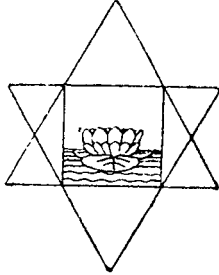


MOTHER INDIA

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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"

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AT THE SAMADHI OF SRI AUROBINDO

K. D. Sethna

1

Majestic Master of the immutable Light,
Calm traveller of the tortured paths of clay,
Love like a universe thronged within your heart!
All pain, all passion by the centuries piled
You took to your bosom like a cherished child
And bore dumb earth to the laughing gates of God.
Brooding in silence across lonely years
On secret heavens a-dream in infinite hells,
You found the hammer to break the Dragon's Sleep
And free from the burying black the fallen stars.
But for each throb of God kindled in earth
You flung a human heart-beat out of Time
You shortened your sovereign life to greaten the dust
Your body, dropped from your spirit's hold on high.
Lays the foundation of a clay-built sky!

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2

Always the Light came down from the limitless blue,
Gold gushing through the head to a heart God-drunk.
But now from the soil's sleep rose one dazzling wave,
Uttering a secret of eternity locked
In caves dumbfounded with a vast black bliss.
It sang how sheer divinity grew dust,
The miracled Love which left the heart of the sun
And crouched with folded fires below Time's feet
To give huge wings to the atom's tiny dream.
The surge of light lifted our bodies up
As though, in laughing answer to heaven's leap down
Into the prisoning space of bone and flesh,
Earth now was ready to enter infinitude.
A blind snake that had swallowed all the stars
Uncoiled a boundless mystery flecked with flame
And undulated shining centuries.
But none riding the rapture and the glow
Saw the still King of the new life's luminous realm,
Tamer and charmer of mortality's night—
One Heart whose deep on gold-dense deep of love
Measured the abyss whose cry is the whole world's death!

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Nirodbaran

3

As usual, all of us gathered round Sri Aurobindo in the hope of hearing something from him. It was evening, the usual time for our talks; so everyone made it a point to be punctual in order not to miss anything. But today Sri Aurobindo did not seem to be in a communicative mood. We were therefore forced to keep silent, thinking how to draw him out, how to break the ice. The silence weighed heavy on us and Sri Aurobindo unlike his customary self did not take any notice of it. As we looked from one face to another, hoping that some one would lift this obstructive veil of silence, we found Dr. B beaming with a smile and making as it were some effort to speak. As he had been rather a silent listener to the talks and was by nature of a quiet temperament, this strange behaviour on his part made us all agog with curiosity. He moved nearer to Sri Aurobindo; we made room for him and waited eagerly for his next move. He came still nearer and then broke out with the question:

“What should be our right attitude in our dealings with others? What principles should we follow?”

As the question was not in a loud enough tone, Sri Aurobindo could not quite catch it; so it was repeated. Then he replied, “It seems to me to be the other way about. If we have the right attitude, proper dealings and other things follow by themselves. Even right attitude is secondary; what is more important is the inner attitude. Spiritual and ethical principles are not at all the same, for everything depends on whether what is done is for the sake of the Spirit or for ethical reasons. One may observe a mental control in one’s dealings with others while the inner state may be quite different: one may not, for instance, show anger, may be outwardly even quite humble, but inwardly one may be full of pride, as in the case of X. When he first came here he was an example of humility outside. To whomsoever he met he used to do namaskar.”

“Even now nobody can reproach him for lack of humility!”

“It is the psychic control that is required”, went on Sri Aurobindo, “and when that is there, the right attitude follows automatically in one’s

outer behaviour. Things must flow from within outwards and the more one opens to the psychic influence, the more it gains over the outer nature. Mental control, on the other hand, may or may not lead to the spiritual. In people of the sattwic type it may be the first step towards a psychic control."

"How are we to get this psychic control?"

"By constant remembrance, consecration of oneself to the Divine, rejection of all that stands in the way of the psychic influence—generally it is the vital that puts an obstacle with its demands and desires. But once the psychic opens, it shows at every step what is to be done."

At this stage the Mother came in; it was time for her to go down to the Meditation. She sat for a while and we all meditated with her. After her departure, Sri Aurobindo asked Dr. B, "What is the idea behind your question? Something personal or just a general problem?"

Dr B was a bit non-plussed; then he replied with a slight hesitation, "I meant, for instance, how to see God in everybody, how to love all and have a good-will for all.

"Well, one has to start with the idea first; to consecrate oneself more and more to the Divine, to try to see God in others, have a psychic good-will for all and reject in oneself all vital and mental impulses and on that basis proceed towards the realisation. The idea must pass into experience. Once the realisation is there, it becomes easy. Even then it is easy only in a static aspect; to put it into a dynamic expression is much more difficult. When one finds a man behaving like a brute, it is difficult indeed to see God in him unless one is able to separate the man from his outer nature and see the Divine behind. One can also repeat the name of the Divine and arrive at the divine consciousness."

"How does the name help one?"

"The name is a power like the mantra: everything in this world is power. There are some who practise pranayam along with the name. After a time the repetition becomes automatic and one begins to feel the divine Presence. There is no limit to the ways of God. Here, people once began to feel a tremendous force in their work, they could work for hours and hours without any fatigue. But they began to overdo it. One has to be reasonable even in spirituality. That was the time when the sadhana was in the vital; but when it descended into the physical, things changed. The physical is inert like stone, full of *aprakash* and *appravritti*."

"Sometimes one feels for no apparent reason a sort of love for everybody. Though the feeling lasts only for a few moments, it gives a thrill of joy"

"That is a wave from the psychic," commented Sri Aurobindo. "But what is your attitude towards it? Do you take it as a passing mood or

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

does it stimulate you to a further experience of that sort?"

"It stimulates, but sometimes the vital mixture tries to creep in. Fortunately I can drive it out."

"Yes, that is the risk. The fact that the mixture tries to come in means that the wave comes through the inner vital and thus takes some colour from the vital. One has to be careful to avoid these sex-impurities. Poor N. who was otherwise a nice fellow—in spite of his occasional outbursts of violence—used to mix up these elements with his experience; as a result, the experiences were spoiled. This happens because sometimes one gives a semi-justification to the sex-impulse, saying that after all it does not matter very much. But it matters very much, sex is absolutely out of place in Yoga. In ordinary life it has a certain function for a certain purpose. Of course if you adopt the *sahaja marga*, you can do it", he added with a smile.

"While in jail," he continued, "I knew of a man who had a power of concentration and used it in order to make everybody love him. he succeeded. All people around him, even the warders, were drawn towards him. Of course one must know the process."

"And that is what we don't know," blurted out somebody, causing a roar of laughter.

"What is the process, sir?"

"Well, the mind must be made quiet and the concentration turned in a more than mental way towards the aim. No doubt it takes time, but that is the process. There are no devices for these things," he added looking at the person who had put the question.

There was a lull after this. Who would take up the thread or pursue a new line? Someone came to the rescue, one who had been hitherto a silent witness. "What difference is there between modification of nature and transformation of nature?" he asked.

"Transformation is the casting of the whole nature in the mould of your realisation. What you realise, you project into your nature. I speak of three transformations: psychic, spiritual and supramental. The psychic many people had; for instance, the Christian saints who speak of the Presence in the heart, especially St. Augustine. They feel the Presence there and bear a universal love and good-will for all. The spiritual transformation begins by the realisation of the Self, the Infinite above with its dynamic side of peace, knowledge, ananda etc. That transformation is more difficult. Lastly, above that, is the supramental transformation, the Truth-consciousness working for the divine aim and purpose."

"If one has the inner realisation, transformation follows in the light of that realisation, doesn't it?"

"Not necessarily; there may be some modification in the nature-part,

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but an entire transformation is not possible; it is not automatic and not so easy as all that. My experience of peace and calm in my first contact with Lele never left me, but in my outer nature there were many agitations and every time I had to make an effort to establish peace there. From that time onwards the whole object of my yoga was to change the nature into the mould of my realisations."

A lull ensued again. Then Sri Aurobindo himself asked, "Do you know anything about Z", meaning a particular spiritual figure.

All of us had heard a lot about him, he had been very much in the papers and had kicked up a big row; he was making all sorts of prophecies, contradictory statements etc., etc. Our impression was not very favourable. Someone said that he was not very much attracted by him in spite of his big claims.

"When I saw his photo," Sri Aurobindo resumed, "I had an impression that he was a man with a strong vital power; when he started to advertise himself as the Messiah, I began to doubt his genuineness. The vital seems to be the field of his sadhana; it is in such cases that power descends more easily and people, unfortunately, are very much attracted by such powers."

"Power does not come in other sadhanas?"

"It does, in the spiritual, psychic, even in the mental type of sadhana. But here it comes automatically in the course of sadhana without one's asking for it. That is the danger of sadhana in the vital. Bejoy was another of this type with a powerful vital. At one time I had great hopes about him. But people whose sadhana is on a vital basis pass into what I have called the intermediate zone and remain there, they don't want to go beyond. The vital is like a jungle; it is extremely difficult to rescue one with such a vital power. Much more easy to save those who are weak. He used to think that he had put himself in the Divine's hand, that he was in the Divine and the Divine was in him. We had to be severe with him in order to disabuse him of this illusion. That is why he could not remain here. He went away and became a guru with thirty or forty disciples around him. *Gurugiri* comes easily to these people. But what I heartily dislike is that he did all that in my name. Unfortunately his mind was not as powerfully developed as his vital; he had the fighter's mind, not the thinker's. We often put a strong force on his mind and it became lucid for a time; he could then see his wrong turns but soon his vital would rush back, take control of the mind and wipe off the lucidity. If his mind had been as developed, he could have perhaps retained the clarity. The intellect helps one to separate oneself from the vital and look at its movements dispassionately."

"The mind can't deceive?"

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

"It can, but not so much. Motilal is another of this vital type," Sri Aurobindo added after a pause.

"We used to hear so much about him and his *sangha*. He himself writes how much you used to love him and how he loved you! Why then did he leave you?"

"He went away because he wanted to be an—or rather the—avatar and because he could not get rid of his attachment to his work. He is very unscrupulous."

"How has he made such a big name in Bengal? He must have some power?"

"Yes, but not an occult power like the others. Before I met him he was an ordinary man with some possibilities. When I had come out of jail, I had been full of a certain force. He got a share of it."

"How?"

"He was doing some kind of yoga. I gave him some instructions and helped him. Of course I did it in return for what he did for me. You know I was staying at his house, when I left Calcutta."

"Was he working on your idea?"

"Well, when I was leaving Bengal, I thought that it might be possible to work through him on condition that he remained faithful to me. That he could never do: his own 'self' came to the front and spoiled everything."

"But he has developed a big organisation. Is it not part of your work and is he not backed by your force?"

"No!" came the clear-cut answer. "It is no longer my force that is working there though the original push came from me. It became totally unspiritualised."

"We used to hear everywhere the name of Motilal, Motibabu etc. and very little mention of Sri Aurobindo in connection with his organisation as if the whole thing had grown up, developed and spread by his and his force alone. Now we understand all about him; but what is all this fuss he is making about his wife, his life-companion, as he calls her? Raising her up to heaven and trying to establish her as the *Sanghamata*? Is she so remarkable as all that?"

"She struck me as a commonplace woman though a good woman. She was a better woman than he a man," added Sri Aurobindo with a smile. "I saw her only once as she was not used to coming out before others."

"He seems to have developed a powerful Bengali style?"

"Is that so?" asked Sri Aurobindo with some surprise. "I remember he was once translating the Vedas into Bengali and his style was like the Christian Missionary type of Bengali. You know that style, don't you?" he asked looking at the questioner. "It comes out with expressions like

Matthew-*likhito susamachara* (Matthew-written good news); *prabhur priya Meshashavak* (dear lamb of the Lord).” All of us burst out laughing; as the laughter subsided Sri Aurobindo added, “Moni used to taunt him, saying, “M-*likhito susamachara*; (Motilal-written good news)—Motilal used to get wild, but could not show his anger because of my presence.”

* * *

I had not at all decided to bring to light this too personal subject, especially when the persons concerned were still living. But we find that Motilal Roy as the apostle of India’s eternal culture and tradition has been pretending to write a series of articles on Sri Aurobindo in which he has been in fact justifying his own position *vis-à-vis* Sri Aurobindo and using the Mother and Sri Aurobindo as pretexts for public declamation. So I thought there was no reason why I should keep silent. The intelligent public will not be hoodwinked by any amount of his white-washing of himself: the cracks and fissures will stand out. What, however, passes my understanding is that out of the few of Sri Aurobindo’s former “closest” associates, of whom Motilal claimed to be one, he who by his own acknowledgement has received so much from Sri Aurobindo comes forward, together with another as close or probably more, to throw mud at his benefactor and his Guru, criticise him, his wisdom, his work no later than only a year after his passing! Neither is it a simple criticism; it contains a prophecy that Sri Aurobindo’s mission will fail, “will be swept away by the current of Time”! Why? Because “what is being attempted here by the Mother is against India’s eternal culture and tradition; it will fail, no matter if behind it is the support and sanction of however mighty a person.” And that mighty person is no other than Sri Aurobindo! But may we ask when he got this seer-vision? After Sri Aurobindo’s passing or even before? If the latter, what kept him from giving his prophetic vision a noble utterance and thus giving a warning to Sri Aurobindo? Or does the fact of Sri Aurobindo’s passing nullify all he has said about the Mother throughout his whole Yogic endeavour and attainment? It may be so in Motilal’s eyes, but we the disciples of Mother and Sri Aurobindo stand by every word the Master has said, the Master who, Motilal admits, is the Rishi of nationalism, the incarnate Word of India’s genius; he admits too Sri Aurobindo’s god-hood (*iswaratva, niran-jantwa*), his supramental status!

Is it all mere rhetoric or the venom of a frustrated “avatar”? I need not answer or shall it be my business to defend my Gurus against these ignominious attacks and pseudo-prophecies? For, we see that what Sri Aurobindo said in 1939 in his conversation amply demonstrates that he was at every step right in his appraisal of the man and every word of it is borne out by the letters Sri Aurobindo wrote to Motilal in 1928,

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now published by him in his articles. People will see how in every letter Sri Aurobindo warned him about the danger that might befall him, his rajasic ego that might swallow him and that he and others of his camp might fall away from Sri Aurobindo by *ahankara*. Could there be a broader hint, a timelier and clearer warning to remain faithful? That was Sri Aurobindo's last admonition when Motilal turned away from him in spite of repeated appeals! The admonition was: "Be single-minded!"

In spite of all these prophetic admonitions, the inevitable has happened; Motilal has become in his own eyes bigger than the Guru, his work more important though that work grew up "with Sri Aurobindo's power behind"; and now to fulfil as it were the last written prophecy of the Kala-Purusha on his ill-fated brow he is proving his complete unfaithfulness—an unfaithfulness parading in the garb of shallow pedantry and misusing the name of India's hoary and sacred lore, as if he or any one else lived and assimilated India's culture more than Sri Aurobindo himself! Is it also India's tradition to criticise one's Guru?

Lastly, what is all this hollow pother and flashy nonsensical objection about burying Sri Aurobindo's body in a coffin? Does he not know that in doing so, the Mother had the full sanction of Sri Aurobindo? Does he not know that the Mother fulfilled the deep wishes of her disciples all over the world? If Motilal, who parted from Sri Aurobindo, and if others of his make feel differently about it, may we ask whose feelings should be counted first—that of the disciples or of those whose cause he is pleading by a shallow advocacy? May we also ask how much recognition Motilal's India gave to Sri Aurobindo during his physical existence or after? . One in whose last days, even, the thought of India's welfare was uppermost and whose last earthly dream realised was India's independence was worthy of a better treatment and his life's mission, the Ashram, deserving of nobler consideration? No, we the disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother emphatically deny that anybody or any country with whatever lofty tradition has any superior claim to ours, and in doing what the Mother has done she has only expressed our profoundest and inmost will and fulfilled our ardent prayer and we are ever grateful to her for this far-seeing act of her supreme wisdom. For, to us Sri Aurobindo is not dead, his body "lying in state" in the samadhi thrills us with his presence, his peace and power, his love and compassion. Every day we worship him with our heart's precious tears, our soul's deep ecstasy and our body's pure surrender. Every day hundreds of people are pouring in to have the darshan of his samadhi. What does it matter if Motilal's India does not accept, does not feel? The true India feels; for Pondicherry is true India and the Mother is the soul of that India.

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 (III)

In the last two issues, Sri Aurobindo's comments on questions pertaining to the descent of the Supermind and its action on the earth and men were given. Here some more questions and answers on the same subject, but in a different context, are presented. The reader will find the comments on the Supermind's descent and the abolition of the ego, and the transformation of Prakriti and Gunas, very instructive.

Sadhak: "It is true that there is a latent possibility of Yoga in every human being. But are You sure that all of us here (in the Ashram) are sufficiently evolved for a Yogic life—especially for this, Your Supramental Yoga?"

Sri Aurobindo: "They need not try for the Supramental. If they can give themselves and attain to the psychic and spiritual, that is sufficient for the present." (17-3-36)

Sadhak: "You wrote to me the other day: 'The descent into the subconscious was a necessity of the general sadhana, i.e. of the Divine Work.' Will You kindly explain what work of the Divine is meant here? Is there any reference to the Supermind?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The work of the yoga which includes the preparation for the Supermind. There is no other divine Work being done here, so the question as to what work has no meaning." (8-3-36)

Sadhak: "Though we are helped here by the supramental planes—sometimes even by their direct action—we find it too difficult to detach ourselves totally from the mind, life and body."

Sri Aurobindo: "Who here has a direct action from the Supermind? It is the first news I have of it. Even indirect from the supramental is rare. Whatever comes to most comes from the intermediate planes."

(16-4-36)

Sadhak: "About the transformation of the Subconscious what I meant to ask You was this: is it necessary for it to send up thought after thought from its chaotic stuff stored since ages or can a flash of the Divine Light burn these up and then fill the Subconscious with the things Divine?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The Yoga cannot be done in a minute. Some essential changes are made rapidly, but even these have to be worked out and confirmed in the detail of action. What you speak of only the Supramental could do if it acted directly or some force fully supported by the Supramental, but that occurs rarely."

Sadhak: "I would like to ask a question about the gunas. In the process of transformation, are the gunas transformed first or the Prakriti?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The Prakriti can be psychised and spiritualised and the gunas yet remain but with the psychic dominant and the rajas and

tamas enlightened by the sattwic. As the transformation increases the gunas change more and more towards their divine equivalents, but it is only when the supramental comes that there is the full change." (19-1-36)

"The transformation of the gunas is necessary for the perfection of the nature, not for liberation. Liberation comes by loss of ego and desire."

Sadhak: "HR often wrote in his poems his experiences of the Supermind already coming down. He said that he smelt its descent! He even realised that he was among the first batch of Mother's Supermen!"

