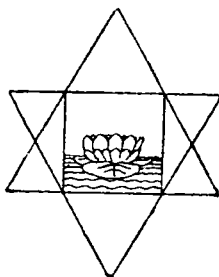


# MOTHER INDIA

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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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A DIVINE LIFE IN A DIVINE BODY  
SRI AUROBINDO'S "SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION  
UPON EARTH"

BY "Synergist"

"Burn the libraries, for their value is in this book," cried out Omar enthusiastically on reading the Koran. The writer had a similar reaction when he first read Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, a book which needs no introduction to the intellectual and spiritual world. Now comes another little book from the Pondicherry Ashram by the same author entitled *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth* which may well be called its sequel, for it carries on the theme expounded in *The Life Divine* and develops in greater detail certain ideas expressed there at the end. In the larger work Sri Aurobindo traced out the curve of Creation from its transcendent Divine Source right down to the nether end of Being, the Inconscient, revealed the luminous peaks and the wide expanses of the Spirit—realities experienced by him when he went through the whole gamut of spiritual experience,—delineated the steps of human evolution, and indicated the possibilities of its future development which he saw on the supramental Truth-plane of divine archetypes. The book ended with his vision of the future of the human race—a race of gnostic beings living upon the earth a life of harmony, mutuality, and universality, in union with God.

After writing the book and later revising it in 1939, Sri Aurobindo went far ahead in his work of the transformation of man and his earthly existence, and to a large extent perfected the process he was employing: he achieved much, and made still greater things immediately realisable. When he had gauged all possibilities, examined and tested things and their reactions and weighed their chances of materialisation amidst present world conditions, he came to certain definite conclusions and made his decisions accordingly. The way he would make the Supermind's Light and Power work directly upon the earth and men, making a divine life possible even now, soon became very clear to him. We get an idea of the patient and silent work he was doing all these years when we read this new book. With characteristic reticence, very unobtrusively and impersonally he once

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again presents his conception of man's destiny upon the earth and shows how a divine life in a divine body is for him not only a possibility but the inevitable consummation of his evolution. Those familiar with Sri Aurobindo's teaching and his work well know that what he has written is not just a theory, but the mature conclusions of one who has himself lived, experienced and realised in his being what he now humbly puts forward as possibilities. The world-mind is not ready yet to receive or accept more.

The value of the book lies not only in what the author says but also in what he leaves unsaid but merely suggests. This is an extraordinary book with ideas so revolutionary that they may befog the commonsense and reason alike of the average reader; but one must remember that it is written by an extraordinary being who lived an extraordinary life and astounded even his closest followers by discarding his body for the better execution of his work. Much of what Sri Aurobindo has written is actually happening today and is being realised by his co-worker, the Mother, and the disciples in their lives, and therefore cannot possibly be sceptically waved aside as interesting speculation. Men have always done well by Caesar—the time has now come to render unto God what is His.

The writer will not be surprised if this modest little book is hailed in another ten years as the book of the century and becomes the bible of seekers of divine perfection all over the world.

The publication of the *Bulletin of Physical Education* proved to be the occasion for Sri Aurobindo to take up serious writing work once again. The passage of time had not succeeded in impairing either the immaculateness or the grandeur and majesty of his writing, as could be seen from the number of essays which come out one after the other.

The *Bulletin* is the quarterly journal of an Association formed within the Ashram for the purpose of working out a scheme of physical education. Since the ideal of Sri Aurobindo's yoga is the entire transformation of man, no part of his being can possibly be neglected; not only his mind, life and soul, but also his body has to be put under the transmuting light of the Spirit. Therefore physical education is given an important place in the Ashram life, and a vast programme is carried out under the Mother's personal direction and guidance. The essays written by Sri Aurobindo for that journal are collected and published in this book.

Sri Aurobindo begins this series of essays with a *Message*, in which he shows the importance of sports and of the qualities they create or stimulate for our national life. He then writes on the *Perfection of the Body*, and follows it up by a remarkable essay: *The Divine Body*. He starts the *Perfection of the Body* with the words: "The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our

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disposal; must be the ultimate aim of physical culture... Our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible." He then informs us that two things are needed for such a consummation—an ascent to the summit of the Spirit without rejecting the material base, and a descent of the Spirit from the heights into the material world. "The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation;... the mind has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down... our life must become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does... It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine."

Sri Aurobindo then begins *The Divine Body* by presenting the problem: "But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound?"

"If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive?... It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit... Into that truth we shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body... The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness, for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer."

If the limitations of the present body have to be transcended, it is necessary to know first in what exactly these limitations lie, and their causes. In the past the body has been always looked upon by spiritual seekers as an obstacle because of its grossness and animality, and the rigidity it offers to the action of the spiritual force. "This is because," says Sri Aurobindo, "the human body even at its best seems only to

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be driven by an energy of life which has its own limits and is debased in its smaller physical activities by much that is petty or coarse or evil, the body in itself is burdened with the inertia and inconscience of Matter, only partly awake and, although quickened and animated by a nervous activity, subconscious in the fundamental action of its constituent cells and tissues and their secret workings. Even in its fullest strength and force and greatest glory of beauty, it is still a flower of the material Inconscience; . . .”

But Sri Aurobindo sees behind this Inconscience its secret truth; he writes: “The body is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of its self and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of Inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptations of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.”

This links up the two threads of our argument; the first—though the processes of the body are subconscious and the body itself a creation of the Inconscient, yet in this Inconscient dwells a secret Superconscience, a “hooded Gnosis” which arranges all things; and the second—the evolution of consciousness ultimately leading to the emergence of this secret Superconscient Spirit in earth-existence and its action on the being for its divinisation. Or to put it another way: “If the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose, then by the very nature of that evolution this growth must involve not only a wider and wider extent of its capacities but also an ascent to a higher and higher level till it reaches the highest possible. . . . This would mean an entry or approach into what might be called a truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies . . .”

“If we could draw down this power into the material world, our agelong dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete

mastery, governance and utilisation of the forces of Nature could see at long last a prospect of total achievement.”

Now, if man has to manifest this Truth-consciousness in him and through him, his body must become a suitable vehicle, like his mind and vital, for expressing its divine powers. As the human body had to come into existence through a modification of the animal form which preceded it, with a new power of life necessary for a mental being, so now a more perfect body must be developed from the human type to suit the needs of a greater and more highly evolved being—a supramental being.

