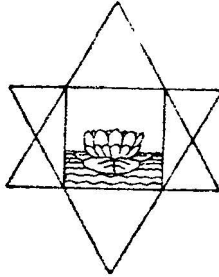




MOTHER INDIA

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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

Managing Editor:

K. R. PODDAR

Editor:

K. D. SETHNA

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“MUNDIALISATION”

K. D. Sethna

“Citizen of the world” that is a phrase of Goldsmith’s to denote the liberal and cultured mind which is at home everywhere. In classical times Terence said, *Nihil humani alienum*—“nothing human is alien”. Here too a world-wide understanding is indicated. Old India also had a phrase of her own in which the entire world is regarded as one family, *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. Today these large-visioned generalities of the moral and intellectual plane have become the seed of a practical movement to unite the various countries and form a World Government. This movement asks for “mundialisation” (from the Latin *mundus*, “world”) which consists in towns, villages or institutions proceeding to declare themselves as being part of the world as a whole and not just any country, and adopting the Rainbow Flag as their symbol. A People’s World Constituent Assembly is sought to be convened in Paris on the basis of one delegate elected by a million people. An attempt is being made to persuade the United Nations that a world body merely representative of the Governments of different countries is not sufficient to safeguard peace and that it is essential to have a Lower House attached to the U.N. wherein the peoples of the world would be directly represented. Work for the movement of mundialisation is carried on in various parts of the globe, supported by the sympathy of eminent individuals like Albert Einstein and Yehudi Menuhin, and according to a cogent advocate of it in our midst at present, Mlle. Miluska Hoppeova, the movement proposes the following principles:

1. A real durable peace can never be a political conquest, but the consequence of the resolution of economic and social problems of the world.

2. Labour, raw materials, machinery and markets in general are a world complex. To continue making them dependent on the rivalries of nations is an error which is the basis of the present crisis. Political unity is needed. As long as the national governments persist in not recognising the importance of a new world, the danger of wars will continue.

3. World citizens must form a world conscience inspired by the

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principles of non-violence and collaboration between peoples without distinction of nationality, race, religious or political opinions and recognise the responsibility of each towards a new fatherland—the world community.

4. It is not proposed in declaring oneself to be a world citizen that people should give up their basic traditions and culture. Diversity is a necessary feature of life, individuality should not be suppressed, but concrete steps should be taken towards disarmament, co-operation and the abolition of frontiers.

The root idea behind the World Government movement is indeed one of the master ideas of our time and deserves hearty encouragement. Also the conception as presented above has its attractive points. One that must be particularly commended is the recognition of diversity and individuality as indispensable-elements of a true unity which is never a rigid monotone. But certain turns in the proposed principles invite some criticism and the whole conception in general calls for a good deal of supplementation or, rather, deepening and subtilising.

In the prevailing circumstances of danger to democracy, what is urgently required as a step towards world unity is not disarmament by democratic countries but a concordat, a co-operation among them by which there would be a sense of common interests, a pooling of vital resources and a vast cultural intercourse leading to a supra-national mind. A huge democratic federation with an overall Council and a joint power of arms is, on the practical plane today, the first necessity if mundialisaton is to make effective progress.

The mundialist scheme draws upon the belief that economic and social factors, together with political ones, are fundamentally responsible for the absence of peace in the world. No doubt, acute situations of an economic and social character, no less than those of a political import, lead to international tensions and can precipitate war, but such situations are themselves symptoms of a deeper malady and, unless this malady is removed, disorders of various kinds are bound to reappear and produce dangerous tensions. Is it not also unrealistic to hope that a satisfying economic and social order can be achieved without altering the psychology of man? Of course every effort must be made to chisel out better economic and social relations, but at the same time the resculpturing of the inner man should be practised.

And surely something more is needed than thinking fraternal thoughts and feeling a desire for world citizenship or even endeavouring to put a wide good-will into practice. For, man is a nature of disharmony. There are a thousand tendencies in him running in different directions or conflicting with one another. He is a creature of appetites and ambitions

"MUNDIALISATION"

as well as of ideals. And there is not only war among his members but also war among his many appetites, his various ambitions, his different ideals. No peace at all is there in him. Some kind of superimposed order can be created, but it is precarious and below it the reality is still a chaos. Unless some power of psychological integration is discovered—a power other than the ethico-intellectual which we are accustomed to and which is patently ineffective in spite of our finest enthusiasms—the basic inner transformation can never be accomplished.

When the ethico-intellectual power in us is deemed insufficient, no matter what the mundialist drive in it, it is not meant to be put in contrast to what ordinarily passes as the religious consciousness. Orthodox religion as such is no radical help, although its metaphysical foundations contain indeed the only logical ground for being mundialised. To move with a sense of conviction towards the feeling of world unity, we require more than being reminded that we belong to the same species or that if we do not co-operate on a mundialist basis the species will grievously suffer and even run the risk of getting destroyed. Something in us will always protest that all that concretely exists is a number of separate individuals and that the species is a mere aggregate and not an organic entity in which the separate individuals are actually knit together. The species is bound to strike the individual as a mere abstraction. There is no natural compulsion in the concept of it. And something in us will also always counter the plea that the species will suffer or come to an end, with an egoistic "*Après moi le déluge!*" Again, the natural compulsion is missing. The metaphysics of traditional religion provide us with two formulas whose combination presents world unity as a concrete and living real. The formulas are: "We are children of one heavenly Father" and "The one supreme Self has become all existences." Here we have the idea of an inherent organic commonalty such as no merely secular notion of an ethico-intellectual kind can logically give. Here is the incentive to a natural communion of all humanity and even more than humanity. Here too is the positing of a sovereign truth and law naturally calling us beyond the ego's interests and desires, an authentic sanction to altruistic mundialised living. But traditional religion, in spite of the luminous greatness in its core, has lent itself to narrow bigotry and communalism and the inquisitorial temper as well as to self-righteousness and pharisaism. The reason is that it too is mostly part of the ordinary make-up of man and its metaphysics offers a logical ground to the intellect for the mundialist mood but cannot become a logic of life and a power of psychological transformation.

Besides, it has been other-worldly, looking upon the earth-scene as a passing phase of sorrow and iniquity, in which these elements are almost

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a welcome school for learning to appreciate and earn the better hereafter. In consequence, it has set social and economic problems at a discount and even allied itself to established interests, serving at best as a moderator of private passions.

If religious metaphysics are valuable, as they certainly are since they alone supply the rationale of mundialisation, they must be attuned to a this-worldly attitude. A religion of humanity insistent on ameliorating earthly conditions and straining towards a heaven here and now has to be developed. The beginnings of such a religion are already in our midst. We owe them to the thinkers of eighteenth-century Europe who revolted against ecclesiastical Christianity. In the hands of Comte and his followers the revolt took a more organised shape, gave rise to effective programmes of philanthropy and social service, encouraged and enriched the trends of democracy, socialism and internationalism. It is in fact the original parent of the mundialist movement. But the postulation of all mankind as the godhead to be worshipped and served loses much of its strength by being too secular. The religion of humanity, as Comte and others popularised it, lacks authority to the logical mind and must be infused broadly and unsectarianly with the metaphysics of the old religious consciousness. That is the initial requisite. The final and pre-eminent requisite is transcendence of the ordinary make-up of man through direct experience of the profound realities to which the metaphysical formulas of orthodox religion are a pointer.

The first and crucial step of this experience is the realisation that our true individuality is not the ego but the soul. The ego of man obscures the soul of him. The soul is individual without being cut off from other individualities or from the universal: the divine Spirit is single yet manifold and in it there is no strife among the many multiplicities or between the unit and the whole. The ego exists only by contrast and division: it is a formation made necessary at a certain stage of the development of individuality from the amorphous flux of the emergent consciousness in this evolutionary world. But it is a make-shift and a stop-gap devised by the *elan vital* under obstructive circumstances: the real objective of individual evolution is the soul whose light is covered up by this distorting imitation. And until the soul is found, with its inherent purity, its harmonious dynamic, its happy intuition of the All-existent, the All-true, the All-beautiful and the All-good, there is no possibility of a genuine psychological integration or of a well-founded sense of unity between man and man. Neither the war within nor the war without can be averted except through the effluence of its more-than-human "sweetness and light."

The technique of finding the soul lies with mysticism. By mysticism is not meant the life of the cloister or the cave, but rather the suffusion of all

“MUNDIALISATION”

activities and relationships with a new and divine consciousness. Soul-finding consists in awaking to depths within, where the Perfect Presence is known and loved and enjoyed and become one with and made the ruling power in our human parts. There are, of course, other dimensions in mysticism than the soul-state, and to transform earth-life completely a vast spiritual and supramental Yoga is needed, such as Sri Aurobindo shaped out and the Mother is concretising in the Ashram at Pondicherry. But the best door-way to these dimensions, no less than the ultimate working-centre for them in earthly manifestations, is the soul-state. Therefore, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have always spoken of the great importance of what they term psychicisation of the whole being and their Ashram is the most potent laboratory today for the development of the indispensable condition of success in creating “a new fatherland—the world community”. Indeed, this very fatherland is part of the Aurobindonian ideal, as rendered amply clear in one of Sri Aurobindo’s major books, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, which, with an eye not merely to the surfaces but to the profundities, scrutinises mankind’s social, political and economic history and the present world tendencies as clues towards the realisation of World Government.

The sincere mundialist would be well advised to seek psychological sustenance at the Aurobindonian fount of experience as well as vision. To give him a brief general notion of what exactly is the soul-state we have written about, we cannot do better than quote some words of the Mother from an article of hers, full of practical guidance, in the February number of the Ashram’s *Bulletin of Physical Education*:

“The starting point is to seek in oneself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formations that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating the individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language, more or less articulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many more others. All combine in

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pulling you out of the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will."

It should be evident that if even a little of this "marvellous consciousness" is cultivated through Yogic discipline with the help of one who possesses it and much more than it, there will be acquired both a poise and a creativity intensely appropriate to the planning and the process of mundialisation.

Invocation To Agni

O Fire who burnest immortal in mortal hearts!
O Knower of secret births! O Guest divine!
Increase Thy light in us till all the parts
Of mind and life and body awakened shine
With Thy opulence of splendour. O Seer-Will!
Illumine our depths in Thy magnificence,
And make each nerve and tissue hushed and still
To bear Thy touch, Thy force-efflorescence!

Thou alone canst stand the fierce onslaught of Hell
Unmoved, unscarred, unmamed, O brilliant Fire!
Let Thy hero-strength in us for ever dwell,
O Priest of our sacrifice, O Presence dire!
O universal God high-seated in Heaven,
Possess our mortal home with Thy powers seven!

PRITHWI SINGH

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Nirodbaran

4

This forms the last portion of the conversation reported in a previous issue, but it has no necessary connection with it.

Some one asked, "Is consciousness of the Divine possible even in the physical cells?"

"Yes", replied Sri Aurobindo, "the cells can have joy, peace, etc., just like the other parts of the being and when they are quite conscious, they can throw out the opposite forces. When peace descends in the physical, it acts as a great force for the cure of illness."

"Can one have peace without knowing it?"

"That is neutral peace, something more than quietude. But there is also a positive peace which one knows and feels. Truth also can descend in this way, so also power but very few can bear power. Light descends, too. I remember a disciple telling his guru that Light had descended in him. The guru had no idea about it and said, 'The devil has caught hold of you.' Since then he has lost everything.

"There is an infinite sea of ananda, peace, power above the head—what you call overhead," he continued and, looking at N, added, "and if one is in contact with it, one can always get them."

"Any thoughts or suggestions come to you?" was the next abrupt question.

"What do you mean?" Sri Aurobindo asked in a tone of surprise. "They come to me from every side and I don't refuse them. I accept them and see what they are. But what you understand by thinking, that I never do. That function has ceased ever since I had, a long time ago, that experience of Silence with Lele. Thoughts, as I said, come to me from all sides and from above and the transmitting mind remains quiet or it enlarges to receive them. True thought also comes in this way. You can't think out such thoughts. If you try, that would be what Mother calls mental construction."

"Were *Arya's* thousands of pages written in the way you have mentioned?"

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"No, *Arya* was directly transmitted into the pen." After a slight pause, he added, "It is a great relief to get free of responsibility."

"Yes, sir," corroborated Dr. Manilal. We laughed out at this warm approval.

"But," Sri Aurobindo hastily added, "I don't mean responsibility in general, but of thinking about everything. Some thoughts are given, some are reflected from above. It is not that I don't look for knowledge. When I want knowledge I call for it. The higher faculty sees thought as if it were written on a wall."

"Visuddhananda is said to be able to produce all sorts of smells, for which he has been known as *gandhibaba*. Do you think it possible?"

'It is difficult to know if they are all materialisations or subtle smells projected into the physical or on the senses.'*

Apropos of Visuddhananda's physical siddhi, Sri Aurobindo took up the subject in general and said, "At one time I thought that physical siddhi was impossible; but in the Alipore Jail I found once after my meditation that my body had occupied a position which was physically impossible: it was actually raised some inches above the ground, what is known as levitation. Then again, I was practising for a time to raise my hands and keep them suspended in the air without any muscular control. Once in that condition I fell off to sleep. The warder saw me in that posture and reported that I was dead. The authorities came and found that I was quite alive, I told them that the warder was a fool.

"The French author Jules Romains is a medical man and a mystic. He says that one can see with other parts of the body besides the organ of vision, the eyes. He himself claims to have that faculty. He says the eyes are only specialised parts: other parts can as well be trained to see. He even went to the length of proving it by an actual demonstration, but the scientists refused to admit it."

The talk turned once again upon Tagore. I said to Sri Aurobindo, "The other day we discussed whether Tagore had any spiritual experiences. Dilip recounted to me one of Tagore's experiences. I would like to know your opinion about it. Dilip said that once in an agony of pain Tagore tried hard to concentrate and dissociate his mind from the body. Ultimately he succeeded in separating himself from the pain and got great relief. Isn't that a spiritual experience?"

"Yes," said Sri Aurobindo at once, "that is a spiritual experience."

* At this place my notebook records some words of Sri Aurobindo's without giving the precise connection between them and the preceding remark. They are "P always saw some Presence accompanying him, but he could not identify it. When he saw my photo, it did not at all resemble his vision. But when he saw me at the Darshar, he at once recognised me as that Presence."

CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

"I remember also to have read in his *Jivan Smriti* (autobiography) that one day he felt a sudden outburst of joy and all Nature seemed to him to be full of ananda. The outcome of that feeling or experience is supposed to be the poem 'Interruption of the Dream of the Fountain', (*Nijharer swapna bhanga*)".

"Yes, that is also a spiritual experience," corroborated Sri Aurobindo. "What does he say in that poem?"

"He speaks of a fountain lying dormant and suddenly waking up, breaking all barriers and rushing out towards the sea in an overleaping sweep of ananda."

"But why does he use that symbol? Was it in that symbolic form that the experience came?"

"I don't suppose so."

"Then why doesn't he describe the experience as he felt it? Reading the poem, nobody will understand or realise that he wrote it out of some experience. He could have described the experience as it was. Take, for instance, that Vedic line about Usha, the mystic Dawn: *vyuchhanti jivam udirayanti usha mritam kanchana bodhayanti*—'Raising high the living, awakening some one dead'. When one reads it, it becomes at once clear that it is written out of experience: raising higher and higher whatever is manifested and bringing out all that is latent, unmanifested. Of course, one has to be familiar with the symbols; then the thing becomes quite clear."

"But mystic poetry is bound to be a little hazy and vague, at least to those who are not mystically minded." I added, "Tagore has also written very simple and clear poems e.g. *matha nata karé* ('let my head bow down'). One can perhaps write poetry of that kind mentally too: is personal experience always necessary?"

'No'.

"You have compared mystic poetry to moonlight and spiritual poetry to sunlight."

