AB. Is not the innermost being now possessing me?

Sri Aurobindo. Yes.

AB. My inner emptiness is growing into a solid and permanent condition so that nothing can penetrate into me from outside.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that is what must happen.

AB. O Lord, again I am getting inertia. What am I to do?

Sri Aurobindo. Keep yourself separate from the inertia as you do from the wrong vital suggestions, sex, ego, etc

23-3-35.

AB. I see different kinds of flowers as if floating before my eyes. Strange to say, before they are clearly visible to me they announce their significance, themselves.

Sri Aurobindo. It is usually when the psychic is active that this seeing of flowers becomes abundant.

AB. Thus I saw, one after the other, two flowers signifying

(1) "The Physical consciousness turned towards the Light"

(2) "The peace in the physical cells."

Sri Aurobindo. It is evidently from what you have written the thing that is happening—the physical consciousness is opening to the spiritual experience.

24-3-35.

AB. In action I feel detached and the Mother's Force working in my place; I find myself above with Her at the same time.

Sri Aurobindo. All is very good—to live on a higher place and see the action in the physical from it as something separate is a definite stage in the movement towards transformation.

25-3-35

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AB. The mind and vital are simply flooded with the experiences. In the consciousness of the physical also the experiences are beginning, while the background of peace and silence is always maintained.

Sri Aurobindo. It is very good, that was what was needed—the settled background of peace and silence as the foundation of the activity of experience.

AB. The stuff of my being has become so quiet that it is difficult for me even to pray.

Sri Aurobindo. It is probably that—in order to establish entirely the inmost silence.

AB. To what heights the Mother is taking me! She makes me bear Her powerful and rapid working with ease.

Sri Aurobindo. That is very good.

AB. I am sorry I am unable at present to describe to You all that is happening in me (experiences, realisations, etc.)

Sri Aurobindo. You will do so hereafter when these things have ripened and can be expressed

26-3-35.

AB. On what a mute ocean do we float! Each day I find the water calmer than before.

Sri Aurobindo. It is true that peace and silence can always become deeper and wider and more intense.

AB. Today, O Lord, I seemed to realise this truth. One depending too much and too long on Your outer guidance may find it difficult to open easily to Your inner and higher help and knowledge. The earlier one puts oneself in contact with the Knowledge above, which is as much an aspect of Mother's as is Her Force, the better. Too many questions especially about one's sadhana may obstruct the building of this inner and essential contact.

Sri Aurobindo. The outer guidance is meant only as an aid to the inner working, especially for the correction of any erroneous movement and sometimes in order to point out the right road. It is not meant except at a very early stage to satisfy mental questionings or to stimulate a mental activity

27-3-35

AB. A part of the being seems to be dissatisfied and begins to doubt the divine love.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the past habit, I suppose. Do not attend to it or listen—let the habit drop and forget to come.

AB. The Mother is trying to establish in me a dynamic muteness moveable only by Her Knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo. Right

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AB. This realisation already bears its beginning in my active state.

Sri Aurobindo. That is good.

AB. That deeper silence will spontaneously open one to the understanding of the inner experiences and realisations by the Light of the Knowledge above.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, for the most part. But when the experience is of importance for the progress it can be written.

27-3-35

AB. If one wants to cut down one's troubles to a minimum one should try to follow the sun-lit path, which means "give all and ask nothing."

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, all that is quite true.

28-3-35

AB. The body has such a peace that there is not the slightest stir in it when I soar high above. If the little mental sense were not there it would be a trance.

Sri Aurobindo. Trance could not be sufficient—the waking consciousness must be the same.

AB. What greater day can there be than this one when my lower vital accepts the Mother!

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, when that has been done, it is one of the biggest steps in the sadhana.

AB. I see a dawning possibility of my silence and work getting fused into each other.

Sri Aurobindo. That will surely happen.

*(To be continued)*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Review by Ravindranath Khanna

ON EDUCATION

By THE MOTHER

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price: Rs. 1-8.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter in 1948, "... the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern, ... it must come by other means, from within and not from without" ... and for that what is required of those who cherish the dream is "to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world whatever form it may take." Indeed, this is the first requisite if we are earnest about grappling with the serious problems that are confronting us today, and the still more serious ones that are looming in prospect. Mere tinkering with the superficial symptoms of the deep-rooted malady can act only as an anaesthetic or a palliative but cannot cure it. We must dig far deeper if we aim at clearing the soil once for all of the poisonous weeds that crop up again and again.

An inner change, a growth within means a truly Copernician revolution in our inview and outview resulting from a shifting of the centre of our vision from the narrow, myopic, ego-centric consciousness which at present constitutes our values to the Divine Consciousness which is not only transcendent and universal but immanent in us. It is well known that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not stop short at the realization of the Spiritual Consciousness on our heights or in our depths but aim at the descent of the Spirit with its plenary illumination and power so as to transform our present nature, a fabric woven by the three yarns of the body, the vital and Mind; therefore it is inevitable that the education of the rising generation should proceed on paths perfectly hewn out and macadamised "so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them." (The Mother)

Everywhere we hear people expressing their deep dissatisfaction with

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the prevailing system of education which scarcely goes beyond dumping a load of information on the student's head leaving the man just where he was, a rational animal no doubt but an animal still, so that if you scratch the Russian you will find the bear. A new humanity, a new world-order can come into existence only if our system of education stands on the basis of a deeper knowledge of human nature, its soul, its vast spiritual possibilities, its inexhaustible potentialities to expand and rise and to manifest not only Divine Knowledge and Power but also Divine Love and Beatitude.

This small book written by the Mother, if it succeeds in bringing home this prime necessity to the educational world, bids fair to pave the way for a great psychological revolution far more potent and beneficial than the economic and political revolutions we witness every day and which leave human misery lamentably the same. It is time that we probed deeper to find out the causes of human misery which lurk within man's own nature rather than outside him. So long as he continues to be a blind slave of his animal passions of greed, anger and the lust for power which grows with use there can be no peace for him. The Mother writes about the "vital" being in the fourth chapter, "Indeed, the vital in man's nature is a despotic and exacting tyrant—it is a master that is satisfied by nothing and its demands have no limit." It is this vital in man's nature which when unbridled brings about the most terrific collisions, the Darwinian struggle for existence, the ruthless Nietzschean Will to Power. The ancients knew its indomitable nature but the methods which they employed to get rid of its tyranny imposed an atrophy on it, robbed it of its dynamic energy and thus by sapping its vigour threw the baby out with the bath water. The Mother comes forward and suggests practical methods by which it can be trained to serve joyfully the higher ideals and put its energies at the disposal of the Divine Master of our Works. The greatest contribution of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is their acceptance of life's Gordian knots and showing the way by which every thread can be disentangled and made to serve the true purpose for which it has been spun. They aim at transforming all the crooked energies of man by spiritualising their very stuff

The book contains six chapters: (1) The Science of Living (2) Education (3) Physical Education (4) The Education of the Vital (5) Mental Education (6) The Psychic and the Spiritual Education.

The Mother's style is very simple, clear and interesting. Books on education are usually overladen with technicalities and infected with an awful dullness, but here is a book which can be read without any difficulty alike by the teachers and students, parents and children. Ruskin writing on education says that clarity in a writer is a sign of his love and sympathy for the common humanity. Here also it is a deep divine love that has successfully expressed the profoundest truths of life and their practical

application in such a manner that all who seek for something greater than the mere humdrum can profit by the perusal of the book.

In one direction it makes the first break into a new and important field: that of reconciling the Spiritual life with our terrestrial existence. The reconciliation is to be effected not by any cheap compromises which concede something to both the parties but by the discovery of the psychic being in us, our soul, which is "the eternal portion" of the Divine in the depths of our heart, and which carries forward our evolution from birth to birth and keeps on sending its impulsions from within for the progress of our outer nature. In the chapter on 'Psychic and Spiritual Education', the Mother says, "The starting-point is to seek in oneself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born, or the age to which you belong. You must find in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals break down." She has given a number of instructive suggestions for the discovery of the psychic with model clarity and yet the sentences ring with a metallic force and wing their way straight into the soul. She says, for instance, "Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure."

All the aspects of human nature find their due place in the book so that the whole of man can enjoy the delight of the higher life. The first five chapters, as the Mother says, deal, "with the education which can be given to all children born upon earth; it is concerned purely with human faculties."

The first chapter, 'The Science of Living' with the sub-title 'To Know Oneself and to Control Oneself' gives a synoptic view of the whole book. The very first sentence gives us the key to the solution of the Riddle of the Sphinx. "An aimless life is always a miserable life." But every aim will not deliver the goods. So she says, "But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life. Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested, this will make your life precious to yourself and to all."

Consciousness is the key to all inner development. We must grow conscious of all our movements, trace them to their springs and then hold them up before the white light of our ideal and then reject what is incompatible with it, falls short of it and accept what will bring it nearer. This is the unremitting labour of what she calls, "purification and unification". Our mission upon earth is to know and live in every detail the

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truth of our being so that, "whatever you do, whatever your occupation and activity, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must always be living, always present behind all that you do, all that you experience, all that you think." Meanwhile all the instruments of our outer nature have to be perfected, raised to their maximum capacity because each is indispensable for the realisation of our ideal in the world. She says. "When the higher truth will manifest, it must find in you a mental being subtle and rich enough to be able to give to the idea seeking to express itself a form of thought which preserves its force and clarity. This thought, again, when it seeks to clothe itself in words must find in you a sufficient power of expression so that the words reveal and not deform the thought. And this formula in which you embody the truth should be made articulate in all your sentiments, all your willings and acts, all the movements of your being. Finally, these movements themselves should, by constant effort, attain their highest perfection." But the problem is how to awaken this will in the child. Here the Mother's answer shows that the Rishi's eyes can see things whole and see them steadily and that she knows how to deal with everyone in a manner most suited to his nature. The Mother says: "On certain individuals, it is rational arguments that are effective, for others sentiment and good will are to be brought into play, in others again it is the sense of dignity and self-respect; for all, however, it is the example shown constantly and sincerely that is the most powerful means."

In the chapter on 'Mental Education' she dilates on the five phases of mental development. The reader can judge their value from their titles alone:

- (1) Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention.
- (2) Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness.
- (3) Organisation of ideas around a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.
- (4) Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants.
- (5) Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more total receptivity of inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being.

That the appearance of the book has synchronised with the inauguration of the International University Centre as a memorial to Sri Aurobindo is an event of capital importance.

The extreme need for such a book to serve as a guiding light can be abundantly clear from Prof. Pumphrey's lecture on "The Origin of Lan-



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guage.' He points out: the danger is not that man's inventions are in themselves difficult to control: it is rather that man will not be able to control them because he is ignorant of springs of his own actions and mistakes this ignorance for wisdom. Hence the need for clearing the wilderness of ignorance and of erecting on the foundations of Science a structure of value, so that "with the appreciation of the truth that the proper study of mankind is man, there will be an end of the rather silly departmentalism which at present afflicts not only scientists, and a concentration of all branches of learning on an objective which will make a university worthy of its name instead of an association of unmitigated faculties as every university now is." The next series on the Spiritual Education will be awaited with keen interest, for it is rare that a Spiritual personality lays down consistent and clear lines on which education should be conducted. The printing and the get-up are very beautiful and the book is very reasonably priced.

We hope that this still small voice will not go unheard in the din and blare of the present hectic conditions.