Regarding the difficulty in the way of Matter becoming a means of revelation of the Divine, Sri Aurobindo states that this difficulty is dual, psychological and corporeal; “the first is the effect of the unregenerated animality upon the life especially by the insistence of the body’s gross instincts, impulses, desires; the second is the outcome of our corporeal structure and organic instrumentation imposing its restrictions on the dynamism of the higher divine nature.” Certain urges and instincts of the body, especially sex and sexuality with its grossness, have always been found to stand in the way of the spiritual aspirant; the part of the nature from which these tendencies arise has to be consequently purified and put under the control of the Divine Light and Power if the goal in view is to divinise the whole nature. But this raises a problem—that of the necessity of sex for the prolongation of the race. This question will be taken up after the second difficulty in the way of transformation is dealt with, because it is connected with the divine body created in the supramental way,—a problem in itself. The second difficulty is the body’s dependence for its existence upon food which brings into play gross physical instincts and desires, “the essential cravings of the palate, the greed of food and animal gluttony of the belly, the coarsening of the mind when it grovels in the mud of sense, obeys a servitude to its mere animal part and hugs its bondage to Matter.” Apart from the purification of these impulses and an attitude of utter detachment to food, a fundamental issue is here raised for the seeker of the life divine—the possibility of not depending upon food at all for the replenishing of bodily energies. If by some means the required energies could be drawn directly from the universal forces around us to sustain the body, the necessity of taking food would be obviated. This raises an interesting point. The writer mentioned in the beginning of this article that most of the things Sri Aurobindo states regarding man’s further development, he first experiences and works out himself and then writes about them in an impersonal way as possibilities for earth and men; whatever he may not have yet made operative in the world he has at least seen on the causal plane as a development of the future; those not familiar with his work and life



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may be led to think because of the restrained philosophic temper of his writings that he is speculating, but they will be doing him an injustice if they forget whilst reading his works that he is above all things a Master of Yoga whose object is not to present interesting theories but to change life and transform Matter; the justification he gives has to be metaphysical, but the issue involved is pragmatic and is always directly connected with his own self.

Here an example of his experiencing a thing before putting it forward as a possibility is given. He writes in the essay on the divine body: "It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins... But one thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance." Now, here is a conversation, as recorded by a sadhak, Sri Aurobindo had on this point with some disciples in June, 1926, about twenty-three years before he wrote this essay.

Disciple: "Is food absolutely necessary for the body?"

Sri Aurobindo: "What is necessary for life is vital force; there is an inexhaustible store of vital force in the universe, and one can draw any amount of it directly from the universe.

Disciple: "Is it not more difficult to take vital force directly from the universal energy than to take it through some kind of food?"

Sri Aurobindo: "For me the former is easier. I can draw as much vital force from the universe as I require. In jail I fasted for ten days—I slept on every third night; at the end of the tenth day I felt much stronger. I could lift weights which I could not lift before, but I lost eleven pounds in weight. This waste of the purely material substance of the body could not be prevented. Once again I fasted for twenty-three days when living at Chetty's house; I felt no weakness, I did eight hours' work, walked in my room, slept normally, and after the fast began at once to take food normally without making small beginnings. I had not lost my balance in the least—I drew sufficient vital force from the universal energy to keep my strength intact, but my flesh shrivelled up and the waste of the purely physical substance I could not make up; hence the necessity of taking some material food."

Disciple: "Is it not possible to overcome this physical need?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Yes, it is possible—but I was not able to do that at that stage of my sadhana."

This conversation took place in 1926, but the matter referred to dates further back—to 1908 and 1910. At that stage of his sadhana Sri Aurobindo was not in a position to stop this wasting of the physical substance of the body, but it seems that later on he came to know what means to employ in order to do this. His very next statement in *The Divine Body* gives a hint about it. "Conceivably, if a practical way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it." In a very illuminating essay *Energy Inexhaustible*, published in one of the Bulletins, the Mother also speaks of drawing down higher Spiritual energies from above which are much more powerful and effective than those absorbed from universal Nature around us. But, of course, till all this is made possible in the world in a few representative individuals, the ordinary process of maintaining the health of the body by giving it food may be accepted in the divine life, but liberated from attachment, desire and the grossness of the appetites.

It must be added that one must not conclude from the above statements that Sri Aurobindo is advocating another kind of asceticism in a supramental garb; the discarding of certain elements and the cleansing of others will be the natural responses of a supramental being—in the divine life there is no question of following the compulsion of the mental will and the moral imperative, for all actions are done from the Truth-consciousness itself and follow the law of a higher nature. The joys of earth and Matter have not to be entirely discarded but purified and taken up into a higher life. Ananda is as much a principle of the Divine as Truth and Power. Sri Aurobindo therefore says: "The divine life must always be actuated by the push towards perfection; a perfection of the joy of life is part and an essential part of it, the body's delight in things and the body's joy of life are not excluded from it; they too have to be made perfect."

After the discussion of this question of drawing the higher energies directly into the body for its sustenance, Sri Aurobindo takes up the issue of sex and its necessity for the prolongation of the race. It is not

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incumbent on the seeker of the life divine to take up this problem at all, because there will always be the mass of men who will not embrace this high ideal in its entirety; the continuance of the race can be left to them. "But," says Sri Aurobindo, "there may be circumstances in which from another standpoint, a voluntary creation of bodies for souls that seek to enter the earth-life to help in the creation and extension of the divine life upon earth might be found to be desirable. Then the necessity of a physical procreation for this purpose could only be avoided if new means of a supra-physical kind were evolved and made available." This will necessitate a resort to occult means, to subtle-physical energies, to the development and extension of powers latent in our nature. Sri Aurobindo explains this: "If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process... It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of the life and form in a divinised earth-nature."

This is in reference to the building up of a supramental body directly out of subtle forces; the problem of transforming the present human body into a suitable receptacle for the Divine light remains to be examined. It is not possible to discuss here at length this process or its results; only a few pointers can be given.

If an entire transformation of the human body is desired, then a change in its present precarious and delicate functioning which easily gets out of order, in its mechanical driving forces and urges, and even in its very structure will be found to be necessary. This imposes on us the problem of finding out the means through which the transformation can

be effected. Yoga knowledge reveals that there are hidden parts of our being, at present occult to us and influencing us negligibly, surcharged with forces which could be released and made operative in our consciousness; they can be made the means through which the soul and the supramental Truth-consciousness can work out the physical transformation. These forces are located in the *chakras*, conscious centres of the dynamic powers of our being which organise their action through the plexuses; they are arranged in the subtle-physical being from the lowest physical to the highest mental and spiritual over the head, the centre known as the *sahasradala*—the thousand-petalled lotus.

The first result of such a release would be an outbreak of the hidden powers and capacities of the being—a liberation of mental, vital and subtle-physical energies, an opening up of the subtle senses, a sublimation of the body consciousness itself. But even these will leave certain material processes and impulses of the being going on in the old way and not amenable to the liberated powers. A total transformation necessitates a transformation of the most material part of the organism—the material organs themselves and their constitution cannot possibly remain unmodified. Sri Aurobindo says: “To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of communication and action, more serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses... The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly, communicating themselves without physical means from mind to mind... The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions thrown outward upon the world by the forces of the psychic centre...” Or again, the evolutionary urge may change the organs themselves. “...These organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive: the central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs. This might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final.”

After the question of the divine body Sri Aurobindo takes up that of the Supermind and the Mind of Light, and their relation to the present humanity and the future race, the last five essays which deal with this issue are here taken together for discussion. What requires to be

considered in this connection is the consequence for earth and men of the descent of the Supermind; whether the world in general will in any way benefit by this descent or whether it will affect only a few persons specially prepared by Sri Aurobindo to receive it, leaving the rest of humanity exactly where it was before. In short, will the new Creation take within its orbit the life of the outside world? This question Sri Aurobindo discusses in the last five essays, giving us glimpses into the future. At the outset he assures us that "a divine life in the world or an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it."

We have then to see in what way the action of the Supermind upon the earth will affect the life of humanity, and for that we must first examine the position of Supermind in the evolution.