"No, I meant occult poetry. Mystic poetry is of two kinds, occult mystic and spiritual mystic. That 'moon and star' poem of mine or the *Bird of Fire* are occult mystic poems, while the sonnets are spiritual mystic. For instance, in *Nirvana*, I have put exactly what Nirvana is. One is at liberty to use any symbol one likes or any image, but what one says must be very clear through those images. Say, for example, those lines of the Veda,

*Condition after condition is born,
Covering after covering becomes conscious;
In the lap of the Mother he sees.*

Here images are used but it is very clear to any one knowing the symbols

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what is meant and that it is a result of genuine experience. Or take another example,

The seers climb Indra like a ladder,

Along with the ascent all that remains to be done becomes clear. It is an extraordinary passage putting with perfect clarity the experience." Repeating the passage again, he asked, "Do you see that? Indra is the Divine Mind and as one ascends higher and higher, all that has to be done becomes clearly visible. One who has that experience can verify how perfectly true it is and that it must have been written from experience, not from any power of imagination."

"But without having any experience or at least without being conscious of it, can one write about true spiritual things?"

"The inner being can have the vision without the outer having the least awareness of it and can express it in a poem," affirmed Sri Aurobindo.

"And one who is not a mystic can write mystic poems? Tagore, or H before he came here?"

"Tagore had a tradition of religious tendencies in his family. H had a mystic part in him. Reading his earlier poems I predicted that he could be a spiritual poet. As soon as he came here, he went on very well in the first year of his sadhana, his inner mind opened and the things he wrote about the Mother were felt by him. His poetry was always associated with his higher parts."

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

"Synergist"

SUPERMIND AND SACHCHIDANANDA

In the last three issues questions and answers relating to the Supermind's descent on earth were published; here, some letters on its knowledge aspect are given. They should be of interest to those who are not very familiar with Sri Aurobindo's larger works, for they are written in a comparatively simple style, and express truths of the Spirit in a way which can be easily understood even by those not well-grounded in his philosophy. The sadhak to whom they were originally addressed had not made a close study of Sri Aurobindo's writings, so they were presumably

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written to suit his understanding. Nevertheless, what they gain in simplicity, they by no means lose in acuteness or profundity, for the philosophical formulation is as perfect here as in Sri Aurobindo's major works. And this is one of the outstanding qualities of Sri Aurobindo's letter-writing, that he often writes about the same subject to different sadhaks, but the reply is attuned to the understanding of the particular sadhak to whom it is written, and has a reference to his own line of sadhana; this gives the reader an opportunity to know various aspects of the same truth when seen in different contexts.

The problem discussed here is that of Supermind and Sachchidananda. In spite of Sri Aurobindo writing about these Supernals at several places in his books, many people are still not quite clear about the true relation between them, and fail to understand why in spite of experiencing the Self as Sachchidananda, the realisation of Supermind is still necessary. Here, mainly the knowledge side of the problem is discussed, not so much the pragmatic issue involved—the problem of transformation, which formed the subject of the very first instalment in this Series.

*

Sadhak: "When one becomes one with the Divine, would Supermind be still far from him?"

Sri Aurobindo: "One can become one with the Divine on the mental plane—The Supermind is necessary for manifesting the Divine on earth."

13-11-33

Sadhak. "You have said in your book *The Mother*: 'It is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical nature' What do you imply by 'opening from below'? Is not 'below' still unconscious of the Divine?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Wherever the Divine is, everything is—it is only concealed, not manifest. The Divine is there below in the inconscience itself, mind and life are concealed in Matter, so is Supermind and Sachchidananda. The below is not something outside the Divine Existence. But as mind manifested in Matter only after the descent of Mind opened it into action, so it is with Supermind. You have not noticed the word 'opening' which implies that it was shut in there and concealed." 16-11-33

Sadhak: "You state, 'The Divine is there below in the inconscience itself.' Does this not mean that it is the divine beings themselves who, in order to raise the whole world towards the Truth, have made a great sacrifice and come down upon earth and concealed themselves in Matter, even forgetting their true reality?"

Sri Aurobindo: "What beings? This is true of the Divine Light and Power itself descending toward the world. But the Divine Consciousness

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

was already there, otherwise the world could not have existed." 18-11-33

Sadhak: "What does an incarnation mean? Is it possible only from the Supermind plane?"

Sri Aurobindo "I don't know what you mean. An Incarnation is the Divine Consciousness and Being manifesting through a physical body. It is possible from any plane." 9-11-33

Sadhak: "Is not the human being, in his true reality, above the Supermind?"

Sri Aurobindo "What is the true reality of a human being—and how is it different from the true reality of any other being? The true reality of all is the Divine." 9-11-33

Sadhak: "Will not the Supermind be for man one of the powers for realising the Divine upon earth?"

Sri Aurobindo: "... You mean manifesting, I suppose—Anyone can realise the Divine—in the sense of being conscious of the Divine.

"Man is a mental being in a body—how can he have command of the Supermind which is far above mind? Even Overmind is far above him." 9-11-33

Sadhak: "As the mind has got its perfectly divinised plane the vital too must be having its corresponding Divine plane. What is this plane?"

Sri Aurobindo. "[Mind—Supermind
Emotional being (heart)—Ananda
Main vital—Tapas
Matter—Sat]

These are the correspondences—but the Supramental is a sufficient instrument for divinising the vital." 12-1-34.

Sadhak: "Somebody, while explaining your letter to NB about 'consciousness', said that *Sat* or Existence itself is Sri Aurobindo and *Chit* or consciousness is the Mother. Is this correct?"

Sri Aurobindo: "... It is rather a crude way of putting it. *Chit* and *Sat* cannot be separated like that." 21-10-35.

Sadhak: "He also added that the transcendent is something beyond *Satchhidananda*."

Sri Aurobindo: "People say like that because the transcendental Absolute is not only what to us is existence but also what to us is non-existence. But there is really no such thing as non-existence. So the transcendent can be conceived as transcendent *Sat*, transcendent *Chit*, transcendent *Ananda*." 21-10-35.

Sadhak: "Since 'the Supermind is the total Truth consciousness' why is it distinguished as the Supermind; is not the *Sachchidananda* also a Truth consciousness?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The *Sachchidananda* is not in itself an active consci-

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ousness, it is simply pure existence, consciousness and bliss. By a Truth consciousness is meant—a Knowledge consciousness which is immediately, inherently and directly aware of Truth in manifestation and has not to seek for it like Mind. Sachchidananda is everywhere behind the manifestation and supporting it as well as above it and can be experienced below the Supermind—even in mind and vital it can be experienced.” 10-11-35.

Sadhak: “In the early days of my sadhana I once had an experience of great stillness in which my consciousness rose upward; at a certain height, it felt the bliss, consciousness and existence all together and at the same time. It is said that below the Supermind, Peace and Power, Knowledge and Will, work separately or as separate aspects. Then how is it that my consciousness experienced them together?”

Sri Aurobindo: “Bliss, Consciousness and Existence together are Sachchidananda and can be experienced anywhere.

“That is quite a different thing from Bliss, Consciousness and Existence. These below the Supermind are separate aspects and even if they work together work by association, not by an inherent oneness. Don't confuse different things with each other” 10-11-35.

Sadhak: “You said that Sachchidananda can be experienced anywhere, even below the Supermind. Does its tri-unity remain the same below the Supermind, or does it appear there only in diversity, e.g. as Consciousness or as Existence or as Ananda, but not all the three together as they are above?”

Sri Aurobindo: “One can have them together or realise pure Existence, pure Consciousness, pure Ananda separately.” 12-11-35

Sadhak: “I am told that everything is in the Supermind—that everything is the Will of Sachchidananda or its expression; but to say so is not enough to give us an idea of the Supermind. I would like to know the real difference between them.”

Sri Aurobindo: “The Will of Sachchidananda can act under different conditions in the Knowledge or the Ignorance.—The Supermind is the Truth Consciousness, the Knowledge, and the Will there works out spontaneously the unmixed Knowledge—whereas below the Supermind it allows the forces to play in quite another way and supports them or intervenes according to the need of the play in the Ignorance.” 5-11-35.

Sadhak: “Am I right in saying that the Will of Sachchidananda can act in the Knowledge as well as in the Ignorance, while that of the Supermind can act only in the Knowledge—below the Supermind Sachchidananda allowing the force to play according to the need of the Ignorance?”

Sri Aurobindo: “Not ‘can act’ only, but ‘acts’. All its native action is the action of the Knowledge; if it comes down it brings down the action of Knowledge. If it acts from above only, then it is no longer a pure supramental action, but mixed.” 6-11-35.

APHORISMS

Sahana

1

Life is a flower of the soul that unfolds its petals when touched by the Light of the Divine

2

Why comes the question of sacrifice? There is no such thing as sacrifice in spiritual life. Whatever one gives is never lost or gone for good; every bit of it is purified and shaped into its highest fulfilment.

3

Once you take up the spiritual life, you have nothing to do with the ordinary life. You have taken a new birth in the new consciousness. There is no place for the past in it. A single seat, the golden throne of the Divine only shines through the heart of your future

4

The more you love the Divine Mother the more your love for others takes the right shape. The more you go near to Her the more you establish the right relation with others. And when She becomes the sole necessity, the sole reality in your life you travel in the sunlit path and the whole universe is radiant with the light of Her Grace

5

O, to feel the devotion for the Mother! A stream of sweet unselfishness fills the heart with a love so pure! In deep gratitude your entire being prostrates at Her loving-feet. And She with Her compassionate and gracious smile bends down and kisses the soul as the Infinite kisses the rising star.

6

When you lay bare your difficulties before the Mother, there is at once a liberation and a step forward nearer to her.

7

Each depression overcome kindles a new aspiration in the heart, consolidates the mind's resolution, opens up a new, a more intimate and elevated relation with the Mother.

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8

Quietude is the path which brings one to the entrance-gate of spiritual realisation.

9

Silence opens the passage to direct communion with the Divine.

9

By rejection only grows the strength for rejection.

10

To feel and become conscious of the Mother's guidance is the core of the sadhana.

11

Clear the passage within you for the free intervention of the Divine.

12

Grow into the light of the Divine Consciousness and you will see the Divine Self in you.

13

To be ruled and governed by the Divine alone is the sign of the psychic attitude.

14

To be ruled and governed by the mortal power is the sign of the vital attitude.

15

A mental resolution does not carry one very far: each resolution must sprout spontaneously in the inner soil of the soul and blossom into a flower of realisation in the garden of the life divine.

16

Any mental plan as to how to do the sadhana does not help much; to go deeper within is the right way to know how to proceed.

17

The secret of entire self-giving lies in the magic touch of Divine Grace. You give your limited self and you become the unlimited one. You give your mortal self and you become the immortal one.

18

The joy of integral surrender is the joy of integral freedom from the limited self.

19

It is the unfailing will behind all efforts that brings success. Without the will the effort is a fruitless task. With the will the effort is a flaming joy in the journey to final conquest.

20

The period of darkness means the period of unwillingness to receive the Light.

APHORISMS

21

Difficulty is nothing depressing. It is to be taken as a sign that the Light from above has touched the part of the being to be changed. It is only when the unwillingness to change comes in that it brings all unhappiness.

22

Wake up the warrior within you, and all your difficulties will be a play of joy.

23

Puritanism has nothing to do with Purity. When all in us, every part of our being, every cell of our body is consciously in touch with the Mother's consciousness, then only can we have the real taste of purity

24

Work, done for the Divine, is Worship; the more perfectly it is done with all love and care, the more perfectly goes on the purification of all the parts of the being for the entire self-consecration.

25

Cleaning one's room is as if cleaning one's own self—the inner as well as the outer—it is the dusting of all impurities, the more carefully it is done, all the more clean and ready it is to install the Divine Presence.

26

When you give a thing to the Mother its value is only so much as you give yourself along with it.

27

By offering everything to the Mother, not only inwardly but outwardly as well, whatever you have, whatever you get from outside, you learn to give your entire nature without reserve into Her hands and allow Her to handle it as She likes.

28

Behind each thing you offer there should burn the single aspiration of the soul to offer itself to be possessed and dispensed by the Mother alone.

29

When you take up the joyful resolution to give to the Mother everything you have or receive from anywhere, then each thing, however small, you offer is only a means to lay at Her feet your desire, your choice, your preference and your will, to learn to become absolutely desireless



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

THE BEGINNING OF THE KNOWLEDGE

31-3-35.

AB. O Lord, in what immensity of stillness did Mother place my soul and all? And then to what great heights did she carry me? When being carried I felt a pure consciousness in place of my mind, life and body.

Sri Aurobindo That is what is known as the realisation of the Self which is other than mind, life or body

AB What I once understood as the "mind" the Mother has pulled back during the Pranam, thus emptying me mentally She wants to fill me with Her own Self! Now my life will be carried on without the usual action of the mind. There will not be any difficulty, I think, for the inner sadhana, as it is entirely done by Her alone, and in my letters to you I shall only put what She sends me from Her Knowledge, myself remaining only a pure and clean channel. I am sure that one day the very words and phrases too will come directly from Her. As regards the physical work, it must be completely left to Her Force, as a child leaves everything to its mother, so will I leave Her to judge every thing and decide for me.

Sri Aurobindo. That is how all should be in the perfect realisation throughout the being

AB I had a dream The Mother came into a large room, where Her children were assembled for the Pranam. To-day She decided to do something different from what She was doing daily; She first asked some of us to retire from the room. Afterwards She and I met in some other place. "My son," She said, "there was some special reason for my asking you to go out of that room ' O Lord, what a love I felt for Her then: such a love I have never experienced in the waking state. It was like a separated child meeting his mother after many years. There was a sweetness even in Her hand which I was holding and pressing to my heart.

Then She said, "My child, I want to tell you a most secret thing. So come with me to a solitary room." While changing the place I left behind something which I was holding in my hand We both entered into a small secluded room She had something of metal in Her hands which She arranged in such a way that it expressed: "My son, I am going to bring down in you the Divine Truth within the shortest possible time." There were two more metallic pieces on which also there was some clear writing, but it being in a foreign language I could not read. This whole dream was so precise, clear and living that it still stands out vividly before my eyes.

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Sri Aurobindo. There is always some truth behind such dream experiences.

AB. What I see as inertia at present may be perhaps coming from the subliminal consciousness; otherwise how can my physical be reposing in peace and silence in spite of the inertia?

Sri Aurobindo. It is evidently in that case the subconscious inertia.
1-4-35

AB. The Mother's Light flows in my forehead. I am surprised to see that it works with a tranquil intensity, while the whole head is completely filled with it.

Sri Aurobindo. Good.

AB. What are these stupid waves moving in the ashram atmosphere? They say: Non-pranam day means a day of rest for the sadhana. Does marching on with the Mother (in the sadhana) bring fatigue? As for the "rest", are we not in the eternal Rest?

Sri Aurobindo. It is the ordinary attitude of the physical consciousness—but once the fundamental consciousness is fixed, there is no reason why the sadhana should stop for a single day or need rest.

AB. We all know that the sadhana here is done by the Mother's Force. Would it not sound queer for us to ask the Force to halt simply because it is a non-pranam day? It would mean that we are wiser than the Mother, because Her Force represents Herself.

Sri Aurobindo. Right.

AB. When a certain aspect of the Mother is powerfully prominent the other aspects withdraw into the background. In fact that was what happened to me yesterday. With the arrival of a powerful muteness the love sank down. This, I suppose, happens in the early stages—afterwards it will be possible to feel all the aspects together and to the same higher pitch.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes.

AB. This withdrawing of one or more aspects into the background is, I think, to give prominence to one particular aspect, so that it can carry out certain important things.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that often happens.
1-4-35.

AB. I seemed to be stationed over the head with the Mother (floating or rising all the time) while below the body hung like a coat.

Sri Aurobindo. It is very good.
2-4-35.

AB. What is the Mother's physical touch if not a self-giving to each of us? But its importance is lost to the ordinary consciousness because it turns every opportunity given into a habit or a mere formality.

Sri Aurobindo. That is what most have made of it.

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

AB. None of us can truly gauge the greatness of the Mother. Even our spiritual experiences fall short to give us the exact knowledge of what She truly is.

Sri Aurobindo. The experiences are not a complete knowledge, but they lead towards it.

AB. What is meant by becoming the Mother's instrument if not to think, move and act as She makes one think, move and act?

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that is right.

AB. The flesh is in a quietude and the cells are at rest

Sri Aurobindo. That is very good.