RAVINDRANATH KHANNA

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# 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 this 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)

## (3) RHYTHM AND MOVEMENT

The *mantra*, poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality, is only possible when three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest inten-

sity of verbal form and thought-substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. All great poetry comes about by a unison of these three elements; it is the insufficiency of one or another which makes the inequalities in the work of even the greatest poets; and it is the failure of some one element which is the cause of their lapses, of the *scoriae* in their work, the spots in the sun. But it is only at a certain highest level of the fused intensities that the *mantra* becomes possible.

From a certain point of view it is the rhythm, the poetic movement which is of primary importance; for that is the first fundamental, indispensable element without which all the rest, whatever its other value, remains unacceptable to the Muse of poetry. A perfect rhythm will often even give immortality to work which is slight in vision and very far from the higher intensities of style. But it is not merely metrical rhythm, even in a perfect technical excellence, which we mean when we speak of poetic movement; that perfection is only the first step, the physical basis. There must be a deeper and more subtle music, a rhythmical soul-movement entering into the metrical form and often overflowing it, before the real poetic achievement begins. A mere metrical excellence, however subtle, rich or varied, however perfectly it satisfies the outer ear, does not meet the deeper aims of the creative spirit; for there is an inner hearing which makes its greater claim, and to reach and satisfy it is the true aim of the creator of melody and harmony.

Nevertheless metre, by which we mean a fixed and balanced system of the measures of sound, *mātrā*, is not only the traditional, but also surely the right physical basis for the poetic movement. A recent modern tendency,—that which has given us the poetry of Whitman and Carpenter and the experimentalists in *vers libre* in France and Italy,—denies this tradition and sets aside metre as a limiting bondage, perhaps even a frivolous artificiality or a falsification of true, free and natural poetic rhythm. That is, it seems to me, a point of view which cannot eventually prevail, because it does not deserve to prevail. It certainly cannot triumph, unless it justifies itself by supreme rhythmical achievements beside which the highest work of the great masters of poetic harmony in the past shall sink into a clear inferiority. That has not yet been done. On the contrary, *vers libre* has done its best when it has either limited its aim in rhythm to a kind of chanting poetical prose or else based itself on a sort of irregular and complex metrical movement which in its inner law, though not in its form, recalls the idea of Greek choric poetry.

Milton disparaging rhyme, which he had himself used with so much skill in his earlier, less sublime, but more beautiful poetry, forgot or ignored the spiritual value of rhyme, its power to enforce and clinch the appeal of melodic or harmonic recurrence which is a principal element in the mea-

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sured movement of poetry, its habit of opening sealed doors to the inspiration, its capacity to suggest and reveal beauty to that supra-intellectual something in us which music is powerful to awake. The Whitmanic technique falls into a similar, but wider error. When mankind found out the power of thought and feeling thrown into fixed and recurring measures of sound to move and take possession of the mind and soul, they were not discovering a mere artistic device, but a subtle truth of psychology, of which the conscious theory is preserved in the Vedic tradition. And when the ancient Indians chose more often than not to throw whatever they wished to endure, even philosophy, science and law, into metrical form, it was not merely to aid the memory,—they were able to memorise huge prose Brahmanas quite as accurately as the Vedic hymnal or the metrical Upanishads,—but because they perceived that metrical speech has in itself not only an easier durability, but a greater natural power than unmetrical, not only an intenser value of sound, but a force to compel language and sense to heighten themselves in order to fall fitly into this stricter mould. There is perhaps a truth in the Vedic idea that the Spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chhandas*, in certain fixed rhythms of the formative word, and it is because they are faithful to the cosmic metres that the basic world-movements unchangingly endure. A balanced harmony maintained by a system of subtle recurrences is the foundation of immortality in created things, and metrical movement is simply creative sound grown conscious of this secret of its own powers.

Still there are all sorts of heights and gradations in the use of this power. General consent seems indeed to have sanctioned the name of poetry for any kind of effective language set in a vigorous or catching metrical form, and although the wideness of this definition is such that it has enabled even the Macaulays and Kiplings to mount their queer poetic thrones, I will not object: catholicity is always a virtue. Nevertheless, mere force of language tacked on to the trick of the metrical beat does not answer the higher description of poetry; it may have the form or its shadow, it has not the essence. There is a whole mass of poetry,—the French metrical romances and most of the mediaeval Ballad poetry may be taken as examples,—which relies simply on the metrical beat for its rhythm and on an even level of just tolerable expression for its style; there is hardly a line whose rhythm floats home or where the expression strikes deep. Even in later European poetry, though the art of verse and language has been better learned, essentially the same method persists, and poets who use it have earned not only the popular suffrage, but the praise of the critical mind. Still the definitive verdict on their verse is that it is nothing more than an effective jog-trot of Pegasus, a pleasing canter or a showy gallop. It has great staying-power.—indeed there seems no reason why.

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once begun, it should not go on for ever,—it carries the poet easily over his ground, but it does nothing more. Certainly, no real soul-movement can get easily into this mould. It has its merits and its powers; it is good for metrical romances of a sort, for war poetry and popular patriotic poetry, or perhaps any poetry which wants to be an “echo of life”; it may stir, not the soul, but the vital being in us like a trumpet or excite it like a drum. But after all the drum and the trumpet do not carry us far in the way of music.

But even high above this level we still do not get at once the greater sound-movement of which we are speaking. Poets of considerable power, sometimes the greatest, are satisfied ordinarily with a set harmony or a set melody, which is very satisfying to the outward ear and carries the aesthetic sense along with it in a sort of even, indistinctive pleasure, and into this mould of easy melody or harmony they throw their teeming or flowing imagination without difficulty or check, without any need of an intenser heightening, a deeper appeal. It is beautiful poetry; it satisfies the aesthetic sense, the imagination and the ear, but there the charm ends. Once we have heard its rhythm, we have nothing new to expect, no surprise for the inner ear, no danger of the soul being suddenly seized and carried away into unknown depths. It is sure of being floated along evenly as if upon a flowing stream. Or sometimes it is not so much a flowing stream as a steady march or other even movement. This comes oftenest in poets who appeal more to the thought than to the ear; they are concerned chiefly with the thing they have to say and satisfied to have found an adequate rhythmic mould into which they can throw it without any farther preoccupation.

But even a great attention and skill in the use of metrical possibilities, in the invention of rhythmical turns, devices, modulations, variations, strong to satisfy the intelligence, to seize the ear, to maintain its vigilant interest, will not bring us yet to the higher point we have in view. There are periods of literature in which this kind of skill is carried very far. The rhythms of Victorian poetry seem to me to be of this kind; they show sometimes the skill of the artist, sometimes of the classical or romantic technician of the prestigious melodist or harmonist, sometimes the power of the vigorous craftsman or even the performer of robust metrical feats. All kinds of instrumental faculties have been active; but the one thing that is lacking, except in moments or brief periods of inspiration, is the soul behind creating and listening to its own greater movements.

Poetic rhythm begins to reach its highest levels, the greater poetic movements become possible when rising from and beyond any of these powers the soul begins to make its direct demand and yearn for a profounder satisfaction: they awake when the inner ear begins to listen. Technically, we may say that this comes in when the poet becomes, in Keats'

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phrase, a miser of sound and syllable, economical of his means, not in the sense of a niggardly sparing, but of making the most of all its possibilities of sound. It is then that poetry gets farthest away from the method of prose-rhythm. Prose-rhythm aims characteristically at a general harmony in which the parts are subdued to get the tone of a total effect; even the sounds which give the support or the relief, yet to a great extent seem to be trying to efface themselves in order not to disturb by a too striking particular effect the general harmony which is the whole aim. Poetry on the contrary makes much of its beats and measures; it seeks for a very definite and insistent rhythm. But still, where the greater rhythmical intensities are not pursued, it is only some total effect that predominates and the rest is subdued to it. But in these highest, intensest rhythms every sound is made the most of, whether in its suppression or in its swelling expansion, its narrowness or its open wideness, in order to get in the combined effect something which the ordinary flow of poetry cannot give us.

But this is only the technical side, the physical means by which the effect is produced. It is not the artistic intelligence or the listening physical ear which is most at work, but something within trying to bring out an echo of hidden harmonies, a secret of rhythmical infinities within us. It is not a labour of the devising intellect or the aesthetic sense which the poet has achieved, but a labour of the spirit within itself to cast something out of the surge of the eternal depths. The other faculties are there in their place, but the conductor of the orchestral movement is the soul coming forward to get its own work done by its own higher and unanalysable methods. The result is something as near to wordless music as word-music can get, and with the same power of soul-life, of soul-emotion, of profound supra-intellectual significance. In these higher harmonies and melodies the metrical rhythm is taken up by the spiritual; it is filled with or sometimes it seems rolled away and lost in a music that has really another and spiritual secret of movement.

This is the intensity of poetic movement out of which the greatest possibility of poetic expression arises. It is where the metrical movement remains as a base, but either enshrines and contains or is itself contained and floats in an element of greater music which exceeds it and yet brings out all its possibilities, that the music fit for the *mantra* makes itself audible. It is the triumph of the spirit over the difficulties and limitations of its physical instrument. Its listener seems to be that eternal spirit whom the Upanishad speaks of as the ear of the ear, he who listens to all hearings: and "behind the instabilities of word and speech" it is the inevitable harmonies of his own thought and vision for which he is listening.

## (4) STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

Rhythm is the premier necessity of poetical expression because it is the sound-movement which carries on its wave the thought-movement in the word; and it is the musical sound-image which most helps to fill in, to extend, subtilise and deepen the thought impression or the emotional or vital impression and to carry the sense beyond itself into an expression of the intellectually inexpressible,—always the peculiar power of music. This truth was better understood on the whole or at least more consistently felt by the ancients than by the modern mind and ear, perhaps because they were more in the habit of singing, chanting or intoning their poetry while we are content to read ours, a habit which brings out the intellectual and emotional element, but unduly depresses the rhythmic value. On the other hand modern poetry has achieved a far greater subtlety, fineness and depth of suggestion in style and thought than the ancients,—with perhaps some loss in power, height and simple largeness. The ancients would not so easily as the moderns have admitted into the rank of great poets writers of poor rhythmic faculty or condoned, ignored or praised in really great poets rhythmic lapses, roughnesses and crudities for the sake of their power of style and substance.

In regard to poetic style we have to make, for the purpose of the idea we have in view, the starting-point of the mantra, precisely the same distinctions as in regard to poetic rhythm,—since here too we find actually everything admitted as poetry which has some power of style and is cast into some kind of rhythmical form. But the question is, what kind of power and in that kind what intensity of achievement? There is plenty of poetry signed by poets of present reputation or lasting fame which one is obliged to consign to a border region of half-poetry, because its principle of expression has not got far enough away from the principle of prose expression. It seems to forget that while the first aim of prose style is to define and fix an object, fact, feeling, thought before the appreciating intelligence with whatever clearness, power, richness or other beauty of presentation may be added to that essential aim, the first aim of poetic style is to make the thing presented living to the imaginative vision, the spiritual sense, the soul-feeling and soul-sight. Where the failure is to express at all with any sufficient power, to get home in any way, the distinction becomes palpable enough and we readily say of such writings that this is verse but not poetry. But where there is some thought-power or other worth of substance attended with some power of expression, false values more easily become current and even a whole literary age may dwell on this borderland or be misled into an undue exaltation and cult for this half-poetry.