Supermind is the grade of existence beyond Mind, Life and Matter; its station is in the higher hemisphere transcendent to the cosmos, but it is not extra-cosmic; rather it is supra-cosmic, for it connects the higher to the lower hemisphere of the Mental, Vital and Material planes, and it is by its original creative action that the cosmic manifestation becomes possible. We say that the One Transcendent Reality is Sachchidananda, Existence: Consciousness-Force: Bliss; at its heights, Supermind may be described as its power of self-awareness and world-awareness; this means that it is a Consciousness by which the Divine is aware of His essence as well as His manifestation—by attaining it one realises the Supreme in all His integrality and unity. It is a Truth-Consciousness that is one with a Truth-Will and a self-effectuating Truth-Power; Sri Aurobindo calls it the gnostic light and creative dynamis of the Divine. The emergence of this Truth-principle in terrestrial existence is inevitable; for as Matter delivered out of itself the principle of Life involved and lying latent within it when a pressure from the Life-plane was put upon it, and Mind similarly emerged out of life, so has the new principle to emerge in response to the pressure of the descending Supermind from above.

It is only this descent causing the Supermind veiled in earth-existence to awaken that can make the divine life possible. The Supramental life on its own plane is divine and as it descends it will bring the divine life with it and establish it here.

The divine life will give to him who embraces it an increasing growth into the Truth-consciousness and all that it carries within it; it will give him the realisation of the Divine in his own self and in all existence; he will possess in his being the truth of the Divine in His integrality. All that

is sought by the God-seeker will be fulfilled in his spirit and in his life; the bhakta and the God-lover in him, the seeker of Knowledge, Beauty and the Highest Good and the doer of divine works in him, will find fulfilment in the supramental life.

Even for humanity in general there will be a change. The descent into the earth-consciousness of so great a Power cannot possibly leave the life of mankind unaffected. On the contrary the change will be very great; when the highest Truth-dynamis of the Divine becomes overtly operative, it must of necessity transform human existence to an appreciable extent. It will create not only a race of supramental beings but also uplift the existing race of mental beings; it will bring about a direct change in mind itself, making it open directly to the higher light. All the ranges and gradations of existence in earth-life will be affected, even the present law of evolution itself, because the original creative power will take up the existing conditions and work through them, bringing down its own truth-law and making it effective there. Evolution in ignorance will change to evolution in knowledge. Sri Aurobindo states what kind of changes to expect in the principles that have already emerged and in the present organised levels of existence, and this makes one of the most interesting parts of the book. He says: "One result of the intervention of Supermind in the earth-nature, the descent of the supreme creative Truth-Power might well be a change in the law of evolution, its method and its arrangement: a larger element of the principle of evolution through knowledge might enter into the forces of the material universe... If man began to develop the powers and means of a higher knowledge in something like fullness, if the developing animal opened the door of his mentality to beginnings of conscious thought and even a rudimentary reason,—at his highest he is not so irrevocably far from that even now,—if the plant developed its first subconscious reactions and attained to some kind of primary nervous sensitiveness, if Matter which is a blind form of the Spirit, were to become more alive with the hidden power within it and to offer more readily the secret sense of things, the occult realities it covers, as for instance, the record of the past it always preserves even in its dumb inconscience or the working of its involved forces and invisible movements revealing veiled powers in material nature to a subtler generalised perception of the new human intelligence, this would be an immense change promising greater changes in the future, but it would mean only an uplifting and not a disturbance of the universal order. Evolution would itself evolve, but it would not be perturbed or founder."

The important question then is, what will happen on the level of organised mental-vital-physical life, of which man at present is the highest development—what will be the consequences of the supramental descent

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for the human race as a whole? In what way will it be able to share in the divine life?

It can be said that for those who will receive fully and in all their parts the light and power of the Supermind, the highest reaches of the divine life will be opened; they will begin to live in the Truth-consciousness. But even those who cannot receive fully, but only partially, will be benefited. Sri Aurobindo points out that "there could also be a minor or secondary transformation of the mental being within a freed and perfected scope of the mental nature. . . . This possibility, if fulfilled, would mean that the human dream of perfection, perfection of itself, of its purified and enlightened nature, of all its ways of action and living, would be no longer a dream but a truth that could be made real and humanity lifted out of the hold on it of inconscience and ignorance." This is apart from the supramental transformation—not exactly within the present human formula, but still on the human level, not the divine level created in the world; it will be on the human plane harmonised and brought *en rapport* with the higher order.

This should be a satisfactory explanation for those who regard Sri Anurobindo's ideal as remote from the life of the ordinary human beings and look upon it as something belonging to the distant future.

Wherever the opening and receptivity are insufficient and the new Truth-principle does not effect an entire transformation, there will still be an initial modification of the mind, the life-force, and the body, causing a change in the whole tenor of life. Under the touch of the Supermind the mind will begin to alter its character of attaining knowledge through division and separation and become gradually what it fundamentally is, a subordinate power of the Supermind. It may even become possible for it, writes Sri Aurobindo, to be capable of "a sort of mental gnosis, a luminous reproduction of the Truth in a diminished working . . ."—"Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind and what I have called Higher Mind, these and other levels of a spiritualised and liberated mentality, will be able to reflect in the uplifted human mind and its purified and exalted feeling and force of life and action something of their powers and prepare the ascent of the soul to their own plateaus and peaks of an ascending existence."—"At a still lower level it could be an increasingly luminous passage leading from light to light, from truth to truth and no longer a circling in the mazes of half-truth and half-nescience."—"At its highest it might pass out of its limitations into the supramental truth and become part and function of the supramental knowledge or at the least serve for a minor work of differentiation in the consensus of that knowledge."—"This is essentially the change which can be contemplated as a result of the new evolutionary order and it would mean a considerable extension of the evolutionary field itself and will answer the question as to the result on humanity of the advent of Supermind

into the earth-nature.”

According to Sri Aurobindo the extent to which this will go will be determined by the intention in the evolution itself, the intention in the Will working in the universe—whether the whole of humanity will be touched or only a portion of it ready for the change. If the evolution follows its old movement and order, then only a portion of the race may go forward, the rest keeping to the old strictly human level. But even then there will be a linkage between the two orders by which one can pass from the lower to the higher—the mind will be capable of making a contact with the Supermind and of being modified by it, thus becoming a means of further evolution. It is again possible that the full emergence of Supermind may be accompanied by a sovereign manifestation, resulting in a rapid creation of a race of supramental beings and a supramental life. But, Sri Aurobindo points out, this has not been the habit of Nature so far; it may well be that this higher evolution also may fix its own periods, though it need not follow a similar development.

So we can envisage the arising of a new humanity, a race of beings possessing not a mind in ignorance seeking for knowledge, a mind whose very mode of knowledge-apprehension is separative and indirect, but a mind of light, capable of living in the truth, and being truth-conscious, and able to possess direct knowledge. It will be controlled by the Divine Light, not governed by Ignorance and conditioned by the Inconscience. “At its highest,” Sri Aurobindo writes, “it would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature.”—“What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge . . . . We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the supramental principle.” Sri Aurobindo sees the Mind of Light “as a transitional passage by which we can pass from supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity.” He then sums up the position of the general humanity in the divine life: “Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this Mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life.”