AB. The nature tried its best, but in vain, to throw its waves of jealousy on my vital, for the Mother has so reinforced my environmental consciousness with Her Peace that nothing foreign to Her can penetrate it.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that is the peace that must be there.
2-4-35.

AB. My lower vital tried to hamper some people's sadhana by harbouring jealousy for them. But my vital proper realised that if they progressed much and rapidly, the sooner would come my own perfection. For a sadhak's progress helps all others. Thus, his conquest over certain difficulties will automatically solve or lighten similar difficulties of others.

Sri Aurobindo. Exactly so. A sadhak ought always to rejoice in the progress of another, as if it were his own.
3-4-35

AB. O Lord, let not my mind observe the bad thoughts and actions of others. If it is not capable of seeing only their good things let its eyes be kept closed to them. No one is perfect here, but what benefit shall I get by learning about their defects?

Sri Aurobindo. The proper thing is to see all with an unmoved calm both the "good" and the "bad" but as a movement of Nature on the surface. But to do this truly without error or egoism or wrong reactions needs a consciousness and knowledge that is not personal and limited.

AB. In the whole asram, so far as I know, there are only one or two who keep their mind, vital and physical merged in the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo. To be always merged in the Divine is not so easy. It can be done only by an absorption in one's own inner Self or by a consciousness that sees all in the Divine and the Divine in all and is *always* in that condition. There is none who has attained to that yet.
3-4-35.

AB. The whole system feels rest when the sadhana is going on well. The deeper the sadhana is, the better is the rest felt,

Sri Aurobindo. That is as it should be
4-4-35.

MOTHER INDIA

'AB. There was a feeling of complete muteness within me as well as above me

Sri Aurobindo. Good.

AB. I wrote the other day that within a short time the darkest and the most ignorant part of my subconscious will come under the Mother's control. Some people would perhaps laugh at such a premature prayer; but then is it not true that when a child cries for his Mother She always comes to him?

Moreover this Mother is not merely a human Mother but a Divine Mother, who is more sensitive to the crying of Her child than any human one could be. She is always eager to remove him from the grip of the ordinary nature and lift him wholly into Herself

The ordinary human being is under the impression that it is only he who feels such an unbearable separation from Her! And he thinks too that it is only he who is doing the entire sadhana in order to reach the Divine while She just remains above and aloof. We sadhaks should realise this most important truth: that it is She who first does the sadhana for us, for each one of us; that without Her there would be no sadhana done*—not at least Thy supramental one

The anti-Divine forces are always trying to throw thorns in our path; and yet how is it that we find it clear and luminous? It is just because the Mother has done the sadhana first for us that all the darkness and obscurities have been swept away and the path made clear

Some people who have fallen into the habit of struggling may well ask: "Why do we then find the journey full of difficulties, gloom and despair? All sorts of suggestions and attacks surround us from all sides to drive us out of the path." They undergo all these because they take an indirect road, not the one the Mother has made ready for them. After a long and strenuous labour She has hewn a special path, which leads more or less straight to the goal. Not that failures, depression etc. never approach those who tread it, but these difficulties do not trouble them very much, as they are clearly seen to be foreign to their path—as if coming from the side like some solitary gust of wind.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, that is the right knowledge

* It must be noted that "AB" had no idea that, apart from their own sadhana, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have to do sadhana in each of the sadhaks, till it was indicated to him in the Knowledge he was receiving. He had not read, at the time he wrote the letter, Sri Aurobindo's statement regarding this matter. Sri Aurobindo had written: "Naturally, the Mother does the sadhana in each sadhak—only it is conditioned by their zeal and their receptivity"

"I have said that the Divine does the sadhana first for the world and then gives what is brought down to others."—Compiler

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

4-4-35

AB Besides the Path made for us by the Mother, there are many side-tracks which always draw away the seeker of the Truth. The play of forces there is very deceptive; their aim is to pull the sadhak towards their side, separating him thereby from the Mother, his true Guide and Light.

Sri Aurobindo Quite right

AB It seems to me, Lord, that my physical body is opening to Mother's experiences. There is nothing to be said about the peace and silence—they appear to be there all the time, but something else happened yesterday. The subconscious inertia arose, and I put the whole of my concentration upon it. I felt at the same time that Her Force was working in the nerves of my left hand. It was a concrete experience.

Another thing. I cannot quite make out why I need to be inactive in order to observe the experiences of the physical. Could one of the reasons be that at present I am doing that part of the sadhana which is concerned with the static side?

Every morning from half past four to half past nine the subnature seems to remain active in a fixed rhythm. It would really be a shame if I allowed its working passively. I try and try to bring down something by long and single-minded concentration, but nothing happens that can change this condition.

One night after the evening Meditation the Mother showed me a dynamic and positive way by awakening the psychic and the self's fire, but again a more passive state got in and Her method was suspended.

I know the time has now come when I must take up the reins of the nature and control it. The old way of remaining a passive observer should become a matter of the past. But I don't know how this step could possibly be taken with such an increasing passivity.

Sri Aurobindo The dynamic action when it comes acts without disturbing the silence and peace. There is the vast peace and silence and in that the Force or the Will works to do what is necessary—in that also is the action of Agni or the psychic.

THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

(6)

THE NATIONAL EVOLUTION OF POETRY

The work of the poet depends not only on himself and his age, but on the mentality of the nation to which he belongs and the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic tradition and environment which it creates for him. It is not to be understood by this that he is or need be entirely limited by this condition or that he is to consider himself as only a voice of the national mind or bound by the past national tradition and debarred from striking out a road of his own. In nations which are returning under difficulties to a strong self-consciousness, like the Irish or the Indians at the present moment, this nationalism may be a living idea and a powerful motive. And in others which have had a vivid collective life exercising a common and intimate influence on all its individuals or in those which have cherished an acute sense of a great national culture and tradition, the more stable elements of that tradition may exert a very conscious influence on the mind of the poets, at once helping and limiting the weaker spirits, but giving to genius an exceptional power for sustained beauty of form and a satisfying perfection. But this is no essential condition for the birth of great poetry. The poet, we must always remember, creates out of himself and has the indefeasible right to follow freely the breath of the spirit within him, provided he satisfies in his work the law of poetic beauty. The external forms of his age and his nation only give him his starting-point and some of his materials and determine to some extent the room he finds for the free play of his poetic spirit.

Nor do I mean to subscribe to the theory of the man and his milieu or the dogma of the historical school of criticism which asks of us to study all the precedents, circumstances, influences, surroundings, all that created the man and his work,—as if there were not something in him apart from all these which made all the difference,—and supposes that out of this the right estimate of his poetry will arise. But not even the right historical or psychological understanding of him need arise out of this

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method, since we may very easily read into him and his work things which may perhaps have been there before and around him, but never really got into him. But the right poetical estimate we certainly shall not form if we bring in so much that is accidental and unessential to cloud our free and direct impression. Rather the very opposite is the true method of appreciation, to come straight to the poet and his poem for all we need essentially to know about them,—we shall get there all that we really want for any true aesthetic or poetic purpose,—and afterwards go elsewhere for any minor elucidation or else to satisfy our scientific and historical curiosity: things accidental are then much more likely to fall into their right place and the freshness of poetic appreciation to remain unobscured. But quite apart from its external and therefore unreal method, there is a truth in the historical theory of criticism which is of real help towards grasping something that is important and even essential, if not for our poetic appreciation, yet for our intellectual judgment of a poet and his work.

In poetry, as in everything else that aims at perfection, there are always two elements, the eternal and the time element. The first is what really and always matters, it is that which must determine our definitive appreciation, our absolute verdict, or rather our essential response to poetry. A soul expressing the eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of beauty, with the word for its instrument, that is, after all, what the poet is, and it is to a similar soul in us seeking the same spirit and responding to it that he makes his appeal. It is when we can get this response at its purest and in its most direct and heightened awakening that our faculty of poetic appreciation becomes at once surest and most intense. It is, we may say, the impersonal enjoyer of creative beauty in us responding to the impersonal creator and interpreter of beauty in the poet; for it is the impersonal spirit of Truth and Beauty that is seeking to express itself through his personality, and it is that which finds its own word and seems itself to create in his highest moments of inspiration. And this Impersonal is concerned with the creative idea and the motive of beauty which is seeking expression and with the attempt to find the perfect expression, the inevitable word and the rhythm that reveals. All else is subordinate, accidental, the crude material and the conditioning medium of this essential endeavour.

Still there is also the personality of the poet and the personality of the hearer, the one giving the pitch and the form of the success arrived at, while the other determines the characteristic intellectual and aesthetic judgment to which its appeal arrives. The correspondence or the dissonance between the two decides the relation between the poet and his reader, and out of that arises what is personal in our appreciation and judgment of his poetry. In this personal or time element there is always much that

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is merely accidental and often rather limits and deflects our judgment than helps usefully to form it. How much that interferes can be seen when we try to value contemporary poetry. It is a matter of continual experience that even critics of considerable insight and sureness of taste are yet capable of the most extraordinarily wrong judgments, whether on the side of appreciation or of depreciation, when they have to pass a verdict on their contemporaries. And this is because a crowd of accidental influences belonging to the effect of the time and the mental environment upon our mentality exercise an exaggerated domination and distort or colour the view of our mental eye upon its object. But apart from this there is always something essential to our present personality which has a right to be heard. For we are all of us souls developing in a constant endeavour to get into unity with the spirit in life through its many forms of manifestation and on many different lines. And as there is in Indian Yoga a principle of *adhikāna*, something in the immediate power of a man's nature that determines by its characteristics his right to this or that way of Yoga, of union, which, whatever its merits or its limitations, is his right way because it is most helpful to him personally, so in all our activities of life and mind there is this principle of *adhikāna*. That which we can appreciate in poetry and still more the way in which we appreciate it, is that in it and us which is most helpful to us and therefore, for the time being at least, right for us in our attempt to get into union with the universal or the transcendent beauty through the revealing ideas and motives and revealing forms of poetic creation.

This is the individual aspect of the personal or time element. But there is also a larger movement to which we belong, both ourselves and the poet and his poetry, or rather it is the same movement of the general soul of mankind in the same endeavour towards the same objective. In poetry this shows itself in a sort of evolution from the objective to the inward, from the inward to the spiritual, an evolution which has many curves and turns and cycles, many returns upon past motives and imperfect anticipations of future motives, a general labour of self-enlargement and self-finding. It is a clear idea of this evolution which may most helpfully inform the historical or evolutionary element in our judgment and appreciation of poetry. And this general movement we see working itself out in different forms and on different lines through the souls of the nations and peoples who have arrived at a strong self-expression by the things of the mind, art and thought and poetry. These things do not indeed form the whole of the movement, even as they do not make up the whole of the life of the people, they rather represent its highest points,—or the highest with the exception of the spiritual, in the few nations that have powerfully developed the spiritual force within—and in them we best see the inner character and aim of that line of the movement.

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This general evolution has its own natural periods or ages; but as with the stone, bronze and other ages discovered by the archaeologist their time periods do not correspond in all the peoples which have evolved them. Moreover, they do not always follow each other in quite the same order; for in things psychological the Spirit in the world varies his movements more freely than in things physical. There, besides, he can anticipate the motives of a higher stratum of psychological development while yet he lives the general life of a lower stratum: so too when he has got on to a higher level of development, he may go strongly back to a past and inferior motive and see how it works out when altered by the motives and powers of the superior medium. There is too here a greater complexity of unseen or half-seen subconscious and superconscious tendencies and influences at work upon the comparatively small part of us which is conscious of what it is doing. And very often a nation in its self-expression is both helped and limited by what has been left behind from the evolution of a past self which, being dead, yet liveth.

Thus, the Indian spirit could seize powerfully the spiritual motive in an age which lived a strenuous objective life and was strongly objective in its normal outward mentality, and could express it at first in the concrete forms proper to that life and mentality converted into physical symbols of the supraphysical and then, by a rapid liberation, in its own proper voice, so producing the sacred poetry of the Veda and Upanishads. An Italy with the Graeco-Roman past in its blood could seize intellectually on the motives of catholic Christianity and give them a clear and supreme expression in Dantè, while all Germanised Europe had only been stammering in the faltering infantile accents of romance verse or shadowing them out in Gothic stone, successful only in the most material form of the spiritual. In another direction, when it seized upon the romantic life-motive, the meeting-place of the Teuton and the Celt, we see it losing entirely the mystically sentimental Celtic element, italianising it into the sensuousness of Tasso, and italianising the rest into an intellectualised, a half imaginative, half satiric play with the superficial motives of romance,—the inevitable turn of the italianised Roman spirit. On the other hand the English spirit, having got rid of the Latin culture and holding the Celtic mind for a long time at bay, exiled into the Welsh mountains or parked beyond the pale in Ireland, followed with remarkable fidelity the natural curve and stages of the psychological evolution of poetry, taking several centuries to arrive at the intellectual motive and more to get at something like the spiritual.

Generally, every nation or people has or develops a spirit in its being, a special soul-form of the human all-soul and a law of its nature which determines the lines and turns of its evolution. All that it takes from its environment it naturally attempts to assimilate to this spirit transmute into

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stuff of this soul-form, make apt to and governable by this law of its nature. All its self-expression is in conformity with them. And its poetry, art and thought are the expression of this self and of the greater possibilities of its self to which it moves. The individual poet and his poetry are part of its movement. Not that they are limited by the present temperament and outward forms of the national mind, they may exceed them. The soul of the poet may be like a star and dwell apart; even, his work may seem not merely a variation from but a revolt against the limitations of the national mind. But still the roots of his personality are there in its spirit and even his variation and revolt are an attempt to bring out something that is latent and suppressed or at least something which is trying to surge up from the secret all-soul into the soul-form of the nation. Therefore to appreciate this national evolution of poetry and the relations of the poet and his work with it cannot but be fruitful, if we observe them from the point of view not so much of things external to poetry, but of its own spirit and characteristic forms and motives

To be continued

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

ACT II

Scene 1

Eleven years have passed since Mira's marriage to BHOJRAJ who is now the Maharana (King) of Mevar living in its capital, Udaipur, the famous and lovely city of lakes and royal castles. As the curtain rises, he is seen sitting on a marble slab under the shade of a baman tree in the palace garden which commands a view of the lake. A fountain is spouting forth water rised by the rays of the morning sun. Suddenly he starts. Mira is singing in the private golden temple of Gopal which has been built for her. He draws near the temple and stands listening intently. He is robust and young and of noble bearing, in his early thirties. From where he stands he can see Mira dancing inside the temple. A sigh escapes him as he watches her, totally oblivious of his presence, conscious only of the IMAGE of GOPAL before her.

MIRA (*sings*)

Oh, make me serve, Lord, thee.

In deep humility

I would fain stay thy slave, and pray: may I thy garland weave!
Then in my gloom thy beauty's bloom will set my soul a-heave.
Thine eye's one spark shall quell my dark-rid slumber's undelight,
And my breath repeat thy name flower-sweet—when thou thy troth wilt
plight.

Everlastingly I will chase thee—a shadow loyal and true—
And will receive whatever thou give: thee—thee alone to woo.
I will attend on thee, O Friend—my heart laid at thy feet—
And sing and sing of thy Grace, King, through every lane and street
Some, in despair, to thee would fare to win swift boons from thee:
Some long to know, some ache to glow in flame-austerity:
Mira, thy slave, chants. "Nought can save but thine unflawed compassion."

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She only cries to thy sunrise in Love's song-adoration
In ecstasy I dream of thee, vested in gleaming gold,
And crowned with plumes of peacock and blooms—O Flutist, aureoled'
If thou indwell my heart—why still must yearn my eyes for ever?
In my chaos of pain, Oh, come to reign on the bank of love's blue river.

When the song comes to an end, Bhojraj heaves a sigh and walks back to the fountain which he contemplates absently... Suddenly, at the sound of footsteps behind him, he starts and turns round UDAYBAI, his sister, about twenty-five years old, meets his frown with a smile.

BHOJRAJ (*dryly*): Some fresh gossip to retail, I suppose?