Poetry, like the kindred arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, ap-

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peals to the spirit of man through significant images, and it makes no essential difference that in this case the image is mental and verbal and not material. The essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling must arise out of or rather be included in the sight, but sight is the primary consequence and power of poetic speech. For the poet has to make us live in the soul and in the inner mind what is ordinarily lived in the outer mind and the senses, and for that he must first make us see by the soul, in its light and with its deeper vision what we ordinarily see in a more limited and halting fashion by the senses and the intelligence. He is, as the ancients knew, a seer and not merely a maker of rhymes, not merely a *jongleur*, rhapsodist or troubadour, and not merely a thinker in lines and stanzas. He sees beyond the sight of the surface mind and finds the revealing word, not merely the adequate and effective, but the illumined and illuminating, the inspired and inevitable word, which compels us to see also. To arrive at that word is the whole endeavour of poetic style.

The modern distinction is that the poet appeals to the imagination and not to the intellect. But there are many kinds of imagination; the objective imagination which visualises strongly the outward aspects of life and things; the subjective imagination which visualises strongly the mental and emotional impressions they have the power to start in the mind; the imagination which deals in the play of mental fictions and to which we give the name of poetic fancy; the aesthetic imagination which delights in the beauty of words and images for their own sake and sees no farther. All these have their place in poetry, but they only give the poet his materials, they are only the first instruments in the creation of poetic style. The essential poetic imagination does not stop short with even the most subtle reproductions of things external or internal, with the richest or delicatest play of fancy or with the most beautiful colouring of word image. It is creative, not of either the actual or the fictitious, but of the more and the most real; it sees the spiritual truth of things,—of this truth too there are many gradations,—which may take either the actual or the ideal for its starting-point. The aim of poetry, as of all true art, is neither a photographic or otherwise realistic imitation of Nature, nor a romantic furbishing and painting or idealistic improvement of her image, but an interpretation by the images she herself affords us not on one, but on many planes of her creation, of that which she conceals from us, but is ready, when rightly approached, to reveal.

This is the true, because the highest and essential aim of poetry, but the human mind arrives at it only by a succession of steps, the first of which seems far enough away from its object. It begins by stringing its most obvious and external ideas, feelings and sensations of things on a thread



of verse in a sufficient language of no very high quality. But even when it gets to a greater adequacy and effectiveness, it is often no more than a vital, an emotional or an intellectual adequacy and effectiveness. There is a strong vital poetry which powerfully appeals to our sensations and our sense of life, like much of Byron or the less inspired mass of the Elizabethan drama, a strong emotional poetry which stirs our feelings and gives us the sense and active image of the passions, a strong intellectual poetry which satisfies our curiosity about life and its mechanism, or deals with its psychological and other "problems", or shapes for us our thoughts in an effective, striking and often quite resistlessly quotable fashion. All this has its pleasures for the mind and the surface soul in us, and it is certainly quite legitimate to enjoy them and to enjoy them strongly and vividly on our way upward, but if we rest content with these only, we shall never get very high up the hill of the Muses.

The style of such poetry corresponds usually to its substance; for between the word and the vision there tends to be, though there is not by any means perfectly or invariably, a certain equation. There is a force of vital style, a force of emotional style, a force of intellectual style which we meet constantly in poetry and which it is essential to distinguish from the language of the higher spiritual imagination. The forceful expression of thought and sentiment is not enough for this higher language. To take some examples, it is not enough for it to express its sense of world-sorrow in a line of cheap sentimental force like Byron's

*There's, not a joy the world can give like that it takes away*

Or to voice an opposite truth in the sprightly-forcible manner of Browning's  
*God's in his heaven.*

*All's right with the world,*

or to strike the balance in a sense of equality with the pointed and ever quotable intellectuality of Pope's

*God sees with equal eyes as lord of all*

*A hero perish or a sparrow fall*

This may be the poetical or half-poetical language of thought and sentiment, it is not the language of real poetic vision. Note that all three brush the skirts of ideas whose deeper expression from the vision of a great poet might touch the very heights of poetic revelation. Byron's line is the starting-point in the emotional sensations for that high world-pessimism and its spiritual release which finds expression in the Gita's \*

*Antyam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajaswa mam*

and one has only to compare the manner of the two in style and rhythm, even leaving the substance aside, to see the difference between the lesser

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\* "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and turn to Me."

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and the greater poetry. Browning's language rises from a robust cheerfulness of temperament, it does not touch the deeper fountain-heads of truth in us, an opposite temperament may well smile at it as vigorous optimistic fustian. Pope's actually falsifies by its poetical inadequacy that great truth of the Gita's teaching, the truth of the divine equality, because he has not seen and therefore cannot make us see; his significant images of the truth are, like his perception of it, intellectual and rhetorical, not poetic images.

There is a higher style of poetry than this which yet falls below the level to which we have to climb. It is no longer poetical language of a merely intellectual, vital or emotional force, but instead or in addition a genuinely imaginative style, with a certain, often a great beauty of vision in it whether objective or subjective, or with a certain, often a great but indefinite soul-power bearing up its movement of word and rhythm. It varies in intensity, for the lower intensity we can get plenty of examples from Chaucer, when he is indulging his imagination rather than his observation, and at a higher pitch from Spenser, for the loftier intensity we can cite at will for one kind from Milton's early poetry, for another from poets who have a real spiritual vision like Keats and Shelley. English poetry runs, indeed, ordinarily in this mould. But this too is not that highest intensity of the revelatory poetic word from which the *mantra* starts. It has a certain power of revelation in it, but still the deeper vision is coated up in something more external and sometimes the poetic intention of decorative beauty, sometimes some other deliberate intention of the poetic mind overlays with the more outward beauty, beauty of image, beauty of thought, beauty of emotion, the deeper intention of the spirit within, so that we have still to look for that beyond the image rather than are seized by it through the image. A high pleasure is there, not unspiritual in its nature, but still it is not that point where pleasure passes into or is rather drowned in the pure spiritual Ananda, the ecstasy of the creative, poetic revelation.

That intensity comes where everything else may be present, but all is powerfully carried on the surge of a spiritual vision which has found its inspired and inevitable speech. All or any of the other elements may be there, but they are at once subordinated and transfigured to their highest capacity for poetic light and rapture. This intensity belongs to no particular style, depends on no conceivable formula of diction. It may be the height of the decorative imaged style as often we find it in Kalidasa or Shakespeare, it may be that height of bare and direct expression where language seems to be used as a scarcely felt vaulting-board for a leap into the infinite, it may be the packed intensity of language which uses either the bare or the imaged form at will, but fills every word with its utmost possible rhythmic and thought suggestion. But in itself it depends on none of these

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things; it is not a style, but poetic style itself, the Word; it creates and carries with it its elements rather than is created by them. Whatever its outward forms, it is always the one fit style for the *mantra*.

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### The Eyes Reply

Bright Eyes! O can't You smile through each  
And every line?  
How shall I know the tame and tawdry  
From the fine  
Unless Your seeing sanctions mine?

How know the poem is true until  
Your Touch is found —  
Most infinitely delicate quest  
For the Whole and Round?

"Follow", I seem to hear You say,  
"Till all is crowned,  
The witchery of word and Wonder-sound."

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

# THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

## A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

ACT I: SCENE 1

*In the province of Marwar: in the small state of Kurkhi.*

*An autumn afternoon. Islands of tinted clouds drifting aimlessly in the sky. Now and then the sun goes behind the cloud-rack to appear the next minute a trifle redder. As the curtain rises, RAO RAJA RATAN SINGH is discovered swinging in a hammock—(an Indian hammock held by four vertical rods which carry the weight of a swinging wood-board, the seat)—in the palace garden with his beautiful young QUEEN, RANI CHANDRA DEVI sitting beside him, both interested spectators of a charming fête organised by the children of the royal family: in front, round an imposing belt of gargoyles—spouting forth parabolas of water irised by the sunbeams—a group of boys and girls are dancing in a circle with MIRA, a child of seven, leading the chorus. Each line she sings solus; this is caught up and repeated by the rest.*

When day is done and shadows fall

Let this my prayer be:

O make my life a tender flame

That only burns for thee.

O make my speech one grateful hymn,

My heart of love thy throne:

My joy, my thought, my love, my life,

Make all, O Lord, thine own.

*In the middle of the song a liveried servant approaches the KING and obsequiously whispers something to him. The KING and QUEEN both rise in haste and accompany him to the garden gate. A moment later the gate*

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opens and SANATAN, in the ochre-coloured garb of a Yogi, is seen entering. The KING and QUEEN bend and touch his feet in reverence when he blesses them, touching the head of each with the right palm. The trio walk to the hammock. The KING motions SANATAN to take his place in the hammock. He first declines but has to yield to their insistence. Presently, an oblong carpet is brought by another servant and placed in the lawn at the foot of the hammock. On this the royal couple sit down gazing in joy at the radiant face of the new-comer. SANATAN smiles at them, a trifle embarrassed. The next moment, however, he forgets them completely, his attention being rivetted on the singing MIRA who, absorbed in her self-imposed responsibility of leadership, has yet to notice him. On her lovely face, tinted rose pink by the setting sun, SANATAN gazes wistfully, drinking in, withal, her lovely voice. They continue singing:

I will wait for you as the evening falls,  
My Lord, I will wait for you:  
I know you will come as the flutelet calls,  
My heart you will come to woo.  
I will call to you at the break of dawn,  
My love, I will call to you,  
In my heart come, Lord, as the light is born,  
My dreams will then come true.

As the music comes to an end, MIRA, still unaware of SANATAN, suddenly leaps on to the top of a circular slab of marble fixed to a dwarf pillar placed in the centre of the belt of gargoyles spouting water. As she confronts the group—standing expectantly, a few feet away from the water-spouts—she looks picturesque in this lovely setting, declaiming:

MIRA (*wagging a finger*): Now, Listen, Children. Don't talk. I will teach you something thrilling. There Prabha, you are giggling! You are impossible!

PRABHA (*a girl of about seven, pouting*): And you are a tyrant—to order us about—all the time.

KAMAL (*a boy of eight and a loyal adherent of MIRA*): Shut up. How dare you call her names! She has come to give us something. No, Mira, you just go on. We love to have you lead us.

PRABHA (*angrily*): Yes, like lambs!

KAMAL (*acidly*): And what a lioness to scold us—who cannot even roar—only bleat!

PRABHA (*furious*): How dare you! I will tell mother.

KAMAL: Little I care! (*Fuming*) Not wanting to be led! As if you could do anything better!

MIRA (*reproving*): Now, now, Kamal! You mustn't go too far.

KAMAL: Far? Do you know what they can do—and with a vengeance

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—the moment you are out of earshot? Did I say they bleat? I was flattering them—they can only screech and bite and tear one another's hair.

PRABHA: You liar!

PRITHVI (*a boy of eight and also an admirer of MIRA*): No, he isn't. Yesterday she wasn't here and what did we do? Quarrelled and quarrelled till we were blue in the face. No Mira—no fun, that's what Kamal says. I agree.

NANDINI (*a girl of seven, scared*): Oh, don't, Mira! It's for you to stop all this. Sing us another song you learned from the temple priest. What can we do but screech, if you won't teach us songs? Make us, monkeys, toe the line—do—do—and pitilessly.

MIRA: But I don't like to force anybody. If Prabha doesn't want she can leave us, I invite only those who are willing to learn.

PRITHVI: A fair enough deal! Prabha, you get out—step out of the ring.