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This means that even before the supramentalisation of the entire being has been effected, its total transformation, the living of a diviner existence here, free from ignorance, evil, strife and suffering, will be within the reach of men. This, of course, will be a secondary movement of the new Creation; the highest consummation, which makes this movement possible, will be a divine life in a divine body lived in union with the Supreme.

This brings us to the last question: What is the relation of this new Creation to the activity at the Pondicherry Ashram carried on by the Mother, with the dynamic Power and Presence of Sri Aurobindo supporting her and working through her from behind the veil of life's outer movement? A relation there must be, since it is Sri Aurobindo who has made the Supermind act on the earth-consciousness through his own being by making it first descend there, and then radiating it out. So whatever he may have presented in his book as a general statement of the issue is actually an evolutionary development on earth in which he is the chief actor. Through his own attainments he has shown what is possible for men to achieve. His Ashram is the centre where the first beginnings of the divine life are slowly becoming outwardly visible—the inner movement towards it began long ago and is now nearing consummation. Through Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's efforts the Supermind's Force has begun to act upon the earth; the irresistibility and the infallibility of its action, the characteristic way of its working—total and integral, and at the same time detailed—indicates its origin: that it is a Power that leans down from the highest Divine regions. The gnostic consciousness now envelopes and broods over the earth atmosphere, and it is possible for whoever is open to it to receive its influence. It may well be that the Supermind at present acts both directly and through its annexe the Mind of Light—a field of Supramental Light and Force Sri Aurobindo has created through which he can carry on a controlled yet direct action of the Supermind. By a controlled action is not meant a modification of the Supramental Power, but its graduated action with regard to magnitude and intensity, a mode of working which does not in any way lessen the essential quality of the original Force. Even in this controlled operation the Supermind's intrinsic all-conquering power remains—nothing can successfully revolt against it; whatever resistance is given to it is overcome. This kind of operation becomes necessary because a great power utterly foreign to the earth-consciousness in its direct action is being used upon it; it is therefore made to work through the existing conditions and world-elements, not arbitrarily thrust into the earth regardless of the comparative feebleness of its moulds, which may get damaged if the Force were precipitated without due consideration for them. Together with the Supermind acting from

above, a field of the Supramental Light seems to have been established in the nether regions of the earth-consciousness, in the Inconscience, and a connection formed with the Higher Force. In the course of time as the Light radiates more and more, conditions will be created for the greater influx of the Supermind in terrestrial life. Then in the full manifestation it will be necessary to show two supramental types—a human body transformed into a divine body, and the direct creation through supra-human means of a divine body for a soul requiring to take birth. The Mother will naturally exemplify the first type, but till conditions are ready the other type cannot possibly manifest. Can the world bear the Gnostic Being in a divine body created in the divine way? It could hardly bear a human body filled with the Supramental Light; how will it receive in its present condition a divine body radiating the divine light?

The Supermind has to infiltrate into the earth, gather into itself those elements which can be transformed and discard others, convert whatever resists or revolts if it can be converted or dissolve it, build up its own moulds and fix its types, create human receptacles for pouring down its energies and powers so that they may spread and create a wider supramental field, and in general push the evolution forward. It will act through the Mind of Light as well as directly. This will create the necessary conditions for the coming of the Gnostic Being in the divine body.

But then who will be this first Gnostic Being? It is not improbable that the one who attained the Supermind for the world and made it directly act upon it, and discarded his body for the better execution of his work, should put on the divine body and manifest as the first Gnostic Being of this type; if the one who is the leader of the evolution in Ignorance proceeding towards Knowledge comes to lead the new evolution proceeding from Knowledge to Knowledge and from Light to Ananda, it will not be at all surprising; on the contrary it will be a logical climax, a fitting *dénouement*, to his evolutionary endeavour.

The writer ended his article *The Debt to Rudra* by saying that Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal from the body may well turn out to be the middle term of the process of his own evolution which is inextricably connected with that of the earth, that it may be the central link joining the two periods of his life, the first concerned with his drawing down the Supermind into the world, and the second with consolidating it there and creating a race of gnostic beings—the first in a human body housing the divine light, even in its most material part, and the second in a divine body radiating it on all creation. The writer even ventured to say that there cannot be a supramental race without Sri Aurobindo. When conditions are made ready by the Mother by her spiritual action to bear the presence of the Gnostic Being, Sri Aurobindo may appear in his own true body,

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the divine body, and together with the Mother lead the world towards Light and Bliss and Immortality.

If all that is written here has a truth in it, then the discarding of a body to put on a diviner body cannot be impossible; we are discussing planes of existence and realms of consciousness which operate under laws greater than those with which we are familiar in our day-to-day life. As far as the writer is concerned such a development seems certain. The reader has to draw his own conclusions from what is written here and also from what is given below, and understand their implications in his own way.

On 11th April the Mother made the following statement about Sri Aurobindo: "When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered—'I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way'."\*

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\*Sri Aurobindo told this to Mother on 8th December, 1950, whilst the life of the form was there and the body still glowing with the supramental light which kept it intact for over four days.

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# CONVERSATIONS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

## Nirodbaran

5

Next day, i.e., 13-12-38, the Mother came to Sri Aurobindo's room at about 6 P.M. and began to meditate. All of us started meditating with her. After about half an hour she went away.

Dr. Manilal opened the conversation.

"How is it that some people lose at once their consciousness in meditation and their body sways this side and that, even falls to the ground?"

"That happens with many," replied Sri Aurobindo. "That is why some yogis bind themselves to a support to prevent their falling. The yogis who have practised *asanas* remain erect."

"How can one succeed in meditation?" continued Dr. M. who had a deep thirst for meditation.

"By quietude of the mind. There is not only the Infinite, but an infinite sea of peace, joy, light, power above the head. The golden lid, *hiranyamaya patram*, intervenes between the mind and what is above the mind. Once one can break that lid—he made a movement of the hand above the head—"they can come down any time at one's will. And, for that, quietude is essential. Of course there are people who can get them without first establishing the quietude, but it is very difficult."

"Is there also a veil in the heart?"

"Yes, a veil or wall of the vital with its surface consciousness, emotional disturbances etc. One has to break through that in order to arrive at what is behind the heart. In some people the Force works behind the veil because it would meet with many resistances if it worked in front. It goes on building or breaking whatever is necessary till one day the veil drops off and one finds oneself living in the Infinite."

"Does the Force work all the time even when there is no aspiration in the being?"

"Yes, in those who have an inner urge. The intermittent bouts of aspiration may be due to the action of the Force behind. Yoga demands patience. The old Yogas say that one has to wait twelve years before one can hope to get any experience. Only after that one can complain. But you once said you had many experiences. You have no right to complain."

"True, sir. I told you how meditation used to come spontaneously at Baroda at any time and I simply had to sit down to meditate, it used to come with such a force! Sometimes it used to visit me while I was just leaving for the hospital and the experiences of peace etc. used to last for

some days. And then comes the period of lull; nothing happens for a long time." He added, smiling, "It should visit at least once a fortnight!" Then he continued, without waiting for Sri Aurobindo's comment, "Sometimes I feel a pull of the head upwards."

"Of course it is not the physical head," answered Sri Aurobindo to his questioning look. "It is a happening in the subtle body, the mind trying to ascend towards the higher consciousness."