Sri Aurobindo: "Others besides HR have assumed that they had the Supermind because something opened in them which was 'super' to the ordinary human mind. It is a common mistake. Even the word Supermind (which I invented) has been taken up by several people (writers in the P.B. and elsewhere) and applied generally to the spiritual consciousness. I see no reason to doubt that HR saw things in vision (hundreds of people do) or had experiences." (7-7-36)

Sadhak: "Some people seem to be quite misled in the matter of the higher planes. When they are in these planes or receive something from them, they begin to think that they have reached a great height, and that the higher planes have nothing to do with the Mother. Especially about the Supermind they have such queer notions—that it is something greater than the Mother."

Sri Aurobindo: "If they have a greater experience or consciousness than the Mother, they should not stay here but go and save the world with it."

Sadhak. "If the Supermind has not been established in Mother's body-consciousness, it is not because She is not ready for it like us, but because in order to establish it She has to prepare first the physical of the Ashram people, and of the earth, to a certain extent.

"But some people here take it in the wrong way. They are under the misapprehension that the Supermind has not been established in Her body because She has not yet reached Perfection. Am I not right?"

Sri Aurobindo "Certainly. If we had lived physically in the Supermind from the beginning nobody could have been able to approach us nor could any sadhana have been done. There could have been no hope of contact between ourselves and the earth and men. Even as it is, Mother has to come down towards the lower consciousness of the sadhaks instead of keeping always in Her own, otherwise they begin to say 'How far away, how severe you were; you do not love me, I get no help from you, etc, etc.' The Divine has to veil himself in order to meet the human."

Sadhak: "The Mother does not work on the sadhak directly from Her own plane above, though She can do so if She wants to—She can even Supramentalise the world in a day: but in that case the Supramental

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Nature created here would be the same as it is Above, and not the earth in Ignorance evolving into the Supramental Earth, a manifestation which will not be in appearance quite the same as what the Supermind is."

Sri Aurobindo: "That is a very important truth." (17-6-35)

Sadhak: "In our sadhana, at times we experience seas of Mother's Peace, Force, Ananda, etc. But let not such heights or depths be usurped by our little human ego and make us feel, as some already do, that we shall belong to the Mother's select band of Supermen.

"I do not wish to be a Superman (with an 'S' big or small)! I shall be content to become Her docile servant."

Sri Aurobindo: "To want to be a Superman is a mistake. It only swells the ego. One can aspire for the Divine to bring about the supramental transformation, but that also should not be done till the being has become psychic and spiritualised by the descent of the Mother's peace, force, light and purity." (22-2-36)

Sadhak: "Those who consciously carry in them ambitious ideas about developing in sadhana and becoming equal in status with the Divine Himself may have to stay back long—if not in the other planes, at least in the Overmind."

Sri Aurobindo: "They cannot get beyond unless they lose it (ego) Even in these planes* it prevents them from getting the full consciousness and knowledge. For in the Overmind cosmic consciousness too ego is absent, though the true person may be there." (27-4-35)

"The Supermind coming down on earth will change nothing in a man if he clings to the ego."

Sadhak: "Some sadhaks say that as one enters into higher planes one meets with greater ego, ignorance and falsehood. How can this be?"

Sri Aurobindo: "It is because they go higher and higher in the same plane of consciousness as before and do not rise beyond—e.g. higher and higher in the realm of vital mental formations—not higher beyond mind into the planes that lead to the full supramental"

Sadhak: "Only today a suggestion from outside advised me to ask Mother whether the knowledge that comes down in me at present is from the Higher Mind or the Intuitive. I said to myself: 'If it is the true knowledge that is descending it matters little for me if it is from the Higher Mind or Intuitive Mind or any other plane. The important thing is that it should be a pure and unmixed knowledge, the transcription by the mind in no way distorting it.

"As for terms like Higher Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind, etc., it is necessary to make these distinctions in the sadhana only if one wants to

* The higher spiritual planes above the mind—Compiler.

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foster one's ego."

Sri Aurobindo: "Rather it has to be analysed when one comes to the stage at which one has to pass from the psychic and spiritual to the supramental transformation. But that stage for all the sadhaks is still far off, so to think of these distinctions now can only foster the ego without serving any useful purpose." (22-5-36)

Sadhak: "One sadhak says, 'When I rise above, at times I have an inclination to aspire and go straight to the Supermind.' Is this a right movement?"

Sri Aurobindo: "It is not possible to go straight to the Supermind. That should not be his pre-occupation, but to become more and more strong in the higher consciousness so that it may be possible for it to become dynamic—the whole nature." (18-2-36)

Sadhak: "I asked You this question because I feel that it is too much for us, at the present stage of our sadhana, to aspire and rise to the Supermind. We all are yet too far away from it. In spite of this fact, if he or anybody else has such an inclination there must be something of the ego lurking in it.

Sri Aurobindo: "That is partly true. It is only if the whole nature becomes dominated by the psychic and the higher spiritual consciousness that one can either reach the Supermind or bring it down."

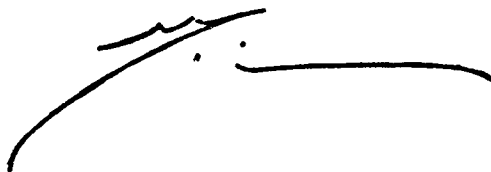
To be continued

PAST BIRTHS OF THE MOTHER

There are many rumours going round about the past births of the Mother—as to who she was before she took this birth. This is the answer she gave to a person who recently asked her about it.

“Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness I was there.”

14-3-52



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 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".

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

by "AB"

Continued from previous issue

29-3-35.

AB. I see that a sadhaka who comes to the Mother for Pranam with the right attitude and not with the object of satisfying any vital demand or desire, does not concentrate on Her physical movements like smiling or the placing of the hand on the head, for his attention is directed towards the inner reception; he may not even know every time if She puts Her hand on his head or not or if She smiles at him, for his concentration is turned exclusively to Her eyes—those seas of Truth, and it is from there that he hopes to receive something.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that is quite true.

AB. Who can deny that Her single gaze is quite sufficient for him to receive all that he needs?

Why then are some people not content with Her one look or a little touch? Is it not because of their time-born ego which keeps them in ignorance and darkness? They do not know or rather refuse to conceive that there is no limitation of time and space with the Divine, that She can create wonders in the fraction of a moment. Thus their minds deny rigidly that She, the Divine Mother, can help them adequately by a mere look or touch.

As they are so limited and narrow they take Her also to be such!

No doubt such foolishness is not in the true being, but in the outer. But then, it must be kept outside and not allowed to become a fact.

Sri Aurobindo: All that is very well said. It is the real truth about the matter.

29-3-35.

AB. It seems that the Mother has started to-day a new working in me. In the morning there was a keen and strong pressure on the right temple, and an inner intoxication which kept me merged in Her Peace and Silence all through. I noticed that most of the inner and higher parts, which ordinarily remain prominent, withdrew in a deep passivity; the outer being was then left to itself without any dynamic control. When this happened the inertia tried to take advantage by rising up.

Sri Aurobindo: If the physical being has felt and assimilated the 'silence' and peace, then inertia ought not to rise up.

AB. Why do I feel today that I should keep myself plunged in this rich and deep intoxication and suspend my post and prayer?

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Sri Aurobindo: It is better not to suspend the post (the writing of letters).

AB. Thou knowest, Lord, that I have been keeping separate from the lower Prakriti since a long time. It is during this period of detachment that the Mother made me realise what I really am and what the human nature is. But the Mother knows that a mere separation is not enough. Now I must control the nature and govern it according to Her Light; then only can it be a conquest. Let me then apply myself to this new movement for the further change of my outer nature. I have become conscious that Her cleansing Fire is there, capable of purifying and transforming the darkest nature.

The Mother—the Bearer of the Divine Agni—cannot now hide from me that She has done something special to me during Meditation time. It is that which has made me write all this, and has showed me what She wishes to do in me in the future.

Already a change in me and around me is seen. She has awakened in me two fires for Her great work. But why two, was not one enough? It is because one fire may not be able to keep pace with Her new working which is so huge, tremendous, powerful, fast, and full of Agni.

Thus two Fires are indispensable. One is in the heart, it will go on tirelessly putting its pressure upon the unconverted parts, and helping their purification and transformation. The other is in the higher consciousness, the Agni of the self; this will support the psychic fire and keep it alive all the time. (For, the psychic fire, being already in the evolution, may get veiled by the lower nature, but the Agni of the self is always above the Creation and so is ever aloof and living.) It can bring down whatever help and protection is necessary from the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the two are necessary for any complete or rapid transformation.

AB. I am aware that for such a new action of the Mother I must remain in a fully conscious state, vigilance, intense aspiration, surrender and rejection not flagging even for a moment. No feeling, thought, or act should be allowed unless it is from the Mother or for Her work.

Sri Aurobindo: It is good. If you remain in a fully conscious state, the cleaning of the nature ought not to be difficult—afterwards the positive work of its transformation into a perfect instrument can be undertaken.
30-3-35.

AB. Lord, it will be good if the Mother does something,—otherwise I may perhaps have to suspend the outer communications; for, Her love in which She is pressing me is so deep and sublime that my poor pen refuses to manifest it through a material thing like paper!

Sri Aurobindo: Material things are not to be despised—without them

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

there can be no manifestation in the material world.

AB. Why do the following flowers present themselves repeatedly before me: "Psychic purity," "Purity in the blood," "Supramental Light in the physical"? Are they thus announcing descent of these things?

Sri Aurobindo: The first two perhaps, but the supramental light in the physical cannot come until much else is done to prepare the physical for it.

30-3-35.

AB. If one is vigilant and constantly keeps a watch over all the movements, feelings of dullness will not come, experiences will not stop, and progress in the sadhana will not be affected. Often, a sadhaka feels that the experiences have stopped; this is because what he has already received is being consolidated in him. But even then, if he is sufficiently conscious and watchful he will find that it is only from the surface consciousness that they are withdrawn or suspended. The inner being is still having them in the deeper regions of the consciousness. For, if he is fully aware of his self with a ceaseless aspiration, he will not be emptied of the experiences even for a short time. For this he has of course to learn to observe things deep behind the surface layers.

Sri Aurobindo. That is all true and I am glad you have realised it.

AB. It is for the great object of transformation that the Divine Mother sends down something from Her own Self in the form of experiences and realisations.

Remaining in the Mother the sadhaka need not remain all passive, doing nothing when the lower nature becomes active; but remaining in Her he must repel everything undivine.

Sri Aurobindo: Correct.

NOTE

It will be noticed here that the sadhaka who used to ask questions only, has all of a sudden started writing things which only spiritual knowledge can reveal. It will also be seen that Sri Aurobindo's comments have become very brief. This is because some new development was taking place in the sadhaka—in his experiences he was beginning to receive direct knowledge from the Mother. Sri Aurobindo therefore sent very short answers to his letters making him depend more upon the direct knowledge he was receiving than upon written instructions for the working out of his sadhana. It will be seen from the correspondence given in the subsequent issues that this was Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's way of working upon his being from within and from above. The sadhaka himself did not know all this for a long time; it is only when Sri Aurobindo explained to him what was happening that he understood.

COMPILER.

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)

(5) POETIC VISION AND THE MANTRA

This highest intensity of style and movement which is the crest of the poetical impulse in its self-expression, the point at which the aesthetic the vital, the intellectual element of poetic speech pass into the spiritual justifies itself perfectly when it is the body of a deep, high or wide spiritual vision into which the life-sense, the thought, the emotion of the beauty in the thing discovered and its expression,—for all great poetic utterance

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is discovery,—rise on the wave of the culminating poetic inspiration into an ecstasy of sight. In the lesser poets these moments are rare and come like brilliant accidents, angels' visits, in the greater they are more frequent outbursts, but in the greatest they abound because they arise from a constant faculty of poetic vision and poetic speech which has its lesser and its greater moments, but never entirely fails them.

Vision is the characteristic power of the poet, as is discriminative thought the essential gift of the philosopher and analytic observation the natural genius of the scientist. The Kavi* was in the idea of the ancients the seer and revealer of truth, and though we have wandered far enough from that ideal to demand from him only the pleasure of the ear and the amusement of the aesthetic faculty, still all great poetry preserves something of that higher truth of its own aim and significance. Poetry, in fact, being art, must attempt to make us see, and since it is to the inner senses that it has to address itself,—for the ear is its only physical gate of entry and even there its real appeal is to an inner hearing,—and since its object is to make us live within ourselves what the poet has embodied in his verse, it is an inner sight which he opens in us, and this inner sight must have been intense in him before he can awaken it in us.

Therefore the greatest poets have been always those who have had a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of Nature and life and man and whose poetry has arisen out of that in a supreme revelatory utterance of it. Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Valmiki, Kalidasa, however much they may differ in everything else, are at one in having this as the fundamental character of their greatness. Their supremacy does not lie essentially in a greater thought-power or a more lavish imagery or a more penetrating force of passion and emotion; these things they may have had, one being more gifted in one direction, another in others, but these other powers were aids to their poetic expression rather than the essence or the source of it. There is often more thought in a short essay of Bacon's than in a whole play of Shakespeare's, but not even a hundred cryptograms can make him the author of the dramas; for, as he showed when he tried to write poetry, the very nature of his thought-power and the characteristic way of expression of the born philosophical thinker hampered him in poetic expression. It was the constant outstreaming of form and thought and image from an abundant vision of life which made Shakespeare, whatever his other deficiencies, the sovereign dramatic poet. Sight is the essential poetic gift. The archetypal poet in a world of original ideas is, we may say, a Soul that sees in itself intimately this world and all the others

* The Sanskrit word for poet. In classical Sanskrit it is applied to any maker of verse or even of prose, but in the Vedic it meant the poet-seer who saw and found the inspired word of his vision.

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and God and Nature and the life of beings and sets flowing from its centre a surge of creative rhythm and word-images which become the expressive body of the vision; and the great poets are those who repeat in some measure this ideal creation, *kavayah satyaçrutah*, seers and hearers of the poetic truth and poetic word.

The tendency of the modern mind at the present day seems to be towards laying a predominant value on the thought in poetry. We live still in an age which is in a great intellectual trouble and ferment about life and the world and is developing enormously the human intelligence,—often at the expense of other powers which are no less necessary to self-knowledge,—in order to grapple with life and master it. We are seeking always and in many directions to decipher the enigma of things, the cryptogram of the worlds which we are set to read, and to decipher it by the aid of the intellect; and for the most part we are much too busy living and thinking to have leisure to be silent and see. We expect the poet to use his great mastery of language to help us in this endeavour; we ask of him not so much perfect beauty of song or largeness of creative vision as a message to our perplexed and seeking intellects. Therefore we hear constantly today of the “philosophy” of a poet, even the most inveterate beautifier of commonplaces being forcibly gifted by his admirers with a philosophy, or of his message,—the message of Tagore, the message of Whitman. We are asking then of the poet to be, not a supreme singer or an inspired seer of the worlds, but a philosopher, a prophet, a teacher, even something perhaps of a religious or ethical preacher. It is necessary therefore to say that when I claim for the poet the role of a seer of Truth and find the source of great poetry in a great and revealing vision of life or God or the gods or man or Nature, I do not mean that it is necessary for him to have an intellectual philosophy of life or a message for humanity, which he chooses to express in verse because he has the metrical gift and the gift of imagery, or a solution of the problems of the age or a mission to improve mankind, or as it is said, “to leave the world better than he found it.” As a man, he may have these things, but the less he allows them to get the better of his poetical gift, the happier it will be for his poetry. Material for his poetry they may give, an influence in it they may be, provided they are transmuted into vision and life by the poetical spirit, but they can be neither its soul nor its aim, nor give the law to its creative activity and its expression.

The poet-seer sees differently, thinks in another way, voices himself in quite another manner than the philosopher or the prophet. The prophet announces the Truth as word of God or his command, he is the giver of the message; the poet shows us Truth in its power of beauty, in its symbol or image, or reveals it to us in the workings of Nature or in the workings

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of life, and when he has done that, his whole work is done; he need not be its explicit spokesman. The philosopher's business is to discriminate Truth and put its parts and aspects into intellectual relation with each other; the poet's is to seize and embody aspects of Truth in their living relations, or rather,—for that is too philosophical a language,—to see her features and excited by the vision create in the beauty of her image.

No doubt, the prophet may have in him a poet who breaks out often into speech and surrounds with the vivid atmosphere of life the directness of his message; he may follow up his injunction "Take no thought for the morrow," by a revealing image of the beauty of the truth he enounces, in the life of Nature, in the figure of the lily, or link it to human life by the apologue and the parable; the philosopher may bring in the aid of colour and image to give some relief and hue to his dry light of reason and water his arid path of abstractions with some healing dew of poetry. But these are ornaments and not the substance of his work; and if the philosopher makes his thought substance of poetry, he ceases to be a philosophical thinker and becomes a poet-seer of Truth. Thus, the more rigid metaphysicians are perhaps right in denying to Nietzsche the name of philosopher; for Nietzsche does not think, but always sees, turbidly or clearly, rightly or distortedly, but with the eye of the seer rather than with the brain of the thinker. On the other hand we may get great poetry which is full of a prophetic enthusiasm of utterance or is largely or even wholly philosophic in its matter; but this prophetic poetry gives us no direct message, only a mass of sublime inspirations of thought and image, and this philosophic poetry is poetry and lives as poetry only in so far as it departs from the method, the expression, the way of seeing proper to the philosophic mind. It must be vision pouring itself into thought-images and not thought trying to observe truth and distinguish.

In earlier days this distinction was not at all clearly understood and therefore we find even poets of great power attempting to set philosophic systems to music or even much more prosaic matter than a philosophic system, Hesiod and Virgil setting about even a manual of agriculture in verse! In Rome, always a little blunt of perception in the aesthetic mind, her two greatest poets fell a victim to this unhappy conception, with results which are a lesson and a warning to all posterity. Lucretius' work lives only, in spite of the majestic energy behind it, by its splendid digression into pure poetry, Virgil's *Georgics* by fine passages and pictures of Nature and beauties of word and image, but its substance is lifeless matter which has floated to us on the stream of Tune saved for the beauty of its setting. India, and perhaps India alone, had managed once or twice to turn this kind of philosophic attempt into a poetic success, in the *Gita*, in the *Upanishads* and some minor works modelled upon them. But the difference

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is great. The Gita owes its poetical success to its starting from a great and critical situation in life, having that in view and always returning upon it, and to its method which is to seize on a spiritual experience or moment or stage of the inner life and throw it into the form of thought; and this, though a delicate operation, can keep well within the limits of the poetic manner of speech. Only where it overburdens itself with metaphysical matter and deviates into sheer philosophic definition and discrimination, which happens especially in two or three of its closing chapters, does the poetic voice sink under the weight, even occasionally into flattest versified prose. The Upanishads too, and much more, are not at all philosophic thinking, but spiritual seeing, a rush of spiritual intuitions throwing themselves inevitably into the language of poetry, shaped out of fire and life, because that is their natural speech and a more intellectual utterance would have falsified their vision.