PRABHA (*bursts into tears*): You brutes! I-I-I! Oh mother!

MIRA: Oh don't cry, Prabha! Prithvi, you mustn't talk like that to your own sister. (*Brightly*) Listen, Prabha, what I am going to teach you is great fun, I assure you—something I saw in my dream last night.

NALINI (*a girl of nine*): You dreamed! How thrilling! We'd love to—

MIRA: Shh! Listen. I saw Radha in my dream. She was standing before Him with one foot over the other—as He does in the picture. And then—look at me—you must get a flute—wait. (*Turning to her left*) Roma, darling! Just go and fetch my little flute with bells from my bedroom.

ROMA, *a girl of five, runs off.*

MIRA (*continuing*): Meanwhile don't let's waste time. (*To KAMAL*) You stand like this, look—the right foot across the left—and like this: the knees slightly bent—not too much—

*As KAMAL overdoes it—*

{ NANDINI: ha ha ha!  
PRABHA: You look like a clown!  
PRITHVI: Take care—you'll sprain your ankle—

KAMAL (*stamping his foot*): Shut up, you grinning baboons! Can't do a thing—and good only at picking holes! For shame, I say.

MIRA (*sternly*): Oh—don't! Look here, Kamal! Look at me—me—me, here. Don't pay any heed to them. What does it matter what they say? Look at my feet. This time I stand straight, see? For I am Radha now. And you are to kneel to me. You can do that at least. Can't you?

RATNA (*a girl of ten, importantly*): But what nonsense! Krishna is a man. It's for the girl to kneel. You must kneel to Kamal.

MIRA (*severely*): Silence. You can criticise later—not now, when I

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am teaching. (*Sarcastically*) And this idea—that girls are nothing and boys everything! My blood boils. Besides, I am *not* imagining: I saw Krishna kneeling to Radha and not the other way about, I say. So you must obey. Or else I must find another—a more obedient Krishna.

KAMAL (*hurt*): But that's unfair, Mira! *They* pitch into you and you—you make *me* pay the price—*me*, your friend! (*To NANDINI, PRABHA and a few others who are gloating*) I would like to knock those grinning—

MIRA (*interjecting*): I can't allow this.

*At this moment ROMA runs back into the restless group with the flute. MIRA claps her hands: the humming group look up. There is silence at last.*

MIRA: Throw it to me.

ROMA: Catch—(*she tosses the flute up towards MIRA*).

MIRA (*catches*): Splendid. Now children, look! Radha is to play the flute.

PRABHA: Nonsense. Radha never played a flute in all her born days.

MIRA: How do you know?

PRABHA: It is not written that she did anything—convincing.

MIRA: Is it written that she pared her nails? Besides, I do what I like. I have no use for a Radha who cannot both dance and play. (*Defiantly*) Since I can play, why can't Radha?

*And she plays a lovely simple tune on her flute.*

*The children look up, all their restlessness gone. SANATAN gazes tenderly on MIRA, playing the flute ecstatically.*

CHANDRA (*proudly*): Isn't she a picture?

SANATAN (*half-aloud*): A born musician too—a prodigy! (*Aloud to CHANDRA*) Look, *how* she is improvising—a mere baby! How old is she?

RATAN SINGH: Seven. (*Proudly*) She is gifted, that's certain.

SANATAN: Don't use common adjectives to describe one who is *holy*. She is your daughter, I take it?

RATAN SINGH: Yes, Gurudev, but such a self-willed child—

CHANDRA (*the mother in her roused*): Oh,—she is no such thing. She's a perfect fairy! Gurudev, you needn't heed him. Bless her.

SANATAN: She is blessed already, Maharani! But I would like to talk to her if I may?

RATAN SINGH: Certainly, Gurudev! (*He stands up and calls out*) Mira! Look here! Will you come here—for a minute?

*MIRA starts, and slips down into the basin of water below. There is an outcry: KAMAL jumps forward and catches her by the hand. Meanwhile SANATAN rushes forward followed by the King and Queen. But before thy can reach the pool MIRA has leapt out of the basin and runs towards them, laughing. She meets them, moving towards her.*

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

CHANDRA: O child—child! How careless! Look, your elbow—

MIRA (*nonchalantly*): But it's nothing, mother, just a tiny scratch.

RATAN SINGH: But how *could* you fall like that? You might have broken your neck!

MIRA (*offended*): Nonsense! I can dive from ten feet high. Besides, one doesn't drown in a shallow basin. Look, the water's hardly wetted my clothes above the knees.

RATAN SINGH: Well, I'll leave it at that for the present. Now make your obeisance to Gurudev. He is a great saint but, I warn you, he won't bless you if you are naughty.

MIRA (*touching his feet, smiles boldly*): But I am not naughty, am I?

SANATAN (*charmed*): Who says you are? I will fight the whole pack of them. (*He rolls up his sleeves playfully*).

MIRA (*bursts out laughing*): But father said you came to bless me!

*By this time the other children too have run up and they now stand in an eager ring round the four, missing nothing.*

SANATAN (*tenderly*): You need no blessings of us, humans, my child! You only need one thing—what I have brought you: a present from the Lord Himself.

MIRA (*clapping her hands*): How splendid! Whatever can it be? Oh, show me.

SANATAN: If you want to be Radha you must be lessoned in one thing, my little mother!

MIRA: And what is that?

SANATAN: Patience—you must learn to wait on His Will. (*He laughs*) But don't make a wry face. I have come to give you a boon—not to teach you a lesson. Just a moment.

*He thrusts his hand deep into his knapsack and brings out an exquisite IMAGE OF BALAGOPAL (that is, Krishna as a child) about two feet in height.*

MIRA (*excitedly*): Oh! mother!! I-I have seen HIM!!!

SANATAN: Seen Him? Where? When?

MIRA (*triumphantly*): In my dream—last night. I was just now teaching them what I had seen. Radha first knelt to—(*pointing at the Image*)—Him. Then *He* came to life and knelt to her—just in the same manner. And then—oh, what did I see?

SANATAN: What was it?

MIRA: I saw myself in the place of Radha! I must have been mad!

SANATAN (*smiles quizzically*): But who knows, my child! Who knows?

MIRA (*with a quick glance*): How do you mean by "who knows"?

SANATAN (*in a mollifying tone*): You won't understand now, my



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little mother! Only let me tell you this: I have been commanded by my Lord (*indicating the IMAGE*) to hand Him over to you, personally. I have seen you in my vision and I was told that you were born in Rajputana though I did not know in what State. I have been wandering for the past two months in search of you. The moment I saw you I knew my quest was over. You are blessed as few have been in this Dark Age. Take this from me—(*his voice thickens*) for He has chosen from now on to remain your guest and comrade.

RATAN SINGH (*moved*): Gurudev! We are, indeed, blessed that you should have again come to shed the dust of your holy feet in our house and . . . and so grateful, besides, for your priceless gift. But—

SANATAN: But—?

CHANDRA DEVI (*coming to his rescue*): But you see, Gurudev, it is such a valuable IMAGE and it has belonged to you so long—

SANATAN (*smiling a trifle sadly*): Nothing on earth belongs to us, earthlings, Maharani! We are trustees of whatever we choose to call our own. The Lord in His fathomless Grace (*he clears his voice and then masters himself*) has made me blessed by staying with me for a while. Now (*he forces a smile*) He prefers the hospitality of this beautiful Princess. (*Casting a glance at little MIRA*) And no wonder: for He is devoted to beauty, don't you know?

MIRA (*importantly*). I know. But then you are beautiful too, you know.

SANATAN (*oscillating between laughter and tears*): But one thing you do not know yet, little mother! that my Lord is famous for his fickleness. He passes from love to love. Now you are His choice. So laugh in joy—won't you—while the sun is still shining? (*He laughs and MIRA joins*).

RATAN SINGH: I admire your laughter, Gurudev, with all my heart. Because (*hesitantly*) surely this is no laughing matter for—you.

SANATAN (*looking him full in the face*): But the Lord has taught me also a thing or two other than laughter, Maharaj! So I have learnt that it isn't joy or pain that counts, ultimately, if we can offer our all at His feet. This Image was with me night and day for five years . . . I cherished Him. And I lived in joy because . . . because such was His Will. Now I leave Him to her care. I will live in Pai—I will miss Him, but that's also because such is His Will. What matters, I repeat, is not the pain or joy in either case—but doing His Will. For pain borne for Him can be as much an offering as joy given by Him.

MIRA: But why have pain at all when you can have joy? The Lord belongs to all—mother tells me. So why not let us both own it together, as keepers? Why must you go? Stay with us, I implore you.

SANATAN (*stifling a sigh*): May He bless you, my kind mother heart!

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

But I cannot stay in a palace. I must go back to—Brindaban.

MIRA (*insistently*): But why must you go? You are free to—

SANATAN: Nobody is free, my little mother—except of course the few blessed ones who have surrendered their freedom at His feet.

MIRA (*mystified*): I don't understand.

SANATAN (*with forced brightness*): Do not mind me: I was talking to myself. Listen: I have to go because such is my Guru's command.

MIRA: But what is a Guru? (*A pause*) Won't you tell me?

SANATAN: One who reaches the Ganga can ignore the well. *He will tell you everything, in due time.*

RATAN SINGH (*not knowing how to take it*): But how, Guruji? The IMAGE is lifeless.

SANATAN (*assertive*): No.

MIRA (*surprised*): No? What do you mean? (*After an expectant pause*) Tell me: how will the Image speak?

SANATAN (*after a slight pause*). As I am speaking to you, little mother!

MIRA: But you are a living being.

SANATAN: So is He—the Image—even more living, I tell you.

MIRA: Have you gone mad? Come here. (*She puts her forefinger under the nose of the IMAGE*) He has no breath: just feel.

SANATAN: But love will supply Him the breath.

MIRA: Love? Whose love?

SANATAN: Your own.

CHANDRA: But, Gurudev—

MIRA (*cutting in*): Wait, mother! (*Looking hard at SANATAN*): Do you tell me that if I love Him, He will come to life? Oh, why don't you answer?

SANATAN: You will get your answer when you will have learned to love Him. (*After a slight pause*) May the Lord bless you always, little mother, and claim you for His very own. (*He turns towards the west*) Oh, the sun has set. I must go.

RATAN SINGH: But we can't let you go like this, Gurudev! You must stay with us for a few days at least.

CHANDRA: (*folding her hands*): Gurudev, you must stay as long as you possibly can.

SANATAN (*touched*): Maharani! May He guard you all and make you see. But you must not mind if I cannot comply. I do not belong here. My Gurudev, Mahaprabhu, has commanded me to live and die in Brindaban. I was there when the Lord asked me to hand—Him over to your daughter. My mission is fulfilled. I cannot delay any longer—every moment counts.

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### *A silence*

RATAN SINGH: Won't you give us some guidance—some advice or something—at parting.

SANATAN: Well! (*After a pause*): May I suggest—just one thing?

CHANDRA: Of course, Guruji!

SANATAN: You won't mind? It's only a humble request.

RATAN SINGH: How can we, Gurudev? We'll do anything—

SANATAN: Be not so generous with your promises, Maharaj, for I was going to ask you not to—not to—marry your daughter.

CHANDRA (*aghast*): Not marry her? But why, Gurudev?

SANATAN: Just this: your daughter won't be happy if she marries.

CHANDRA (*pulling a long face*): But why, Gurudev?