"One sees seas, hills etc. in dreams or visions; what is their significance?" asked somebody.

"They are symbols: sea of energy and hill of being with its different planes and parts, with the Divine at the summit. These are quite common. When one feels the wideness, a vastness as if one were expanding, that increases the opening." Then turning to Dr. M. Sri Aurobindo asked, "Have you never felt your inner being?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dr. M. "I told you how I had found it and how also I had lost it through fear. I felt as if I was going to die... At one time I felt as if my head were lying at the Mother's feet; what does it mean, sir?"

"It is the experience of the Psychic. So you had the experience of the Psychic?"

"But unfortunately I could not recognise it, sir." All of us burst out at this naive confession.

"It is this 'I' that comes in the way", said Sri Aurobindo. "One must forget it, the experiences happening to somebody else, as it were. If one could do that, it would be a great conquest. When I had the Nirvanic experience, I forgot myself completely. I was a sort of a nobody. What's the use of Dr. Manilal So-and-so living with this 'I'? If you had died it would have been a glorious death!"

We don't know how far Dr. M. appreciated this glorious prospect, for his next question was: "What happens when the human consciousness is replaced by the divine consciousness?"

"One feels a perpetual calm, perpetual strength," Sri Aurobindo replied in a sweet tranquil rhythm, "one is aware of Infinity, and lives not only in Infinity, but in Eternity. One feels Immortality and does not care about the death of the body. And then one has the consciousness of the One in all. Everything becomes the manifestation of the Brahman. For instance, as I look around this room, I see everything as the Brahman. No, it is not a mere thinking, it is a concrete experience; even the wall, the books are Brahman. I see you no more as Dr. Manilal but as the Divine living in the Divine. It is a wonderful experience!"

Thus was finished the talk with those last sentences vibrating in our being and filling it unforgettably with the tone in which he had expressed the divine consciousness.

# 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 living document of his teaching and will help the reader to come to close grips with problems of this particular Yoga.

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

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

*“Synergist”*

SUPERMIND AND THE OTHER PLANES OF HIGHER KNOWLEDGE

Questions and answers on Supermind and Sachchidananda were presented in the last issue. The letters given here deal with Supermind and the other planes of Higher Knowledge which are below it in the hierarchy of Existence, from the Overmind to the Higher Mind. These letters also describe the nature of the beings, the gods, who belong to these higher planes.

Sadhak: "Is every plane or everything below the Supermind influenced more or less by the Ignorance? I gather that the planes from the Higher Mind to the Overmind are also of the spiritual consciousness"

Sri Aurobindo. "The planes below are of the spiritual consciousness, but when there is a dynamic action from them, it is always a mixed action, not an action of pure knowledge but of knowledge subduing itself to the rule of the Ignorance, the cosmic necessity in a world of Ignorance. If their action was that of the full Knowledge, there would be no need of any supramental descent" 6-11-35.

Sadhak. "What exactly is the difference between the Supermind and the Overmind?"

Sri Aurobindo "The Supermind is the total Truth Consciousness; the Overmind draws down the truths separately and gives them a separate activity—e.g. in the Supermind the Divine Peace and Power, Knowledge and Will are one. In the Overmind each of these becomes a separate aspect which can exist or act on its own lines apart from the others. When it comes down to Mind they turn into an ignorance and incapacity—because Knowledge can come without a will to support it or Peace can be disturbed by the action of Power." 9-11-35.

Sadhak. "You have written: 'If the soul having reached the spiritual state wills to pass out of the terrestrial manifestation, it may indeed do so—but there is also possible a higher manifestation in the Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.' I don't understand how the soul can be in Ignorance after it has reached the spiritual state. Is not the spiritual consciousness and all beyond it All Knowledge?"

Sri Aurobindo. "It is only the supramental that is All Knowledge. All below that from Overmind to Matter is Ignorance—an Ignorance growing at each level nearer to the full Knowledge. Below Supermind there may be Knowledge but it is not all Knowledge" 20-9-36.

Sadhak "Since all is created from Ananda, contained and held by Ananda (I don't know if 'created' is the right word), from where have pain and misery, grief and sorrow, depression and darkness come?"

Sri Aurobindo. "Through Ignorance, Division and separative Ego" 9-11-35

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

Sadhak: "The Vedanta says: 'When one enters the fourth centre one sees the Divine effulgence' Is this a fact?"

Sri Aurobindo: "What is the fourth centre? In our system the fourth centre is the heart and the Divine is there in the psychic behind the heart. But the fourth of our seven planes is the supramental which is far above the head, but can be communicated with through the seventh centre, the Sahasradala padma." 22-9-33

Sadhak: "Are the Overmind and the Supermind the sixth and seventh planes in our Yoga?"

Sri Aurobindo: "No. The Overmind is part of the mental plane. The Supermind is the fourth not the seventh plane." 21-11-33

Sadhak: "What is the distinction between the Knowledge of the Higher Mind and that of the Illumined Mind?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The substance of knowledge is the same, but the higher mind gives only the substance and form of knowledge in thought and word—in the illumined mind there begins to be a peculiar light and energy and ananda of knowledge which grows as one rises higher in the scale, or else as the knowledge comes from a higher and higher source. This light etc. are still rather diluted and diffused in the illumined mind; it becomes more and more intense, clearly defined and dynamic and effective on the higher planes so much so as to change always the character and power of the knowledge." 3-6-36.

Sadhak: "Is not the Overmind a centre of all dynamic movements?"

Sri Aurobindo: "It is not a centre at all—it is a plane far above the mind—above and organising the terrestrial existence but from a distance above it." 28-10-33.

Sadhak: "You say that the Overmind is not a centre but a plane, then it must be full of beings working under a certain law of that world."

Sri Aurobindo: "Of course." 29-10-33

Sadhak: "Do the beings, then, of the Overmind plane work directly on the terrestrial beings or do they work, as your reply seems to suggest, indirectly—'from a distance'. Do they themselves not take any direct part in the earth-life? Do they work through some human agents?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The Beings native to the Overmind are Gods. They work through the mind and life and body, but if they do it directly, then they do it from the lower planes, not from the Overmind—until at least the human being becomes conscious of the Overmind." 29-10-33.

Sadhak: "You said about the Beings of the Overmind: 'If they do it directly, then they do it from the lower planes'. Does it not mean that they come down upon the earth as incarnations?"

Sri Aurobindo: "No—they put out Powers from themselves in the lower planes and so act." 31-10-33



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Sadhak: "Are the gods of the vital world eternal, as are those of the Overmind?"

Sri Aurobindo: "They are mostly Emanations from the Overmind Gods." 31-10-33.

Sadhak: "Do the natives of the Overmind put out powers from themselves in the cosmic consciousness in a general way, in the direct working?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The natives of the Overmind are Gods—Naturally the Gods rule the cosmos." 9-11-33.

Sadhak: "In the direct working of the Overmind Gods, when they want to put out some power upon the terrestrial existence, do they take birth upon this earth or do they work through some human agency?"

Sri Aurobindo: "Through some human agency. They can take birth if they like." 13-11-33.

Sadhak: "Can the intuitive mind or the higher mind be influenced by hostile forces?"