Nowadays we have clarified our aesthetic perceptions sufficiently to avoid the mistake of the Roman poets; but in a subtler form the intellectual tendency still shows a dangerous spirit of encroachment. For the impulse to teach is upon us, the inclination to be an observer and critic of life,—there could be no more perilous definition than Arnold's poetic "criticism of life", in spite of the saving epithet,—to clothe, merely, in the forms of poetry a critical or philosophic idea of life to the detriment of our vision. Allegory with its intellectual ingenuities, its facile wedding of the abstract idea and the concrete image, shows a tendency to invade again the domain of poetry. And there are other signs of the intellectual malady of which we are almost all of us the victims. Therefore it is well to insist that the native power of poetry is in its sight, not in its intellectual thought-matter, and its safety is in adhering to this native principle of vision and allowing its conception, its thought, its emotion, its presentation, its structure to rise out of that or compelling it to rise into that before it takes its finished form. The poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophic view of it, but a soul-view, a seizing by the inner sense, and the *mantra* is not in its substance or form poetic enunciation of a philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul's sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth—occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being. •

With regard to the view of life which Art must take, distinctions are constantly laid down such as the necessity of a subjective or an objective treatment or of a realistic or an idealistic view, which mislead more than they enlighten. Certainly, one poet may seem to excel in the concrete presentation of things and falter or be less sure in his grasp of the purely subjective, while another may move freely in the more subjective worlds and be less at home in the concrete; and both may be poets of a high order.

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But when we look closer, we see that just a certain objectivity is necessary to make poetry live and the thing seen stand out before our eyes, so on the other hand even the most objective presentation starts from an inner view and subjective process of creation, for the poet really creates out of himself and not out of what he sees outwardly: that outward seeing only serves to excite the inner vision to its work. Otherwise his work would be a mechanical construction and putting together, not a living creation.

Sheer objectivity brings us down from art to photography; and the attempt to diminish the subjective view to the vanishing-point so as to get an accurate presentation is proper to science, not to poetry. We are not thereby likely to get a greater truth or reality, but very much the reverse; for the scientific presentation of things, however valid in its own domain, that of the senses and the observing reason, is not true to the soul, not certainly the integral truth or the whole vision of things, because it gives only process and machinery and the mechanic law of things, but not their inner life and spirit. That is the error in the theory of realism. Realistic art does not and cannot give us a scientifically accurate presentation of life, because Art is not and cannot be Science. What it does do, is to make an arbitrary selection of motives, forms and hues, sometimes of dull blacks and greys and browns and dingy whites and sordid yellows, sometimes of violent blacks and reds, and the result is sometimes a thing of power and sometimes a nightmare. Idealistic art makes a different selection and produces either a work of power or beauty or else a false and distorted day-dream. In these distinctions there is no safety; nor can any rule be laid down for the poet, since he must necessarily go by what he is and what he sees, except that he should work from the living poetic centre within him and not exile himself into artificial standpoints.

From our present point of view we may say that the poet may do as he pleases in all that is not the essential matter. Thought-matter may be prominent in his work or life-substance predominate. He may proceed by sheer force of presentation or by direct power of interpretation. He may make this world his text, or wander into regions beyond, or soar straight into the pure empyrean of the infinite. To arrive at the *mantra* he may start from the colour of a rose, or the power or beauty of a character, or the splendour of an action, or go away from all these into his own secret soul and its most hidden movements. The one thing needful is that he should be able to go beyond the word or image he uses or the form of the thing he sees, not be limited by them, but get into the light of that which they have the power to reveal and flood them with it until they overflow with its suggestions or seem even to lose themselves and disappear into

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the revelation. At the highest he himself disappears into sight; the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of the vision, and the Spirit of all seems alone to be there speaking out sovereignly its own secrets.

But the poetic vision, like everything else, follows necessarily the evolution of the human mind and according to the age and environment, it has its levels, its ascents and descents and its returns. The eye of early man is turned upon the physical world about him, the interest of the story of life and its primary ideas and emotions; he sees man and his world only, or sees the other worlds and their gods and beings in that image also, but magnified and heightened. He asks little of poetry except a more forceful vision of these which will help him to see them more largely and feel them more strongly and give him a certain inspiration to live them more powerfully. Afterwards he begins to intellectualise, but still on the same subject-matter, and he asks now from the poet a view of them enlightened by the inspired reason and beautifully shaped by the first strong and clear joy in his developing aesthetic sense. A vital poetry appealing to the imagination through the sense-mind and the emotions and a poetry interpretative of life to the intelligence are the fruit of these ages. Later poetry tends always to return on these forms with a more subtilised intellect and a richer life-experience.

Great things may be done by poetry on this basis, but it is evident that the poet will have a certain difficulty in getting to a deeper vision, because he has to lean entirely on the external thought and form, be subservient to it and get at what truth he can that may be beyond them with their veil still thickly interposing. A higher level comes when the mind of man begins to see more intimately the forces behind life, the powers concealed by our subjective existence, and the poet can attempt to reveal them more directly or at least to use the outward physical and vital and thought symbol only as a suggestion of greater things. Yet a higher level is attained, more depth possible when the soul in things comes nearer to man or other worlds than the physical open themselves to him. And the entire liberation of the poetic vision to see most profoundly and the poetic power to do its highest work must arrive when the spiritual itself is the possession of the greatest minds and the age stands on the verge of its revelation.

Therefore it is not sufficient for poetry to attain high intensities of word and rhythm; it must have, to fill them, an answering intensity of vision. And this does not depend only on the individual power of vision of the poet, but on the mind of his age and country, its level of thought and experience, the adequacy of its symbols, the depth of its spiritual attainment. A lesser poet in a greater age may give us occasionally things which exceed in this kind the work of less favoured immortals. The religious poetry of

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the later Indian tongues has for us fervours of poetic revelation which in the great classics are absent, even though no mediaeval poet can rank in power with Valmiki and Kalidasa. The modern literatures of Europe commonly fall short of the Greek perfection of harmony and form, but they give us what the greatest Greek poets had not and could not have. And in our own days a poet of secondary power in his moments of inspiration can get to a vision far more satisfying to us than Shakespeare or Dante. Greatest of all is the promise of the age that is coming, if it fulfils its possibilities; for it is an age in which all the worlds are beginning to open to man's gaze and invite his experience, and in all he is near to the revelation of the Spirit of which they are, as we choose, the veils, the significant forms and symbols or else the transparent raiment.

To be continued

Mystic

Wing thy fire-strange twilight in my dream
With golden music of thy dewy stars,
Thy wonder-pale solitude with its stream
Shall wash my dark sleep white and open its bars
To many harmonies of gloam-ward wings
And echoes of a luminous flame alone—
And voices of the nectar-hearted things
Deep in my soul, and to the monotone

Songs of a viewless sea. I shall drink peace
Of thy immeasurable titan force
And of thy diamond sky-ecstasies
And glimmer-light born of thy rapt moon-source.
House in my sanctuary of silver flame
The calm dawn-pure felicity of thy name.

ROMEN

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

ACT I. SCENE II

Eight years have passed Mira is now about fifteen The scene is her living-room She is seen offering flowers at the feet of her Lord, the IMAGE, reposing on a marble altar she has erected in one corner It is evening After lighting a few incense-sticks she folds her hands and sings with closed eyes:

Oh, who stole softly into
The temple of my heart
And woke me from my slumber
With all his tender art?
A riot of wind then wafted
The rumour of some far shore...
I heard a deep-toned flutelet
That opened in me a door...
An auspice Glean then entered
And kindled my twin thrilled eyes...
And my life acclaimed the Stranger,
Augur of a new sunrise.
But the Herald was a visitant
Disturbing to my peace
Even as the moon to the ocean,
Yet a weaver of harmonies!
As I mused, the alien-intimate
In a mystic smile broke out ..
When, lo, a curtain lifted
And I spied an angel rout!

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

A sunken world revived then
With the flow of time reversed
And I saw. we ran to the *Rasa*
Where nightly for Him we rehearsed
The parts for us predestined
By our soul's one Lord again,
Who was born to us as Beauty
In this our sphere of pain.
In Him we found our Guru,
The drop revealed the Deep
When merged Mira's restless heart in
His soft heart of song and sleep.

After the song as she opens her eyes she sees BALAGOPAL—that is, KRISHNA, a boy of fifteen—standing before her

MIRA (*petulently*): You didn't come for full one day and a half. Do you realise that?

KRISHNA. But I can't play only with you. I have other playmates.

MIRA. Then go to them. If you think they love you more than your Mira —

KRISHNA. It isn't a question of loving more or less, Mira, it is a question of joy. I am a growing boy and the desire for variety must grow too with the years.

MIRA (*in an accusing tone*). And you insist, don't you? that I must want you and you alone! But you forget that what is honey for the flower should also be honey for the bee. I will never forgive you—never, never, never.

KRISHNA: Aren't girls unreasonable? The flower cannot move. Then must the bee also refuse to flit about on pain of the flower's displeasure?

MIRA: But what about the sense of justice? The bee drains one flower dry and then perches on another. Then must the poor flower alone offer all her sap—to fade away obligingly? Fine *lala*, yours, Gopal!

KRISHNA (*smiles*): Now, now, you are again at it! Why won't you see that similes should never be pushed too far? A flower blooms but once, and, after yielding her sap, must fade—that is her destiny. Not so with humans. The more they give of their best, the more they prosper—and grow.

MIRA: But I do not want to prosper. I want to play—and with you alone. You are cruel, Gopal! Your honey takes away all savour from my

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mouth and then you come and play your pranks—withholding more and more what has made one averse to all the other sweets.

KRISHNA (*ironically*): You flatter yourself, Princess! Your parents have decided to delight you with a royal sugar-pill whose taste and savour, I'm sure, you will find much more thrilling than the innocent honey of a rustic boy like Gopal.

MIRA (*on the verge of tears*). For shame! You know what my Guru, the Yogi, said seven years ago. I must never marry. I will not be happy.

KRISHNA You judge before the event—that's woman all over, once again.

MIRA (*flaring up*): You incorrigible—! Knowing full well what I mean to say—

KRISHNA (*cutting in*): But how can I know? I am not omniscient like women. I feel it is quite probable that what you tell yourself now will be falsified by experience. When Bhojraj holds you in his arms you will forget me sooner than the bee forgets the flower drained of its honey. And then—won't you have your revenge?

MIRA: Revenge! As if you are likely to miss me—ever! No, Gopal, you mustn't make fun of me all the time. You know what you are saying is untrue: also that you have many another but I have only you. Didn't you yourself inspire my song word by word?

Oh who stole softly into
The temple of my heart
And woke me from my slumber
With all his tender art?

KRISHNA. But supposing you wake to find something more tender still?

MIRA (*pushing Him playfully*): Oh, for mercy's sake! I am talking seriously — and you — you —

KRISHNA (*cutting in*): But I am no less serious, I assure you, Mira! Could I be otherwise after having grown all these years along with you as your friend, admirer and playmate? But as a precocious girl, you must have noticed how eager is a growing soul for any new experience. So how do you know that such a handsome and rich personality would not give you much more than what a mere cowherd boy has offered up till now? And surely one does change with what one imbibes.

MIRA (*angrily*): Get out of my sight. I don't want to have anything to do with you. I will shut myself in and fast for days and days till—I am dead. Then you will be sorry and I will be glad.

KRISHNA (*about to touch her hand*): Listen — Mira —

MIRA (*repulsing His hand*). I won't. You don't know your Mira. You don't deserve her.

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KRISHNA (*laughs*): Ha ha, you see? The suggestion has already found a place in your mind that there is one who *can* be more deserving, after all, than a guileless, illiterate boy!

MIRA: Guileless indeed! You—heartless—cruel—(*she bursts into tears*) O Gopal! don't go on tantalising me in this way—pitilessly One can go too far. I warn you. And then you will have to wring your hands and sigh, if you are not careful.

KRISHNA (*laughing*): But you do remind me of someone who used to speak to me almost in the same way. How history repeats itself!

MIRA (*forgetting her anger*): Who was it? Not Radha?

KRISHNA: The paragon herself! But to be fair to you—she used, often enough, to curse me even more indignantly than you do. (*He smiles*). One day I shall never forget—when she prophesied to me, with tears in her eyes—and didn't my heart stop beating?—when she sang vindictively:

(*He hums softly*)

Can man ever feel a woman's heart

To whom love's all in all?

But wait till you're reborn as Radha

And I as Nandalal.

For then I'll play the cruel flute

And you'll come running to me:

But I shall laugh, unseen—ah then

You'll know love's agony!

MIRA (*eagerly*): Oh do tell me more about her. Do you know, I have often seen her in my dream lately?

KRISHNA: Woe is me! For she must have pricked the bubble about me and let me down irretrievably—women are never shy with women, for which alas, we—men—*have* to pay dearly.

MIRA (*impatently*): Oh you are perfectly maddening! Listen, I am dying to tell you. (*She pauses and resumes reminiscently*) I saw her in tears. I asked her why she was sad. In reply she sang a song. The context was quite clear. You had gone away to Mathura leaving her forlorn. Day and night, she thought of nothing but you but was happy in her loneliness because you, from all accounts, were flourishing in Mathura Suddenly she saw a vision which was the theme of her song.

KRISHNA: And what was it, pray? Accusing me of heartlessness? The old old story!

MIRA: What else do you expect—may I ask?—men being men! You never deserved her. She sang a lovely song. There was no reproach, no complaint—only—oh I must repeat it to you as I heard it:

(*She sings softly*)

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I dreamed last night of Krishna
He was playing His Flute of Grace
When, lo, He paused . . . a memoried
Pain's cloud came on His face.
"Into my breath," He murmured,
"Who trails like a sigh's caress?"
Oh, that my thought for a moment
Should mar His happiness!

KRISHNA Now, now, it's for *you* to be careful, my little Princess! I wouldn't start so early idealising pain if I were you. Radha suffered because—but never mind—what I mean to stress is that I would be the last person to wish to hover as a cloud over *your* happiness. Not that I *could* even if I would—for you will surely have ceased, before long, to regard my memory as even a "sigh's caress"—

MIRA (*interjecting*): You are insufferable. I will never speak to you again—as long as I live.

KRISHNA: That's only to be expected now that a new sun rises, the pole-star must fade away. But today I came to discuss something—not about the past—but the present, if only you will allow me.

(*He holds her hand tenderly*)

MIRA (*forgetting everything*). Oh Gopal, why must you go on teasing me so? You know full well that your merest wish is command to Mira! No, don't—let me have my say for once.

(*She pauses and places her head on his shoulder*)

KRISHNA (*embracing her*): Now, now, don't start—

MIRA (*disengaging herself with a jerk*): You are mistaken. I will never weep again before you—not even if I go to pieces. But you, Gopal, tell me: why do I love you so—a being whom none but I have ever glimpsed *once*—one who is real to none but Mira—one who grew with me, laughed with me, played with me, quarrelled with me, who has sung and danced with me—who, entering my life as a lifeless Image, grew into something more important than life itself—life which we love without knowing why or understanding its play in the least—an experience which is not given to others Tell me: why, why did you come to me?

KRISHNA: What a question!—Because I loved you.

MIRA: In the past tense?

KRISHNA: Oh don't let's quarrel tonight of all nights when, I repeat, I came to ask you something.

MIRA: No You can't have your way all along the line. Tonight you must let *me* ask first.

KRISHNA (*helplessly*): Go on then.

MIRA: You remember how you came—that day in the garden?

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KRISHNA: Don't I? You wanted to share me with that Yogi when I wanted to be yours alone. And you talk of woman's love!

MIRA (*laughing in spite of herself*): Oh don't start teasing me again: you make me forget everything but your mysterious spell and infectious laughter. I only wish I could be infected as effectively with your heartlessness also. For then I would be able to pay you back in your own coin.

KRISHNA: You said you wanted to question me. In your world is indictment synonymous with inquiry?

MIRA: But it's you who are to blame: you make me go off the track. you drive me so frantic sometimes that—(*she pauses, her eyes glistening*)—that I almost catch myself longing to cause you pain—bitter pain—and then—I feel aghast because you make me love only to fill me the next moment with cruel thoughts. Wishing to punish you I only punish myself, realising how flawed my love is to ache thus to inflict pain on you! No! I am *not* the girl you knew seven years ago. I am a full-grown woman and, as you know, an *arakshnaniya*.

KRISHNA (*pouting*): How you love to scare good folk with long Sanskrit words!

MIRA: There you start again! As if you really didn't know that after twelve or thirteen a girl is called an *arakshnaniya*—whom it is a sin to keep at home unmarried. As if you don't know that my aunts are torturing father, insisting that I should be married off at once! It is because I refused that they could not dispose of me last year and the year before. But trouble is brewing: they are set on yoking me for ever to Bhojraj—perhaps next month, who knows? Wait, I have not finished yet. I know I am not moulded in the cast others are. I have so many friends and cousins and relations. But no one understands me. Many actually call me mad because I go on talking for hours and hours to an airy nothing. Even my good father doesn't believe when I tell him that you come to life, at all hours of the day and have been playing, talking and laughing with me, night after night, all these years. That is another reason why he wants to get me off his hands. He feels dismayed and is all but persuaded that something has gone wrong somewhere. Yet when he hears me sing the songs taught by you he feels moved to tears and sometimes he has indeed addressed me as the holy virgin, *Kanyakumari*. But for all that, he cannot quite get rid of the old *samskara*—the ancient superstition—that a girl has to be married *before* puberty. So he suffers. He indeed loves me dearly; he respects me, he is awed by my holiness as he puts it—but when his people tax him with their unanswerable arguments he veers round again and tells himself that *they* are right and *I* am wrong living in a dangerous dream-world of my own. But I have told him that I can't marry, and I won't.

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KRISHNA: Let us dismiss the "can't". I accept the "won't". But why won't you? Tell me that.

MIRA: No, it's for you to tell me: why *must* I marry?

KRISHNA: Because that is how the world goes on—isn't that your father's contention?

MIRA (*impatently*): But is it the right contention?—that is what I want to ask you.

KRISHNA: But why do you ask *me*? I am not your Guru. Besides, how do you know that mine will be the correct advice?

MIRA: Because I love you.

KRISHNA: As what? No, I do not want to evade. For I tell you I have no appetite *now* for sparring with you for fun. I ask you because I want to know *why* you seek my advice. To *you* I don't stand as the Guru, far less the Lord of the three worlds.

MIRA: But aren't you the Lord? Even father admits—though only in theory—that you *are* the *Bhagwan Swayam*, the Lord Himself. He quotes your own saying from the Gita that you make people move as the wire-puller makes a doll dance mechanically.