SANATAN (*in a muse*): Because, Maharani, one who loves (*pointing at the IMAGE*) Him, cannot possibly love another.

*A silence falls again.*

CHANDRA: Must you depart at once, Gurudev?

SANATAN (*waking up*): Yes. I am late. Farewell, little mother!

MIRA (*prostrating herself at his feet*): But shall I never see you again?

SANATAN: Yes, you shall, little mother!

MIRA (*hastily wiping a tear and picking up the IMAGE*): But where?

SANATAN: The Lord will tell you.

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## Midnight

Life weary of a long-drawn noon-travail  
Enjoys its repose within Sleep's lulling wings,  
When the bright deities in the firmament sail  
Wide and watch and feel the imaginings  
Of earth's Godhead mysterious and unfound.  
This midnight of occult phenomenon,  
This emissary of the immense Profound,  
Holds Eternity and point in one:  
A symbol figure of mute meditation,  
He impels the immediate and the old past  
To kindle her ancient faith in preparation  
Of this near dawn that all dawns will outlast;  
Destined to be pursued by the sombre steeds  
He tempts them to the field of golden seeds.

RANJU

## WHAT IS YOGA?

Once, at a session with the Mother, some sadhakas of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram were asked to give their definitions of Yoga. It is interesting to note how various individuals respond to the Spiritual Call and envisage the Spiritual Life. Some of the definitions are inclined to be philosophical in their terms, others bring out more feelingly the Ideal, still others try to catch the actual process of Yoga in general and the remainder hint the inner psychic movement in a purely personal mode.

"Divinising life."

"Faith in the Divine and aspiration for the Highest."

"A series of experiences which the individual soul feels from the time of its contact with the Divine up to the union with the Divine."

"The process by which we transcend the ego and put on the Divine Consciousness and by which we transform the lower nature into the divine nature."

"Birth of the supreme harmony in matter from the union of the above and the below."

"To be so entirely cleansed of falsehood that there may be purity to know the Divine Will and respond to the Call at any moment."

"To return home."

"To do as Mother directs us to do."

"Not to hinder Mother in making the best possible of you."

"To be in complete union with Mother."

"To live in Mother and to know Mother's Will."

"To feel a warmth and a glow in my heart in my relation with Mother."

"To live only for Mother as if nobody and nothing else existed."

# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchand

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHIC—THE DELIGHT-SOUL

PART I

Every cosmic principle in our individual composition is double: we have two bodies, two lives, two minds and two souls. They are derived from the involutory and evolutionary movements of Spirit. We have a gross physical body, *annamaya sharira*, and a subtle physical body, *sukshma* or *linga sharira*; a life-force working in our gross body and conditioned by its past evolution in Matter, and a *sukshma* or subliminal life, which is larger and more flexible and not subject to the limitations of the former; we have a surface mind of aspiring ignorance, chained to the ego and the desires, appetites and normal reactions of the life and the body and dominated and deluded by the senses, and a subliminal mind, which is wider and wiser, open to the universal mind and its movements, and full of intimations and inspirations from the higher planes of consciousness. Similarly, we have a double soul—the egoistic desire-soul in front, living in the disquieting illusion of a separate existence and cut off from its source which yet sustains and supports it from behind a veil, and the delight-soul or psyche, which dwells in the inmost sanctuary of our being, the immortal inhabitant of our mortal tenement. In the last essay we have seen what the desire-soul is and how, having helped the evolution of the mental being to a certain extent, having even led him to the frontiers of his consciousness and given him a glimpse of the infinite, stretching beyond, it yet stands as the greatest bar to his irrevocable self-transcendence. In the present essay we propose to

study the delight-soul or the psychic,—its origin, essential nature, evolution, mission, aspiration and fulfilment.

### The Psychic Entity

The psychic or the delight-soul is our eternal and essential individuality in Nature. It is made of love and bliss and is the very self of an immaculate purity. It comes from the Bliss-self of *Sachchidananda*, as our mind comes from the *Vijnanamaya Purusha* or the Supramental Being, our life from the *Chit-tapas* and our body from the *Sat* or the eternal divine Existence. In the beginning of our terrestrial evolution this soul or psychic entity remains veiled behind the turbid working of our surface nature. It exerts its influence from behind and prepares its instruments of manifestation. It is the one thing in us that is imperishable and “nothing that enters into our experience can pollute its purity or extinguish the flame.” It has a direct, spontaneous perception of truth and beauty and goodness, and an infallible sense of the unity and harmony of things. “This veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, nextinguishable even by that dense unconsciousness of any spiritual self within which obscures our outward nature. It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge. It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic . . . .” “It is . . . . untouched by death, decay or corruption . . . . It is . . . . the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature.”\* The psychic entity contains all possibilities of our manifestation, but is always superior to them. It is neither limited by its manifestation nor ever exhausted by it.

The seat of the psychic in us is behind the heart. It is the individual spark-soul supporting the evolution of our mind, life and body in the material world. It is full of love and devotion for the Divine and aflame with an aspiration for the manifestation of His Grace and Glory in terrestrial nature. It is the child of the divine Mother descended into the evolutionary experience, and immediately, intimately aware of Her Will in itself.

### The Jiva or Jivatma

It is better to note here that Sri Aurobindo uses the term Jiva or Jivatma in a sense which is different from that generally attached to it in

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\* “The Life Divine” by Sri Aurobindo.

Indian philosophy. The current connotation of the word is the embodied soul, which passes from life to life and whose liberation from the meshes of Nature or Maya or Karma is the salvation so strenuously sought after. But this connotation is indefinite and incomplete, as it leaves the origin and *swabhava* (essential nature) of the soul and the purpose of its descent into birth unexplained and rather obscure. As in everything else, Sri Aurobindo's description and differentiation of the Jivatma, the psychic entity and the psychic being are characterised by a clarity and precision remarkably rare outside the province of science, and reveal the three aspects of the same reality in such a way that the various spiritual realisations of them fall into their proper places without creating the confusion which not unoften bewilder the beginners on the path.

According to Sri Aurobindo,—and he is here at one with the Gita—it is the supreme Mother, the *Para Prakriti*, who has become all these numberless Jivatmas, these multiple centres of the one transcendent and universal Consciousness—*Para Prakritirjwabhuta*. Each Jiva or Jivatma is an individual Self in conscious union with the Transcendent and the Universal. It does not descend into evolution, but presides from above over the evolution of the psychic entity, which is its self-projection or representative in the material world. The Jivatma is our eternal and central being, untouched by the mutations of our nature and unqualified by the varying forms assumed by our evolving soul here. It also projects a Purusha, a representative of itself on each plane of our consciousness—a *manomaya Purusha* in the mind, a *pranamaya Purusha* in the vital and an *annamaya Purusha* in the physical—and exercises an ultimate co-ordinating control, subject to the Will of the Divine, over the various parts and activities of our nature. These Purushas are the instrumental, while the psychic is the central, self-projection of the Jivatma. When the psychic is awake and evolved in our being, it widens its individuality and rises into union with the Jivatma. This union gives the psychic the experience of its own universality and its oneness with all in the cosmic Divine; and through this experience of the universal it can pass on into the embrace of the Transcendent.

### The Psychic Being

The psychic entity, which is at first an undifferentiated power of the divine Consciousness, the immaculate, inextinguishable spark-soul, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, puts forth and develops its individuality in the nature, its representative central Purusha, the psychic being. The subtle distinction between the psychic entity and the psychic being has to be clearly grasped. "The psychic being is...the soul (the spark-soul or the psychic entity) of the individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is that spark of the Divine Fire

that grows behind the mind, vital and physical as the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into Prakriti of Knowledge.”\* It is the Antaratma or Chaitya Purusha as distinguished from the Jivatma, of which it is an evolving delegate here. As the Jivatma is our central being above manifestation or evolution, so the psychic being is our central being in evolution. In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the importance of the psychic being is of an immense practical importance, as we shall presently see. Nothing substantial and abiding can be achieved in this Yoga without the opening of the psychic being and its self-infusion into the parts of our nature. The psychucisation of our being is regarded as the first solid achievement upon which the later attainments and conquests can be securely based. Our normal human nature would never care to turn to the Divine or the Eternal, were it not for the occult influence of the psychic. Whenever there is an aspiration for the Infinite, for a transcendence of the ego and its inherent limitations, for the essential unity and harmony underlying the divisions and discords of the surface appearances; whenever the heart aches for the bliss ineffable or the mind thirsts for the knowledge illimitable, it is the psychic being that has been at work, purifying and preparing the nature and turning it to the Love and Light of the Divine. When the being is obsessed with the superficialities of existence and its passing interests, and has not developed the finer perception of any higher values and supersensuous realities, any refined aesthesis and sensibilities; when it wallows in the material life and its crude amenities or even makes its mental powers and faculties subserve the ends of material life, it means that the psychic in it has not awakened—the being is still wandering through a spiritual night. The psychic being has an infallible discrimination,—it can immediately tell the true from the false, the beautiful from the ugly, the good from the evil and the divine from the undivine. When it is fully awake and in control of the nature, spiritual life becomes a triumphal progress from light to light on a surge of developing joy and power. It is the psychic alone that can give the readiest response to the divine call and offer all itself for the fulfilment of the divine Will. Its love and devotion and self-surrender to the Divine are as unstinted and spontaneous as the ego’s devotion and self-giving to its mundane pursuits. The psychic being is the temple of the Divine in us and it is because of it that even the vilest man, the most confirmed sinner sometimes feels a qualm and a contrition, and lifts up his eyes to Heaven for a ray of light, a redeeming touch of Grace. It is because of the psychic that even the hardened heart of a criminal sometimes melts, and the hand that rises to strike falls limp with pain and pity. “It is always this psychic being that is the real, though often the secret, cause of man’s turning to the spiritual life

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\* “Letters of Sri Aurobindo”—Vol. IV.



and his greatest help in it.”\*

### The Mission and Aspiration of the Psychic

What is the mission of the psychic? Why does it descend into human birth? This is a moot problem of religion and philosophy, and upon its solution depends the meaning and purpose of human life, if it is conceded that man has a soul. Buddhism denies the existence of any soul or immortal entity subsisting in the midst of the cosmic flood; therefore, for it there is no meaning or purpose in human life except to dissolve it into its constituent elements and have done with it—done with the desire it generates and the suffering it entails. And the Buddhistic compassion beckons man out of the life of suffering into the silence of the Void or the fathomless peace of the Permanent, beyond the swirl of sangskaras. For life its only message is one of sudden or gradual extinction. Christianity regards life as a long probation and preparation and counsels its adherents to lay up for themselves “treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and whence thieves do not break through nor steal”. Its kingdom of heaven upon earth is a moral kingdom of piety and charity, the reward of which can only be reaped in heaven. If rebirth is denied, the soul has only one human life, the present petty precarious span of three-score and ten, to do whatever it can, to be “raised up at the last day.” The earthly life is used as a vaulting board, and not as a vehicle for the outpouring of the divine splendour. In the ascetic schools of Vedanta, life is looked down upon as a lie or a snare or a colossal hoax from which flight is the only wisdom. They do not care to ask themselves why the soul has come down at all and got enmeshed in this life, and whether there is any purpose behind it. Vaishnavism contemplates the world as the lila of the All-Beloved and All-Beautiful, but a lila that is mysterious, inscrutable, baffling and without any definite issue; and the Bhakta tends to withdraw from it in order to enjoy an unbroken continuity of the inner union. In almost all religions and philosophies there is a curious conspiracy of silence over the purpose of the soul’s birth in the material world. To call the birth a fall explains nothing, unless you account for the fall and discover its rationale; for, surely in the divine dispensation of Providence, such a tremendous event could not have occurred as a mere chance or an inexplicable error.