Sri Aurobindo: "No—but the hostile forces can use the forces sent down from them if they get mixed with the mind or the vital." 21-11-33

Sadhak: "Have not some of the intermediary agents or the formateurs of the Overmind shaped things mischievous and evil, out of the Power that has gone out from the Divine?"

Sri Aurobindo: "The Formateurs of the Overmind have shaped nothing evil—it is the lower forces that receive from the Overmind and distort its forms." 27-11-33.

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## SUPER-SCIENTIST

Einstein of the super-science of the soul,  
He found the Immutable's space of trance a field  
Grooved with almighty thought-transcending arcs—  
Figures of a single Truth bent everywhere  
On linking the ultimate Suns to our mortal sod..  
A rapt geometer in the deepest heart  
Saw the long line of human hungering  
Towards infinite freedom from the drag of clay  
As no straight movement on and ever on,  
Leaving the body a vanishing cry of woe,  
But a huge curve that reaches farthest light  
And comes back kindled to the darkling dust...  
O mystic energy of re-entrant love  
Springing immense into the Immortal's bliss  
Yet keeping earth's small poignancy your goal!

*K. D. SETHNA*

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## JOURNEY

My lonely hours grow into a tranquil mood  
Unruffled by the winds of time, they share  
An inviolable breath of silver prayer  
On a high brink of vigilant solitude.

The hidden flames of life burn one by one  
And point towards a far mysterious goal  
Beyond the horizon of thought's aureole,  
The golden face of an apocalyptic Sun.

Now every sound is born from harmony  
That dwells above the vision of mortal dream  
Only a sudden flicker or mystic gleam  
Reveals the core of the veiled Secrecy.

Through light begins my journey to the Unknown,  
Led by an infallible voice within the heart  
Till all these myriad streams become a part  
Of the primeval sea of the Alone

*NIRODBARAN*

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# 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"

MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

By, "AB"

*Continued from previous issue*

THE WORKING OF THE HIGHER KNOWLEDGE

It was pointed out in the April issue that "AB", who had been content merely to ask questions, suddenly began to write things which only spiritual knowledge can reveal. A new development took place in him—he began to receive direct knowledge from the Mother in his experiences. Simultaneously, Sri Aurobindo's replies to his letters became brief, making him depend for the working out of his sadhana more upon this direct knowledge than upon written instructions. "AB" himself did not realise all this for some time; it was only when Sri Aurobindo indicated certain things to him that he understood.

A hint was given of this in the March instalment of this Series. When "AB" began to have experiences he wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "I am sorry I am unable at present to describe to you all that is happening in me (experiences, realisations etc.)" Sri Aurobindo replied: "You will do so hereafter when these things have ripened and can be expressed." Those who practise the sadhana of the Integral Yoga know that Sri Aurobindo does not merely give advice about a problem, but actually puts forth a force from himself to help the sadhak to succeed in whatever he is attempting. This can be very clearly seen in "AB's" case, for a few days after he received this reply from Sri Aurobindo he began to give expression to spiritual truths in a very facile and spontaneous manner. "AB's" account given below of this particular turn in his sadhana shows how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother work behind the veil of the surface nature in a sadhak and build up his whole being from within outwards; among other things the reader will see how the mind of Knowledge is gradually built up in one on whom they are working.

COMPILER

"AB'S" ACCOUNT

Sri Aurobindo always discouraged in me the ordinary way of developing the mind. Whenever I asked him intellectual or philosophical questions he would reply that I should not go after intellectual knowledge, but should allow direct intuitive knowledge to grow in me. He used to tell me this when I had just begun the sadhana and was very far from even the beginning of the Knowledge. When the higher knowledge first started descending in me, I was utterly unaware of what was taking place; it took such a personal aspect that I did not even guess that I was receiv-

## THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

ing it. It did not come as a voice, or as something objectively apprehended, but touched the stuff of my mind in a way that made it flow as a natural and spontaneous movement, making me think that it was a product of my own mind.

How things really were I only came to know later. One day I realised that Sri Aurobindo was giving me very brief answers: so I wrote to him that I found such answers unsatisfying. It was then that he informed me that as it was the higher knowledge I was receiving from the Mother, he found no need to comment on my letters at length. A little later he told me in connection with some other question that this knowledge was from the Higher Mind level. Just for the sake of interest I counted the number of mistakes I had made in transcribing this knowledge, that is, in giving it mental expression; they were four to five in three or four years. These occurred when I attempted something which was obviously beyond my capacity at the time—I tried to formulate metaphysically certain spiritual truths.

It is necessary to explain here the value of this higher knowledge for my inner sadhana as well as for my external life, which is nothing but a continuation of this sadhana, an outer expression of the inner development.

In the course of the practice of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga one comes in contact with the higher knowledge, it can be effectively utilised for one's sadhana either by entering into it or by drawing it down. This movement of contacting the knowledge remains with many, at least in the early stages, more or less impersonal. But this was not the case with me; I did not know *mentally* what was meant by spiritual knowledge when it first began to descend—the actual relation between the knowledge and myself was, and still is, even after so many years, beyond my grasp. What the Mother seems to have done, not as a result of my tapasya but as an act of Her Grace, is this: She has opened me to Her higher spiritual knowledge, and has linked it through this opening with the stuff of my mental consciousness, so that whenever the Knowledge flows in I feel it as a natural product of my own consciousness, but when the opening is closed the same Knowledge seems foreign to me. The action of this Knowledge is at times felt, to use Sri Aurobindo's own words, "as a sort of concrete spiritual sense."

Through this Knowledge I feel not only in an impersonal way the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's guidance, but also Their personal intervention and direct help in any problem I may be having, the action of Their light and power can always be dynamically felt. In the course of the Diary we shall have occasion to see this many times. In a few cases the possession of the Mother's Knowledge over my mind was so entire that She

## MOTHER INDIA

spoke to me as directly as if She were physically present before me and speaking. These too have been recorded in the Diary.

Had it not been for this rare act of the Mother's Grace, I would never have been able to go ahead so boldly and confidently on my path; for I have always felt assured that if I made any mistake She would not only inform me inwardly about it but also show me why it had occurred and how it could be prevented in the future. Whenever she has done this, She has not merely enlightened me about my defects as ordinary Gurus do, but has projected Her Power to transform them.

One wanting to tread the path of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga to the very end must needs have, along with other requisites, Mother's Knowledge too.

Sri Aurobindo's opening me to the higher knowledge proved an everlasting boon to my sadhana. In 1938 He stopped corresponding with almost all of us; but He maintained His contact with me through this opening of the Knowledge, and I got all the necessary help for my sadhana.

In December 1949, this opening was widened and the form of the Knowledge became more clear and precise. This again developed to such an extent that it took a solid form and guided me like an inner voice.

In December 1950, after His withdrawal from the body, this development of the Knowledge proved to be one of the best means for my keeping up a direct and intimate contact with Him. Through it He and the Mother have been giving me all the necessary light and direction for my progress. The only difference is in the plane of Knowledge they now use; it seems to be much higher than that of 1935. When the Knowledge first started descending, it helped mostly in clarifying the activity of the sadhana, not of my entire life. In the second stage of its descent it took into itself some part of my outer life also; but since 1951 it has begun to act as a will or a power, and the light of the Knowledge is definitely spreading over the movements of my daily life.