UDAYBAI (*reproachfully*): A King should not be so ungracious, brother! (*After a pause*) One thing he should know: how to forgive

BHOJRAJ (*sneeringly*): And learn also to patronize the indecent, I suppose?—Go on.

UDAYBAI: You must not be so hard, brother! Vikram said it purely as a joke.

BHOJRAJ (*irritably*): You call it a joke, do you? To upset her with gossip about her moral character?

UDAYBAI (*protesting*): But how hyper-sensitive you have become of late! Vikram told me he had meant it for the best. You can silence us, but you can't throttle all your subjects. People *will* talk so long as they have tongues in their heads.

BHOJRAJ (*with asperity*): And you *will* come to plead for wagging tongues so long as you can think of some defence of the wicked in your brain!

UDAYBAI: You are being unfair, brother! People will be critical of eminence.

BHOJRAJ: Don't try to whitewash soot, Uda! You know I have never shied at honest criticism. But to say that she passes her nights in the temple with a partner somewhat more convincing and living than her Gopal—and for Vikram to come and retail it to her gloatingly—it may promise rich confectionery for the curiosity of the populace—

UDAYBAI (*cutting in*). Oh, don't be unreasonable, for mercy's sake! Vikram told me he had only said what is true: that people are talking because she spends most of her time in the temple, neglecting you and her household duties. You must not be so touchy. As a King you should know that a Queen is hardly free to indulge her whims as she likes. She must be a Queen first and a devotee afterwards.

BHOJRAJ (*sternly*) I am in no mood to discuss with all and sundry what a Queen's duty is and how far she is free or not free. Let me only tell you one thing: that you had better not meddle in what does not concern you. I hope I am clear?

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UDAYBAI (*hurt*): But you never used to talk like this before she came Vikram is right: she has poisoned your mind insidiously and made you totally blind. Otherwise you could not have missed what is so blatantly obvious

BHOJRAJ (*sharply*): I see what I will and choose to miss what is despicable. But whether I am keen-eyed or blind, I have not the slightest wish to exchange my eyes, such as they are, for yours or those of the petty-minded.

UDAYBAI *bursts into tears as MIRA, with a basket of flowers, emerges out of the temple behind her back. On seeing UDAYBAI she runs in joy but stops dead as she finds her in tears.*

UDAYBAI (*inferring her from the familiar trend*): All right, brother I will go away tomorrow to Chittore and Vikram will, too, I am sure.

MIRA (*barring her passage*): Why, sister, what has happened?

UDAYBAI. Oh don't—let me go. (*She dodges past her, in tears.*)

MIRA Why, Raj! What on earth is the matter?

BHOJRAJ: Nothing. I only gave her to understand something she didn't want to. Oh, these jealous women, mealy-mouthed before your face and vicious-tongued the moment your back is turned!

MIRA (*putting a hand on her shoulder*): O Raj! Don't say such unkind things about your own sister. She didn't mean, I am sure—

BHOJRAJ: You are too generous and noble by nature, Mira, to see meanness for what it is. She says she will go away. Let her, and Vikram too—for all I care. (*Fuming*) The liar he is—to have told her that you took offence only because you couldn't take a joke!

MIRA (*after a pause*). I know, Raj! But—never mind I must nevertheless ask you to forgive them. Just one more chance, please!

BHOJRAJ. But why do you ask? Is it that you do not mind? Tell me frankly.

MIRA. No, Raj! I can't truthfully say that I don't mind malicious lying. I wish I could but I can't—because (*her eyes glisten*) because I abhor falsehood. That is why I hate to pretend like a Queen who is above feeling upset when actually I feel like a woman too proud to seek sympathy and yet too weak to dispense with it

BHOJRAJ (*distressed*): Now, now, don't let's start prodding the old sore (*Taking her hands in his*) But I didn't raise the topic (*Kissing her hand*) I try so much to make you happy, dear heart!

MIRA (*wiping a tear*): I know, Raj! And I also do try to make things a little easier for you. But—(*withdrawing her hand*)—as days pass, a curious feeling grows in me that perhaps—it's because I do not belong here that I come like a cloud on everybody's brow.

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BHOJRAJ (*distressed*): Now, now, Mira—I warn you—I implore you—because it isn't true. Why, my brow has accepted you like a crown.

MIRA (*shaking her head*): No, Raj, you know it is not true... and ... and that is precisely why I am so often in despair because—your noble breeding prevents you even from seeking the little relief one feels when one can confess to one's own misery.

BHOJRAJ (*tenderly*): But I repeat—I insist—I am *not* miserable. All I can truthfully confess is—but never mind. (*He takes her hands again in his*) Surely, you don't suppose that I do not mean it when I say that the best thing in me is my brave acceptance of what had to be—I mean (*dropping his voice*) that I *have* kept my promise.

MIRA (*in a moved voice*): I know, Raj! (*Giving his hands a warm pressure*) But can't you understand... imagine... why... it's just what weighs on my conscience so heavily? You may have kept your word and so may derive some compensation but what about the wife who had to exact such a promise on the very threshold of marriage? Can she feel happy about it that she is not destined to give to one who is so noble and considerate what it is her wife's bare duty—even privilege—to offer?

BHOJRAJ (*after a pause*): But don't let's exaggerate. For though I cannot but own to a sense of disappointment about the bargain, I cannot truthfully say that it's only the sigh that you inspired in me.

MIRA (*sadly*): You are saying that just to console me

BHOJRAJ (*looking at her calmly*): No, Mira. Of course I did not wish to imply that it is easy—but what I do claim is that I have seen something in you which has taught me that one should not sigh too sentimentally over the unattainable but rather have the simple good sense to be grateful for whatever one does get in this world.

MIRA (*ruefully*): Oh, don't, Raj! I would rather have your bitter reproaches than—this gratefulness you keep stressing. I only plead one defence: that I had warned you against taking me for what I was not or could ever consent to be.

BHOJRAJ (*with forced cheerfulness*): Nonsense. You were born to be a Queen and that you have become. Barring a few lost souls like Vikram, and petty women like my sister, everybody in Mevar rejoices in your songs. You have shed glory on the *gaddi* of Mevar. Your songs are sung in every house and all but a few, whose hearts are black with envy, are thrilled that the Lord of the universe comes Himself to teach you these.

MIRA (*smiling sadly*). Now, now, Raj! A generous heart is all right, but one can hardly approve of an enthusiasm which rides blindly, heedless of pitfalls. You know perfectly well how few among those who profess to be thrilled really believe in the Giver of these thrills: my Gopal.

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BHOJRAJ: Oh anything but this, Mira, I implore you! Cynicism and you are poles asunder.

MIRA (*warmly*): But I am *not* a cynic. How can I be—after having known and seen what you, with your large heart and rich courage, can be. The very fact that I have accepted you as you are surely proves that I *can* believe and trust. And one who can trust can never be dubbed a cynic.

BHOJRAJ (*flushing*): You can be sweet when you want to, Mira, and you know that. Only I am afraid I must still stick to my protest: I mean, I may have got something in me which induced you to accept me with all my limitations (*he pauses and then shakes his head mournfully*) but I could never feel that I deserved you.

MIRA (*distressed*): Don't say that, Raj! I am not a whit less human than the others. I may, indeed, have been born a little better equipped than some others, but, when all is said, to be born on earth is to be cabin-ed—a prisoner of one's native limitations.

BHOJRAJ: Granted but surely you'll grant also that there are limitations and limitations? Do you know what I felt so strongly when you were singing a little while ago? A deep regret that one so human and near should be so unearthly . . . and unattainable!

MIRA (*holding his eyes*): Now, Raj! do not let your tongue commit you to what your heart must veto. How can I be so unearthly to you, you who do not even believe in the reality of my Gopal?

BHOJRAJ (*smiling sadly*): Just what makes you seem unearthly to—to such as we. You are born in the world and yet are not of it. Otherwise you wouldn't find it so hard to understand us, earthlings, who admit what is beyond our ken and yet cannot believe when the far-off does come near and the great miracle happens (*He takes her hand in his*) But who knows? Perhaps that is precisely why you elevate one as you do—as I was thrilled to feel this morning when I was watching you dancing and singing in ecstasy in your temple. No, Mira, I am not letting my emotion run away with me. For what I experienced this morning is something . . . something so concrete that even my stubborn scepticism *had* to capitulate. For it was a feeling of . . . how shall I put it of awe one feels when one is face to face with something one can only reach for but never grasp and yet . . . the strangest part of it is that even the failure is not a failure because it leaves a legacy of reverence . . . the reverence one feels when one comes into contact with something too pure to be real and yet too vivid to be denied. No, you must listen to me today. My heart is sad, but full because I felt this morning as never before how your contact—or rather what I could not contact—has purified me in a way I can hardly fathom myself. Mind you, this feeling has not always made me feel glad

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—in the past in fact it has often made me feel bitter and sore—so much so—that, at times, I was on the point of throwing all restraint to the winds to get my desire. But when it came to the point it was because you were *you* that I did not dare to run amok. You inspired a hush in me that one can only feel when one is face to face with holiness.

MIRA But you mustn't go on in that strain—as though I were a saint or something—

BHOJRAJ You may not be a saint in the accepted sense of the term but—shall I tell you something? You have imbibed something from your Gopal whose name is probably ecstasy. But this morning I felt something equally thrilling before you, Mira, something to which I cannot even put a name. I can only say that it is an emotion bordering on worship. Night after night you have danced in that temple of yours without noticing once that I was sitting just outside the threshold keeping vigil. . . Yet how was it that my eyes never grew heavy with sleep—not for a moment? Only because you were you—because I saw in you something I had never glimpsed before

MIRA Shh—! Vikram is coming.

BHOJRAJ *makes a wry expression and averts his face* MIRA *takes up her basket of flowers and turns towards the temple.*

VIKRAM (*barring her passage*): Sister-in-law, you mustn't be hard on a poor sinner who has repented.

MIRA (*drily*). Surely you stand in no need of my indulgence.

VIKRAM (*placatingly*) You are wrong: I do need your forgiveness. Last night your Gopal visited me with a nightmare because I had affronted you—

BHOJRAJ (*cutting in*). Don't talk nonsense. Her Gopal has better things to do than to take notice of your imbecility.

VIKRAM (*obsequiously*). You must be right, brother. But all the same forgive she must. I am terrified (*He falls at her feet*)

MIRA (*forgetting all her grievance*): Oh, brother, please—don't! (*Raising him*) If I minded it at all—it's because—but never mind (*She pats him kindly on the shoulder*) I assure you I am less sorry for the shock you gave me than for the shaking you got on the rebound

VIKRAM (*his voice quavers*) And what a shaking, sister-in-law! If only you knew the hell I passed through last night! It was no ordinary dream, I tell you (*He shivers*) I felt as though every drop of my blood had turned to ice. (*Folding his hands supplicatingly*) Oh you must assure me that I am forgiven.

MIRA (*taking both his hands in hers*): Oh, brother, put away all misgivings from your mind I am glad you have repented but more

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because you offended against holiness than because you hurt me personally, I assure you.

VIKRAM: My angel sister! You are . . . you are I did not know who you were—sinner that I am I promise it shall never happen again. Oh, pray to your Gopal that He may have mercy on me (*He covers his face with his hands*).

BHOJRAJ (*patting him*): Come, come, Vikram! To be human is to err. But, in the last analysis, it isn't the errors that matter but what one gains in wisdom through them. Now let's hear what the dream was.

VIKRAM (*breathlessly*): My God, it was terrible! I . . . I saw myself in the temple . . . Sister-in-law was dancing. Uda was sitting by my side . . . She inveighed against sister-in-law, saying she was a bad and unchaste woman I added "And a humbug too, into the bargain—" just when it happened—all in the twinkling of an eye! I suddenly saw that the Image of Gopal had transformed itself into Mother Kali with a scimitar in her hand—dripping blood. And then (*he shudders*) She gnashed her teeth and swelled . . . till . . . till her head touched the ceiling! Then what a horrible laughter she gave! . . . I . . . I fell at her feet. But She only roared the louder and then pierced Uda's neck with her sword. (*His voice is now hoarse with terror*) And then . . . She pounced on me and severed my head from my body—at one stroke. And I saw my own head rolling on the ground. And she laughed and laughed! Oh sister-in-law! (*He laughs hysterically*).

BHOJRAJ (*shaking him*): Vikram—Vikram—

VIKRAM (*yells*): Oh help, help . . . (*collapses in a swoon*).

MIRA (*promptly sitting down on the lawn and taking his head on her lap*) Send for the physician, Raj!

BHOJRAJ Let him first be taken inside. (*Calling*) Ho—there!

By this time three liveried servants and the gardener have run in, attracted by the cry They salute and then stand at attention.

BHOJRAJ: Carry him inside. (*They salute again and, between them, carry him away.*)

BHOJRAJ (*detaining MIRA*) Let him be—It will do him good

MIRA: O Raj! Allow me to look after him a little Let us forgive and forget

BHOJRAJ Forgive—by all means But forget—certainly not

MIRA (*accusingly*) Oh how can you be so hard, Raj—when his condition—

BHOJRAJ (*warningly*): I would be a little more wary, if I were you, Mira! You don't know Vikram as I do, He can be easily led by the

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nose by any clever manoeuvrer. That is why he is under the thumb of this mischievous Uda. Of course he is in a pitiful condition *now*. But he is terribly volatile, I warn you. His terror has, for the moment, disinfected him from her influence. That is why he said today, God bless him, that he didn't know who you were. (*Smiling*) A remark I would echo with all my heart.

MIRA (*reprovingly*). You mustn't make an idol of me, Raj! It does me no end of harm. Didn't I tell you what Gopal said to me once: that one only grows conscious of Grace in the measure one forgets one's merit?

BHOJRAJ (*shrugging his shoulders*): There you have me For I will not enthuse over what I cannot understand. I can accept holiness as I feel it to be a reality, but Grace you have to accept on trust There is no sign of it in this our far too dismal world.

MIRA. But you mustn't close yourself like that, Raj! We understand practically nothing, to start with. Does that mean we should not try to enlarge or deepen our understanding?

BHOJRAJ: I never said that I only say that Grace is something you have to accept on trust, on bended knees. It hurts my self-respect to abase myself so A boon should be given unconditionally

MIRA (*sighs*). Perhaps you are right, from your point of view. (*Smiling ruefully*) And yet that reminds me of a remark of Gopal's. I had asked him why He withheld His boons from all but a few. He replied that man moves still in the rut of helplessness because he would rather be miserable in the pen of his pride than be happy in the vast of humility. That's why, He said, human beings resist nothing so obstinately as Grace. (*Looking at him sadly*) You say you cannot understand Grace, Raj! But I understand at least one thing: that you can't because you won't, because you have to humble yourself even to admit that you have so much of it

BHOJRAJ (*hurt*) You do me an injustice, Mira. I rule out Grace, I repeat, because—

MIRA (*cutting in*): Because your mind takes a keen pleasure in holding your heart's findings suspect But that's just it. You can't imbibe Grace unless and until you are humble. Didn't I sing to you yesterday what he taught me Himself:

(*humming*)

If thou would'st my union
With the lowliest dust be one.

BHOJRAJ: Oh I loved that song. Do sing it once more—yes, yes, just now—this moment. (*Smiling*) For if you really want to educate me

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in the mysteries of your Grace or humility or what else—you must sing more and sermonise less.

MIRA: If you insinuate ever again that I want to educate you through my songs or sermons—

BHOJRAJ: Oh hold, my Queen: only sing, sing—the more lustily, as song is more impressive than ire.

MIRA: Indeed! But be warned then, for I am going to impress you most with what you need most: humility.

But her smile fades away and tears glisten in her eyes as she sings:

Some bring to thee then learning,

 Their wisdom new and old:

Some—fame and power and glory,

 Rich treasures, art and gold.

I, too, would offer something

 At your feet, my Lord and King!

I claim no might nor knowledge:

 To you what shall I bring?

I bring a heart that loves you

 And lips that sing your praise,

A soul that seeks one honour:

 To learn to tread your ways.

UDAYBAI *enters from the other end of the garden, BHOJRAJ frowns.*

UDAYBAI *(to MIRA)* Vikram has high fever. He wants to see you.

BHOJRAJ *(interposing)*: She can't see him now.