Sri Aurobindo does not by-pass this momentous question. In fact, he makes the mission of the soul’s birth the focal point of his theory of terrestrial evolution and manifestation. According to him each soul or the psychic is a centre of the multiple Divine, a centre that has descended into birth for the evolution of its inalienable divinity in an individual nature. It assumes birth in order to manifest the Divine in one of His

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\*“Letters of Sri Aurobindo”—Vol I

individual aspects. If the world is not an illusion or an amorphous flux of chaotic possibilities, but a progressive self-expression or manifestation of the one Omnipresent Reality, the Supreme Being, then the psychic is the conscious and co-operating medium of that manifestation. The very presence of the psychic beings in the material world is an indubitable proof, not only of the presence of the Divine here—that is admitted by most theistic religions—but also of His Will to an eventual perfection in self-manifestation. The psychic is the living and immortal image of the divine individuality and the means of multiplying diversity in unity. It is the one luminous point in man that proclaims the advent of the Eternal Sun.

“The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for Its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.”\* It is quite possible that emphasising its tendency to peace and silence, the psychic may turn to the immutable Self and merge in its vast freedom and impersonality,—a consummation which it usually seeks when there is a contracting movement in spirituality and a strong, almost compelling centripetal magnetism. But that is a truncated achievement in which the soul wins its freedom by an escape and an evasion of its God-given mission. Sri Ramakrishna had the wisdom to nip this tendency in Vivekananda as soon as he perceived it and turn him towards the fulfilment of his soul’s mission. This exclusive tendency of the soul towards personal salvation or self-annihilation in the infinite, immutable existence is accentuated, if not superinduced, by the force of crystallised traditions in the subliminal as well as in the surface consciousness of the individual and the race, and it takes nothing short of a revolution in will and thought and aspiration to break these hard crystals and clear the passage for the full efflorescence of the psychic, which is a global turning, not only to the immobile Impersonal, but to the Supreme Being, inducing a quiet, unrelaxed insistence on the surrender and transformation of the nature for His perfect manifestation in the material world. The psychic has an innate, unquenchable aspiration for union with the Divine through love and self-giving, but the union that gives it the highest fulfilment and satisfaction is not a passive and partial, but a dynamic and integral union,—a union which is self-revealing, self-reproducing, world-illuminating; a union in the body and all its activities as much as in the heart and the mind and in the inner depths. It is to achieve this integral union and become a thrilled channel of the divine splendour in the material world that the soul descends into darkness and mortality; and this aspiration it infuses into its whole nature, little by little, till all unconsciousness,

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\* “Letters of Sri Aurobindo”—Vol. I.

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all obscurity, all disharmony, all separative egoism are transformed into luminous consciousness and a harmonious, manifold unity. The aspiration of the psychic is for the victory of the Divine over death and darkness and division and discord and His undisputed sovereignty over all earth, even as it is over all heaven.

### The Opening of the Psychic

There are two ways of opening the psychic: one is direct and comparatively easy, and the other rather indirect and difficult. The first comes by a simple and sincere concentration in the heart with a growing love and devotion for the Divine and an untiring self-dedication to His service. A constant thinking of the Divine, an unebbing flow of the heart's purest emotions to the Supreme Lover and an unflagging self-offering to His Force in every part of the being are a great help to the opening of the psychic being and its coming to the front. But all this movement of love and devotion and dedication, to be fully and swiftly effective, must proceed on the quiet basis of a consciousness that knows itself to be separate from its natural instruments and eternally belonging to the Divine. It is this consciousness that is the most decisive factor in the spiritual turning of a man. Some subtle intuitive perception, some inner vision or experience, some living faith and divination gives the start and serves as the germinating nucleus of the spiritual life. This tiny nucleus becomes the rock of safety against the blows and buffets of adverse forces. Deriving strength from the recondite sources, it grows and expands, annexing part after part of the being till all or most is retrieved from ignorance and egoism and surrendered to the Divine. This initial glimpse or experience is the sign of the awakening of the psychic, and what one has to do is to sustain and fortify it by an increasing aspiration for the Divine and a surrender to His Supreme Force, the Mother. But a mere awakening of the psychic being is not all that we understand by the term opening. The opening of the psychic being means its coming in front and its progressive control over the nature. It means that the love and devotion and surrender, which are natural and spontaneous in the psychic, begin to infect the other parts of the being, so that the mind may turn its thoughts to the Divine and seek to know and understand His Will, the heart may turn its emotions to the Divine and seek its highest satisfaction, its termless delight in loving and adoring Him and Him alone, in Himself and in all, and the life and the body find their completest fulfilment in serving Him and accomplishing His purpose in the world. The opening of the psychic being implies a developing control and co-ordination of the parts of our nature and their detailed and exhaustive consecration to the Divine. An unwavering concentration in the heart, a quiet but intense aspiration for the Divine, a call and reliance

on the Mother's Grace, a renunciation of desire and attachment and egoism, and a growing spontaneity in devotion and surrender, are the most potent means for the opening of the psychic

The second way of opening is "the descent of the higher consciousness through the mind" The higher consciousness, descending from above, releases the heart-centre and opens the psychic This happens in cases in which the emotional being is not much developed and the mind has taken the lead in the sadhana But by whichever way it comes the psychic opening is a *sine qua non* of the liberation and supramental perfection of our integral being

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### Hell's Brood

Dear Lord, tonight lift all the veils of fear  
And show me as I am. Let your keen love  
Put forth the fingers of its cleaning light  
Through all the spaces of my soul—spaces  
of sin and utmost shame . . .

— The midnight strikes

The witches sabbath—restless ghosts of sins,  
And shapes of ugly mood and ugly thought  
And ugly wishes Look, O Love, O Love.  
The black pools of my heart, wild sorrow-streams,  
And ancient sheltering mock-repentance dips  
In smooth baptismal fonts—while at the edge.  
In piercing spite they whirl and shriek and shriek,  
And dance me dizzy —

— imps of careless hurts.

Wild grinning hags of callous mockeries  
And taunts. sharp images of envy, spite,  
And vampire-hates that suck with sharpest beak  
Blood of our own earth-brothers, more and more,  
Unnumbered leprous faces of small lies,  
Hypocrisies and shams. vague forms of all  
Weak pettinesses, perverse strengths which raise  
Mad arms to knock with swift skilled speed the nail  
Straight in love's naked flesh

THÉMIS

## THE PLAY'S THE THING

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Among the considerations that made me rejoice that I was visiting the United Kingdom, there was one that particularly filled me with eager anticipation—now at long last I would be able to see a few plays on the stage. Although I had loved and taught Shakespeare for a couple of decades, never had I seen his plays effectively produced, and I was almost totally ignorant of the conditions of the British Theatre. Some bits of half-knowledge I had no doubt gathered from books or journals, but they were a poor cure for my mortification. Once, during my college days at St. Xavier's, two of my classmates had played the Temptation Scene in *Othello* under the late Fr. Lebeau's expert direction. Presently, when I became a teacher of Mathematics in Ceylon, I was to attempt some hand-to-mouth direction on my own, and my students managed to present as a result a few scenes from *The Tempest*. Years later, after my return to India, I happened to preside over the Annual Day celebrations in a school at Dharwar, and I found that a performance of *Othello* was to crown the day's festivities. The boys did roaringly well, *Othello* was white-skinned, "white as leprosy", Iago was a delightful swaggerer, Roderigo whined exceedingly well, Desdemona died sweetly and uncomplainingly—and indeed this *Othello* was played much as Bottom and the other "rude mechanicals" lay then "tedious brief scene of Young Pyramus and his love Thisby", without question "very tragical mirth" in either case. There were, besides, the many screen versions—*Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *Hamlet*. These were interesting in their own way, but one invariably ended by doubting whether they were really Shakespeare. The stage, the stage was the place wherein alone Shakespeare came out fully alive and not to have seen any of his plays properly produced on the stage was just rotten luck. Cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras are visited occasionally by travelling troupes, but I had spent most of my life in out-of-the-way places and hence I had not seen any of their performances. So, then, here was

my opportunity at last. In the May 1951 issue of *Britain To-day*, Mr T C Worsley had written "The Theatre being the most anarchic and least planned of our national activities, there is no kind of overall Festival programme for the theatre this summer. Nevertheless, visitors to England this year will find nearly all our leading actors and actresses playing somewhere, and many of them staging some specially selected event." I calculated that, during the nine weeks of my stay in Britain, I ought to be able to see as many as nine plays at least on the stage, and that was how it actually turned out.

I reached London on the 16th September, and I was thus in time to catch the Festival of Britain—by the tail-end as it were!—and do the round of the more important Exhibitions. My hosts were the British Council,—such perfect hosts too, so unfailingly generous in their understanding. I was gratified to find included in my tour programme visits to the right theatres to see the right plays. Two of Shakespeare's plays in London, four more at Stratford-upon-Avon, a play of Moliere's at Bristol, a modern French comedy at Manchester, and Othello at Oxford, these were the nine plays I saw in England, and undoubtedly they opened new horizons to me. I shall here set down my reactions for what they are worth.

I began, appropriately enough, with *The Winter's Tale*. Nearly forty years earlier, in September 1912, the late Harley Granville-Barker had inaugurated the modern Shakespeare Revival with his classic production of *The Winter's Tale* at the Savoy Theatre, Leontes being played by Henry Ainley. It was infallibly sure instinct, then, which led Peter Brook and John Gielgud to the choice of *The Winter's Tale* as the central Festival event. Gielgud had already triumphed in many Shakespearean parts, Hamlet, Cassius, Benedick, Lear, Angelo. After Angelo, Leontes: why this particular sequence? Mr Gielgud himself supplies the explanation:

"Angelo and Leontes are not wholly realistic figures. One is a narrow, priggish hypocrite, the other a jealous tyrant. Both are presented in comparatively few scenes. . . The characters are stylized and symbolic, and tremendously concentrated. We are shown, almost without preparation, the hideous secret lust of Angelo, and the violent unreasoning hysteria of Leontes against his innocent Queen. But it is no use trying to act these parts if one imagines them to be melodramatic monsters without a shred of humanity. . . But if the actor believes in them sincerely as human beings, their behaviour may be made to seem dramatic and even logical within the framework of fantasy with which Shakespeare has surrounded them."

Peter Brook and Gielgud had phenomenally succeeded with *Measure for Measure* in 1950 at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford

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and this had emboldened them to tackle next the other seemingly intractable play, *The Winter's Tale*. They were lucky too in their choice of Flora Robson as Paulina and Diana Wynyard as Hermione. The latter had already played with distinction, at Stratford and elsewhere, star parts such as Desdemona, Helen, Beatrice, Lady Macbeth and Hermione. To play Hermione again in a new context was a fresh challenge, and she readily accepted it. The cast also included Sir Lewis Casson as Antigonus and George Rose as Autolycus.