KRISHNA. But have you realised it—seen me make men dance?

MIRA: An irrelevant ques—

KRISHNA (*cutting in*): It isn't. You love the Gita. So you know; I am supposed to be to everyone what they want me to be to them. To you, I humbly suggest, I am not *yet* either the Lord or the Guru. I am only your comrade, playmate, teacher of songs and dances if you will, but not the divine Guide whom one can only disobey at one's peril. You may protest till you are blue in the face, but the fact remains that I can at best advise you on matters in general—but not solve for you, judicially, questions of life and death. You cannot get to the top of the ladder in one bound: you have to go up rung by rung. To cut a long story short, you do not know who I am: I may, for all you know, be really as heartless as my detractors proclaim. So why embarrass me by asking what you should do on an issue so serious as the marriage of a gifted Princess to a noble Prince?

MIRA: Then shall I obey my father and get married? Now, don't evade once again. (*A familiar step is heard on the staircase leading to Mira's bedroom*). There, my father's coming. What is to be my answer? The right answer, I insist.

KRISHNA: Whatever comes to your pure heart—will be right.

MIRA: But suppose I choose to accept what is poison for my soul?

KRISHNA: What is poison to the impure can be, often enough, nectar to the pure.

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He vanishes into the IMAGE as RATAN SINGH enters followed by BHOJRAJ.

MIRA (*rising eagerly*): Father! (*sees BHOJRAJ*) oh—(*lowers her face and flushes scarlet*).

RATAN SINGH (*presenting his guest*): Surely, you know who he is? We showed you his picture.

MIRA: (*almost inarticulately*): Y-yes.

RATAN SINGH: I invited him without telling you.

BHOJRAJ: Allow me, Raja Sahib! Princess, I have never been one for etiquette or convention. So I wrote to your father about my view.

MIRA looks at him in surprise but the next moment lowers her head again.

BHOJRAJ: Princess, I will try to put it as simply as I can—not to embarrass you more. You see, I have taken some pains to keep in touch with you. I have often come to the temple here where you usually sing, and heard you on the sly. I cannot tell you how moved I was, every time, by your voice and your face. You have become to me an ideal—a symbol of purity, of dream, of beauty. I have seen you in my meditation. Your face, your voice have haunted me in my dreams. It is not usual for an heir-apparent to the throne of great Mevar to bow his head to another—least of all to a bride to be. But your face of purity has chastened me and made me know what humility is. So I have thrown all royal dignity to the winds, and come to you to beg your hand. I took the initiative and asked your father to invite me as I was told you were unwilling to marry. I wanted, very unconventionally again, to press my suit myself—if I can, that is. (*After an expectant pause*) Now I await your reply.

RATAN SINGH. I may add one word more, my daughter! You know very well that you are not made of the common stuff of ordinary girls. I do not refer to your talent in music or dancing which moves even your bitterest critics, your aunts and cousins. I have in mind your mental development and psychic powers. To me you have been, as you know, an enigma. I have loved you and yet how often have I not stood in awe of you! Time and time again, just when I was on the verge of thinking that I had taken your measure, you simply eluded me and left me guessing. But one cannot always go through life a neutral. A time does come, every now and then, when one has to face up to reality. I feel that psychological moment has come. We are at the cross-roads. The time for procrastination is past. Besides, I would be failing in my duty if I did not insist that this is a great honour that has come to us: the hand of the noble Prince of great Mevar. To a lesser potentate like your father it is nothing short of a dream come true.

BHOJRAJ: (*embarrassed*): But I assure you, Raja Sahib, that I feel

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no less honoured—

RATAN SINGH: Your humility, Prince, is the brightest jewel of your crown. But you cannot be unaware of your status. (To MIRA) Yes, Mira, I do feel thrilled by the very thought that the great Prince of Mevar, my honoured guest, should come to my door to seek the hand of my daughter.

MIRA looks at him and then covers her face with her hands . . .

RATAN SINGH: Oh, don't! (He hugs her). You don't suppose, do you, that I am going to force you to marry? Only, bear this in mind that, should you finally decide to remain unmarried, I would abdicate in favour of my son and spend the rest of my life in a retreat in the Himalayas. For I cannot bear to think that I may have to see you pass your days in barren religious austerities. (He releases her) Now I will leave him to plead his cause. You will talk it over between yourselves, and tell me your final decision, won't you? (He takes a step towards the door and turns round facing BHOJRAJ) One thing. It is but fair to tell you that my daughter is looked upon by many as not quite normal, and they regret deeply that she should have decided to live in a dream-world of her own. Some even call it a world of make-believe and—hallucination. Now you know. (Exit)

The heavy thud of RATAN SINGH's steps dies away on the stair-case. MIRA turns her back on BHOJRAJ and facing the IMAGE, stands like one petrified.

BHOJRAJ (taking a step forward, softly): Princess! . . . Need I say once again—

MIRA (turns round abruptly): You need not. You know of my vow. I cannot marry.

BHOJRAJ (a little taken aback): I know that. Only . . . if you will at least listen—I only ask for what few will deny a visitor: common courtesy.

MIRA (relenting but drily): What is it you wish to say?

BHOJRAJ (forcing a smile): That is hardly the attitude—but I understand . . . I will try to be brief. (He pauses, then lifts his eyes to hers) Princess! I won't prevaricate—not only because it is a waste of time but also and chiefly because you are not an ordinary girl. You are not only both highly gifted and precocious, but, from all accounts, a girl—or rather a woman—who is not easily led. It so happens that I resemble you a little here. I do not mean I am as gifted but (smiling) I think I can quite hold my own against you in one thing: I have been famous, since I was five, as a self-willed creature whom no chastisement could ever subdue. Now such a one cannot easily admit defeat in love. Surely you will understand that.

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MIRA: And surely you will understand, also, that a girl who knows little of what men call love is not likely to be interested in what captures those who are in love.

BHOJRAJ (*with a hint of irony*): You will surely pardon me, Princess, if I submit that in every royal family girls, even when they are not supposed to know anything, do know a thing or two.

MIRA (*nettled*): Are you insinuating that I am pretending innocence?

BHOJRAJ (*hastily*): Don't fight a shadow, Princess, I pray. For you must know that a man, in love, does not wish to offend the one he adores.

MIRA (*smiling in spite of herself*): Oh, I can imagine what is imaginable.

BHOJRAJ: I am glad. Then I would only request, if I may, to be given a fair trial—I mean, I want you to trust me as a friend—at least tentatively. Or is that also asking too much?

MIRA (*mollified*): You are tactful, I am bound to concede.

BHOJRAJ (*bows gallantly*): And you are generous, I rejoice to admit. But—I must add, somewhat ungraciously—I have not come all the way from Mevar to Marwar—to go back home empty-handed, appeased by mere compliments, irised bubbles.

MIRA (*a little impressed in spite of herself*): I begin to like you, Prince. No—don't let's take too much for granted. (*She colours*) Perhaps I ought not to have said that. But I say it because I too hate convention and ceremony. But alas, I have found, to my cost, that even the wisest among men often prefer folly to wisdom and submit to what does not mean anything just because it is the vogue. That's why I cannot help liking you because you can prick the time-old "irised bubble", didn't you say?

BHOJRAJ (*nodding*): I am glad I was frank with you, at no small risk though.

MIRA (*gravely*): But don't start building your castles in the air. Frankness is desirable—not because it leads to something ideal, for that isn't true, but because its opposite, pretence, leads to disaster. So you mustn't presume too much. I know what I want and I do not want what my heart vetoes. I hope I am clear?

BHOJRAJ (*smiles*):— A crystal could not be clearer. I only regret that your findings are not nearly as deep as your words are clear.

MIRA: I don't understand—

BHOJRAJ. Princess, you said just now that one should not "take too much for granted". I agree. But, claiming, as I do, that I have seen a little more of life than you, I am persuaded that an instinctive initial liking does afford a fairly reliable basis on which to build a castle of love—given a generous understanding and good-will on both sides.

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MIRA (*embarrassed, but smiling*): You have a way of putting things, Prince...But the fact is...your boundless optimism does frighten one. You move a little too fast for me. For what you expect out of our mutual give-and-take and good-will may indeed lead *you* somewhere but it can only land me into the pit, I am afraid.

BHOJRAJ (*after a slight pause*): But may I humbly suggest—that what prevents you from being optimistic may be just what has prevented so many from accepting the simplest things—and the best that life has to offer—as against the dramatic and spectacular?

MIRA (*sharply*): Do you imply that I am only dramatising?

BHOJRAJ (*hastily*): I beg you not to be so uncharitable. All I imply is that in each of us—and especially among gifted and evolved beings like you—there lurks, often enough, an unaccountable perversity which goes out of its way to welcome pain rather than reject it.

MIRA (*trying to be calm, ironically*): You are being too clever by half, Prince. You are assuming that I belong to the usual other-worldly type who turn away from life and seek solitude just for the luxury of pain. But to me, I tell you, it is not the other world that calls: it is He and He alone that matters and I love Him not because He hails from His world, of dream and bliss, but because He lights up ours, of falsehood and evil.

BHOJRAJ (*smiles*): I think I know what you mean. But then why turn your back finally on this our world for something which is too rare to be trustworthy if not actually too good to be true? Is it wise to bank on something so uncertain?

MIRA (*sharply*): But I do not ache to be wise. I only hunger for one thing: to be true and loyal to my Gopal.

BHOJRAJ: The old old story, alas!

MIRA (*testily*): One mustn't mouth slogans even for fun. What if it is old? You want to make love to me. Is that new? A flower is old—so is the sky—but are they to be dismissed on that account?

BHOJRAJ: No, Princess! I do not object to whatever is old—but if what is venerated is not stable, then can you blame me for demurring? Be not angry with me for being unable to accept what is difficult to prove.

MIRA (*trying to be calmer*): I am not angry. Only I don't feel called upon to "prove it" in the way you seem to demand. (*Warming up*) Others may not accept that He comes to me and me alone. But can one, to whom He does come, refuse to keep faith with Him on that account?

BHOJRAJ (*a little undecided*): I confess you have taken me somewhat at a disadvantage. For though I doubt not your veracity I cannot take all that you say or imply at their face value, if you will pardon me.

MIRA: But I tell you I am not offended: the fact that I have seen what is not given to most doesn't make me blind to their blindness. I do

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see that they, not having experienced what I have, must dismiss my seeing as against their not seeing and disallow what I feel to be right because they feel it to be wrong. So, while pardoning you—and them—may I not request you, in my turn, not to bank on one who is even more unstable and questionable than my Gopal, so far as you are concerned?

BHOJRAJ: Princess, I do not know how to meet you. I confess I have not seen what you have seen. I only know what the normal man knows. Not that I am against prayer and worship. But how can I take this Gopal of yours seriously, when he looms as something perfectly outlandish? But there, I have involuntarily preferred a charge—

MIRA (*ironically*): Don't worry, Gopal does not mind when the charge is true and it is true that He is outlandish—if for no other reason than this that He comes from a land outside our ken.

BHOJRAJ: Oh let Him come and go as often as He will. But why must He bind you down to an exclusive loyalty? What right has He? Surely you are not going to tell me that you love Him physically?

MIRA (*surprised*): Physically? Whatever do you mean? I know only of one love: the love He has inspired in me. I know of no other.

BHOJRAJ (*looking at her quizzically*): Princess, I understand. From now on I will argue no more. Because I see now that I had been, so far, moving entirely on a wrong track—having, mistakenly, assumed all along that you knew what the issue was.

MIRA (*nettled*): Must you talk in riddles?

BHOJRAJ (*appraising her steadfastly*): Princess, I had thought you were mature enough to know something at least of what a woman feels when she is attracted by a man. But you made me realise—but let's change the subject

MIRA (*flushing*): Look here, Prince! You are talking down to me like a superior. I do not fancy that.

BHOJRAJ: But you said you were for truth, did you not? So you cannot object when I tell you, which is true, that when grown-ups talk of love they mean something other than what children do when they discuss love. You may know what love is in your world of dream but you certainly do not know what it means in ours, of stark reality.

MIRA (*indignantly*): I challenge that—emphatically. Surely you do not mean to say that one can have intimacy with Gopal for seven years without knowing what love is? What is He good at, may I ask, if He cannot teach one to love?

BHOJRAJ (*breezily*): He has perhaps given you only the first lesson in love. But to learn an alphabet is not to master the language. No, Princess, I do not even mind your anger now that you have given me such a relief!

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MIRA (*staring*): Relief!

BHOJRAJ (*nodding*): Yes, and therefore a new lease of hope. For a day shall come when the bud of your heart will blossom and then—ah *then* you will know what the bee means. Only one thing more—I cannot depart without hearing from your lips once again that you like me. (*Appealingly*) You do, don't you?

MIRA (*frowning*): How can I go on liking you when I know that you are secretly laughing at me?

BHOJRAJ (*with sudden warmth*): But I was *not* laughing at you. On the contrary, I will cherish you more than ever now that I know how pure and virginal you are. A trifle non-human maybe, but nature is not mocked: it will assert itself—in due time: till then I will possess my soul in patience—wistfully.

MIRA (*somewhat mollified*): I confess I am quite at a loss... (*pausing and then suddenly*) But I must admit that you are likable—if only for your refinement.

BHOJRAJ: And I that you are adorable—if only for your innocence and love of truth.

MIRA (*proudly*): Yes, I love truth as I love nothing else. But I am not sure that I like this adoration.

BHOJRAJ: Suppose I said: you would, once you have savoured it?

MIRA: But you mustn't. For please understand, once and for all, that Mira can love none but Gopal—because—

BHOJRAJ: Because?

MIRA (*with sudden decision*): Well, I will tell you—if only to be fair to you. Listen The great Yogi who gave me the Image said I must love Him and no other, nor must I marry.

BHOJRAJ (*ironically*): A prophet? I see. But I happen to be more interested in the reason, if you will only mercifully reveal it.

MIRA (*nettled*): But the reason may well prove rather merciless, I warn you. He said I should be very unhappy if I ever married because, in the first place, I would not be able to love my husband, and secondly, he will not be able to love a wife who loved Gopal. Mother was so displeased that she did not press him to stay a moment longer.

BHOJRAJ (*acidly*): I applaud her wisdom, Princess, because her mother's instinct must have told her instantly that such prophets had best be consigned to where they belong—the outskirts of contempt.

MIRA (*flushing*): You mustn't talk in that superior tone—of an infallible judge.

BHOJRAJ (*hurt*): And should you talk in that tone—of a dictator—especially when I was expressing an opinion, which—right or wrong—I have every right to hold?

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MIRA: All right. Then I have also an equal right to hold mine and say that I think it is wrong to pass an opinion on what is above one's head.

BHOJRAJ (*wounded*): But how do you presume this—when I have seen crowds of such fanatics since I was a child? (*Fuming*) Oh, these pretentious imbeciles who can boast only of one thing: that they have nothing but a beggar's sack to boast about!

MIRA (*exploding*). You dare call him names—him, my Guru, who brought me my Gopal—whose sandals you are not fit to touch! Leave my presence at once.

BHOJRAJ (*genuinely alarmed*): O Princess! Believe me—I did not know he was your Guru. You had never given me a hint!

MIRA (*pointing at the door*): Not one word more. I don't want to look upon your face again. Go-go-go away.

Alarmed by the shouting RATAN SINGH rushes in, BHOJRAJ lowers his heads, MIRA goes to the altar of Gopal and, kneeling, covers her face with her hands.

RATAN SINGH: What has happened? Mira!... Prince!

BHOJRAJ (*dejected*): I was entirely to blame, Raja Sahib, the idiot that I am! (*A pause*) And the pity of it is that we were almost on the brink of a perfect mutual understanding when I—(*he draws RATAN SINGH aside to the corner of the room away from MIRA and the altar and whispers a few words*)

RATAN SINGH (*heaving a sigh*): I see... Well, Prince! Done's done. Only—(*he pauses, undecided*)—well, you mustn't mind—that is my request. (*Moving near to him and dropping his voice*) It's my fault really—in a way. You see, her mother died when she was barely eight and I did not look after her properly, nor had the heart even to speak severely to her—ever. So she grew into a—somewhat intractable girl, if you know what I mean. People did warn me but I was weak: I argued that things would right themselves automatically later when she would meet a good, strong, handsome husband. Unfortunately, it turned out differently in actuality.

BHOJRAJ (*in a low voice*): Differently? In what way?

RATAN SINGH: It's like this. We hadn't at first taken her ecstasies over the Image seriously though she swore that it was actually coming to life day after marvellous day. But then she began, in a few months, to sing such beautiful songs—songs which she could not have possibly composed—that we did not know what to make of it all: the more as she claimed that her Gopal had taught her these. Then, after a year or so, she started dancing and in very difficult rhythms which she could not have learnt by herself. She said: her Gopal had trained her. Soon after, strange things started happening; for instance, food which she prepared

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and offered to the Image used actually to disappear or else sometimes large morsels were taken leaving clear finger-prints on what was left over.

BHOJRAJ (*incredulous*): You do not say so! I mean—er—there was no trickery?

RATAN SINGH (*shaking his head*): Impossible. For I sometimes locked her room with nobody inside. Sometimes even drinking water, offered to Gopal, vanished similarly. There were many other phenomena which went on happening which are even more incredible still—so much so that we, sometimes, actually doubted our senses!

BHOJRAJ (*a little shaken*): Indeed! (*after a pause*) But excuse me, Raja Sahib—sometimes, when one investigates—

RATAN SINGH: But I did investigate, I assure you. And not I alone—there were her aunts and her mother too. Of course I do not know whether the Image actually came to life, but some sort of a Presence *was* there—beyond the shadow of a doubt. In any event, there could be no question of trickery. that much I can swear for all I am worth

BHOJRAJ: Hm. But then—what did you do?

RATAN SINGH: What else but gape and speculate—till, in the end, we had to give up trying to look wise when we felt foolish? The best we could do was to hope on that things might not be nearly so bad as they looked and would mend—somehow. (*Drawing a sigh*) But it went on from bad to worse till matters became rather too serious—when she began refusing the suitors who came, attracted by her songs and dances, not to mention her beauty. We tried to make her see reason. . . but. . . well. . . (*shaking his head and smiling wanly*) you know what she can be like?

BHOJRAJ (*with an answering nod*): Indeed, to my cost!

RATAN SINGH (*suddenly taking both his hands in his*): I have one request to make, Prince! I feel you have come as our saviour and you will not shirk your role: you will not give up too easily? None but you can save her in this—

BHOJRAJ (*bowing ceremoniously*): A moth hardly needs a fillip to court the flame, Raja Sahib! (*He drops his voice*) But I wouldn't try to use threats or arguments if I were you. It needs—

RATAN SINGH: I know—patience and. . . and tact.