UDAYBAI *(pleading)*. He's half-delirious and is calling for her again and again

MIRA. Let me go, Raj, please!

BHOJRAJ *(sternly)*. No. *(To UDAYBAI)* She will be with him a little later. Try to put him to sleep.

UDAYBAI: You are hard, brother!

BHOJRAJ *(with asperity)*: You may voice your opinion of me when I ask for it.

UDAYBAI *(bursts out)* It's she—she—she who has turned your head. But bear in mind one thing: that I am the Princess of Mevar and not the daughter of a small chieftain—like her.

BHOJRAJ *(grimly)*. And I'd bear in mind, if I were you, that Bhojraj is the Maharana of Mevar. *(A slight pause)* Leave my presence

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at once.

MIRA: Oh, Raj!

BHOJRAJ (*waving her aside*): ' And I might as well tell you what I think of you and your whole pack of petty, tongue-wagging women. You are jealous—jealous—jealous—and foolish, besides. That is why you have gone on so long as you have—thinking that your silly talk and mean gossip will turn me against her. You may be rich in malice and mischief, but you are not overloaded with imagination. That is why you argue, as you do, that since I am not religious I must disapprove of a Queen who is. But you women make one grievous mistake when you decide, unimaginatively, that to be against dead tradition is to be against a living faith. Your ignorant minds run in narrow, rigid grooves. No wonder you feel baffled when you see a man loathing dogma and yet reverencing holiness. (*He restrains himself*) But what's the use? Light can understand darkness but darkness can only blaspheme against light and call it a myth.

UDAYBAI, *weeping, turns back and moves in the direction of the temple, just as a servant comes in and hands BHOJRAJ a letter. MIRA remains standing, brooding.*

BHOJRAJ (*his face brightens*): This is great news, Mira! Tansen has come and asks if you would grant him an interview

MIRA (*clapping her hands*): Tansen! The greatest singer of India! Oh! (*turning to the servant*) Show him in here—at once . . .

SERVANT (*to BHOJRAJ*): Here, sire, or in the reception room?

BHOJRAJ (*sharply*): When the Queen herself has said, need you ask again? Only—look you—bring the screen and two carpets

The servant runs off

MIRA (*her eyes shining with joy*): O Raj! Doesn't it sound like—like a fairy tale?

BHOJRAJ: What?

MIRA. Why think—just think: the great Tansen, the noblest singer and composer of Hindustan is actually going to sing—before us!!

BHOJRAJ (*bantering*): Oh why rope in the poor king when he has come to court the favour of the Queen?

MIRA (*frowning but not ill-pleased*). You must never talk like that—not even in jest.

BHOJRAJ: But I was not jesting: his heart is *not* a-flutter to win a fugitive glimpse of one so prosaic as my humble self. Listen. (*He reads out the letter*):

"Maharana! I have heard a few songs composed by the Maharani

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Mirabai of Mevar, the blessed devotee and singer, an almost legendary figure in her own life-time. I would indeed deem it a great favour if she will be pleased to grant me an audience from behind the purdah, so that I may pay my respects to the adorable saint—”

MIRA (*interrupting*): Enough, Raj! I do not want to be adored yet.

BHOJRAJ (*breezily*): The flower might as well say: I would not be adored by honey-bees. (*Shaking his head playfully*) No use, Mira—even the Sage is against you who gave the ruling, in holy Sanskrit:

‘King! be worshipped in your Court:
Artist! be by all adored.’

MIRA. For shame, Raj, to tamper thus with the original! The Sage said—“Wise man”—not “artist”

BHOJRAJ: But supposing your Gopal declares the artist to be the wisest of the wise? Anyway, I hold that one song of yours is worth more than twenty pulpit sermons. Oh, here they are!

Two servants run up one with a screen, the other with two oblong carpets

BHOJRAJ: Good. Spread one carpet here in the shade and the other behind the screen for the Maharani. And the screen just there—no, no, it should be placed parallel to the carpet. Yes, like that—but not too near—what a fool you are—move it off a little farther—about a yard or so from the carpet. Yes, that’s right. Now you can lead him in. Now Mira—!

MIRA *quickly takes her station behind the screen as TANSEN is seen entering through the main gate of the garden.*

TANSEN (*bowing to BHOJRAJ*): Allah be praised! (*As BHOJRAJ, smiling affably, leads him to the carpet, he turns towards MIRA whom he can see behind the thin muslin gauze of the screen*) This is, indeed, a great day of my life, noble Queen!

BHOJRAJ (*with a quick glance at MIRA who answers TANSEN with a silent nod*): Be seated, great singer!

TANSEN (*salaaming in the Muslim style*): None is great except Allah! sire!

BHOJRAJ (*to MIRA, half in banter*): The man after your heart, Mira: set on bypassing the visible for the Invisible, alas! (*They sit down on the carpet*).

MIRA (*sitting down on her carpet*): I feel so honoured, great singer!

TANSEN (*bowing to the ground*): And I feel blessed, noble Queen!
(*A silence falls.*)

BHOJRAJ (*to break the ice*): You come now from—?

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TANSEN (*with pride*): From the Court of Shahanshah Akbar, the Emperor of India.

BHOJRAJ (*flushing*): Pardon me: Mevar is still free and always will be.

TANSEN (*put out of countenance*): Forgive me By the word Emperor I only meant—

MIRA (*interposing*): Set your mind at rest, great minstrel! You said nothing wrong, since to you he is the Emperor.

BHOJRAJ (*taking the cue*): I am sorry... the more as you are our honoured guest—

TANSEN: Oh do not say that, sire, since it's for me to feel honoured. (To MIRA) Maharani! I cannot tell you how proud I feel to be accorded this great privilege to pay my heart's homage to one so—(*bowing again*) so holy.

MIRA (*colouring*): But you yourself said just now that there's none great on earth except Allah.

TANSEN (*rising to the occasion*): But, Maharani, the great Allah enjoys His greatness most when His devotees shine in His light You cannot be classed with the commonalty.

BHOJRAJ (*pleased*): I rejoice to see, great minstrel, that you are an adept in the art of repartee as well!

TANSEN (*salaaming again*): Sire, I bow to you because you are so gracious, but I wish you had used a happier word than "art".

BHOJRAJ (*surprised*): But why, Tansenji?

TANSEN: Because, sire, the word art, somehow, fills my heart with misgivings—it has an association of insincerity.

MIRA: But that is not quite true, Tansenji—if I may humbly demur. For whatever we create ought to aim at perfection. Art is only a pathfinder to the flawless.

TANSEN: May be... and yet I wonder if what is commonly called art is inspired so much by this deeper urge to perfection as by the cheap desire to turn out polished stuff to catch the fancy of all and sundry. Take the case of music, Maharani! I have heard ever so many singers who are as proud as peacocks of their "perfect art." But this art of theirs—whatever it may mean in theory—boils down, in practice, to a mere display of technique—of vocal acrobatics. As a result, their songs, for all their vaunted art, utterly fail to move. Why?

MIRA (*impulsively*): Because they only flaunt their technique to win praise. But true art, as I understand it, Tansenji, can never be

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inspired by such a petty impulse: it can only spring from what is conveyed by the word *tapasya*—that is, a sleepless self-discipline to make flawless whatever one expresses. And whatever we achieve becomes worthwhile only in the measure it is offered to Gopal. Now He is perfect and so everything we offer at His feet should be as perfect as we can possibly make it. (*Colouring again, suddenly*) Oh, pardon me, Tansenji! I ought not to have presumed to contradict the greatest singer-artist of India.

BHOJRAJ (*interposing*): Yes, Tansenji! We must not miss the supreme opportunity. Won't you give us a song?

MIRA: Yes, Tansenji—oh, how thrilling! (*she claps her hands and then flushes*) Oh, forgive me! I forgot myself.

TANSEN: Allah smiles on your forgetfulness, Maharani! (*After a pause*) I know now why you are *blessed*: because you are pure and simple of heart—a child of innocence. May you never lose it, that will be my only prayer for you—always.

MIRA (*shyly*): You make me feel . . .

BHOJRAJ (*coming again to her rescue*). But now you must give us one song at least.

TANSEN (*bowing*): Certainly, sire! (*To MIRA*): Won't you command me?—what am I to sing?

MIRA: One of your own compositions—Ragas which have made history. (*Smiling*) I have heard that when you sing a rain-song the darkest clouds shed tears of joy. (*Looking at the sky*) Not even a courtesy cloud up there. We may well do with a little rain after the drought.

TANSEN (*bowing gracefully*): I will sing a Malhar then:

Rain, rain, rain!
Come to appease our pain.
Rain, rain, rain!
May not our prayer be vain

Descend, O Ruth,
On our heart of drouth,
Absolving pain
With Grace again:
Compassion! come again:
May not our prayer be vain

We dream of skies to wake earth-bound
And cry: "Oh, make us free!"
But how shall we unfurl our cloud-wings,
Clipped everlastingly?

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Hark in the soul to His deep refrain

We hail and yet ignore:

"The Far-off is our kin—beyond .
The shoreless waits the Shore."

But, doom-enchanted, still we quail

To answer the saviour call

Of the Bourneless. so to break our dungeon

Let thy thunder fall

As he goes on singing, MIRA starts swaying from right to left. Her eyes fill. Beads of tears trickle down her cheeks, till, lastly, her expression changes when she goes into a trance.

BHOJRAJ (gazing admiringly at TANSEN): Oh, you are a divine singer!

TANSEN (pointing at MIRA): Shhh—!

BHOJRAJ (with a proud smile): Oh, do not worry. Even if the very thunder were to fall here this moment, her *samadhi* would not be affected.

Fascinated they watch her face of trance as she begins swaying again. Now her features assume a concentrated tenseness of expression, then they relax till a beatific smile overspreads her lips. After a while she starts singing, her eyes still closed

His memory . . . His memory . . .

Like clouds that siege elusively!

I am haunted by that blissful night

When—from afar His flute He played .

Then He came as a drizzle of delight,

Beat time and, like a dream, He stayed

So near and yet so far from me!

His memory . . . His memory . . .

Like clouds that siege elusively!

How He would make my eyelids close

And into my heart's lone temple steal

And kindling there . . . how, no one knows . . .

The lamp of vision would reveal

The rapture in my world to be!

As she goes on singing her face reveals a deepening ecstasy till, suddenly, she rises up (TANSEN and BHOJRAJ rise also) and starts dancing as

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she sings:

His memory . . . His memory . . .
Like clouds that siege elusively!
The daytides ebb . . . we pine in vain
For Him who Brindavan forgot . . .
We asked of every grove in pain:
"Say, was it here He danced who sought
For earth the Heaven's own minstrelsy?"

His memory . . . His memory . . .
Like clouds that siege elusively!
O friend, if Him you meet again
And He my tidings crave—convey
To Him my love that never shall wane,
But ask: how can I live and pray
To attain through love my destiny
By the light of nought but memory?

BHOJRAJ (*to TANSEN*): She will awake from her trance in a while.

TANSEN (*in a thick voice*): Sire, I am, indeed, blessed! I only wish—my great master, Shahanshah Akbar, could see what I have seen

BHOJRAJ (*gruffly*): Tansenji. I do not wish to hear such a wish reiterated again.

TANSEN (*surprised*). Why, sire?

BHOJRAJ (*grimly*): Are you not acquainted with history? (*Flaring up*) Have not hundreds of Rajput women preferred to die rather than be exposed to the gaze of these—these Muslims?

MIRA (*interposing*). But, Raj, what is all this?

BHOJRAJ (*vehemently*): Why, did you not hear what he said just now? A Muslim king to come to Mevar and look on the face of the Maharani of Mevar? Is not the very thought intolerable to you?

MIRA (*calmly but firmly*). Listen, Raj, and listen calmly. For this is not you—the great soul I have admired. Let not your wrath blur your noble vision and tolerance, I beseech you.

BHOJRAJ (*ironically*). I wonder if your Gopal would approve of such tolerance in his temple!

MIRA (*smiles*): Listen then, I will tell you something I have kept from you so long. A low-caste sweeper once happened to be listening, in tears, outside my temple while I was singing within. The priest, noticing him

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near the steps, drove him away, threatening him with a whipping in case he ventured to pollute my temple again. The man went away deeply mortified. (*Her eyes glisten*) As I was singing inside, I knew nothing of all this. But, when after my song, I offered my flowers at Gopal's feet, they dropped off. I offered them again, but again they were rejected. That night I did not go to bed but prayed and prayed in the temple till, just before sunrise, when I was in an extremity of despair—Gopal spoke through the Image and, with unshed tears in His eyes, told me how the sweeper had been turned out. Next morning I dismissed my priest and sent for the sweeper. When he came I saw tears of joy rolling down Gopal's cheeks. (*She wipes her eyes*) And then—lo! He suddenly started dancing round the sweeper and sang . .

Her face suddenly brightens and, closing her eyes, she sings:

Worship Him in thy heart,

In thy heart, in thy heart, in thy heart.

If He would come in state when we adored the lifeless stone,

I would adore, athrill, whole mountain-ranges all alone.

If by offering flowers and leaves one could attain His mystic light,

Whole forests would I rob of blooms and foliage day and night.

If by burning lamps and incense one might ever achieve His Grace,

I would blow my conchs from dawn to eve to meet Him face to face.

He only begs for love, O friend! He only knows one art:

Love's dancing in the heart.

We look for light without, alas, when He in the soul abides.

"He is supreme," we sing and yet will bow to alien guides.

For the blue's own alms we probe the earth to come by smoke and
eld;

The wary bride would please her swain with her beauty's visage
veiled!

Nor chants nor forms to Him appeal—He answers but one art:

Love's yearning in the heart

TANSEN (*his eyes glisten*): Allah bless you, Maharani! I will report this to my master.

BHOJRAJ (*in a moved voice*): Tansenji! I ask you to pardon me. You are my guest . . . I should have known better . . .

TANSEN (*taking his hands in his*): It is for me, sire, to ask pardon, for having affronted you, however unwittingly, in return for the great favour you have shown me.

BHOJRAJ (*mollified*). Oh, do not say that. For you will believe me when I say that I consider it an honour—to be able to pay you my respects, personally. But you must be tired. Be rested. (*Calling a*

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servant) You will take him to the private summer-house and convey him by my own chariot to the palace And ask the Chief Minister to invite all courtiers, announcing that the greatest singer of India will sing in the Durbar Hall this evening.

TANSEN Sire, you are generosity itself, but you must excuse me I cannot sing in your Durbar Hall. (*Anticipating him*) No, it isn't because of what happened just now, I assure you

MIRA. Are you sure, Tansenji? For should you still feel—

TANSEN (*smiling*). Maharani! Please remember I was born a Hindu and know how I used to feel once against Muslims. But my master, Shahanshah Akbar, has made me see how blind and foolish I was (*With emotion*) He is a great soul, Maharani! That is why he could see from the start that he is a false Muslim who respects another's faith less than his own.

MIRA. Gopal bless him, Tansenji, and you, for being true Muslims. But then why do you still refuse to sing at the Durbar Hall?

TANSEN (*with bowed head*): Because, Maharani . . . You will be there.

MIRA (*astomshed*): Of course I will be there (*After an expectant pause*) I really do not understand

TANSEN (*smiles sadly*): Maharani! I am rather sensitive by nature. . . I cannot sing before you

MIRA (*amazed*): I still feel baffled. You—the greatest singer and composer of India—you c-cannot sing before m-me, a humble devotee! Why?

TANSEN (*his eyes on hers*): Because, Maharani, one who sings for man dare not sing before one who sings only for the Divine.