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# THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

(6)

## THE CHARACTER OF ENGLISH POETRY

(1)

Of all the modern European tongues the English language, I think it may be said without serious doubt, has produced the most rich and naturally powerful poetry, the most lavish of energy and innate genius. The unfettered play of poetic energy and power has been here the most abundant and brought forth the most constantly brilliant fruits. And yet it is curious to note that English poetry and literature have been a far less effective force in the shaping of European culture than those of other tongues inferior actually in natural poetic and creative energy. At least they have had to wait till quite a recent date before they produced any potent effect and even then their direct influence was limited.

A glance will show how considerable has been this limitation. The poetic mind of Greece and Rome has pervaded and largely shaped the whole artistic production of Europe, Italian poetry of the great age has thrown on some part of it at least a stamp only less profound, French prose and poetry,—but the latter in a much less degree,—have helped more than any other literary influence to form the modern turn of the European mind and its mode of expression, the shortlived outbursts of creative power in the Spain of Calderon and the Germany of Goethe exercised an immediate, a strong, though not an enduring influence, and the newly created Russian literature has been, though more subtly, among the most intense of recent cultural forces. But if we leave aside Richardson and Scott in fiction and in poetry the very considerable effects of the belated continental discovery of Shakespeare and the vehement and sudden wave of the Byronic influence, which did much to enforce the note of revolt and of a half sentimental, half sensual pessimism which is even now one of the strongest shades in the literary tone of modern Europe,— to the present day Shakespeare and Byron are the only two great names of English poetry



which are generally familiar on the continent and have had a real vogue, —we find the literature of the English tongue and especially its poetry flowing in a large side-stream, always receiving much from the central body of European culture but returning upon it very little. This insularity, not of reception but of reaction, is a marked phenomenon and calls for explanation.

If we look for the causes,—for such a paucity of influence cannot, certainly, be put down to any perversity or obtuseness in the general mind of Europe, but must be due to some insufficiency or serious defect in the literature itself,—we shall find, I think, if we look with other than English-trained eyes, that there is even in this rich and vigorous poetry abundant cause for the failure. English poetry is powerful but it is imperfect, strong in spirit, but uncertain and tentative in form; it is extraordinarily stimulating, but not often quite satisfying. It aims high, but its success is not as great as its effort. Especially its imaginative force exceeds its thought-power; it has indeed been hardly at all a really great instrument of poetic thought-vision; it has not dealt fruitfully with life. Its history has been more that of individual poetic achievements than of a constant national tradition, in the mass it has been a series of poetical revolutions without any strong inner continuity. That is to say that it has had no great self-recognising idea or view of life expressing the spiritual attitude of the nation and finding successfully from an early time its own sufficient artistic forms. But it is precisely the possession of such a self-recognising spiritual attitude and the attainment of a satisfying artistic form for it which make the poetry of a nation a power in the world's general culture. For that which recognises its self, will most readily be recognised by others, that which attains the perfect form of its own innate character, will most effectively leave its stamp in the formation of the mind of humanity.

We have only to take one or two examples to see the whole difference. No poetry has had so powerful an influence as Greek poetry, no poetry is, I think, within its own limits so perfect and satisfying. The limits indeed are marked and even, judged by the undulating many-sidedness and wideness of the modern mind, narrow, but on its own lines this poetry works with a flawless power and sufficiency. From beginning to end it dealt with life from one large view-point, that of the inspired reason and the enlightened and chastened aesthetic sense; whatever changes overtook it, it never departed from this motive which is of the very essence of the Greek spirit. And of this motive it was very conscious and by its clear recognition of it and fidelity to it it was able to achieve an artistic beauty and sufficiency of expressive form which affect us like an easily accomplished miracle and which have been the admiration of after ages. Even the poetry of the Greek decadence preserved enough of this power to act

## THE FUTURE POETRY

as a shaping influence on Latin poetry

French poetry is much more limited than the Greek, much less powerful in inspiration. For it deals with life from the standpoint not of the inspired reason, but of the clear-thinking intellect, not of the enlightened aesthetic sense, but of emotional sentiment. These are its two constant powers, the one gives its brain-stuff, the other its poetical fervour and appeal. Throughout all the changes of the last century in spite of apparent cultural revolutions, the French spirit has remained in its poetry faithful to these two motives which are of its very essence, and therefore too it has always or almost always found its satisfying and characteristic form. To that combination of a clear and strong motive and a satisfying form it owes the influence it has exercised from time to time on other European literatures. The cultural power of the poetry of other tongues may be traced to similar causes. But what has been the spirit and form of English poetry? Certainly, there is an English spirit which could not fail to be reflected in its poetry: but, not being clearly self-conscious, it is reflected obscurely and confusedly, and it has been at war within itself, followed a fluctuation of different motives and never succeeded in bringing about between them a conciliation and fusion. Therefore its form has suffered; it has had indeed no native and characteristic principle of form which would be, through all changes, the outward reflection of a clear self-recognising spirit

The poetry of a nation is only one side of its self-expression and its characteristics may be best understood if we look at it in relation to the whole mental and dynamic effort of the people. If we so look at the general contribution of the English nation to human life and culture, the eye is arrested by some remarkable *lacunae*. These are especially profound in the arts. English music is a zero, English sculpture an unfilled void, English architecture hardly better; English painting, illustrated by a few great names, has been neither a great artistic tradition nor a powerful cultural force and merits only a casual mention by the side of the rich achievement of Italy, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium. When we come to the field of thought we get a mixed impression like that of great mountain eminences towering out of a very low and flat plain. We find great individual philosophers, but no great philosophical tradition, two or three remarkable thinkers, but no high fame for thinking, many of the most famous names in science, but no national scientific culture. Still in these fields there has been remarkable accomplishment and the influence on European thought has been occasionally considerable and sometimes capital. But when finally we turn to the business of practical life, there is an unqualified preeminence: in mechanical science and invention, in politics, in commerce and industry, in colonisation, travel, exploration, in the domi-

## MOTHER INDIA

nation of earth and the exploitation of its riches England has been till late largely, sometimes entirely the world's leader, the shaper of its motives and the creator of its forms.

This peculiar distribution of the national capacities finds its root in certain racial characteristics. We have first the dominant Anglo-Saxon strain quickened, lightened and given force, power and initiative by the Scandinavian and Celtic elements. This mixture has made a national mind remarkably dynamic and practical, with all the Teutonic strength, patience, industry, but liberated from the Teutonic heaviness and crudity, yet retaining enough not to be too light of balance or too sensitive to the shocks of life; therefore, a nation easily first in practical intelligence and practical dealing with the facts and difficulties of life. Not, be it noted, by any power of clear intellectual thought or by force of imagination or intellectual intuition, but rather by a strong vital instinct, a sort of tentative dynamic intuition. No spirituality, but a robust ethical turn; no innate power of the word, but a strong turn for action, no fine play of emotion or quickness of sympathy, but an abundant energy and force of will. This is one element of the national mind; the other is the submerged, half-insistent Celtic, gifted with precisely the opposite qualities, inherent spirituality, the gift of the word, the rapid and brilliant imagination, the quick and luminous intelligence, the strong emotional force and sympathy, the natural love of the things of the mind and still more of those beyond the mind, left to it from an old forgotten culture in its blood which contained an ancient mystical tradition. In life a subordinate element, modifying the cruder Anglo-Saxon characteristics, breaking across them or correcting their excess, we may perhaps see it emerging in English poetry, coming repeatedly to the surface and then working with a certain force and vehement but embarrassed power like an imprisoned spirit let out for a holiday, but within not quite congenial bounds and with an unadaptable companion. From the ferment of these two elements arise both the greatness and the limitations of English poetry.