BHOJRAJ (*pursing his lips*): No: something more than that. Somehow she must be made to see that. . . her Gopal would be pleased if she married. But we'll see about that, later. (*Casting a quick glance at MIRA, lying prone on the carpet*) You had better speak to her now. I shall wait outside just near the door. (*He reaches the doorstep, turns round abruptly and then loudly*) I wish you would tell her that I am deeply distressed and hold myself entirely to blame for what has hap-

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

pened. I apologise unconditionally. (*He goes out and takes his station behind the door*).

RATAN SINGH, left alone, remains steeped in thought for a while. Then, as he turns back, with a sigh, he sees MIRA, seemingly unconscious of his presence, rise from the floor and approach the IMAGE. Unable to make up his mind, he watches her as she, sitting at the foot of the altar, rests her brow on the feet of the IMAGE. He moves up now and is on the point of accosting her, when, hearing her murmur, he decides to wait and, standing just behind her, listens intently.

MIRA (*praying half-aloud*): O Gopal! Why don't you come? I wait and wait—in vain. And you said you loved me! (*Bitterly*) What is this love which lifts not a finger but stays cold and aloof when the loved one is in despair? Did you not assure me, time and time again, that I am your beloved child and friend and playmate? I have heard that you are the Lord of the three worlds, but to me you came—not as the Divine Ruler, but as a friend and comrade. I have never yet felt the call to see you as the Creator: I have known you only as somebody dearer to me than my father, mother, brothers and sisters. Yet here comes a noble Prince to take me from you—and you choose to treat it as a joke! They say you know every thought that passes in our hearts—every wish, every tremor. Why can't you then divine what I am passing through—the torment, the storm, the despair! What have I done, Gopal, that you should thus stay withdrawn, most probably enjoying your own *lila* of torture! What crime have I committed? I only told him that I liked him: is that the reason why you have chosen to desert me so suddenly? But how was I to blame? Can it be that even to like a man who is noble and handsome and refined and undertsanding is a crime amounting to disloyalty in your eyes? I cannot believe it. Oh, why don't you answer? Why don't you come now—when I need you as never before? Can you not see what is at stake? How can I marry a man when I feel I can't love him and yet—father loves me so dearly—he often talks of committing suicide if I refuse to marry. So far I have stuck to my refusal—but who knows what is going to happen now? Won't father be humiliated in the eyes of the world? How can I let him down now—when he feels so lonely and utterly helpless? He often says he only lives to see me happily married. O Come, speak! I will do whatever you tell me: do not torture me any more.

She waits for a few seconds expectantly after which her body begins to shake with vehement sobbing.

RATAN SINGH *wipes his eyes but stands motionless, indecision writ large on his face. Then he gives a start, his face brightens and he steps forward resolutely.*

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RATAN SINGH (*placing his right palm gently on her head and disguising his voice*): I have come, Mira, to tell what you should do—but on one condition. Keep your eyes shut and look into your heart and then tell me, once for all, whether you are prepared to do what I say.

MIRA (*shivering but with her eyes closed*): I do not need to look in, Gopal! I will obey you—implicitly.

RATAN SINGH (*in the same voice*): Put your hands on my feet—I am speaking through the Image now—take my name thrice, with closed eyes, and promise you will do my will.

MIRA (*doing as directed*): I promise, Gopal! I will, I will.

RATAN SINGH: Then here is my command: a girl must marry and do her duty by her husband. I did not create the world to be shunned for the cave...

MIRA (*her body trembles—but only once*): I...I will marry, Gopal... come what may.

RATAN SINGH's face kindles with joy—only to be extinguished the next moment as MIRA gives way to convulsive sobbing.

RATAN SINGH. Mira!...Mira!...Mira!...

He holds her as she suddenly falls down in a dead swoon just as BHOJ-RAJ enters.

RATAN SINGH: She has swooned away. Will you lend me a hand... I want to put her on the divan.

Between them they take her to a divan in the corner. RATAN SINGH sits down beside her and places her head gently on his lap. He motions BHOJRAJ who picks up a fan lying near the altar

RATAN SINGH (*fanning her*): She will come to in a little while. Prince: there is no cause for alarm.

BHOJRAJ (*in a moved voice*): Raja Sahib! (RATAN SINGH meets his eyes) I cannot tell you... words fail me... but I... swear over my sword... (he unsheathes his sword and with his head bowed, touches it with his brow)... that I will do my very best... to merit the great honour you have conferred upon me.

RATAN SINGH (*placing his palm on his head*): And I bless you, my son! And... (his eyes glisten)... may His mercy forgive the father... in case... in case...

He covers his face with his hands as—

THE CURTAIN FALLS

To be continued

THE PLAY'S THE THING

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Continued from previous issue

Olivier and Gielgud, Edith Evans and Sir Ralph Richardson, are among the actors and actresses of today who have received abundant praise for having "kept alive the old tradition of full-blooded acting." Plays like Shakespeare's demand from the actor a very high degree of imaginative identification with their poetic medium. Thus it is only those actors who are prepared to surrender to Shakespeare's language and give it full scope for galvanizing the stage that are likely to storm the gates of achievement and bring the plays back to life. The Shakespeare Revival in our time has been rendered feasible by a combination of many factors. Producers are now-a-days wisely reluctant to meddle with or amputate Shakespeare's texts. Cuts are few and very far between. As a general rule, every attempt is made to get Shakespeare's words in their purity and fullness. Miss St. Clare Byrne, writing in the second volume of *Shakespeare Survey*, shrewdly links this particular trend in the theatre with a similar trend in the world of scholarship:

"When scholarship itself took a jaundiced view of the authenticity of the text, the theatre might well be excused if it cut and trimmed to suit its own purposes, but the vindication of the Folio editors and of the good Quartos by Pollard, Greg, McKerrow and others altered the position."

These two trends coalesced and fused in 1944 in the Haymarket production of *Hamlet*, in which Gielgud played the title role under the direction of Mr. George Rylands of the Cambridge University:

"The lion and the lamb lying down together was in itself a portent—the theatre and scholarship, professional and amateur, the commercial theatre and state-aided Shakespeare."

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Apart from this revived respect for the full text and for the authentic text of the plays, apart also from the desire for collaboration between actor, producer and scholar, the present-day vogue for simplified stage architecture and for speed in acting and verse articulation has richly contributed to the value of the Shakespeare Revival. One thing more was needed: the right atmosphere for the revival of poetic drama. Were the world of entertainment equally shared by the cinema on the one hand and the prose farce and the exciting revue on the other, how was Shakespeare to find a place under the sun? There had to be a revival in poetic drama if the revival in Shakespeare was to be something more than a display of pseudo-patriotism. In other words, there had to be heirs to Shakespeare before he could be easily summoned back to our midst. There seems to be little doubt that Eliot, Auden and Isherwood, and Christopher Fry, have now established their claims to be Shakespeare's heirs of our time. This is not to maintain that an Eliot or a Fry is the equal of Shakespeare. But these poets have, with whatever limitations, continued the Shakespearian tradition. Spender says, rather paradoxically, that "to be like Shakespeare one must be unlike him"; and, likewise, to be modern, to give one's plays a contemporaneous significance, one must strive to set one's plays against the background of eternity. This Eliot, Auden and Fry have tried to do; and that is the measure of their success in poetic drama. By succeeding in this difficult genre, they have also contributed to the reality of the Shakespeare Revival.

From London I went to Stratford-upon-Avon, and there I saw four of the Histories in the course of three consecutive days: *Richard II* on Monday the 24th September, *Henry IV, Part I* on the 25th, and *Henry IV, Part II* and *Henry V* on the 26th. Such a terrific concentration of good Shakespearian acting was bound to overwhelm the visitor; and, besides, the plays were produced at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, and one was unconsciously impregnated by the feeling for Shakespeare's birthplace and its seductive environs. I spent three enchanting days in Stratford-upon-Avon, and even the plays were but a part of the general enchantment.

Walking up on the first day to the theatre from my hotel, I encountered the Shakespeare Monument on the way and saw the sculptured figures of Hamlet, Prince Hal, Falstaff and Lady Macbeth at the four corners, while the figure of Shakespeare rose high at the centre of the pedestal. From the riverside, the Theatre looked beautiful, although seen from other angles it is apt to look like a factory. The auditorium, with seating accommodation for about 1000, created special difficulties for the actor, although he generally surmounted them with a little practice. In the Stratford production of the cycle of the four historical plays, all was sought

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to be subordinated to the hypothesis that this tetralogy was "planned by Shakespeare as one great play." It was "not only a living epic of England through the reigns of the three kings, but also a profound commentary on Kingship." From these premises followed, as a corollary, that "the true hero of the whole play is Henry V, who personified, to the people of Shakespeare's England, the ideal King: brave, warlike, generous, just, and—it must be added—loving humour." It is quite possible to argue that *Richard II* is a play in its own right, a significant foreshadowing of *Hamlet*; that Hotspur is the tragic hero of *Henry IV, Part I*, that Falstaff is the human colossus that bestrides and dominates the world of the two Parts of *Henry IV*, and that it is an idle task to seek to inflate Hal-Harry into the proportions of national hero and Ideal King. Mr. Anthony Quayle has every right to interpret the cycle of plays in the way he has done, and it is at least one of several more or less plausible interpretations. On the other hand, this interpretation must of necessity affect the rendering of particular parts—Hotspur, Falstaff, Hal-Harry himself.

Speaking for myself, *Richard II* moved me most, Michael Redgrave as Richard giving an unforgettable and deeply affecting performance. Miss Tanya Moiseiwitsch's permanent set, albeit an apparently crude fabrication made up of a pair of folding-doors at the centre leading into the inner stage and a flight of stairs leading to a gallery, was used for all the four plays, and experience showed that it both permitted endless variety and ensured background unity and continuity in the action. Even as the set was the same, yet different, in the four different plays,—and indeed even at different points in the same play, now a gallery in the palace, now a council chamber, now a field of battle, now the bedside of a dying king,—so the actors too changed chameleon-wise, the same in name, yet tantalizingly different in their personations. Redgrave was Richard II, he was also Hotspur in *Henry IV, Part I*; Harry Andrews was both impetuous Bolingbroke and ruthless King Henry, and later he was also the very different Henry of the Second Part of *Henry IV*; Hugh Griffith was John of Gaunt, Owen Glendower, and, in *Henry V*, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Alexander Gauge followed Northumberland's career through the first three plays, and Richard Burton played, first Prince Hal, and then Henry V, in the three last plays; Heather Stannard was Richard's Queen in the first play and Doll Tearsheet in the third, while Rosalind Atkinson was the bouncing Mistress Quickly of *Henry IV* as also the lady Alice in *Henry V*.

With so good an actor as Redgrave to play the part of the impulsive, emotional and weakly tyrannical King, *Richard II* was assured of the resounding success that it actually registered at Stratford; yet there were not wanting critics who recalled Gielgud's Richard to the inevitable

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detriment of Redgrave's King who, according to Quayle's scheme, was to be more a foil and a prologue to the great Hal-Harry than a tragic hero in his own sovereign right. Having had to diminish Richard's stature, that of Bolingbroke had to be advanced correspondingly; and John of Gaunt had to acquire a tremendous Tiresias-like importance, especially when he intoned the richly evocative lines on the glory and greatness of "this blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England." The deposed and dying Richard, however, made an attempt to win our sympathies back; it was both a painful and a beautiful performance; but it couldn't seat him back on the tragic throne, which at least should have been his due.

To be continued

Moon

Uprises a moon in my heart,
In the sky of the heart a luminous round;
O treasure I have newly found,
White mystery, tell me who thou art!

Where wert thou?
With anxious eyes I sought thee everywhere,
But not one touch of thine was on life's air.
Peeping from the heart I see thee wondrous now!

The agelong emptiness is filled,
Filled to the brim in deepest core:
Thy beauty's stainless secrets pour—
The clamouring cells in a happy sweetness stilled!

PRAJARAM

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

A RESUMÉ

BY "Synergist"

In the February issue, a resumé of Part I of this Series of essays, *The World Crisis and India*, was published; here, that of Part II is given—its first two Sections. As this Part is rather long, being written over a period of two and a half years, it is thought advisable to divide its resumé into two essays instead of condensing it in one.

In Part I, our inquiry led us to the conclusion that what humanity needs today is a guide with the highest spiritual realisation and knowledge, one who can give the right interpretation of existence,—a new world view showing the meaning of life and God's purpose in the world—and thereby help men to direct their lives through the right channels; it was found that he should be a person who, through complete union with the Divine Being, has become His radiating centre, and as a result, is in a position to bring down gradually from the higher spiritual realms light, harmony and peace in a world of ignorance, conflict and suffering. Further, as the main thesis was that man must take the next step in his evolution by reaching a higher level of being and consciousness, it was pointed out that what is needed is not a spiritual guide only, but also one who can be the leader of the evolutionary movement of humanity—who can through his own spiritual development show that the attainment of a higher state of being is possible; that it is within man's capacity to transcend the narrowness and limitations of his ego-centric personality and gradually reach the supramental consciousness and make its light and power bear upon his external being and his life.

It was finally concluded that the one person who has the necessary spiritual attainment, an integral union with the Supreme through the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, is the seer-philosopher and Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo. His whole life and spiritual development, his great realisation of the Supermind and his ultimate triumph in making it act in Matter and on the earth-consciousness, for the eventual transformation of human life, singles him out as a leader capable of guiding humanity to its destined goal and helping it to fulfil God's purpose in the world. He has succeeded

in creating a nucleus of light and power at Pondicherry, with his spiritual associate, the Mother, at the helm of affairs, a nucleus which has become a transmitting channel of the Divine Power he represents.

It was seen that his work, a spiritual action carried on from behind the veil of life's surface activities,—but controlling and transforming its outer modes and movements also,—is very closely connected with the evolution of the human race because it has a universal significance. It is obvious that if any person in the world manifests in himself a new power or faculty, or a new principle of being, or passes through a new biological or psychological mutation, it will show that it is within man's capacity to do so—that the same development is possible in others too. When a tremendous power and new principle of existence like the Supermind manifests through a person in the world, it naturally has a universal significance, firstly because this principle is the original creative dynamis behind the Overmind, a lesser power formed out of itself, through which it has created the universe, and secondly, because the individual is a self-conscious centre of concentration of the Universal and represents it and is connected through it with other beings. It was then pointed out in what way Sri Aurobindo has made it possible for it to act on the earth-consciousness and in Matter, and how in order to achieve this he had to bridge in himself the two ends of Being, the inconscient depths and the supramental heights. The inconscient depths—because the roots of all human difficulties and limitations lie there and because these dark and obscure nether regions of consciousness, which keep man securely tied to his lower nature and prevent him from transcending his humanity and growing into a divine perfection, had to be opened to the Divine Light and Power; the supramental heights of the Spirit—because only the irresistible power of the highest spiritual dynamis can reach down, illumine and control the lower inconscient regions and remove the impediments that stand in the way of the complete manifestation of the Divine in earth-existence.

But the bridging between the Superconscient and the Inconscient, between Spirit and Matter, had to be done in himself before it could be successfully effected on a wider scale. The reason for this is that, all through, Sri Aurobindo has been the representative of the two ends of existence; on the one hand, that of evolving earth aspiring to a greater life and, in its own groping way, seeking Truth, Beauty, Love, Bliss, Harmony and Perfection; and on the other, the Light and Power that has been gradually descending in answer to earth's aspiration. The two realms, the terrestrial and the celestial, had to be joined and made to meet and coalesce in the person of one who represented both. Sri Aurobindo as the representative of humanity revealed through his own attainments that whatever he achieved and showed to be possible could be achieved

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by other human beings also. Naturally, as the leader of the evolutionary march of humanity his work was immeasurably more difficult and even dangerous; but that is exactly the *raison d'être* of his existence on earth. If his life and work were not a showing of the way to others, his birth would not have been a sign and a symbol of a greater life for humanity. As he has written in a letter to a disciple: "My point about my sadhana was that my sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done."

But this is only one side of his sadhana, of the tapasya he did for the world. He also showed through his spiritual attainment and through the great Power he transmits, that man's seeking for the Divine Truth, his high ideals and aspirations are not futile; there is a Grace and a Power above that does answer to a sincere call from the earth. To those who have lived in his light and have concretely felt the impact of his power, his birth is itself the sanction of the leaning down of this Grace towards earth and men.

He has now made the gradual operation of the Supermind's direct Power upon the earth possible; what remains to be done is a working out of forces according to the Supramental Truth, so that its fuller descent can become possible making the Supermind a stabilised power on the earth. The task of spreading its divine Power and working out the actual transformation of the human being he has entrusted to the Mother, through whom now his force centrally acts.

In view of all this, Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of existence is definitely worthy of consideration; its greatest recommendation is that it arises directly out of a gnostic vision of Reality that sees the truth of both Essence and Manifestation, of the Transcendent Reality and the Cosmic Process, of the Lord's Being as well as His Creation. All the great treatises that he wrote, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Fundamentals of Indian Culture*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Vedas*, as well as his Commentaries on the Isha and the Kena Upanishads, were written from the heights of his vast realisation, the light of the Divine Gnosis illumining his writings and giving them the stamp of the highest Truth. They cannot be looked upon as mere philosophical speculations of a great intellect, rather, they are the creations of a great intellect transcending its narrow boundaries, the consciousness rising beyond the mind to the summit light of the Supreme Divine Intelligence, the Supermind

Over and above his spiritual attainments, Sri Aurobindo possesses the

necessary scholarship and intellectual equipment to formulate a whole philosophy of life, a world-view which takes within its wide embrace Metaphysics and Ethics, Psychology and Yoga, Mysticism and Occult Knowledge, Social and Political Philosophy

He has interpreted the ancient Scriptures of India in the light of his Supramental realisation and given them an intellectual form which can satisfy the seekings of the philosophic mind, the truths embodied in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita, are assimilated in his higher synthesis of knowledge, and find their full meaning and significance in it.

It is necessary to emphasise all this here, especially the fact that for the elucidation of truths embodied in the ancient Scriptures mere scholarship is not enough; spiritual illumination of a very high order is also needed. Many people do not seem to understand that without the experience of the Divine Reality in all Its aspects, it is not genuinely possible to pronounce verdicts on the great Scriptures or the Commentaries written on them by persons of spiritual realisation.*

Therefore, in Part II, Sri Aurobindo's world-view is placed before the readers, it is sure to go home to people who believe in higher values and see a meaning in human evolution. Only on the secure foundation of an interpretation of life realised in God-union will it be possible to create a greater existence and fulfil the Divine purpose in the world.

* * *

Part II begins with a short biographical sketch, it shows how Sri Aurobindo's life suddenly took a dramatic turn and he became from a political leader a rishi and a bearer of the Divine Light. This sketch comes under Section I.