He bows to the ground—as
THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE PLAYS THE THING

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Continued from previous issue

Unlike *Richard II*, *Henry IV*—the First Part especially—is a far more difficult play to present convincingly on the stage. Lytton Strachey thus explains this nature of the difficulty:

“The Falstaff scenes, with their extraordinary mingling of brilliant wit, sheer fun, and psychological profundity, seem to cry out for acting that is something more than passable—for acting that is really great—and, in addition, for that most difficult product of stage artistry—a perfectly manipulated *ensemble*. On the other hand, the ‘historical’ scenes, with their long speeches and sonorous verse, seem to lack action, and, except for the figure of Hotspur, to be too deficient in character to be made much of, save by actors of high accomplishment”

Much, then, would depend on the actors playing Hotspur and Falstaff, and on the alert deployment of the characters and situations. Redgrave as Hotspur and Quayle himself as Falstaff solved the first difficulty: yet the “tetralogy” theory sent them nearly shackled to the stage. Hal-Harry was the Hero-King of the entire cycle: hence Hotspur and Falstaff had both to be toned down a little. Hotspur could shine as much as he liked, he could radiate the brilliance of his impetuosity to his heart’s content, he could bristle, he could storm, he could fascinate: but at the centre there had to be the darkness of futility, even a little absurdity. In like manner, Quayle as Falstaff could be enormous and imposing, he could be allowed easily to bear down on the Pistols and Bardolphs, he could reign in his little world with the sceptre of his ready wit and the crown of his humanity,—only he shouldn’t be allowed to get the better of Prince Hal, for that would have upset the precious hypothesis that Hal-Harry was the real hero of this historical cycle! Thus, verily like the bed of Proustes, the theory interfered with the full amplitude of Hotspur’s and Falstaff’s parts, and however we might plead excuses and point to the consequential greater significance of the background, it did damage a good deal the beauty and formal pattern of the individual plays.

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The First Part of *Henry IV* is a rounded whole made up of the two hemispheres of the Court and the Boar's Head Tavern at Eastcheap, the world of Hotspur and the world of Falstaff. Neither world is all of a piece—the Court breaks up into two factions, and even Eastcheap achieves variation when Prince Hall and Poins, having first agreed to be parties to the highway robbery, decide to doublecross Falstaff and rob the robbers of their booty. What is there in common between these two worlds, and the groups of characters that inhabit them? What is the unifying force that holds the two hemispheres together? The obvious answer is Prince Hal. He is within and without both the worlds—and hence he welds them into one. There is abundant comedy in *Henry IV*—but it is very different from the comedy of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* or even of *The Way of the World*. In Shakespeare's play, comedy has to hold its own alongside of tragedy or at least of serious drama. Falstaff has to be himself, and at the same time achieve an integral relation to the play as a whole. The difference, of which I had been dimly aware all along, was forcibly brought home to me when I saw, soon after the Stratford plays, two French comedies—*The Prodigious Snob* (Miles Malleson's English version of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*) at the Theatre Royal at Bristol and *Figure of Fun* (Arthur Macrae's adaptation from the French of André Roussin) at the Opera House, Manchester. In Molière as in Roussin, fun is what we are after and fun is what we are drenched with, and we are not obliged to wander between two worlds, one bright red, the other coffee brown, nosing for the wires, the machinery, holding them together. Comedy hems us round and laughter bubbles up all the time. In Molière's play, M. Jourdain dominates the stage—and as played by Malleson he rather reminded me of a bald-headed person I know, a purveyor of howlers and an unconscious humorist. Malleson's versions of Molière have been received well. "A straightforward, workaday prose idiom, and a fast pace which makes the very most of the comic situations"—such is Mr Worsley's description of Malleson's recipe for translation. As actor, too, Malleson has been justly applauded.

That curious amalgam, Molière-Jourdain-Malleson, nevertheless glowed with real life on the stage of the Theatre Royal (the oldest theatre in Britain, Prof. D. A. James told me, which is still being used as a theatre!), and wit, intrigue, satire, absurdity and mere fooling gaily gyrated around him, spraying him with significance and also sucking sustenance from him. It is almost like the Indian Juggler giving an exhibition of revolving balls and flashing swords—it amuses and dazzles us awhile—and presently all is over. M. Jourdain plays the juggler, but unconsciously, he has waved his wand—or, rather, his cheque-book—and the music master, the dancing master, the singing master, the fencing master, the Philosophy master and

the etiquette master, all batten upon him or revolve around him, he is progressively keyed up to higher and higher pitches of excitement, he sups full of snobbery and absurdity—till at last with a bang crash the balls, the enchantment breaks, the false lights fade away, and all is sanity and sobriety again. *Figure of Fun*, too, was as good as its name. The three Acts of the play were respectively located at "Paris: Early Evening," "London: later the same evening", and "Paris and London: the following afternoon." Wasn't Truth stranger than Fiction? Freddie, playing in a comedy,—the play within the play!—argues that a particular episode is not true to life. When the play is over, he returns to his flat and realizes that what he has played on the stage has been but a mimicry of what has actually happened to him. In the play the girl who jilts her lover ultimately returns to him; but Freddie, whose wife has just left him, has no hope that *she* will return to him. Nevertheless the play is correct: and Freddie's own wife, having tested him as she had desired, returns to him, and all's well that ends well. The filiations between life and literature can never have been more amusingly brought out—and one wonders whether art imitates life or whether life imitates art. The atmosphere is so subtly charged with the spirit of comedy that Freddie's frivolities and frenzies alike acquire its flavour, and we are never in danger of mistaking the play for a tragedy or a romance. It floats in mid-air like a soap-bubble, fragile and rainbow-coloured,—and anon it bursts, and leaves not a rack behind.

To return to *Henry IV*, not only is the comedy of the Falstaff scenes a different kind of comedy—being both superficially cruder and quintessentially deeper than that of *The Prodigious Snob* and *Figure of Fun* which is airy, selfish and evanescent—but it is also presented in neat contrast to the seemingly high and swelling argument of the political scenes. French comedy has the merit of simplicity and obvious beauty, Falstaffian comedy has the richness of complexity and hidden depth. French comedy is a miniature whole, Falstaffian comedy is a massive incompleteness, only to be understood in relation to the "other" hemisphere. The whole point of a play like *Henry IV, Part I* is that neither the Hostpur world for all its stir and glory nor the Falstaff world for all its humour and humanity holds the whole clue to the secret of right conduct and wise living. Prince Hal therefore oscillates between the two worlds, now identifying himself with one, now with the other, humanizing as well as tempering himself in the process. In *him* Shakespeare intends us to see a confusion—and later a stern integration—of the two categories of living typified by the two worlds. But the whole point is lost if we reduce Prince Hal to the position of a cold and calculating researcher, almost a spy, spending odd hours in the Boar's Head Tavern at Eastcheap. This is the reason why Prince Hal's soliloquy in Act I, Scene 2—

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*I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyok'd humour of your idleness . . . —*

gives a nasty twist to his character, and it seems easier and more natural to assume that Shakespeare inserted it after completing the Second Part. This hypothesis too is not without unresolved difficulties, but in any case it is essential, even in defiance of the soliloquy, to present a Prince Hal whose mind is as yet more or less equally attached to the two worlds, and the shift from Eastcheap to the Throne is achieved by slow imperceptible stages under the pressure of two civil wars and the imminent responsibilities of Kingship. To present a precocious worldly-wise Hal, who frequents Eastcheap as one attends a laboratory, is altogether to miss Shakespeare's main intention, and almost to maim it out of recognition.

Redgrave's Hotspur, like his Richard, was a creditable performance. Hotspur bristled in every feather, and was wonderfully alive. In the two Parts of *Henry IV*, Harry Andrews had progressively to acquire a deeper tone and a graver aspect, he had to play the ageing King reeling under the double burden of guilt and responsibility, and it must be said that he emerged from the ordeal with colours flying and head unbowed. As for Falstaff, Anthony Quayle was quite adequate for the role. Here, again, unlike Sir Ralph Richardson who had portrayed Falstaff brilliantly for the Old Vic, Quayle, like Redgrave with Richard and Hotspur, had to wriggle as best he could within the shackles of his own theory. Even so Falstaff was enormous in his stature and infectious in his humour—and his lies, his size, his snore, his bravado, as also his laughter, his wit, his humanity altogether became him and invested him with a gigantic significance. Falstaff, in spite of Quayle the Director, managed to remain very near the centre even in the Second Part, and his "dismissal", however one might explain it away, seemed rather a brutal thing. "Our sympathy goes to Falstaff", wrote Mr. Worsley reviewing the production in *Britain Today*, "and we are left with the feeling that the Prince was something of a prig." As for the other characters, Doll Tearsheet was the very picture of the pretty, young, abandoned whore, wild and beautiful in her looks, reckless in her actions, reckless but also luridly attractive. The Hostess was splendid, as a matter of course. Bardolph's nose glowed like red-hot coal, and Pistol was recognizably a coxcomb. John of Lancaster was a little demon, with not the least touch of grace or humanity in him, while Shallow and Silence were exquisite fun throughout. In *Henry V*, there are no inner tensions to resolve, for the conflict is almost exclusively an outer one: this circumstance helped to make it very effective on the stage. Burton as Henry V did exceedingly well. Mistress Quickly made a good job of the reporting of the death of Falstaff. Fluellen and Kate, the French Princess, contributed to the humour of the play. But emphasis

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was largely on the heroic theme, and on the personality of the Warrior-King who was also a comrade-in-arms with the meanest soldier in the camp. Minor cavillings apart, the cycle of the four historical plays was adroitly conceived as a compelling heroic sequence and was so presented on the stage. In view of the theme, it had no doubt a particular national significance in the Festival year, but even when considered merely as an event in the theatrical world, it must be given due praise both on account of the boldness of the planning and the fullness and completeness of the execution

The last play I saw in England was *Othello*. The Old Vic were presenting this play at the New Theatre at Oxford when I was there, and so on the 26th October I went to see it in the company of Mr Harvey of the British Council. *Othello* was played by Douglas Campbell, a young Scottish actor; Iago by Paul Rogers; and Desdemona by Irene Worth, who had already gained no mean reputation at the Edinburgh Festival of 1949 by her performance in *The Cocktail Party*. The opening scenes were poor in acting and even in articulation. Roderigo (played by Douglas Wilmer) was pathetic enough, but Iago began poorly. The alarm, Brabantio's outbursts,—tame again. Even *Othello*—black-faced, brown-armed, and smallish in stature—played his part indifferently at first. As for the Duke, he looked a clown and acted a clown. The great speech of *Othello's* in Act I, although it was clearly delivered, didn't quite set the Thames on fire. Then came Desdemona—frail, fair, already strangely helpless with the lines of fateful tragedy drawn dimly across her face (or, did I only imagine them to be there?)—and Desdemona redeemed the performance and lifted it to the heights of poetic tragedy. Emilia too was good,—played by Coral Browne. Little by little, Iago improved, and entered into his part. Once in Cyprus, Iago improved greatly—and the action became tense. But is there any warrant in Shakespeare's text, or at least in theatrical tradition, for the peeping courtesans at the quay? Or for the wild lascivious carousing of soldiers and harlots on the night of *Othello's* nuptials? Cassio as the drunken Captain was a pitiful creature; and so the performance zig-zagged through alternating tameness and effectiveness. Even the Temptation Scene was but so-so. *Othello's* thunders were not thundering enough—but there were rumbling clouds, there were sudden flashes of lightning, and these were telling. On the other hand, Desdemona's growing agony was profoundly moving, and the bedroom scenes were unbearable. After Desdemona's and Emilia's deaths, the rest somehow petered out and one felt relieved that all was over. However, as Iago lay on the stage in final discomfiture, he turned on the audience a pair of eyes which were terrifyingly sinister in the extreme—he was very Devil for a few seconds—superb impersonation indeed! As

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for the minor characters, Roderigo, Cassio, Bianca, all played their allotted parts with reasonable competence. But, then, when Othello fails in *Othello*, almost everything fails.

Yet the Director couldn't altogether be blamed for the comparative failure of this *Othello*. None of Shakespeare's great tragedies is an easy play to produce. In the past Othello had been played, among others, by Talma, Kean, Kemble, Macready, Joanny and Paul Robeson. While the Old Vic performance was being given at Oxford, Orson Welles's *Othello* was being shown at St James' in London. In November, both *Othellos* simultaneously ran in London, and hence critics indulged not a little in the fascinating game of comparing the two productions. Neither seemed to satisfy the fastidious critic. Orson Welles had Personality, but little Passion, Campbell, on the contrary, had Passion, but an inadequate Personality. If Campbell's brown hands ill assorted with his black face, Welles's legs looked thin and rickety in the context of his massive body made all the more massive through generous padding. The clouds over Campbell clashed and resulted only in token thunder, but the far more menacing clouds enveloping Welles never achieved any thunder whatsoever! We have to fall back on our usual consolations—Hamlet, Othello, Cleopatra, Lear, demand far more than any single actor, however superlatively gifted, can by himself provide. They are darlings of Infinity, and must elude the grasp of actor and producer alike.

Concluded

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchandra

CHAPTER IX

THE PSYCHIC—THE DELIGHT-SOUL

PART III

The Odyssey of the Psychic Being

We have already had an understanding of the rationale of the soul's descent into material birth: it is to awaken consciousness in the giant nescience of the material existence and effect a dynamic union between Spirit and Matter, rendering the latter a plastic and transparent medium of the Spirit's multiple self-expression. But this stupendous evolutionary work cannot obviously be done in a single birth of the soul—the nature that emerges from Matter and develops through life and mind is much too dense and dark, much too inert and ignorant and frail and peccable to be lifted up at once to the divine stature. It has to be prepared,—its complex strands and elements to be purified, refined, impersonalised, integrated and organised round the central divine Presence. It is this long work of preparation that is done through the series of births of the individual soul. If a fulfilment was sought elsewhere than on this earth, this series of births would not impose itself; but if the earth is to be the scene of the highest divine fulfilment, as Sri Aurobindo holds, then a succession of rebirths in the human form seems to be the only possible means to it. But, it must be carefully noted, this succession of rebirths is not a machinery of repetition of the same personality. John, dead, is not born again with his old nature and character unchanged, as Jack. If it were so, rebirth would be no means of evolution, but only a perpetuation of the same personality in different physical garbs. The logic of evolution, if we subscribe to it, demands, on the contrary, that each birth must mark a definite step forward, a bringing out of that which was involved or latent, and a working out of some of the complex potentialities of the evolving individual. It is true that this evolutionary advance cannot be in a straight line; it is necessarily in a spiral. Now it is one group of elements that

are caught up in its movement, now it is another, a part of the being is raised into light and another left tossing in darkness; and the part that is lifted in one life is dropped in another to work out some of its submerged or suppressed tendencies. It is an incalculable, winding movement, unobstinate but unrelaxing, aiming at thoroughness and harmony, though appearing to drive only towards stray specific results.

But how is this evolution effected, and under what agency is it led from stage to stage? If John is born immediately after his death as Jack, he can only remain what he was in his previous life—the mere fact of the assumption of a new physical form does not of itself argue any modification of the psychological make-up of his being. According to Sri Aurobindo, this agency is the psychic being and its inter-natal odyssey is the process by which it rings the curtain up and down upon the decisive stages of the evolution of its nature. Death is only a signal, may be an abrupt and violent signal in a majority of cases, for a shift of scenes, and nothing more. When the gross physical body drops, the being passes into the subtle physical, and from there into the vital world. It exhausts its vital Karma in the vital world, and then passes into the mental. When the mental formations are dissolved, like those of the vital, the soul goes to its own plane, called by Sri Aurobindo the psychic plane, for rest and assimilation of all its past experiences, acquired both on earth and on the planes of its post-mortal journey. When the period of rest is over, and the work of assimilation complete, the soul or the psychic being emerges from its plane and assumes again, first, a mental sheath, that is to say, a mental body composed of those mental elements which it attracts towards itself by the characteristic force of its personality for the work of its next incarnation. Then it descends to the vital plane and, assuming an appropriate vital sheath, comes down through the subtle-physical into human birth. This is the general process, but it admits of many variations, some of which we may glance at in this essay.