The event had justified expectations, for *The Winter's Tale*, months after its first presentation, was still running in London, and there seemed to be little diminution in the public enthusiasm. On Thursday, the 20th September, I found myself at last in the Phoenix Theatre at 7-30: Mr John Hampden, Administrator of the Literature Group of the British Council, was by my side, the house was full, and the audience was expectant. The curtain went up slowly, the lights dimmed, and the austere stage came in view. A door at the centre, and two more, one to the left and the other to the right, all three mounted by balconies, and in effect looking like three tiny isolated cottages—such was the stage. As the first scene had been cut, the play began with Polixenes' speech:

*Nine charges of the wat'ry star hath been  
The shepherd's note since we have left our throne  
Without a burden*

Leontes answered from the opposite end, and Hermione watched the proceedings from the centre. The princely exchanges were quick and were clearly articulated. Leontes, aggressively importunate; Polixenes, affable but unyielding; Hermione, simply and beautifully arrayed, animated and almost radiant: it was only in mere seeming a "static" group, for one could somehow infer the sinister system of springs behind, ready at a second's notice—or without any notice whatsoever—to elude the grip and spread confusion around. Leontes' "Tongue-tied, our Queen? Speak you" was the preordained signal for the unloosening of the grip, and so the action gathered momentum all of a sudden.

There are no more than eighty lines between Leontes' "Tongue-tied, our Queen?" and his "Too hot, too hot!" As one reads these lines on the printed page, one is unable to account for this sudden surge of jealousy, for Leontes' violence seems to be in excess of the needs of the situation as it has unfolded so far. It is just here that the stage can come to our rescue and clothe the action with the air of plausibility. Hermione should be innocent, yet unwittingly give cause to her husband to suspect her. While Hermione advanced towards Polixenes, took his hands in hers, turned words into music and smiles into compulsive logic, there at the other end stood Leontes watching, thinking, waiting, and his face and his

hardly perceptible gestures and his entire aspect vividly enacted the birth of Jealousy. The play could convince only if it convinced us then—and here Leontes, hardly moving or speaking a word, scored magnificently. The rest followed as a matter of sheer logical necessity. Gielgud had indeed achieved identity with his part, and played to perfection the fearful phenomenon of the disintegrating mind of a jealous husband. Eyes, gestures, the timbre of the voice, the exotic costume, all helped to make credible what on the printed page is a mere puzzle. Was Leontes-Gielgud mad,—or was he only maddened by that show of more than cordiality which conveyed burning gleams into his very soul? So far as the first Act (the first 3 Acts in the printed texts) was concerned, Leontes-Gielgud was the play. Things moved swiftly, precipitately, as in *Oedipus Rex*, and the climax of the first Act, and indeed of the whole play, was Leontes' defiant and fatal words:

*There's no truth at all in the oracle*

*The sessions shall proceed thus is more falsehood*

Fatal man, albeit a King, had chosen to blaspheme against the gods. Almost immediately retribution followed. A servant brought news of the death of Mamillius, and Leontes' despairing and guilt-conscious—

*Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves*

*Do strike at my injustice—*

struck the keynote of his returning sanity. This surely was the "anagnorisis"—and the news of Hermione's death could only complete the circuit of his self-forged sorrows. The curtain fell, and hid from our view the spectacle of Leontes' tragic discomfiture.

Leontes was the play in the Sicilian drama that ended with Act III, Scene 2, of the printed texts. Hermione's speech in self-defence in the Trial Scene was keyed rightly, and was compounded of queenly dignity and persuasive logic. The lords strutted about trailing fatality and futurity behind. Antigonus achieved half-articulate opposition, and Paulina waxed as a benevolent fury in vain.

The second Act in the theatre covered the last scene of the third Act and the whole of the fourth Act of the play. There was an interval, and Mr Hampden and I compared notes, so to say; and I casually mentioned the similarities between *The Winter's Tale* and *Sakuntala*. The producers had done well to render *The Winter's Tale* as a trilogy, a Bohemian play wedged between two Sicilian plays. Yet the two later Acts lacked the fierce concentration and maddening precipitateness of the first Act closing on Leontes' belated recognition of his own tragic folly. But the later Acts brought other compensations. The symbolical presentation of the flow of Time was suggestive, and came as a relief after the scene of the pursuit of Antigonus by the bear. The rural scene where Perdita pre-



sided over the sheep-shearing feast was enjoyable in every way. Autolycus rattled and tantalized and amused by turns, the clown was foolish and likeable, and the peasant was a gentlemanly rustic who was alternately scared and thrilled. And so to Act III, where all converged on the Statue Scene, which was very movingly done. The Trial Scene, the Sheep-shearing Scene, the Statue Scene—round these three centres of dramatic concentration Shakespeare built his play. Everywhere Gielgud gave that touch of personal interpretation which went far to make the written word glow with satisfying significance. What was remarkable about the production was the discriminating approximation to Elizabethan conditions that was achieved, as if effortlessly, by Peter Brook and his team. The theatre itself rather looked like a modern version of the "Globe", and through artificial lighting the illusion was created that the sky was really open above and that fields stretched behind. The cuts and telescoping were few, the articulation was throughout ringing and clear, and there was never any attempt to tear passion to tatters. Gielgud spoke in a tragic haunting sing-song which suited the part absolutely. Hermione, both when she was happy and when misfortunes crashed upon her, was uniformly adorable. Paulina's, of course, was the triumph of getting into the spirit of that extraordinary part. Autolycus, delightful rascal, delighted everybody—on the stage and off—and the young lovers gave a new meaning and beauty to love. A most enjoyable and memorable evening, I told Mr. Hampden, as we left the theatre at 10-30.

Two days later, on Saturday the 22nd September, I went to see *Antony and Cleopatra* at St James's Theatre in the company of a young Oxford English graduate, Mr. Matthews. For months previously, Sir Laurence Olivier and his wife Vivien Leigh had been playing to packed houses Shakespeare's tragedy and Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* on alternate nights—an experiment unique of its kind. Theatre-goers were thus privileged to see "side by side one play from the highest reaches of romantic tragedy and one from the highest reaches of anti-romantic comedy." I unfortunately missed the Shavian comedy and it was only at the eleventh hour that tickets had been secured for what proved to be the final performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

It could never have been an easy play to produce. Mr Michael MacLiammoir, writing in the first volume of *Shakespeare Survey*, remarks that "the problem posed by Shakespeare of a story that moves rapidly from Egypt to Rome, to Sicily, and to a series of battlefields in varying places, is, architecturally alone, once one has abandoned the Elizabethan system of allowing the script to perform the function of the scenic artist as well as that of the actor, impossibly difficult." The architectural difficulty was largely solved by the revolving stage in St James's Theatre,

which with easy manipulations served as need arose the purpose of palace, ship's deck, or battle-field, and also suggested movement or repose as the occasion demanded. How about the cast? Sir Laurence could have been expected any day to play a convincing Antony—a decaying, yet not quite decayed, Antony, an Antony who in spite of his weaknesses remained an impressive and even heroic figure. On the other hand, any Antony would need strong support from his Cleopatra and his Enobarbus. If we couldn't see Antony through Enobarbus' eyes, if we couldn't ourselves be bewitched by Cleopatra, the reality of Antony's greatness in the face of his veering moods and violent gestures must remain problematic. The witchery of Cleopatra should have an overwhelming effect, and likewise the integrity of Enobarbus should convince at once. It cannot be said that Vivien Leigh and Norman Wooland quite rose to the required heights. Might it be that Sir Laurence, wishing to redress the balance, overacted his own part? In some quarters a very different opinion was also expressed: that Sir Laurence deliberately played in a lower key with a view to throwing into bold relief his wife's part. Be that as it might, I had a feeling of insufficiency in the production taken as a whole. *The Winter's Tale* at the Phoenix had produced the impression that it was something more even than Shakespeare's play. Here, at St James's, the feeling was not to be escaped that somehow the theatre had caught but a fraction of the play. But, after all, Cleopatra, like Hamlet, is a creature of infinity; and even to have seized a portion of infinity was ample justification for praise. "Cleopatra", wrote Mr Hampden in a letter to me a few days hence "above all other women in the plays, seems to me to ask more than one woman can provide". All this does not mean that I did not enjoy *Antony and Cleopatra*. Sir Laurence's was unquestionably a brilliant performance, and Wooland and Vivien Leigh played their respective parts with competence; Robert Helpmann as Octavius did very well, and so did Maxine Audley as Charmian and Jill Bennett as Iras, and Richard Goolden as Lepidus was irresistible. At the end of the performance, Sir Laurence made a brief humorous speech thanking people all round, and promising to play *Antony and Cleopatra* even when he and Vivien Leigh should be ninety!

*To be continued*

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# MOST ANCIENT INDIA

Sisir Kumar Mitra

The starting-point of India's history has yet to be traced out. Where the story of India should begin is still an open question. Newer approaches to this problem suggest themselves as newer facts about the origin of the earliest cultures and races of the country emerge into view. It is not possible with the present range of our knowledge to be in any way dogmatic, far less, definitive about the beginnings of man and his culture in India, and without this no story of the country can be considered complete. The point where the prehistoric stage ends and history begins cannot be fixed, it has many a time proved illusory and has sharply receded as fresh archaeological finds have added centuries to the age of the culture concerned. Yet a reference to the first glimmerings of the dawn of man's life and culture in the country need not be ruled out as a thing apart.

## Early Man in India

It is now generally believed that early man existed in the Himalayan regions. Some large flakes from the Siwalik foothills are said to be among the oldest specimens of his handiwork. Geologists are inclined to the view that Himalaya has much to do with the emergence of the early man whose origin in south India is held by some anthropologists to be quite a possibility. In the South, however, no human remains of the early paleolithic period have so far been found, whereas the Siwalik regions have yielded fossils of anthropoids which show perceptible evolutionary tendencies towards man. Some of these are regarded as more in the human than in the prehuman stage of evolution, which fact points to something definitive of man having started there his growth towards his modern form. Joseph Borell suggests that Man and Himalaya arose simultaneously over a million years ago. More remarkable, however, are the human remains recently discovered in Baroda by Dr. H.D. Sankalia. These remains, particularly those of the skulls, compare well with the modern Europoid. They belong to a dolichocephalic race and are said to be of the 'Microlithic Man.'

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The shrinking of the forests caused by geological upheavals was among the reasons why man's arboreal ancestors had to face living on the ground, and out of sheer necessity, develop those parts of his body which now distinguish him from his apelike ancestors. His creative ability was called into play for the first time when possibly for hunting purposes he began to flake stone into a shape which improved in quality and variety as his needs increased and his brain developed.

The earliest tools of the Old Stone Age in India are dated, with some probability, somewhere around four hundred thousand years ago when India had already attained most of her important physical features. On a conservative estimate based on geochronology—a surer method than that of archaeology—Prof. F. E. Zeuner holds that man has been in India for 250,000 years and that even at the beginning of this period he had already attained technical perfection in the manufacture of stoneaxe etc. Throughout this period and for many hundred thousand years afterwards man was dependent for his precarious existence mostly on hunting and food-gathering. It may be he was then just forming into tiny groups of families or small tribes, following the kind of animals he killed for food over great tracts of the country, his other occupation being to chip off flakes from blocks of stone and work them into tools, such as, hand-axes, cores or cleavers. Relics of these made of quartzite have been found in the Rawalpindi region, in central India and in the Upper Narmada Valley. In valleys of the Soan and Sindhu evidences have been unearthed of this industry of the early man. This flake-culture had more or less a parallel evolution in South Africa, Palestine and Western Europe.