* It is not laymen alone who make this mistake, persons who are supposed to know something about yoga and yogic philosophy also make it. Only recently, Swami Jagadiswarananda committed what may well be called a yogic howler when in his article on Sri Aurobindo in the "Modern Review" he brought in the journalist Vincent Sheean to pass a verdict on Sri Aurobindo's yoga and his vision of a race of spiritualised beings. One may as well bring in a radio comedian to disprove the validity of the New Testament, that would certainly not be more preposterous.

Even apart from this, many people seem to be under the impression that any educated man who knows Sanskrit well, is qualified to interpret the Scriptures and criticise those who have written Commentaries on them. The implication here is that spiritual experience is not needed to understand the real meaning of the realisations described in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita; the man who has a knowledge of Sanskrit knows more than the God-realised rishi about, say, Satchitananda, or Ishwara and His cosmic manifestation, or about the realisation known as "Tat Twam Asi" and "So Hum". The difference between the man who speaks with authority and the man who writes like the scribes is utterly abolished here, anyone can say anything about the teachings and spiritual experiences of men of God—what Krishna, Sri Aurobindo, or the rishis say is as good as what any Tom, Dick, Harry, or Vincent Sheean has to say.

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Section II is entitled *The Spiritual View of Existence*; it begins with a long extract from Sri Aurobindo's writings on the necessity of integrating the psychological tendencies of the East and the West. He points out that the tendencies of the West have been predominantly, though not exclusively, pragmatic and rationalistic, with the greatest emphasis on the economic and material organisation of life, whereas those of the East have been psychic and spiritual, with the fundamental stress on the life of the Spirit and the realisation of the Ultimate. He states that the new world-view will not regard Spirit and Matter as irreconcilable opposites but as polar truths, the apparent divergence between which should be healed. He then points out that the one-sided approaches to life of both Europe and Asia are defective. Regarding Europe's rejection of religion as an emotional delusion and of philosophy as a barren thought-weaving, and its resolve "to devote the whole intellectual faculty of man to a study of the laws of material Nature and of man's bodily, social, economic and political existence and to build thereon a superior civilisation" he wrote in 1918, "That stupendous effort is over, it has not yet frankly declared its bankruptcy, but it is bankrupt. It is sinking in a cataclysm as gigantic and as natural as the attempt which gave it birth." Today many of the best minds of Europe make similar observations about their civilisation. Then he proceeds to describe the shortcomings of the other extreme tendency—the one prevalent in India; he writes: "On other hand, the exaggerated spirituality of the Indian effort has also registered a bankruptcy; we have seen how high individuals can rise by it, but we have seen how low a race can fall which in its eagerness to seek after God ignores His intention in humanity. . . . The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community. The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unilluminated knowledge and soulless organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of the material mould and the mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of a rapidly changing movement. It is not any exchange of forms that is required, but an interchange of regenerating impulses and a happy fusion and harmonising." He concludes his *Message to America*,* where he dwells on the same theme, with the words: "The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is the soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify

* Given in 1949.

the existence of the material world also, giving a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit."

It must be clearly understood here that by the reconciliation of Spirit and Matter, Sri Aurobindo does not mean that Spirit should be brought in as a subsidiary power merely to help the intellectual, vitalistic and materialistic tendencies of the present unregenerate human life. Spirit and Matter are not fundamentally coequal and coexistent realities; like the other two operative powers in earth-existence, Life and Mind, Matter is a manifested principle of the One Spiritual Reality, and therefore, though as real as Spirit itself, is yet a derivative, not an ultimate. The ultimate is the Spirit, the source and basis of all manifestation.

So when Sri Aurobindo says that Spirit and life must embrace each other, he does not advocate the acceptance of the ordinary life with the pursuit and realisation of the Spirit added on to the other human aims and ideals, but the reconstruction of the whole of human life with the Spirit becoming its creative, formative and governing power.

A general statement of his ideal is given at the end of the first essay in Section II. He writes: "What then shall be our ideal? Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one, for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the Spirit." Regarding the type of spirituality advocated by him, he writes: "Nor is ours the spirituality of a life that is aged and world-weary and burdened with the sense of the illusion and miserable mutuality of all God's mighty creation. Our ideal is not the spirituality that withdraws from life but the conquest of life by the power of the Spirit. It is to accept the world as an effort of manifestation of the Divine, but also to transform humanity by a greater effort of manifestation than has yet been accomplished, one in which the veil between man and God shall be removed, the Divine manhood of which we are capable shall come to birth and our life shall be remoulded in the truth and light and power of the Spirit. It is to make of all our action a sacrifice to the Master of our action and an expression of the great Self in man and of all life a yoga."

It may seem a little strange to positivistic minds in the habit of drawing a rigid and trenchant distinction between the secular and the spiritual how Spirit could be made the leading motive and formative power of the whole of life, the social, political and economic life too. Even in India, the home of spirituality, the pursuit of the Spirit began to imply a shunning of life after the two great waves of Buddhistic Nihilism and Shankarite Illusionism had swept over it. Seen in a larger vision even these extreme forms of life-negating spirituality seem to have been necessary for trying out a particular tendency, Nature often works through extremes,—she tries to fathom the deepest possibilities of forces by driving them to their furthestmost limits before integrating them in a larger whole. Perhaps it had to be known objectively where one-sided pursuits of life and of Spirit ultimately lead, and they seem to have been worked out in the two hemispheres of the world. The time has now come for an integration of these two approaches to existence and for making life an expression of the Spirit.

"*Brahma satyam jagan mithya,*" (the Eternal alone is true, the universe is a lie, a fiction) wrote the great Shankaracharya, and it must be admitted that he was not quite wrong in making this pronouncement, for he spoke according to the particular spiritual experience he had—that of the Absolute beyond Time and Space, Name and Form, aloof and remote from the manifested world. This experience of Parabrahman, which he had, made him realise that this Reality alone is real, and the world is illusory; that as long as one is in the world and caught in its movement it seems real and tangible, but as soon as one attains to the Absolute one realises that this Absolute alone is real and the world is Maya. Consequently, it cannot be said that he had no grounds for making his famous pronouncement, but now many of his followers have come forward to show that he did not mean that the world is an illusion. These attempts cannot be philosophically acceptable, because in the experience of Parabrahman that he had, the world *does seem* like an illusory phenomenon having no connection with the Infinite which alone seems to be real. To try and argue that Shankara did not see the world as an illusion, is to miss the significance of this particular experience and represent him for what he was not. Many besides Shankara have experienced this, and they have all come to the same conclusion; no one has said after having such an experience that the world is a direct manifestation of the Lord, and therefore real, for the Lord of existence Himself is supposed to be part of Maya, and therefore an illusory Phenomenon.*

* It must be pointed out here that it is possible to experience the Absolute in all its three static aspects of inclusion, indwelling, and identity—the Absolute seen as supporting within itself and forming the basis of all that

Mr. Malkani, a staunch Shankarite, writes in the *United Asia*: "According to traditional Vedanta"—(by this, of course, he means Shankara's interpretation of the Vedanta, the Shankarites do not make any distinction between the knowledge contained in the Upanishads and the Gita, and Shankara's interpretation of them) —"the world is created by Ishwara, who is like a great magician, with his power of *maya*. A magician never creates real things, but only an appearance of them. Sri Aurobindo's thesis that the Real can only create the real is absolutely opposed to this view and is altogether incomprehensible."

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation may be different from Shankara's and opposed to the view that God is a magician who constantly performs tricks like creating unreal things before an audience that does not exist, or if it does, is illusory, but that does not make it incomprehensible; this is not the proof of incomprehensibility. There are many thinkers all over the world who find his philosophy perfectly intelligible. In order to understand a philosophical exposition, two things are needed; ability on the part of the one who is expounding, and capacity to understand on the part of the one who is trying to grasp it. If one of the two is missing, then this kind of "incomprehensibility" occurs. In this particular case, where the defect lies can be easily judged by reading the above statement of Mr. Malkani, and the statements of Sri Aurobindo spread throughout this essay. A Persian poet sang years ago,

*Diving and finding no pearls in the sea,
Blame not the ocean, the fault is in thee.*

What Mr. Malkani gives in the above quotation as Sri Aurobindo's thesis is a mis-statement of the latter's position. As a matter of fact the major part of this article in the *United Asia* is a mis-statement. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the world is real because in his spiritual realisation he sees it as a direct manifestation of the Divine—a projection of Himself in Time and Space.

Then Mr. Malkani writes: "Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indian philosophy will be hailed by all those who are influenced by modern trends in their thinking. The world is real. So is time and progress in time. Empirical existence is not without value. It has a purpose behind it, a purpose in the Divine mind." Here most people will agree with the writer; many intellectuals find the voice of the *Zeitgeist* speaking through

exists, as pervading all existence equally, and finally, as itself that existence. But the one who has this three-aspected experience does not maintain that the Absolute alone is real and the world is a fiction, on the contrary, like the Upanishadic seers and the Advaitists of the older school, he declares "All is Brahman". Obviously, this was not the experience of Shankara; his was of the poise of the Absolute detached from the cosmic manifestation. As we shall see, even the three aspects mentioned above do not give the complete knowledge of Reality.

the works of Sri Aurobindo. But it is hard to agree with him when he concludes by saying: "This estimate of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy however will find little appeal in the minds of those who have entered into the spirit of the traditional Vedanta of Sri Shankara, and who can compare the two systems dispassionately and with a clear sense of the values of logic."

Sri Aurobindo's position with respect to the values of logic can easily be seen from what has been written in this article, at least regarding his interpretation of existence. This is the Mayavadist's position: The world is Maya, a fiction; the Lord of existence, Ishwara, who manifests this world in His own Being, is Himself part of Maya, and therefore an illusory Phenomenon; the mind that advances arguments in support of Mayavada is also a product of Maya, but by some strange Super-Illusionistic magic the arguments themselves are real and valid, and are put forward for acceptance as an explanation of the cosmic process. The world is an illusion: God is an illusion, man is an illusion; but man's arguments in favour of Mayavada are real and valid. It seems that the values of logic vary with different people; one man's logic is another man's moonshine.

Metaphysical subtleties are excellent but they must not be self-invalidating; secondly, they must explain the meaning of existence or at least, some aspect of it in relation to the whole. The allegories of ropes and snakes and magicians can no longer be brought forward as metaphysical arguments to explain the rationale of the cosmic process; the intellectual temper of the times demands that a more philosophical explanation be given of the riddle of this universe—no amount of Shastric logomachy can satisfy it. The Sri Aurobindo-Shankara controversy started recently has its roots in a lack of understanding of the fundamental realisations on which the two interpretations of existence take their stand.

A complementary spiritual realisation reveals that the ultimate Reality is also a Divine Person, the Lord of existence, who by His Consciousness-Force, His Shakti, manifests this cosmos of myriad worlds. But still the hiatus remains between the cosmos and the Ultimate—it cannot be understood even in this spiritual experience exactly how the cosmic manifestation proceeds from the Transcendent Reality, or the *raison d'être* of existence. These can only be known by attaining oneness with the Supreme Divine Intelligence, the Gnosis itself, the Supermind.

Before the advent of Nihilism* and Mayavada, spirituality in India was not world-shunning, as can be seen from the life and culture of the Vedic and the Post-Vedic periods. Spirit was then looked upon not as a

* Buddhistic Nihilism also was life-negating; it looked upon the world as a place of sorrow, suffering and bondage and aimed at a Transcendence beyond, at a withdrawal from world-existence into Nirvana.

Reality apart from life but as permeating it and governing it, with the result that spiritual realisation was always looked upon as a gain for life. The extreme tendencies had their source in experiences that were themselves partial, and not integral and all-comprehensive—mostly the Impersonal and Static aspects of the Divine. Naturally the systems of philosophy which proceeded from these experiences looked upon life as a transient and evanescent phenomenon and did not give it the value it really merited. The type of spirituality advocated and practised by Sri Aurobindo, as it arises from the realisation of the Integral Divine Reality attained through the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, does not deny life because it looks upon the Impersonal and Static aspects as partial revelations of the Supreme, it affirms the truth of the Personal, Creative and Dynamic aspects also. The Ultimate Reality can be apprehended on all levels of existence, the difference in Sri Aurobindo's case is that he apprehends it at the summit of Being, and therefore in all its wideness, totality and integrality. The very nature of his realisation makes him see that the Impersonal and the Personal, the Static and the Dynamic poles of the Divine, which seem to be antithetical on all levels of cosmic existence, are the polar statuses of a single Reality fusing into each other without the truth of either getting annulled in any way. Therefore it is quite logical that Sri Aurobindo should accept life and see the world as a manifestation and expression of the Divine,—not a perfect expression but one evolving from Ignorance to Knowledge, Inconscience to Superconscience, imperfection to perfection.

To state that Shankara's illusionistic interpretation of existence is correct and not Sri Aurobindo's is to imply that the experience of Parabrahman, is greater and completer than that of the Divine in His integrality, a conclusion which is *prima facie* absurd, because it implies that the partial is greater than the whole, that the experience of a single aspect of the Ultimate is greater than that of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, God-consciousness in all its totality, the Divine in His Omniscience, and Omnipotence—(the Omnipresence is of course implicit).

This is generally how the limited finite human mind explains the Illimitable even after a direct experience of It; it takes up an aspect of Reality, like the Impersonal or the Personal, the Static or the Dynamic, and looks upon that alone as the ultimate and then builds a system of philosophy upon such a conception and offers it as the only valid explanation of things. It is not within the scope of this essay to write more on this controversy, it can be summed up that it is the failure to grasp the true import of the realisations that are fundamental to the two sides that has given rise to it; Shankara spoke according to his realisation, Sri Aurobindo speaks according to his, whose interpretation is more complete and

answers satisfactorily the questions men have asked since the beginning, is for the world to judge.

So far as the author is concerned, there is no real controversy. Shankara's experience is valid as the partial revelation of a Reality that is single but many-aspected; it is acceptable as a limited truth, and finds a place in Sri Aurobindo's wider and higher realisation and larger synthesis. But the interpretation of existence based on this limited experience cannot possibly be accepted as valid, because it does not take into cognisance the whole of Reality and fails to answer the riddle of this world. His Commentaries on the Upanishads cannot be fully accepted, because his limited spiritual experience which throughout guides him is quite inadequate for understanding and explaining the rich and comprehensive knowledge contained in them. Its limitations become quite apparent in his Commentary on the Isha Upanishad.

From all this it is clear that a truly comprehensive spiritual interpretation of existence does not exclude the great aims and ideals of human life nor does it discourage the impulse of the human soul towards development, expansion and perfection. This has to be so, because the world-manifestation is a process of "becoming", and man as the spearhead of the evolutionary movement has to pass through this process and "become" overtly what he is potentially, or rather, he has to manifest his divine potentialities. But it must be borne in mind that this development will not be on a basis of ego-centrism, but of theo-centrism and universalism. That is, man will cease to look upon himself as an utterly separate individual living only for himself and the satisfaction of his own desires, but will realise as a fact of immediate experience his oneness with God and with the universe; he will become aware that God is the centre around Whom and in Whom all things move and have their existence, and that all individuals are emanated powers of His Being, projections of His Timeless Self in time.

This development, consequently, will not be an egoistic "becoming", but a "divine becoming", a "becoming" not in Ignorance but in Knowledge—a gradual spiritual evolution from lower states of being and consciousness to higher ones. It is necessary to make this distinction in order to avoid a misconception, for in certain system of psychological discipline growth and development are synonymous with ego-expansion. Once this "divine becoming" is accepted, man's evolutionary development, his intellectual and aesthetic pursuits, and his endeavours to create a perfect social, economic and political organisation of life, have also to be accepted. Life then becomes an expression of the Spirit. It is obvious that such a "divine becoming", once it is accepted, cannot possibly deny life-values, or men's humanistic ideals and aspirations; only, these have to be infused with the spiritual motive.

The next problem, which immediately arises out of this argument, is the social and cultural organisation of life with a spiritual metaphysic as its foundation, because, as pointed out in Part I, *The World Crisis and India*, it is the prevalent metaphysic with the particular norms and values it inculcates that largely influences the life of a people. Men's life and conduct, their conception of good and evil, and right and wrong, will always be largely influenced by their ideas of God, man and the universe. As an example of a nation where a spiritual metaphysic, a metaphysic created out of spiritual experiences, has governed its social and cultural life, ancient India can best be cited,—the Vedic and Post-Vedic periods.

It must not be supposed that a re-creation of ancient forms is here advocated, an idea in vogue at present among the orthodox elements in India; that way lies stagnation and retrogression, not evolution and progress. The outer forms must always be carefully distinguished from the inner spirit that creates and moulds these forms. In each new phase of the cultural evolution of a people, the outer forms have to be discarded when they cease to answer to the spiritual, psychological and social needs of its evolving consciousness and new ones created through a renewed contact with the inner spirit. This can be seen in the progress of India's social and cultural life before her decline. The spirit of her culture has always remained the same, but its form has undergone tremendous changes. This was inevitable, because there is always a close relation between the psycho-spiritual evolution of a people and its social and cultural development.

But the tendency to go to the other extreme, at present prevalent among so-called "progressive" minds in India and also in other parts of Asia, must also be curbed; the heritage of the past should not be entirely discarded—tradition is not necessarily a force of retrogression; there are many great and valuable things in the past which can always be profitably assimilated into the present. The past is not something apart from the present; what we look upon as past, present, and future are three terms which reveal to a particular type of consciousness—the developing human consciousness—at a certain period of its psycho-biological growth the deploying of a continuous evolutionary process which proceeds from inconscience to Truth-consciousness. The present seems to arise from the past and advance towards the future, but the *Igdrasil*, as they used to say in the Norse legends, is a single integral reality having its roots in the remote past and its trunk and branches stretching out heavenwards into the future.

Sri Aurobindo explains the relation of the past to the present: "We have to make three distinct and yet convergent comparisons in order to arrive at a fruitfully guiding judgment, a wholly helpful view of what

we are and what we may be. We have to compare our past and our present, to distinguish in the first all that was great, essential, elevating, vitalising, illuminating, victorious, and in that again to separate what was of the permanent, essential spirit and the persistent law of our cultural being from what was temporary and formulative,—for all that was great in the past cannot be preserved as it was or repeated; there are new needs, there are other vistas before us. Secondly, we have to distinguish too what was in the past deficient, imperfect, ill-grasped, imperfectly formulated or only suited to limiting and unfavourable circumstances,—for it is quite idle to pretend that all in the past, even at its greatest, was entirely admirable and the highest consummate achievement of the human mind and spirit. Then in this comparison we have to understand the cause of our decline and seek the remedy, so that our sense of the greatness of the past may not be, as it is to some, a fatally hypnotising lure to inertia, but rather an inspiration to renewed and greater achievements.” Then regarding the future he says that what we at present consider to be ideal, “will then be condemned as a self-satisfied imperfection; much that we call enlightenment will appear as a demi-light or a darkness. . . . There is a permanent spirit to which we must cling, certain fundamental motives or essential idea-forces which cannot be thrown aside, because they are part of the vital principle of our being and our aim of being, *swadharmā*; but these motives and idea-forces are, whether for nation or for humanity, few, simple in their essence, capable of a varying and progressive application. The rest belongs to the less internal layers of our being and must undergo the changing pressure and satisfy the forward-moving demands of the Time-Spirit. There is the permanent spirit in things; there is the persistent *swadharmā* or law of being; there is a less binding system of laws of successive formulation,—the last obeying the mutations of the ages, *yugadharmā*. This double principle of persistence and mutation the race must obey or bear the penalty of decay and deterioration.”