The process seems to be simple enough, but unless we know the principle behind it, governing its purpose and functioning, we shall miss its real significance and rest satisfied with a mechanistic view of it. There are two factors of the most primary and decisive importance to be taken into account in this connection. The one is the evolution of the psychic being from Matter upwards, following a certain curve of developing consciousness and nature, and the other is a particular line of divine consciousness influencing and guiding from above the evolution of the psychic being, and using its transient surface formations to further its own ulterior aim of self-manifestation in Matter. This particular line of divine consciousness, at once transcendent, universal and individual, seeks its perfect self-expression on earth through the psychic being which is its

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projection here, and is the ultimate reason and justification of the whole complex process of the rebirth and the internatal journey of the psychic being. It follows naturally from a consideration of these two factors that rebirth is an evolutionary necessity and not a mere mechanism of Karma from which the soul has to escape into the immutable eternity of its unconditioned existence or non-existence. But for rebirth, the soul instead of evolving into the mental consciousness of the human being would have remained a perpetual prisoner of the subconscient obscurity; and if it ever rises from the mental twilight into the solar glory of the infinite supermind and reveals that glory in earthly life, as it seems destined to do (unless it elects to beat an oblique retreat), it can only be by the process of rebirth and the full utilisation of the opportunities rebirth makes accessible to it. The whole problem changes its aspect when viewed from the standpoint of evolution. The traditional idea subjects rebirth to the rigid determinism of the chain of causality and regards it as a bondage and burden of the soul, from which an escape is the only release; while, according to Sri Aurobindo, rebirth is the only means of evolution and liberation, and once they are achieved, it becomes a means of divine self-expression and immortal enjoyment of unity in diversity—*sambhūtyām-ritamashnute*, as the Upanishads say. The liberated soul, the Jīvanmukta, does not shrink from assuming any number of births for the fulfilment of the divine Will—each birth of such a soul is, indeed, an invasion of light into the terrestrial darkness and an infusion of bliss into the mortal suffering.

The particular line of divine consciousness influencing and directing the evolution of the individual being is then an important determining factor. This influence and direction come down to the evolving individual through the subliminal, and are rather occult to his unenlightened comprehension. If he lives mostly in his physical being, engrossed in the needs and cravings of his body and attached to his physical interests and relations, it is likely that his soul will not be able to go on a long journey of the supraphysical planes after the death of his present body—the insistent material preoccupation of the nature will pull it down to the earth. But if he has sufficiently developed his vital being and the mental, if he has, consciously or subconsciously, developed an affinity with any of the supraphysical worlds, his post-mortal sojourn in that world becomes almost a certainty. Take, for instance, the case of a philosopher. After his death he passes through the subtle-physical to the vital world, and unless there is a strong vital knot or twist somewhere in him, some deep-rooted desire or passion, his vital sheath will soon be dissolved and he will proceed straight to the mental world where, relieved of the vital burden, he will be free to acquire various experiences. Because he has

developed a mind of reflection and imagination and an affinity with the mental world, he can live in that world more or less securely and fruitfully till the mental sheath is dissolved and the soul or the psychic being departs to its own plane to rest and assimilate its past experiences. It must be noted that the psychic being carries only the quintessence of its experiences to its abode of rest, having discarded and exhausted on the way much that was necessary in its own time but irrelevant to the future set-up and growth, and it is this quintessence that goes, along with the new factors emerging into existence, to condition the shape and pattern of the next birth. But what are these new factors? They are the different lines of evolution that the psychic being takes up for development in its successive births. For, the psychic being is not bound by the chain of causality; it is the determining agent, in union with the divine Will in it, of the purpose and processes of its incarnations. It freely accepts the conditions and inherent limitations of the material life and the risks and hazards of its journey through the supraphysical planes to work out the tangled complex of possibilities without which the many-sided perfection and fulfilment of its destiny cannot be achieved.

Another thing to be marked here is that, as, on the one hand, the evolution of the psychic being is not the result of a mechanical interaction of karmic forces, so, on the other, it is not an isolated phenomenon unrelated to the universal being and its evolution. The evolutionary development has "a universal as well as an individual aspect. the Universal develops the grades of its being and the ordered variation of the universality of itself in the series of its evolved forms of being; the individual soul follows the line of this cosmic series and manifests what is prepared in the universality of the Spirit. The universal Man, the cosmic Purusha in humanity, is developing in the human race the power that has grown into humanity from below it and shall yet grow to supermind and spirit and become the Godhead in man who is aware of his true integral self and the divine universality of his nature. The individual must have followed this line of development; he must have presided over a soul-experience in the lower forms of life before he took up the human evolution: as the One was capable of assuming in its universality these lower forms of the plant and the animal, so must the individual, now human, have been capable of assuming them in his previous stages of experience. He now appears as a human soul, the Spirit accepting the inner and outer form of humanity, but he is not limited by this form any more than he was limited by the plant or animal forms previously assumed by him; he can pass on from it to a greater self-expression in a higher scale of Nature."*

* "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo—Book II, Chapter XX.

This seems to be a striking departure from the accredited theories of rebirth. Sri Aurobindo stresses two important points in this connection,—points which have been curiously ignored up to now. The first is that the evolution of the individual is not an isolated movement following its own separate lines and sufficient unto itself. If Karma is one or Prakriti is one or the stream of flux is an indivisible universal dynamism, then there must be an interpenetration and interaction of their energies, precluding the possibility of any strict individual insularity. In this world of teeming relativities, subsisting in the Absolute, no single unit is sufficient unto itself, but all are divergent and convergent parts of the whole, acting and reacting upon one another and developing by this mutual interaction. The Karma of an individual is not altogether his own exclusive concern, of which he alone reaps the harvest of corn or thorns; it is also the concern of the universal Being who, using the individual as one of His myriad channels of self-expression, exercises a presiding and directing control over his evolution. If the philosophy of Karma and rebirth is to be properly studied, it cannot be done except in the larger context of universal karma and universal manifestation. The second point of importance is that while, according to the current interpretations of Karma, rebirth comes to an end as soon as the mental consciousness of the individual abolishes itself in the spiritual, Sri Aurobindo regards rebirth as a means of ascent into “a higher scale of Nature.” The mind is not the highest degree of consciousness accessible to man on earth; there are higher degrees and levels hierarchically graded and leading to the supreme consciousness, to which man can attain without abolishing himself. And that is, indeed, the intended crown and culmination of his evolution through birth and death—the full and perfect recovery and revelation of the Spirit in him. His experiences in successive lives, in changing forms, in different and often difficult circumstances; his after-death journey to the various worlds of life and mind; his exploration of their powers and principles, and their bearing upon his own development and perfection; his soul’s assimilative and preparative repose in its own world of peace and bliss—all these are but episodes in the long and chequered history of his soul’s evolutionary progression from Matter to Spirit, its eventful odyssey. His humanity is a shifting mask, an immaculate divinity is his eternal essence and ultimate destiny.

The Psychic Predetermination

When the soul or the psychic being comes out of its assimilative sleep, it decides upon the nature and conditions of its next incarnation in the light of the will and knowledge it has of its immediate evolutionary

objective. Every essential factor, whether it is the place and the environment, or the family and the circumstances of its birth, or the events and experiences it will pass through, or the forces it will meet and combat, is foreseen and fore-ordained by the psychic being in consonance with the divine Will in it. Suffering, defeat, humiliation, destitution as well as happiness and honour and success are equally accepted by the psychic being as part of the mixed material of its self-evolution in earthly nature. The psychic being has an equal delight in all the vicissitudes of its temporal existence, and it profits by each of them. It turns failures into successes and defeats into potential elements of victory. That is why even though crushed by the forces of life, we are not altogether crushed out of existence—something seems ever to sustain and uphold us. Even when we walk through the darkest night, a light, however dim, burns on within, and in the acutest agony of pain a hope of its end saves us from an utter collapse. The psychic being often accepts situations, which appear to be revolting or repellent to our mental or moral sense, in order to work out its manifestational possibilities. The human mind, tethered to its petty standards and concentrated on momentary interests, cannot fathom the direction of the psychic being and is, therefore, often perplexed or shocked by the turns events take in life. But if it can develop the spiritual vision, it will see that there is nothing like chance in life, no accidents,—everything is foreseen and predetermined by the Divine through the psychic, so far as the evolution of the human individual is concerned, and to be united with the psychic and live in it and from it is the only sun-lit path of progress for man.

The Psychic Guidance

When spiritual knowledge develops, one begins to perceive that the proud idea of free-will which the human ego cherishes in its ignorance is nothing but a precious fiction. It is true that it is a practical and effective fiction, indispensable for the evolution of the individual in the ignorance, but one that has to be flung away as soon as he advances towards wider horizons and is able to command a more or less clear view of the unity of universal existence and the sovereignty of the divine Will in it. This view does not reduce him to a helpless automaton, drained of all will and initiative and moved by the fiat and force of an alien supremacy. On the contrary, it unites him with the universal existence and eventually even with the transcendent through an identification with his real soul, the psychic being. In that unconfined consciousness he discovers that the will of his ego was but a puppet will, drunk with the cramping illusion of its separate freedom, and that his true being is not encased in a tiny formation

of Nature, but embraces the whole universe and extends even beyond it. He finds his own freedom in the freedom of the Infinite and his own will in the self-effectuating Will of the Eternal.

The perception of the psychic guidance and an ungrudging surrender to it is the surest way of spiritual advancement. Much of the struggle of the spiritual life, much of the twisting and torturing of nature, much of the fantastic mortifications imposed upon the body and the life-energies is due to a lack of direct guidance of the psychic being. The mind, taking the lead in the sadhana and straining to force the whole nature into its pre-conceived moulds, often ends by only maiming and disfiguring it. The excesses of asceticism have little of genuine spirituality in them—they are, more often than not, a gross wilful violence upon oneself and upon the Divine in oneself. And it is not only the average men, but even some of the great spiritual personalities, that have been responsible for this kind of deliberate violence upon their nature under the arbitrary lead of their self-righteous mind. But a simple surrender to the psychic guidance in faith and sincerity obviates much of the difficulty of the path and makes of our evolution a spontaneous outflowing.

Here a note of caution seems to be called for. When we speak of the psychic guidance or the psychic leading, we do not mean the direction of what is called conscience. Conscience, as it is understood, is a mental and moral construction, a central crystallisation of the more or less conventional ideas of good and evil in the human mind. It is invariably coloured by the preferences and prepossessions of the mind, and, even at its best, cannot but reflect the dominant tendency of the being, though that tendency may not be apparent on the surface. To perceive the psychic guidance, one must have gone deep into oneself, beyond the mind and its ideas and principles, and the likes and dislikes of the heart. It is only in the serene silence of the mind and the heart, and not in their feverish striving, that the psychic guidance reveals itself. A purity in the being, attained by a renunciation of all desires and a clearance of all mental cobwebs, is the best condition for the still small voice to be heard and the slender revealing ray to be seen.

But even when we are not aware of the psychic guidance, it is always there behind the activities of our ego, but crossed, perverted and falsified by the egoistic misprision and interference. There is an evolutionary utility even in this distortion and falsification of the psychic guidance, entailing many a stumble and suffering, so long as the ego is the overt leader of the individual evolution—the ego learns in the school of suffering and grows in strength by defeat and failure. But when the being has evolved enough to overleap the egoistic bounds, nothing is more helpful than a contact with the psychic and a surrender to its infallible guidance.

Any insistence on the realisation of one's mental principles and conceptions would mean, at this stage, a definite retardation or a regression, not an advance

The Self-expression of the Psychic Being

A progressive surrender of the whole being to the guidance of the psychic, which means, in effect, a surrender to the Divine and His Shakti through the unerring agency of the psychic, leads to a more and more unflawed self-expression of our essential divinity in life. The psychic being comes forward and makes its presence felt in our mind, our heart, our will and even in our body, removing all impurities and preparing our nature for the manifestation of the Divine. The sway of the psychic being in our nature is a guarantee of peace and purity and love and joy, and when the parts of our nature are moulded into the image of the psychic, our life becomes a triumphal march to the Love and Light of the Supreme. A boundless love and devotion for the Divine, a complete self-consecration to His Will, a spontaneous love and sympathy for all beings, a concrete experience of the unity of existence and a growing poise in that unity, and a limpid placidity and plasticity in the entire nature, are some of the principal elements of the self-expression of the psychic being. It may appear that this is the very summit of the soul's perfection, but in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga this psychic conversion and transformation of the nature is but the first decisive achievement, and beyond it lie the ascents and descents and conquests which culminate in an integral union with the Divine and His manifestation upon earth. The Divine completes what the psychic being commences.

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Sisirkumar Mitra

Continued from previous issue

Builders of the Sindhu Valley Civilisation

Who are the builders of the Sindhu Valley civilisation? What kind of people were they? Whom do they resemble racially?—these are among the questions, answers to which would give some idea of the nature of the culture and its indigenous character. The only basis of the attempts so far made to trace the ethnic origins of these early civilised peoples of India has been the skeletal remains and skulls found among the ruins. And Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean Alpinoid and Mongoloid are the four racial types so far ascertained from the remains. We have already said in chapter one that these types form elements of India's population even today and that their foreign appellations do not necessarily mean that they migrated to India from outside. It is quite possible that they have been in the country for thousands of years and had even been there long before the Sindhu Valley culture started developing. The populous cities and towns in the large areas which were under the direct influence of this culture must have had in them humans of various types. And as the culture took a long time to reach its finished form, these humans, particularly the dominant type among them, must have been there for many centuries so as to be able to lay the foundation and then build on it those fine works that formed the fabric of the Sindhu Valley civilisation.

The view that it was the creation of the Dravidians does not seem to be any longer tenable. Their funerary customs of burying their dead differed from that of the Sindhu people who used to cremate their dead. Besides, the Dravidian type is a mixed one, and cannot be spoken of as having any distinctive character of its own. This, however, is more or less true in respect of almost all racial types. If it is accepted, as some scholars hold, that the Dravidians invaded India from the west, it has also to be remembered that they had enough intermingling of blood with the local aboriginals to become thorough natives of the soil, at least, in the period of the Sindhu Valley culture. Besides, the cranial evidence is too scanty to justify any

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definitive conclusion with regard to the division of the racial elements in the population of the Sindhu Valley, neither is it always dependable. The Dravidian, let us repeat, has never been an ethnic type. In fact, Arya also is not strictly speaking, any such. These two names stand for languages and cultures and apply to peoples who speak those languages or adopt those cultures.

The Vedic influence in the Sindhu Valley culture, as already pointed out, may be taken to indicate that there were among the builders of the Sindhu culture people who had already had contact with the Aryan culture, a fact which not only opens up a new phase of the Sindhu culture but points to the earliest efforts of India to bring about a kind of synthesis in the religious life of the people. Thus Indians in that remote past had betrayed an innate tendency of their racial being, which, as their later history proves, has been a remarkable characteristic of all their creative strivings through the ages. The gods and goddesses of the Sindhu Valley had direct or indirect affinities with the Vedic ones. Whether the former derived from the latter or *vice versa* brings us to the question of the antiquity of the Aryas in India. All controversy over it would for ever be set at rest if it could be established that the Aryas had evolved their culture in India before or about the time of the Sindhu Valley culture. This is not to say that they were the only people living in India at that time and that it was they alone who created the Sindhu culture. It is quite probable that people or peoples with different cultures who might have migrated to those regions long ago or had been living there became racially and culturally united with those following the Aryan culture. There is also the other possibility that, as racial distinctions did not then exist so markedly, it was culture that separated the one community from the other and erected those barriers between them which seemed to be the cause of all those struggles and conflicts—if they are at all facts and not only symbols—that are described in the Rig Veda. This distinction came particularly to be always between the Arya and un-Arya in culture, the Aryan followers of Light and un-Aryan Dasas and Dasyus, sons of Darkness. But in its psychological meaning this conflict symbolises a great truth of human existence seen and revealed by the Vedic mystics, in which case the question of Aryan and non-Aryan does not arise. Anyway, it is not correct to call the Dasas and Dasyus Dravidians and noseless. The Sanskrit term, used in that sense, means literally 'mouthless', and figuratively 'speechless'. An Indian scholar has shown them as no human beings at all but as ugly-looking evil spirits that the Vedic Aryas fought in the occult world,—a view which comes very near to the esoteric implication of the Vedic symbols. Besides, says Sri Aurobindo, 'even if the Vedic word *anasa* is taken to mean 'noseless', as has been done by European and Indian scholars, it is wholly inapplicable to the Dravidian

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racés; for the southern nose can give as good an account of itself as any "Aryan" proboscis of the North.'