When a tool is made into a convenient size by chipping away from a block of stone, it is called core-culture by archaeologists. Regions in south and central India have yielded abundant remains of tools evolved by this culture. Some of them show an improvement and look like the hand-axe, a number of which have been found in the Kurnool area of Madras. The possibility of constant interaction between the Madras and the Soan industries has been suggested by Stuart Piggott. In the Billa Surgam caves in Kurnool have been discovered implements like bone-tools along with bones of a variety of animals, which are held to indicate a period just before that when man made some beginnings in the domestication of animals. Though very few stone tools have been found here, yet the use of a stone flake is traced in a number of bones. The absence of even a single skull in these finds is accounted for by the possible practice of some religious or magical rite by the men dwelling in those caves.

Man's first resort to caves as his dwelling is believed to have been occasioned by the onset of the cold Glacial period. But we know next to nothing about this phase of his living. More cave-dwellings of the early

man of the type of Altamira or Tuc d'audoulet must be discovered so that an idea may be formed of his cave-life in India. Even the evidences of the Old Stone Age, mentioned above, are not enough, neither are they clearly defined, to indicate the life and the kind of people who are the makers of the palaeolithic tools and implements that are seen today. The absence of human remains, due probably to the destructibility of the soil, is an even greater hindrance to any speculation about it. It is likely that most of the early men were nomad hunters whose articles of daily use were perhaps made of impermanent substances. Nothing of a definite nature is yet known as to what final form the products of the early Stone Age industries took in later times. Some finds from Kurnool, the Dekhan and Bombay showing a new type of tool with a slender blade, along with some of the finds of the Sindhu valley, such as pebble tools and scrapers, are ascribed to this period.

When and how the Old Stone Age gave place to the New is beyond the present range of our knowledge of the early man in India; but relics of the period of transition from the former to the latter have been found in various parts of the country in almost all the districts of south India as well as in regions in Gujarat, the Punjab and the Vindhya hills. Because of their smallness these tools are called microliths which consist of blades, scrapers, points and scores with some improvement on the palaeolithic flakes and cores. The mesolithic man was still in the hunting stage.

The neolithic man distinguishes himself by his decidedly polished tools and by his use of not only quartzite but fine-grained trap and a number of other varieties of stones. Relics of the Neolithic Age have been found in various parts of the south, central and western India. Funerary monuments are among the most important finds of this age. While palaeolithic men left their dead in forests, the neolithians buried them and erected tombs. In the Kolar district of South India alone there have been excavated as many as fifty-four such tombs together with piles of tools and pottery. Some of these tools found in the graves along with iron things are taken to imply that the Neolithic period continued to the Iron Age and early historic periods, as palaeolithic industry in some parts had continued to later ages. Earthen mounds carrying terra-cotta coffins found near Madras city are assigned to this period.

Mention may be made here of the neolithic celts and other cutting instruments of various kinds and sizes, which are pointed, rounded and polished, and which show a distinct improvement in craftsmanship. While like the palaeolithians the neolithians used natural rock shelters, they also constructed for themselves dwellings, perhaps huts 'of wattle and thatches, daubed with clay.' They knew how to make a fire, and the art of cooking. Besides fishing and hunting, they tended flocks of domesticated ani-

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mals & also began the cultivation of land. They are presumed to have been worshippers of spirits of nature as embodied in trees and stones. They covered their body with leaves, barks of trees, and skins. They developed the art of pottery and invented the wheel. For their stone weapons they chose the tough trap, but they used other materials of various colours for things of domestic use. Traces of the artistic efforts of the neolithians such as 'cup-marks' and 'riddle-drawings' have been found in the caves of the Vindhya and Kaimur hills and in the Hosangabad district, which resemble the Spanish drawings of the same period. A recent opinion holds that these drawings are of a much later time.

We have yet to know when first the neolithic man learnt to use metals. There is a view that gold was the earliest metal to be discovered by him, but rarely did he use it. Copper, however, was the metal he easily found in various parts of North India, from Rajaputana to Bengal where hoards of axes, swords, daggers, harpoons and rings have been found, belonging to the early age of metals in India. In south India stone was directly superseded by iron. But in the North the age of Copper was followed by an age of Bronze.

### Early Settled Life

The excavations started in the twenties by Sir Aurel Stein in south Baluchistan brought to light the fact that in the Bronze Age Makran and certain adjacent tracts were inhabited by settled peasant communities. These explorations were followed soon after by the epoch-making discoveries in Sindhu and the Panjab. A number of dams and terraces built in stone for purposes of irrigation, and a huge barrage to serve as a reservoir of water have been discovered in Baluchistan. Surface finds from sites about the Bolan Pass include fragments of painted alabaster cups. Evidences have been brought to light of the existence in this area of a group of villages with houses made of mud or mud-bricks. Similar settlements have been traced in Rakshan and at Nundara where mud-brick walls and dwelling structures have been found. The white plaster on the stone and brick walls at Nundara and its red-painted bowls and other vessels of domestic pottery deserve mention.

At Amri in Sindh and in Nal Valley in south Baluchistan are noticed works of painted pottery and a number of other burial articles. A Nal cemetery has yielded two hoards of copper implements—an instance of the continuity of the Copper Age. Distinct contact with the Sindhu Valley culture has been traced in the pottery of the above-named regions.

Stone vessels and their pottery imitations from Kulli in Baluchistan show some development in craftsmanship. But more striking are baked-clay-figures of women and of cattle. The clay-figures are supposed to be

household deities which resemble Hindu clay-figure deities popular even today in the rural areas of India. The faces of other female figurines do not seem to have received much attention but their hair-dressing—the same as that of a bronze dancing girl of the Sindhu Valley art—and the ornaments show how much care the artist bestowed on them. The bangles on the wrists and arms remind one that these have always been a favourite with Indian girls. Some kind of garment—maybe *sari*—is also indicated. Fragments of clay carts of the Sindhu Valley type have also been found in Kulli and other neighbouring areas, in one of which a group of vessels carved out of soft stone shows some connection with the Sindhu Valley culture. From the same area have been excavated a large number of bronze and copper objects as also a bronze mirror with a human figure of the type of the above-mentioned clay figurine. Similar mirrors have also been found at Mohenjo-daro. These connections and resemblances are attributed to the trade that the Sindhu Valley had with those regions. There is some similarity between the Kulli finds and those of Elam and Mesopotamia.

In the valley of the Zhob river in north Baluchistan have been found remains of a number of rural settlements along with works of superbly painted pottery and stylized figures of animals and clay figurines of women which are regarded as a 'grim embodiment of the mother-goddess who is also the guardian of the dead.' Evidences of contact of this valley with the Sindhu culture have been traced in many of its relics.

Most of these sites in Baluchistan are a hundred and twenty miles or so from Mohenjo-daro. They belong to a stage more or less analogous to the Sindhu Valley culture. Their evolution may roughly be assigned to the fifth millennium B C.

### That Long Travail

We would make a digression here to consider the immense gulf of time that separates the dim beginnings of that early culture from the crude work of the primitive savage whose sole pre-occupation was the satisfaction of animal needs. We know nothing of him except that he took hundreds and thousands of years to accomplish the flaking of stone into shapes and to learn how to polish them, and then another long period of thousands of years to fashion those tools into artifacts of convenient size. Why should man take such an unconscionable length of time in order to develop such meagre capacities?

To begin with, the early man had to pass through a very long period in which each part of his body developed in accordance with the pressure of the environment. And along with his limbs his brain also expanded, enabling him to fight all adverse circumstances. He could stand cold, face

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climatic severities, fight ferocious animals, all because he had and because Nature provided him with a body strong enough for these purposes. But as this body became more human in form and function, and as his brain grew to its present size and structure he lost that natural strength and protective instinct and also much of his capacity for endurance. But he had his brain to make up for his bodily shortcomings. It took him a long time, millenniums on millenniums on end, to reach his present stage of mechanical and industrial civilisation. a development from the flint handaxe to the atom bomb, from the early village and city republics to the mammoth empires and unions of today, through the various phases of his mental growth.

Recent advances in biology raise the question whether the brain moved into larger and larger action and thereby quickened in man his creative power or its slow movement compelled Nature to take a *saltus* by swiftly evolving a new type out of the already physically developed man through the alteration of the 'chromosome number' and therefore of the constituent 'gene' elements which are believed to be specific and new character-bearers. This newly emerged being is the mental man who created cultures, built civilisations, made history. There is therefore the view that the 'modern' man has in this way emerged from the type whose fossils have been discovered in the Siwalik foothills of Himalaya.

There are also thinkers who hold that the way in which man's past—his primitive past, in particular,—is appraised and dated does not seem to be the right one and that the evolution of the Old Stone Age savagedom towards civilisation may not be a continuous process of growth and expansion of man's brain and other faculties into what they are today. It is quite possible, and there are ancient traditions which support the view, that it took man different periods to rise to peaks of culture but, maybe, owing to some aberrations or the onset of glaciation, he fell from those peaks only to be the aboriginals as they are found in various regions of the earth even today. The high standard of morality that some of these tribes still possess may be the remnant of their past achievements, a testimony to which is suggested by the anthropologist that primitive societies passed through a stage when man was simple and truthful and lived a corporate life of mutuality and co-operation the like of which he has not had since then. The bowels of the earth or perhaps the beds of the seas may contain relics of these unknown stages in the cycle of civilisation represented, for instance, by the Satya Yuga of ancient Indian tradition and by Lemuria and Atlantis.

Mention may be made here of the primitive races—maybe, evolved out of the tribal communities—which are said to have developed non-rational capacities such as instinctive insight, occult knowledge and



## MOTHER INDIA

immediate perception of the forces of physical Nature. These races might be the precursors of the Age of the Mysteries when out of their intuitive powers grew the esoteric cults at those well-known centres where the oldest and greatest civilisations of the world evolved and in this evolution those cults played no inconsiderable part. Taoism in China goes back to a time of which no visible record is available. So also do the beginnings of the Vedic mysticism in India, of the mystic doctrines in early Egypt and Chaldaea. The origin of the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries of ancient Greece also belongs to such a dim past. It seems this Age dawned simultaneously or near about the same period at every such centre, since all those culture, except the Greek, were almost contemporaneous. In these facts may lie some explanation of the long travail of man towards civilised existence. He did expand in his powers, though they were inner and not so much mental, and by these powers, laid the foundations of a higher life, which with the growth of mind, took the form of a larger culture and of those later developments that are now history.

The civilisation of today is what man has attained to after millenniums of hard striving; but it also shows signs of how man after having gone very far indeed in developing his mind and intellect is now showing himself in his collective life to be little more than the savage, whose sole object of existence is to aggrandise his collective-ego and produce more and more deadly weapons for the service of that ego. And when once the conflict breaks out, he knows no law but the law of the jungle, no fine sentiment but the urge of his brute instincts. This is not to say that modern civilisation has nothing in it of real value to man. It does posit many things that indicate man's progress and the most important of it is that he has, through it, arrived at a stage in his evolution which is to prepare him for the next higher one.

Eminent Indian scholars give much historical importance to what the Puranas say about the royal dynasties that ruled in India millenniums before Christ: some of these are held to be even pre-Vedic. But very little is known of their reigns, their exact dates and their actual achievements. Researches are being carried on to discover these details as well as their connection with historical events and periods. But dates of ancient Indian history can never be permanently fixed and hitherto accepted dates of these periods and events may have to be revised in the light of some startling finds which, in spite of the destructibility of Indian soil, are waiting in various parts of the country only to be laid bare by the archaeologist

*To be continued*

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