Then, after an essay on the central conception of India's religion and the basic truths of her spiritual metaphysic, an abridgment of two essays by Sri Aurobindo is given in this Section. It shows India's past in a correct historico-cultural perspective and reveals how metaphysical ideas and concepts based on the spiritual realisations of her rishis influenced the social and cultural life of the Vedic, the Post-Vedic, and the Purano-Tantric phases of her civilisation.

It can be easily seen from this account how a spiritual metaphysic can become the central unifying force of the cultural unity and integrate its diverse strands. This influence of the prevalent metaphysic has become one of the major problems of social philosophy and culturology; as a matter of fact, a whole branch of philosophy called Metaculturology is

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being created round it. That the importance of the underlying metaphysic of a given culture cannot be underrated is realised today by many social philosophers and historians, especially by those who are concerned with examining the causes of the ideological differences between nations and arriving at a solution which will provide a set of philosophical principles serving as the basis of a common cultural outlook. It is believed by them that the recognition of a common set of metaphysical ideas with their consequent norms and values by the peoples of the world will result in bringing them closer and in creating a better understanding between them. The metaphysical and ideative elements in the growth of civilisations which were being neglected by sociologists anthropologists, and social psychologists, owing to their one-sided sociological and functional or genetic and psycho-analytical approaches, are being once again recognised as the basic ones, as elements which form the very ground of the culture-pattern of a nation

Section II ends here and *Section III: The New World View* begins. Its resume will be given in the next issue. It begins with the cultural crisis and the present problem of thought and the general scheme of Sri Aurobindo's *weltanschauung* followed by his vision of the future of the human race, and his spiritual metaphysic.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchandra

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHIC—THE DELIGHT-SOUL

PART II

The Realisation of the Psychic

“Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

“A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you—your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.”*

In these few packed words the Mother outlines the most rapidly effective way of realising the psychic. A sincere, intense aspiration and an unflagging concentration in the depths of our being, shutting out the unending clamours and conflicts of the outer members, is the royal road. But it must be a loving aspiration and a loving and living concentration; not a routine, mechanical exercise,—a joyous progress through constant devotion and self-giving. Two things which greatly help this progress are: (1) calm and equality and (2) a growing, spontaneous discontent with the normal round of life with its petty aims and puerile struggles, its fixed grooves of narrow ideas and recurrent thoughts, and its ravaging desires and heaving reactions. The more we seek for the soul, the more we come to feel the customary atmosphere of our self-centred existence as positively boring and suffocating. And seeking and longing for the soul, we advance, step by firm step, through the long, dim passage of our inner being till, one day, as the Mother says, the passage suddenly dissolves in a splendour of light or a door swings open upon a flaming Presence, or it is a well or abyss of dazzling effulgence in which we find ourselves. It is an experience unlike any that ever takes place in our ordinary life, unlike any that even the sharpest human mind can ever conceive or imagine. It is an experience in

* “Words of the Mother”

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a new dimension of being, in an unaccustomed ether of existence. It is an experience that changes the very stuff and texture of our deeper consciousness and leaves an indelible mark even upon the outer. Once we have it, be it even for a fleeting moment, we know what we are in our essence— infinite and immortal; and we receive, as it were, a fire-baptism in that luminous infinity and immortality. And we also know, not by the thought or idea of the mind, or the feeling or emotion of our human heart, but by something much deeper and elemental in our being,—an immediate, intimate sense, an indubitable, mystical perception, an impalpable light, which is the very grain of our consciousness—that we are not the struggling and suffering creatures of Nature we seem to be. An unimaginable purity, an unstirring calm of eternity possess us in their ineffable sweetness. A veil has been lifted, a long-cherished illusion dispelled for ever.

Another simultaneous experience, unless the psychic realisation be partial and incomplete, is that the flood-gates of our love and devotion for the Divine are flung wide open and we feel an exclusive and ecstatic tension towards Him. The tension, the turning has no alloy of the mental effort or the vital urge in it—it is an automatic turning, as natural as the turning of the sun-flower towards the sun, and infinitely more ardent. Our soul seems to hunger and thirst only after Him, and recognise Him alone as the Master of our being, the sole reason of our existence. There is something so spontaneous, so sparkingly joyous in this love and self-giving that even aspiration seems to melt and disappear in a mute rapture of fulfilment, and all the chords of our being vibrate to the ecstasy of the divine touch.

The third concomitant experience, or more precisely, the third strand of the total indivisible experience, is an unutterable sense of release, a tremendous relief, from the gnawing cares of the life of ignorance. An abyssal peace sucks us in and a tranquil silence envelops and embalms our repose. A serene eternity, in which there is no succession of quivering moments, and a radiant unity, unwounded by division, cradle and sustain our soul in that transporting bliss of self-realisation.

These three experiences together constitute the psychic realisation in its essence, but in the case of each individual, it has usually a colour and a rhythm characteristic of his individuality and the peculiar nature of his aspiration. But it is quite possible that the being, emphasising the peace and silence of the realisation and revelling in the calm passivity of its freedom, may turn altogether towards the immobility of the impersonal Self or Spirit and seek to blot itself out in it. But that is a rather narrow and exclusive orientation, happily becoming a less common eventuality than before. The incipient expansiveness of the spiritual impulse in modern

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humanity presupposes a widening of aspiration and presages a very comprehensive fulfilment—a dynamic and integral union with the Divine, and not a mere merger in the silent immutability of His impersonal existence. The aspiration with which the Integral Yoga starts is such an inclusive and embracing aspiration which seeks to harmonise and unify all the aspects of the supreme Reality in the most comprehensive spiritual realisation. Sri Aurobindo does not countenance the escapist aspiration of the soul towards the blank peace or the silent void of the unconditioned Vast, as will be evident from the following quotation from the third book of his epic, *Savitri*:

*A stillness absolute, incommunicable,
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known,
All that the labouring senses still would weave
Prolonging an imaged unreality.
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies space;
Only the Inconceivable is left,
Only the Nameless without space and time:
Abolished is the burdening need of life:
Thought falls from us, we cease from joy and grief,
The ego is dead; we are free from being and care,
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power?
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?
One was within thee who was self and world,
What hast thou done for his purpose in the stars?
Escape brings not the victory and the crown!
Something thou can'st to do from the Unknown,
But nothing is finished and the world goes on,
Because only half God's cosmic work is done.*

* * *

*A black veil has been lifted; we have seen
The mighty shadow of the omniscient Lord;
But who has lifted up the veil of light
And who has seen the body of the King?*

* * *

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*A large white line has figured as a goal,
But far beyond the ineffable sun-tracts blaze.
What seemed the source and end was a wide gate,
A last bare step into eternity.
An eye has opened upon timelessness,
Infinity takes back the forms it gave,
And through God's darkness or his naked light
His million rays return into the Sun.
There is a zero sign of the Supreme;
Nature left nude and still uncovers God.
But in her grandiose nothingness all is there:
When her strong garbs are torn away from us,
The soul's ignorance is slain but not the soul.
The zero covers an immortal face.
A high and black negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God's last word,
Life's ultimate sense, the close of being's course,
The meaning of this great mysterious world.
In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul
And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,
It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.
To free the self is but one radiant pace;
Here to fulfil himself was God's desire.*

* * *

We have appended this long and luminous extract and dwelt on the escapist tendency of the soul both in this and the previous essay, because, next to surrender to the Mother, the nature and quality of the aspiration is the most important factor determining the direction and culminating perfection in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The initial aspiration of our being, as it turns towards the Infinite and Eternal, contains, like a seed, the full potentiality of the future efflorescence. If the integral, dynamic union with the Divine is the aim, as it is in the Integral Yoga, then there must be, in the aspiration with which one starts on the path, something like a prescience or foreshadowing of it. The beginning must betray, to the eye that can observe, the dim contours of the distant end. The Integral Yoga cannot be persued to its glorious consummation by those who have any exclusive leaning towards personal salvation or the vast peace and silence of the immutable Self.

Experience and Vision

The realisation of the psychic or the soul, as described above, is an experience which operates a basic change in a great part of our consciousness and from which we never return the same as we were when we entered into it. It is felt as a new birth, a revolutionary reversal of our normal poise and an opening of mysterious horizons. Its effect is therefore far-reaching and abiding. But a vision is a different thing. It is seeing and knowing rather than being and becoming. There are, it is true, certain visions which produce a considerable change in us or leave an ineffaceable imprint upon our being and nature, but they are more an exception than a rule—and even they do not possess the power to transform our consciousness. Sometimes it happens that a vision is followed by an experience; in that case, whatever change or transformation takes place in us should be attributed to the experience and not to the vision. Besides, there are visions and visions, and one must be able to tell the true from the false.

Let us take an outstanding example of a vision of the soul and its eternal Master dwelling in it. Suso, the Western mystic, once saw a vision of angels and, as Dean Inge describes it, "besought one of them to show him the manner of God's secret dwelling in the soul. An angel answered, 'Cast then a joyous glance into thyself and see how God plays His play of love with thy loving soul.' He looked immediately, and saw that his body over his heart was as clear as crystal, and that in the centre was sitting tranquilly, in lovely form, the eternal Wisdom, beside whom sat, full of heavenly longing, the servitor's own soul, which leaning lovingly towards God's side, and encircled by His arms, lay pressed close to His heart." It is a beautiful vision as illuminating as enrapturing; but it is evidently mixed with Suso's mental constructions and cast and garbed in his mental symbols.* It must have produced a considerable effect upon him, but an effect bearing more directly upon his mind and heart than upon the deepest layers of his consciousness, as the pictorial representation and the detached visual perception clearly testify. But an experience is neither a representation nor a detached perception—it is a realisation by identification, a knowing by being, an obliteration of the subject-object duality in the perfect osmosis of union. And yet, baffling all mental understanding, a rapturous relation of love persists in the heart of that union. A vision, if it is not very powerful, may, in course of time, and particularly if life is forced in a contrary direction, fade away from the mind or remain only as a vapid memory in the remote background of one's consciousness; but an experience is a guest that never departs—it has come to stay and conquer and possess. "A vision is a vision," says the Mother, "but an experience is a gift."

* These symbols and constructions are usually subconscious.

The Psychic Attitude in Action

The true psychic attitude is one of blissful love and unstinted self-giving. It is polarised to the Divine, but this polarity is not exclusive, it is all-inclusive. The light of consciousness and the force of consciousness being, unlike as in our mind, one and indivisible in the fully awakened psychic being, the stress of its personality is at once towards the ecstasy of the divine union and the perfect expression of that union in its terrestrial nature. The sole self-sufficing delight of the psychic is in the Divine and in the fulfilment of His Will in the world. Fully conscious of the reason of its existence, it does not count it a sacrifice to forgo even the highest ecstasy of a rapt union with the Divine for the sake of accomplishing His work and promoting His manifestation. It is a mistake to think that the soul or the psychic seeks only the absorbed bliss of the divine union and has a natural aversion to the world and its activities.* That seeking, as we have already seen, is an intense but exclusive trend, not the whole tenor of its being and consciousness. "You may think, my daughters," says St. Teresa, "that the soul in her state of union should be so absorbed that she can occupy herself with nothing. You deceive yourselves. She turns with greater ease and ardour than before to all that which belongs to the service of God, and when these occupations leave her free again, she remains in the enjoyment of that companionship."

But where shall we look for the most perfect illustrations of the true psychic poise, the true psychic attitude, the mysterious persistence of the rapturous relation of the psychic love and devotion in the midst of a rapt divine union, the psychic control and transformation of nature, and the unwearied insistence on service, on the perfect fulfilment of the divine Will and the manifestation of the supernal glory of the Divine upon earth, except in the *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*?

The Psychic Poise

The essential psychic poise is one of perfect peace and equality. The psychic does not so much seek after the Divine as see and feel and enjoy Him. Its aspiration is a pure flame, calm and unwavering, that rises straight towards its eternal Beloved. It knows no flurry or flutter, but is serenely firm in its trust in the Divine. If love and delight are the very stuff of its being, peace is its foundation, and an infinite patience the rhythm of its intensity. This poise of peace and patience is beautifully illustrated in the following Prayer of the Mother:

"In Peace and Silence the Eternal manifests; allow nothing to disturb you and the Eternal will manifest; have perfect equality in face of all and

* There is always a mental or vital alloy in such a one-sided seeking.

the Eternal will be there. . . . Yes, we should not put too much intensity*, too much effort into our seeking for Thee; the effort and intensity become a veil in front of Thee: *we must not desire to see Thee*, for that is still a mental agitation which obscures Thy Eternal Presence; it is in the most complete Peace, Serenity and Equality that all is Thou even as Thou art all, and the least vibration in this perfectly pure and calm atmosphere is an obstacle to Thy manifestation. No haste, no inquietude, no tension; Thou, nothing but Thou, without any analysis or any objectivising, and Thou art there without a possible doubt, for all becomes a Holy Peace and a Sacred Silence.

“And that is better than all the meditations in the world.”†

The Psychic Love

The psychic love is a radiant flower of identity, and yet in the very heart of identity, it maintains a mysterious relation of love and devotion with the Divine; for, if it merged in the Divine and His Love, the psychic individuality would be abolished, and abolished with it the very means of divine manifestation in the world. This subtle duality in the midst of the closest unity is very sweetly brought out in the Prayer of May 21, 1914:—

“Outside all manifestation, in the immutable silence of Eternity, I am in Thee, O Lord, as unmoving beatitude. In that which, out of Thy puissance and marvellous light, forms the centre and reality of the atoms of Matter I find Thee; thus without going out of Thy Presence I can disappear in Thy supreme consciousness or see Thee in the radiant particles of my being. And for the moment that is the plenitude of Thy life and Thy illumination.

“I see Thee, I am Thyself, and between these two poles my intense love aspires towards Thee.”

The Mother has identified herself with the Divine both in His transcendence and in His universal immanence, she has become one with Him, Himself, and yet she sees Him; and between these two poles, her psychic love aspires for Him. This duality in unity, this difference in identity, incomprehensible to the human mind, is a source of infinite bliss to the psychic, permitting, as it does, a constant union and communion, without which the psychic mission of manifesting the Divine would not be possible.

The psychic love is a constant oblation and an unailing incentive to service. It wants nothing for itself—it is a flame that is content only to burn. “O Lord, I am before Thee as an offering ablaze with the burning fire of divine Union. . . .”‡ It seeks only the pleasure of the Divine,

* It is mental or vital intensity that is meant here

† “Prayers and Meditations”—Dec 5, 1912.

‡ “Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.”

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the fulfilment of His Will and the deployment of His Love and Light upon earth. Its essential aspiration is to spend itself in God's service, but this service is not any mentally conceived work, altruistic or humanitarian, done in a spirit of disinterestedness; it is the becoming a flexible and iridescent instrument for the perfect self-expression of the Divine. In her Prayer of the 27th July, 1914, the Mother prays to the Divine:—

“Let me lie down at Thy feet, merge into Thy heart, disappear in Thee, be blotted out in Thy beatitude; or rather be solely Thy servitor without pretending to anything else. I do not desire or aspire to anything more, I wish only to be Thy servitor.”

It is interesting to note the ascending scale of the aspiration, which starting from “lying down at the feet” of the Divine, rises, step by step, through “merging in His heart,” “disappearing in Him” and, (this is the traditional climax) being “blotted out in His beatitude,” to the superb pitch of a total holocaust—wishing “only to be Thy servitor”! Nothing can reveal better the essentially sacrificial nature of the psychic love than this high-souled aspiration of the Mother.

In the next issue we shall consider the odyssey of the psychic being, its predetermination of the developing lines and conditions of its birth, its secret guidance of the nature even in the ignorance and its eventual self-manifestation as a step and means to God-manifestation.

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Sisirkumar Mitra

Continued from previous issue

A Splendid Urban Civilisation

One of the discoveries relating to a splendid urban civilisation in ancient India was made in the early twenties of the present era by R.D. Banerji, a Government Archaeological officer. While excavating a Buddhist stupa and monastery in the region called Mohenjo-daro in the Larkana district of Sindh, Banerji came upon some burnt bricks of a peculiar size which he knew could not belong to the period when the stupa had been built. These bricks, as shown by later excavations, had been dug out from lower strata of the earth where had lain the ruins of a vast city at least three thousand years older than the Buddhist monastery. At the instance of Banerji the Archaeological Survey of India undertook extensive operations in the regions with the result that there came to light conclusive evidence in the form of relics and antiquities pointing to the existence there of a big city, characteristic of an urban civilisation, with well-built dwelling-houses, roads and drains, public baths and meeting-places, holy sanctuaries and halls of worship, shops and bazaars, and various signs of other amenities that a visitor cannot but take as remains of an advanced culture and of a progressive community-life, even in the modern sense of the term.

But Sindh is not the only site of this culture. In Harappa in the Montgomery district of the Punjab—about three hundred miles from Mohenjo-daro—have also been unearthed similar antiquities which are part of the same culture as that of the Sindhu Valley. The absolute uniformity in the products of these two cities can be explained, says an authority, by the possible currency in both of these cities of a common commercial code and a standard technique of production which could control the size of bricks, the capacity and type of pots and the system of weights and measures. Not only in their products, but in their plan and layout also, these two cities are strikingly similar. The climate of Sindh when this culture was being evolved was certainly not as dry and

trying as it is today. The water-supply was adequate and also the vegetation. The Sindhu apart, there was another river, the Mihran, by which also the region was watered, and a heavier rainfall from the south-west monsoon is suggested by the elaborate drainage-system of the city and by the use of kiln-burnt bricks for the exposed parts of the ancient buildings, and sun-dried ones for their unexposed parts. That the arid deserts of today were green forests in those days is indicated on the explored seals by the figures of animals, which live only in dense forests.

Before the excavations, the site had on it a number of mounds from which it derived its name Mohenjo-daro, meaning in Sindhi, 'mound of the dead', where hovered, so ran a local tradition, the spirits of those whose bodily remains lay beneath the mounds. Anyway, a spirit is certainly there prevailing in the atmosphere, the spirit of a most ancient civilisation, which an understanding visitor will most likely feel. These mounds which today represent the city cover a square mile. As the diggings started, one by one, there were uncovered as many as seven strata of remains lying hidden under those mounds for the past thousands of years. The first three strata belong to the Late period, the next three to the Intermediate period, and the last stratum to the Early period. It is believed that yet more strata of even earlier periods could have been brought to light had not the water-level come up much higher than at the time when the culture began.