That the Aryas were not always in enmity with those who did not follow their culture is evident from the battle between the Vedic King Sudas and the ten kings, in which on either side there were both Aryas and un-Aryas. It seemed that in those days racial differences were not so rigid but were fluid enough to be resolved by Vedic culture in proportion as it influenced those communities which with the growth and expansion of Vedic ideas among them developed into a cultural type. It is not improbable that this culture-type retained some of its old non-Vedic ideas not separately to maintain its distinctiveness but partly assimilated to its new way of life. There is also the other possibility, as suggested by a scholar, that the non-Vedic communities adopted Vedic ideas but gave to them their own stamp. This might explain the view that the Vedic god Rudra became Shiva, Vedic Aditi became the Mother-goddess under different names, Vedic Mītra took so many forms of popular worship. The religious element in the Sindhu Valley culture might have much to do with one such movement of cultural interfusion through which two or more cultures met and mingled and grew into the Sindhu culture in whose body can be seen the principal symbols and, through them, the religious ideals of the Vedic culture. It may be that this movement was not always a silent one. Some conflict of ideals was quite possible. Image-worship, for example, might have little or no place among the Vedic Aryas, whereas it was part of the religious life of the Sindhu people. There is a suggestion that image-worship in Indiā had its origin in the Sindhu valley, although the gods worshipped there had their originals in the Veda. Needless to add that a high esoteric culture must, of necessity, remain confined to small groups of advanced souls, the common run following easier cults of worship. That this was the fact in the Vedic age is borne out by internal evidences in the Vedas themselves. While the mystics were voyaging into the vasts of God, the laity were occupied with exoteric forms of worship and sacrifice.

European scholarship has in the main tried to show that sometime during the second millennium B.C.—different dates have been suggested by different scholars—the Aryas migrated to India from south Russia or central Europe or Iran or central Asia. These views are generally based on linguistic evidences which are not always dependable, though there is much truth in what is said as proof of the linguistic relationship of the Aryas with the archaic elements in the cultures and languages of those regions. And it is this that gives rise to the opposite question whether Aryan culture spread to those and other regions from some outside country an instance of which is furnished by the inscriptions of the Hittite capital of the fourteenth century B.C., invoking specifically Rigvedic deities.

These Hittites ruled over a greater part of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine between 2000 and 1200 B.C. And their real name, according to the inscriptions, was Khatti, a corruption of Kshatri or Kshatriya, the warrior-caste of India. These are among the facts that are held by some scholars as pointing to an anterior period of the R̥gveda which must have at that time originated much earlier to have its culture spread from India to those regions. The fifteenth century Tel-el-Amarna letters of the same region mention four Mittani kings whose names are distinctly Aryan. Hall suggests the Aryan affinity of these Mittani kings. But more interesting are the four cuneiform tablets found there containing expressions in pure Sanskrit which refer to chariot racing. The name of a certain Palestinian king was Subandhu, a distinctly Indian name. Myres speaks of Aryan settlements about Lake Van in Armenia. In *Antiquities of India* Thomas Maurice says that originally Celtic priests called the Druids were the Brahmanas from India who spread themselves widely through the northern regions even to Siberia itself. Evidences are available today that Indian scholars existed in Iran, Greece and in various regions in between when in the fifth century B.C. the Achaemenian empire touched the borders of India and Greece. In the third century B.C. there were Buddhist communities in Alexandria and Palestine, and the Bhagavatas, followers of a Krishna-cult, near Lake Van. From about the same time and for centuries large number of Indian scholars lived in various parts of Central Asia, China and south-east Asia. There is reason to believe that these were not isolated instances but the continuity of an ancient tradition of India built up by the long line of her cultural ambassadors who from very early times had been carrying to distant lands the torch of their country's lore. And they used, more often than not, to settle in those places.

While the possibility is there that before the emergence of the 'modern man' migrations had taken place in various parts of the world and that India, then linked to some of them by land-bridges, had been affected by these movements, it is also the belief of many scholars, European and Indian, that India has been the scene of human activity from very early times and that she is the cradle not only of man but also of his culture. Sir Arthur Keith, the eminent authority on anthropology, holds that evolution of human groups has always been local, that is to say, confined to particular regions, and that migrations, whatever they might be, had taken place before man attained his 'modern' form. Keith regards the northern frontiers of India as the 'cradle-land of humanity.' This view is supported by other scholars including Max-Muller, Harry Johnston and H. G. Wells. Max-Muller remarks that India's historical records, as available in her ancient literature, can supply the missing link between ape and man. Ancient Indian cosmogony and the later Pauranic theory of ten incarnations

from Matsya (fish), the first form of life in water at an early stage of creation, to Kalki, the maker of the future civilisation have in them much truth to the recognition of which modern science is tending, however slowly.

Early Aryan Dawns

There are material evidences that in earlier times the Himalayan regions and the river valleys of the Panjab were inhabited by man. The view is gaining ground that the Aryas are among the descendants of these peoples, and it is they who built their civilisation in the Land of Seven Rivers which comes to be frequently mentioned in the Rig Veda. It was probably here—also called *Brahmarshi-desa*, the land where lived the seers of the supreme Truth,—that the Rig Vedic hymns were composed by Aryan mystics. But the homeland of the Aryas appears to have extended beyond the present northern frontiers of India. A recent theory, developed out of Vedic, Avestan and archaeological sources, is that the region Airyana, as mentioned in the book Vendidad of the Avesta, comprised the whole of north-western India including part of eastern Iran, and Baluchistan in the south—the Ganga-Yamuna Doab and Rajasthan being its southern boundary. This is the region most notable in history, which is believed to be the scene of activity of the early Aryas in four successive periods, Bactrian, Sindhu Valley, Vedic and Avestan are the four cultures that flourished at different centres of that region during the period from 5000 to 800 B.C. The chronological order of these cultures can be finally determined when further finds and researches bring to light definite evidence on the point. But the possibility is tending to be a fact that these cultures were the creations of the same type of people generally known as the Aryas. And this type, it would be well to note, is more cultural than ethnic.

We have already pointed out the affinities of the Sindhu with the Vedic culture. These affinities are likely to be the result of the influences of the latter on the former. There is no doubt, however, that the Vedic culture was purer, simpler and more spiritual. The Aryan character of the Bactrian culture is known from its influences, direct or indirect, on the cultures of Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia. There are scholars who hold that the Aryas of India are the builders of Egyptian civilisation. Herodotus referred to the Aryan customs of the Egyptians. Inspiration from India is traced in many of the cultural achievements of ancient Egypt. Many gods and goddesses of Egypt are said to have been adaptations from Vedic ones. Sanskrit roots of ancient Egyptian words are not uncommon. The root meaning (to give) in Egyptian of the Egyptian Sun-God Ra is the same as the meaning of the same Sanskrit root. Ka, the surname of many Pharaohs, is derived from Khnumu, the Egyptian god of creation, with a goat's head.

Ka is also the surname of Daksha of Hindu mythology, who is also a god of creation having a goat's head. The name of the river Nile is derived from almost the same Sanskrit word meaning 'blue' which, according to Rawlinson, is also the meaning in Egyptian of the word Nile. Sir Flinders Petrie, the famous British Egyptologist, believes, on the basis of positive archaeological evidence, that an Indian colony existed in Egypt about 500 B.C. All these resemblances as also those pointed out below do suggest possibilities of Aryan intermingling. In *The Secret Doctrine* H.P. Blavatsky, the famous Theosophist, says that Babylonian civilisation was imported from India and the importers were Brahminical Hindus. About 1800 B.C. the Kassites, a branch of the Indo-Aryans and speaking an Aryan tongue, were in possession of Babylon. They worshipped the Vedic god Indra-Bhaga and the Sun-god Surya. Hall says the Sumerians were decidedly Indian in type. Waddell maintains that the Sumerians were Aryans and that their names can be identified in the Vedas and the Puranas. These views lend further support to the view that the Aryas migrated from India to those countries. A recent corroboration of this view comes from Dr. Kalidas Nag, the eminent historical scholar, who in 1951 visited the Middle Eastern countries and Turkey and found ample archaeological proofs preserved in the museums of those countries, which bear out the authenticity of much of the evidences cited above. The positive and unmistakable character of these proofs leads him 'to discard the old theory of Aryan migration into India' and to hold 'that the Aryan trail definitely began from India and the East and that it gradually moved to the West.' As regards the Aryas of the Avesta, we may mention that while the separation of the Avestan Aryas from the Vedic Aryas might be due to social or religious differences, their cultures did not differ much from each other. There is abundant evidence of how the archaic Vedic Sanskrit continued in the Avesta with slight variations. The name Avesta is derived from Upastha, another name of the Veda. Ahura Mazda, the supreme Avestan deity, has his origin, Ahura, in Asura (powerful) of the Rig Veda (a god of power, as Rudra), Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda, and Mazda in the Sanskrit word *Mahat* (great). The *yajāt* (god) of the Avesta is the *Yajatra* of the Veda meaning one who sacrifices or to whom the sacrifice is made (god or priest). Indra, Vayu, Mitra and Nasatya of the Rig Veda continue in the Avesta almost in the same forms. But these are only a few out of many points of significant similarity between the Iranian Avesta and the Indian Veda.

That early man arose in the region of Airyana has already been shown. And scholars always suggest that he must have continued to grow there till his emergence into the 'modern' man. The recent finds of human remains in northern Iran, said to be about 75,000 years old and probably the oldest

of their kind ever found, support the above suggestion. It seems 'modern' man existed even before a more subhuman species, such as the 50,000-year-old Neanderthal man. Langdon says that it is far more likely that the Aryas of India are the oldest representatives of the Indo-Germanic race.

The extreme antiquity of the Rig Veda is indicated, according to some scholars, by the geographical facts it contains about the surrounding regions of Sapta-Sindhu, the land of seven rivers, which is often mentioned by ancient Indian writers as that country where originated the Veda and of which the Aryas were the autochthons. The Sindhu and the Saraswati are the most important rivers of India in the Vedic age. The Sindhu Valley culture shows its link with the Vedic culture. Recent excavations over an extensive area of the dried-up bed of the ancient river Saraswati in the Bikaner division have unearthed relics of the Sindhu Valley culture. These two rivers had on their banks and in their valleys not only magnificent cities but also beautiful hermitages of seers and sages in forest solitudes from urban life, both in touch with each other, the cities drawing their spiritual sustenance from the contemplatives of the quiet ashramas, who used to give to kings and rulers their wise counsel and guidance sought for in a spirit of earnestness and humility in times of weal as in woe. Thus, in ancient India city-life grew under the exalting influence of selfless sages who were always available for advice and direction in the affairs of the State as well as for inspiring man to higher pursuits. The Vedas and later Indian literature abound with descriptions of such centres of secular and spiritual activities flourishing side by side, tracing their origin to those dim days of India's past whose history has yet to be written. But even earlier than the days of these urban cultures was her quest for the Truth Eternal, of the story of which there would never perhaps be any visible record.

The Rig Veda has in it nothing which may mean that the propounders and followers of its culture migrated from any foreign country; on the other hand we find in it material which supports the fact that the Vedic Indians regarded Sapta-Sindhu as their original home. Besides, Vedic scholarship represented by Yaska (fifth century B.C. or earlier), the Mimamsakas and Sayana have never suspected anything like the so-called Aryan invasion and a struggle between the Aryas and the Dravidians, notwithstanding the more or less exoteric character of their interpretations. Swami Vivekananda is absolutely emphatic on this point. Says he. "And what your European Pandits say about the Aryas swooping down from some foreign land, snatching away the lands of the aborigines, and settling in India by exterminating them, is all pure nonsense, foolish talk! Strange, that our Indian scholars, too, say amen to them; and all these monstrous lies are being taught to our boys! This is very bad, indeed . .

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In what Veda, in what *Sukta* do you find that the Aryas came into India from a foreign country? . . . There is not one word in our scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryas ever came from anywhere outside of India."

The eminent Indian scholar B. G. Tilak has shown on the basis of astronomical evidences that the hymns of the Rig Veda were composed in the period between 6000 and 2500 B.C. G. Basu's researches on scientific lines into ancient Indian historical tradition, as available in the Puranas, assign the date of the Rig Veda to early fourth millennium B.C., which is also taken as the latest date by T. V. Kapali Sastri, the eminent Vedic scholar and author of a Sanskrit commentary on the Rig Veda based on Sri Aurobindo's new esoteric exegesis of the symbols of the Riks. In *The Secret of the Veda* Sri Aurobindo says that the Rig Veda represents a later period of the 'the great Ages of Intuition, the luminous dawns of the forefathers' whose beginning and development trace back to earlier times. Whatever of the rays of these earlier 'Dawns' were still gleaming in their consciousness, the Vedic Rishis acknowledge when they say in some of the hymns that they repeat only what they still know of the inspired words of their ancient fathers. The Rig Veda often speaks of 'ancient' and 'modern' Rishis (*purvah, nutanah*), the former remote enough, says Sri Aurobindo, to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge. This view of the extreme antiquity of the Veda is from one to whose inner vision came the secret significance of the Vedic symbolism while he was absorbed in its profound study and research. And has he not, as his writings indicate, actually realised and revealed the supreme truths of man's ascension to higher and yet higher states of consciousness envisaged in the Rig Veda?

The Rig Veda is universally regarded as the oldest religious literature of the world. This, taken with what Sri Aurobindo says about it, points to those remote ages in which there had started and developed in India the unprecedented and unparalleled spiritual quests of man, whose fruits were those golden visions of the supernal Light of which today we know only a fragment. That the glorious land of the Panjab was the principal seat of these elevating activities admits of no doubt, as also the fact that the Rig Veda was a continuity of the immemorial tradition of man's search for truth in India.

It is this which leads the writer of India's story to peep into her most ancient past and, with whatever glimpses he can have of it, try to discover the growth of the halting, unsure and staggering steps of its primitive life to the more and more confident, firm and rhythmic footfalls of its history. An attempt has, therefore, been made to study the movements of the early man in India, to give a brief account of how he made his first efforts to develop into a community, and then to branch out into a corporate life in rural as well as in urban surroundings, all of his own making. These crea-

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tions were, doubtless, the marked steps of the growth of his capacities. The study takes the line of a rather longish survey of the Sindhu Valley civilisation, mainly because it is an outstanding phenomenon suggesting vast possibilities of solid historical value. A study of this civilisation claims precedence over that of the Vedic not only because it has distinct relationships with the latter but, in particular, for a better appraisal of those relationships in the light of the material evidences of its earlier phases thrown up by the exploration of its sites extending over hundreds of miles. The Vedic 'Dawns' belong to far distant ages, though racially there does not seem to be much difference between the people of the Sindhu Valley and those of the Vedic times who either were autochthons of those regions of north India or must have been living there for a very long time before the cultures already mentioned were evolved.

All this, however, is external to the central idea of what the real history of the period stands for. This idea in the Vedic age, in particular, cannot be fully grasped by a mere intellectual scholarship which has erred, and erred grievously whenever it has tried to interpret the Veda, simply because intellectual equipment, however efficient, is too meagre for the effort. Unhappily it has missed the inmost meaning of the wonderfully profound truths revealed by the ancient fathers.

It is deplorable that Indian scholarship, despite its natural grasp and intimate feeling of the language, its infinite capacity of acuteness, labour, inference and soundness of judgement, which Sri Aurobindo in another context attributes to it, has hardly fared any better than western scholarship. It has with great labour sought to prove that the Aryas were immigrants into India from outside and that the Vedas are nothing more than a body of rules for rituals, chants for invoking gods and forces of Nature—a bit of an improvement, no doubt, on the views of European scholars who see in the Rig Veda only the babblings of humanity in its infancy. Yet Indian scholarship with its remarkable capacities has its value only when it is reinforced by an intuitive insight, the highest order of which has helped in the revealing studies of the Vedas by Sri Aurobindo.

It is a singular piece of good fortune for the future of the world that the Master-Seer of the race has, at this propitious hour of dawn after millenniums of oblivion and darkness, opened to the awakening eye of man the golden gate of the treasure-house of those splendours of the Infinite where waits, for its divine descent on earth, man's new heaven of Freedom, Harmony and Perfection that are for ever

Concluded