According to stratigraphic calculations as done in other countries, it would seem that the period which should ordinarily be taken by the culture to grow and develop through the seven strata should be at least one thousand years. But archaeologists hesitate to accept this in view of the fact that the region was frequently subjected to heavy floods which did not allow the culture of a stratum to last for any considerable length of time, and which was also ultimately responsible for the destruction of the whole civilisation. That this is a possibility is supported by the homogeneous character of the relics found in all the seven strata, though some deterioration is noticed in the masonry work in the last stratum.

Even a cursory survey of the remains of the city will convince the visitor that the builders of it must have meticulously followed an excellent system of town planning. There is no doubt that the construction of the city was supervised by competent civil engineers. The whole conception and execution, the design, content and utility cannot but be attributed to master-builders and to men highly skilled in the art and science of architecture. Mohenjo-daro is said to be the earliest city in the world built according to plan, in which the first thing that strikes the visitor is the order of the streets which, varying from 9 feet to 34 feet in width, ran in straight lines and, at almost regular intervals, crossed by others

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at right angles, divided the city into square or rectangular blocks. Indeed the bold parallels of the avenues are as straight as the mason's line could make them. All were aligned from east to west or from north to south, evidently to allow the prevailing winds from the north or south to ventilate the smaller streets and by-lanes also running at right angles.

These streets were flanked by flat-roofed dwelling houses built of burnt brick of various sizes. Wedge-shaped bricks were used in wells. There was one well in every house and one for the public on the roadside after every two houses. The buildings were plain and seem to have been meant only to serve utility and meet the needs of comfort rather than of beauty. There was not much art so far as their decoration was concerned, though decorative motifs were not absent. The brick-laying of the walls of the houses was in the usual 'English Bond' method, in alternate headers and stretchers, the masons never forgetting to use a half-brick to break the joints. The private houses were quite commodious, each having good-sized rooms, a bath-room, covered drains connected with the main street-drain, and an open brick-paved courtyard surrounded by chambers. There was the kitchen in a sheltered corner of the courtyard as well as the porter's lodge and tenements. The thickness of most walls of the houses at Mohenjo-daro and also the stair-ways suggest that they were two or more storeys in height. The ground-floor of a small house averaged 27 by 20 feet, and that of a large one about double this area. There were also even larger houses whose layout indicates that they could be converted into a series of flats for occupation by separate families.

At Harappa has been excavated a great structure which seems to have been planned to meet the needs of processional ceremonies, religious or secular. It had ceremonial terraces and a processional way leading up from a ramp or flight of steps to the actual gateways, the terraces being provided with guard-rooms at the outer angles. The Great Granary is another large building at Harappa. Measuring 169 feet, it consists of two blocks with an aisle, 23 feet wide, between them. Each block has six halls, alternating regularly with five corridors, and each hall is further partitioned into four narrow divisions. The blocks of fourteen small houses are said to be Harappa's workmen's quarters.

At Mohenjo-daro again, there is a large building some 230 by 78 feet, planned as a single architectural unit, which is surmised to be a communal establishment or 'college' of some sort, a 'priest-college', as an archaeologist called it. Its plan is not like the normal house-plan of Mohenjo-daro. Another exceptionally-planned structure is a square hall about 80 feet each way with its roof supported on twenty rectangular pillars of brick-work. It might have served the purpose of an Assembly Hall. But the most remarkable building of Mohenjo-daro is the Great Public Bath, or

Tank, 40 feet long by 29 feet wide, and sunk 8 feet below the floor level. Its beautifully-made walls are paved with brick and polished with cement which even today appear sound and water-tight. At one side a flight of wide shallow steps leads into it, and above and on the same side the remains of a wall with entrances and windows mark the enclosure, used most probably by people who visited it for religious purposes. Tiny little chambers range round the other two sides, evidently for bathers to change, and in one of the central ones is a deep circular well the water from which used to supply the tank. That well is as sound today, and supplying water from the same source, as it did in that long past. The tank floor slopes towards one corner where it opens into the great corbel-vaulted drain over six feet high and with a manhole for cleaning purposes. This was for filling and emptying the Bath,—a noteworthy piece of engineering. This Swimming Bath would do credit to a modern seaside hotel. Arrangements attached to it are taken to be for a hot-air bath, and there is distinct 'evidence of a hypocaustic system of heating.'

The drainage system of Mohenjo-daro has been declared by authorities as the most complete ancient system as yet discovered. Every street, sometimes even small lanes, would have brick-lined drains. Into the main ones would run the drains of the houses. They were made of bricks cemented with mud-mortar mixed with lime or gypsum to make it water-tight. In order to prevent water from escaping into the sub-soil there was a brick-lined pit at every point where one drain entered another from a higher level. There were large manhole covers on the drains, placed in such a way that they could be easily lifted when the drains required cleaning. The drainage system is proof enough of the care the municipal authorities took of the health of the people. And this is said to be without parallel in the civilised world of the time.

Some idea of the arts and crafts of this culture may be had from the engraved seals, figurines, amulets and pottery which have highly realistic animal figures on them. Horned bulls, squirrels and monkeys are vivid enough to attract attention. The bull, the buffalo and the bison, as engraved on the seals, are remarkable for their naturalism as also for drawing and execution. The circular group of monkeys—a gay company—sitting with their arms on each others' waists are surely the forbears of what we see today of the same species. Among the bronzes may be mentioned the figure of a dancing girl whose ease and naturalness of posture are striking. Works of sculpture, not many, include a steatite male draped in a shawl with eyes half-closed and in yoga posture. But the most interesting pieces are those found in Harappa. The famous sandstone torso of a man shows the mature rendering of the human form and also its stylistic affinity to Indian sculpture of a later date. Another is a

dancing figure probably of Shiva Nataraja, 'in which the head has been affixed separately with metal pegs, the arms and legs are also designed to be in more than one piece similarly held together, and nipples are inlaid in some sort of plaster.' The workmanship and technique in both these specimens are decidedly of an advanced type.

Pottery was an important craft of the Sindhu Valley culture. And there was nothing primitive in it. The specimens discovered belong to a highly developed stage of that art and indicate a long course of previous training. A very curious kind of jar has been found which is ornamented on the outside with knobs in rows set closely together. A number of miniature vessels, some of them less than half an inch high, attract the visitor not only for their size but also for their beautiful workmanship. It has been suggested that they used to hold rare and costly scented oils. Jars, big or small, were made of clay, as pottery was made of faience. The glazed pots found here are probably the earliest known specimens of glazed work in the ancient world.

Quaint ivory combs, daintily-carved pomade pots were apparently in common use in those days. Relics have also been found of various kinds of jewellery—necklaces, ear-rings, pendants, nose-studs, rings, bangles, etc.,—made of gold, silver, copper and semi-precious stones. The nose-ring, with a gold chain put round the ear, is still in use, though outmoded and fast vanishing out of fashion, among certain sections of the Sindhi and Bengali ladies. Sindhu Valley ladies painted their eyes with antimony and used copper mirrors and double-sided ivory combs. Carnelian was skilfully bored to form beads for girdles. Marbles, balls and dice were used for games. Terra-cotta toys and dolls remind us of the gay children of the Sindhu Valley. These represent various animals, birds, reptiles, men and women; some were pottery utensils for girls. Even mechanical toys, such as horned bulls the heads of which could be moved by strings, were commonly used by children. It is curious that a whistle, found after five thousand years, has kept the exact form, and sounds quite all right when blown. The little clay-cart recalls the Sanskrit play of that title.

The Sindhu Valley people had intercourse with various parts of India as with outside countries. The discovery of specimens of their crafts at Sumer and Babylon, Ur and Kish, are taken to mean that they had trade relations with those regions. There is a view that during this period there were colonies of Indian merchants in Sumerian towns where they established 'factories' and worshipped in their traditional way. But this trade of India with those countries seems to be a one-track enterprise, since no notable relic of other countries has so far been found in the Sindhu Valley. But the Sindhu traders had to get copper from Rajputana. amethyst from the Dekkan, rare stones from the Nilgiri Hills, deodar wood

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from the Himalayan forests, jadeite from the Pamirs and neighbouring regions, and gold from Kolar in the South or from Persia. Cotton, unknown to the western world until two or three thousand years later, was another singular feature of the Sindhu Valley civilisation. It must have been an important commercial commodity, besides being used for fabrics for the local people. Wheat and rice whose specimens have been found among the ruins, were the staple food of the people and, being local products, were likely exports to other countries. This wheat is of a remarkable kind, the best found in the world, as shown by researches in plant-genetics. It is called bread wheat, most important for its food value, having the largest number of chromosome-pairs. This is another proof of the advanced nature of the material culture of the Sindhu Valley. Weights, a large number of which have been found in both the cities as also at many other neighbouring sites, are evidence of the commercial advancement of the people who had their own system of grading weights so as to have the ratio of sixteen for every unit, to which may be traced the origin of the modern Indian coinage of sixteen annas to one rupee. The exactness of their system of measurement is indicated by the relic of a scale of 1.32 inches probably rising to a 'foot' of 13.2 inches.

The existence of caravansarais on the trade routes of the Sindhu Valley is taken to be a fact. But more interesting are the specially-made large rooms found at several street-corners, which are supposed to have been used as restaurants and rest-houses. The waterways also were fully utilised and there is representational evidence of boats used on them for traffic.

An idea of the religious life of the people may be had from a careful study of the seals and figures. But as the seals are yet to be deciphered, it is not possible to form any exact idea about the origin and development of the cults that seem to have been prevalent in the Sindhu Valley. One thing may, however, be remembered that just as the culture itself is Indian in origin, these cults also are essentially Indian in conception, and since they grew in India, they are wholly and entirely Indian. That the ancient Indian spiritual discipline of Yoga was in practice is evident from the figure of a yogi already referred to. Some form of Shaivism (worship of Shiva) may be ascribed to the worship offered to a male deity figured on a seal, with three faces and three eyes, seated cross-legged on a throne having an elephant and a tiger on the right and a rhinoceros and a buffalo on the left, and two horned deer standing under the throne. The deity is identified by some scholars as the Vedic Rudra, and by others as Shiva. A third view regards it as Mahayogi, (great yogi), mainly because of its peculiar yoga posture. In any case, Shiva need not be taken as a non-Aryan God. In *The Secret of the Veda* Sri Aurobindo says that it is a

wrong view, popularised by European scholars, that the conception of Shiva in the Puranic theogonies was borrowed from the Dravidians: Vishnu, Rudra and Brahmanaspati are the Vedic originals of the later Puranic Triad, Vishnu-Shiva-Brahma.

There are again the female terra-cotta figurines with girdles, head-dress and other ornaments, which are taken to be those of the Mother Goddess, the like of which are found in various countries of Western Asia including Mesopotamia, Egypt and Asia Minor. But what is most interesting is that they are even today worshipped under many Indian names as popular deities in small village shrines in various parts of India, both north and south. The female figure on a seal fighting with a lion is that of Durga, an aspect of the supreme Shakti as described in the famous Tantrik scripture *Chandi*. This Mother-cult traces its origin to a remote past. The Tantrik texts mention it as a basic form of religious worship which was first evolved in India and then spread to countries on her three sides, east, west and north, each acquiring a particular name. Evidences are accumulating of the expansion of Indian culture in the neighbouring countries including Egypt and Mesopotamia. An idea of the Divine Mother is found in the Rig Veda too; although the Tantrik texts refer to a common source of this cult, from which it has been adopted both by the Veda and the Tantras. One of the Upanishads is held to be the origin of the Tantrik cults comprising five forms of worship.

Animal worship was another part of the religion of the Sindhu Valley, as suggested by the figures of animals some of which are mythical and some are vehicles of Vedic gods, the goat of Agni, the elephant of Indra, the buffalo of Yama. Snake, bird, bull and buffalo, found in the Sindhu Valley seals, are different Vedic symbols of the Sun. In later mythology the bull is the vehicle of Shiva, and the lion that of Durga. The pipal tree on several seals indicate the practice of tree-worship. The Vedas regard this tree as the tree of Eternity, and the Buddhist texts as the tree of Wisdom. Tree-worship is also connected with Sun-worship. The prayerful attitude of the Naga worshippers reflects the devotional temperament of the people. The Swastika on some of the seals is significant of the Sun-cult which must have had its adherents in the Sindhu Valley. The view is now gaining ground more and more widely that like the Mother-cult the Sun-cult also originated in India. From the god Mitra—the god of Light and Harmony—in the Rig Veda, which is much older than it passes for—derived the cult called Mithra-ism which was prevalent in various parts of the western world including pre-Christian Europe. The so-called phallus, evidences of whose worship have been found in the Sindhu Valley, is the symbol of the Sun. Shiva Linga—as it is called in India—is the *Jyotir Linga* or Light symbol. It has nothing to do with

sex-worship as European scholarship has erroneously tried to make out. The Shiva Linga of the Tantras is said to have derived its shape from the Vedic *yupa*, a symbol of the Sun and a prototype of the Buddhist stupa and some upper structures of ancient Indian temple architecture. Maybe, its association with the Sun, the primal source of heat and energy that sustain life, is responsible for the misreading of procreative ideas into it. The word *linga* also means image or icon. It is, however, quite possible that the Sindhu Valley culture shows some variation from the original culture of the land, although its derivation from the latter is quite a possibility. Very likely some primitive cults influenced by or interfused with Vedic ideas took new forms in Sindhu culture. R. P. Chanda, the famous archaeologist, is of the opinion that 'the religion of the Vedic Rishis who were worshippers of Indra, Varuna, Agni, and other gods, was accepted by the kings and the people of the Sindhu Valley.'

All that has been said so far about this once flourishing civilisation is mostly based on the material evidence made available by archaeological excavations. But the study of these antiquities cannot be said to be complete so long as the scripts on the seals remain unread. It is believed that they conceal many inscriptions whose decipherment would throw a flood of light on ancient Indian culture and help open a new chapter in her history. Scholars are at work trying to find out the meaning of the script. Some of them are of the opinion that unless bilingual inscriptions in this script and in any other known script are discovered, the decipherment of the Sindhu Valley script is very remote. There is a suggestion that the Tantrik science of script might help in the solution of this problem. A scholar has shown how this esoteric code explains the principles of the Sindhu Valley script. In fact, he has identified some letters of the Sindhu Valley script with Tantrik ones as also with Egyptian hieroglyphics which, he has also shown, are derived from India. Indeed the similarity between these scripts is striking. There is no doubt, however, that the script originated in India. It is quite possible for it to be the script of the Aryas and, as is held by a scholar, the earliest known form of the Brahmī alphabet. Early in 1952 Dr. Pran Nath, Head of the Department of Indo-Sumerian Studies, Banaras Hindu University, announced to the Press that his department had now succeeded in finding the phonetic values of the Sindhu Valley Script and had prepared a table of Sindhu epigraphy giving the phonetic value after each sign of the script. With the help of this table the inscriptions of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa could be read by any one knowing Sanskrit. So read, 'the inscriptions have been found to contain Vedic language, religion and culture', — a view that opens up immense possibilities and proves so many things including the Vedic origin of the Sindhu Valley culture and its definite Aryan character.

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To the Sindhu script may also be traced the origin of Brahmi, and the symbols and legends on punch-marked coins may be its earliest variants. Brahmi, we may mention, was the script that was current for many centuries not only in north India but also in various parts of central Asia which had a large number of Indian settlements. Pictographic in origin, the script of the Sindhu Valley took on a standardised form and is remarkable for its clarity, and for the extent and variety of its signs.

Opinions may differ as to the exact nature of the religion or the meaning of the script of the Sindhu Valley, but there can be no doubt that the homogeneous character of the finds of the region 'extending from the Makran coast to Kathiawad and north-wards to the Himalayan foothills—a huge irregular triangle, with sides measuring 950 by 700 by 550 miles'—does point to the existence there of a highly civilised, peaceful and prosperous community, a well-organised corporate life, an excellent municipal administration. It must have been an equally efficient state, a flourishing kingdom, maybe, a theocracy, as some archaeologists are inclined to believe, though every such ancient state need not be so and the individual character of the Sindhu Valley culture precludes that possibility as in the case of others. We do not know the name of this kingdom. It is, however, clear that its influence spread far and wide in contemporary kingdoms outside India. In India itself areas of the Ganga valley in the east are believed to have been within this kingdom and particularly within the orbit of its culture. Its immediate eastern frontier stands extended to the dried-up bed of the Saraswati in the Bikanir division of Rajasthan, where antiquities have been found of the same age. In Ghazipur and the Banaras districts have been found pictographs, carnelian beads, and other objects of the same type as those of the Sindhu Valley whose influence is also traced in relics from various sites in the United Provinces in the Ganga basin. Terra-cottas found at Buxar and Patna in Bihar are mistaken for Sindhu Valley finds. A stylistic similarity is noticed between many post-Sindhu-Valley but pre-Mauryan terra-cotta figurines and Maurya sculpture, notably animal figures as the elephant and the bull, discovered mainly in the Ganga Valley, on the one hand and the Sindhu Valley figures in stone, bronze and terra-cotta on the other. How much of later developments of ancient Indian art is indebted to, the expansion of the arts and crafts of the Sindhu Valley has yet to be studied and assessed. Further exploration might bring to light new facts about the originality of this culture and the extent of its influence. This, however, is clear that for many centuries, even after the destruction of its original home in Sindh and the Panjab, the artistic tradition of this culture continued to be followed in various parts of North India, from the Panjab to Bengal,—a view which is supported by Sir John Marshall, an authority on the subject.

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What strikes us today is the amazing capacity of those who evolved this culture and gave it such a finished form as might challenge the sense of superiority of the twentieth-century *Homo Sapiens* who claims to his credit the onward march of progress he achieved during the last five thousand years: the simple ground for the challenge would be that long before this the Sindhu Valley culture had already reached the zenith of its glory. Indeed the comforts and amenities of civilised existence that this culture provided in that remote past are not enjoyed in all cities of the world even today. Says Sir John Marshall: "One thing that stands out clear and unmistakable both at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa is that the civilisation hitherto revealed at these two places is not an incipient civilisation, but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it. Thus India must henceforth be recognised, along with Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt, as one of the most important areas where the civilising processes were initiated and developed." Further on he says, "The Panjab and Sindh, if not other parts of India as well, were enjoying an advanced and singularly uniform civilisation of their own, closely akin but in some respects even superior to that of contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt." If 3500 B.C. is the period when this civilisation was already in a flourishing state, it must have taken, as archaeologists believe, at least one thousand years of anterior development during which many parts of the vast area comprising, in particular, the Panjab, Sindh and Baluchistan had started giving expression to their creative capacities and growing towards the stage when the culture took its highly advanced form.

To be concluded