*To be continued*

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# LOTUS—FLAME

## Romen

This is the continuation of the poem whose previous instalments appeared in some numbers of Volume III of "Mother India"—a poem written under remarkable circumstances of inspiration after the passing of Sri Aurobindo—(EDITOR).

### PART V: THE INCARNATION

His soul donned the eternal robe of light  
And wore the blue incarnation's spirit-crown.  
The flame-ruby of the theophanic Ray,  
The lightning-footed unconquerable blaze,  
Came down upon his life's emerald expanse,  
Meeting the luminous chalice of his mind  
And the deep amethyst goblet of his heart,  
To find a timeless soul awaiting Its tread  
Within an immense cavern of tranquil fire,  
His glowing body and his shadowless mind  
Yearning to house Its vast omnipotence  
And Its peerless sea-calm of serenity.  
The undying Mother of the infinite Will  
Prepared the path for the Immanence Supreme,  
Made ready the route of the Incarnate King;  
And thus were heard the footfalls of the Avatar.  
The subtle worlds became iridescent, wide;  
The unseen empires grew lambent with Its gleam;  
The inner skies became jewelled and sunned  
By Its brush-strokes of illimitable power  
And the gods above in their etheric seats  
Grew keen to lean upon the tundras of drowse  
And waited for the timeless hour to strike  
On the unthinkable chronometer of God.

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For, all the miracle of august spirit-change  
Was mapped out on the vast blue-print of the sky—  
On the topless draft-board of the Absolute.  
The descent of the nameless Fire of the Sun  
Was a sure course inevitable and bright.  
And the soil was destined to enshrine the star  
And the whole firmament in her foam-laved heart.  
Presaging the advent of gods from the gnostic Vast,  
Here came the blazing entity of might,  
An icon of his measureless noonday,  
Like an aerial boat on an alien tide  
Coming to reconnoitre the stronghold of the gloom  
Ere thronged the splendid Armada of the Blue  
With its gigantic man-of-wars of light  
And its ruthless U-boats of the Infinite,  
Helped by the super-aircrafts of World-Force  
With all its skiey ammunitions of peace and bliss;  
Or like a covert calm Gestapo of God,  
Parachuted behind the zone of soullessness,  
With the sombre mask of a mere passing form  
To make way for the supernal unhorizoned Beam  
Within the cavern-wombs of nocturnal worlds.  
An incarnation from the dominions  
Of sapphire joys and ruby flames of love  
Came down like a cerulean bird of dream,  
Gold-bright, sun-pinioned, a spirit swan of fire  
From the unseen colossal tree of the sky  
With a burning star-fruit hung upon its beak,  
And wrapping its cobalt limbs of limitless peace  
And its magnificent crown of solar orb  
With the mantle of earth's misty somnolence,  
To dwell within the darkness-tree of the globe.  
So leaned down the blue vast of the Overmind-soul  
On his timeless self within a human house.  
Or like a celestial seedling of amaranth  
Uprooted from its golden soil of the stars  
And brought down to the grey-monotone fields  
Of life's unending deep-green pampas of sleep  
To find a root within its adamant waste  
And crown the knoll of its immobile rest  
With the diadem of its burning flower-flames.  
Or like a crystal surge from a fire-wined sea,

## LOTUS FLAME

Brimmed over from the happy cup of the sky  
By the unknown wave-rhythmed dancer of the Vast  
Who sways the infinite cradle of the Hour  
And moves the blind cycle of the universe,  
And thunders into the world's emptiness.  
Timeless was he wearing the mask of time,  
The Unbound limited in the ambit of Clod:  
One who saw unconcerned the globe's long march  
Visioned aloof the kaleidoscope of life.  
To him all was the Eternal and the True;  
To him were birth and death events of a game;  
To him the earth had lost its magnet-thrills  
Of pulsating ecstasy. He was alone  
In his depths of luminous tranquillity,  
Seeing the dust as the God-light concealed  
And man as the strange pygmied heavenly spark  
Whose soul was the player in his play divine  
And whose mind the potency of the Unseen,  
Himself the living symbol of the sun-white Rose,  
Knowing himself as the Light's secret core,  
The breath that illumed the dreary waste of death.  
An immaculate spirit that was released and true,  
He was the altar of the wonderful Mind.  
In him was the covert chamber of the Light  
Where the vast empyrean grandeur of sheer bliss  
Met the dust's naked and bleeding heart of pangs  
In close communion and oneness supreme.  
In his soul's rendezvous of love and power,  
In his wide waters of star-white Immanence  
Nestled the high sky-gems of crystal blaze—  
The pearls of purity, the rubies of love,  
The emeralds of hope and the sapphires of peace  
And the lonely regal diamond of the One.  
In him rose the wings of man's flight to the stars;  
All the clay's yearning found a home in his heart;  
The long and slow and subtle rise of earth  
Fostered his being's advent upon the soil,  
Nurtured the celestial seed in its breast-seas,  
Hidden like an astral spark within our deeps  
To emerge out of its penumbra-haunted sod;  
Rising like a star-swift levin of flame  
Cutting its way across the rocks of gloom

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To meet and merge in an infinite expanse.  
Plundering the riches of light and bliss and force  
From the endless depths of heaven's treasury.  
And in him the sky converged to find strange room  
On the shifting ground of moods and change all life  
With its cloud-white blessings of a ceaseless grace  
And love-oneness of an inexpressible joy,  
Pregnant with the vast Will of the highest Self  
Like a presiding light above a cliff.  
An infinite-born, he bore the cargo of man;  
A time-sprung, he bore the load of stars on his brow—  
The stress of the everlasting Olympian fire.  
His clay endured the shocks of the abyss,  
His godhood bore the impact of heaven's force—  
The incandescent thunder of deathlessness.  
Unassailable to the changing tides of earth,  
He had come down to remove the rock of fate  
That covers the well of humanity's life and sight;  
To raise the mountain-mass of nightward drowse  
From the bosom of the ever-yearning globe  
He was untouched by the glories of the True;  
He hungered not for the prize of heavenly rest  
Nor sought extinction in the Unknown's core  
But craved the Self's Immortality for the world,  
And called down to the world the measureless Sun.  
His mind was laurelled with the pinnacles of sight,  
His soul was immersed in the cobalt depths unseen,  
And his spirit embraced the vastitude of God  
And his being was an unveering ocean-soul  
Of deathless and spaceless and timeless tranquillity  
Shining on the triple countenance of the One.  
The triform wheel of fate and time and space  
Was a giant play-hoop in his mighty hand.  
His sky-married heart came here to find a seat  
On the earth's tripod-base that supports the soul.  
His topless advent was a passage of gold—  
A blue-white lion of lightning and of might.  
In the universal forest of stark unrobed gloom,  
An ebon mystery of a fathomless soul,  
Came the leonine avalanche of the Remote,  
Splendour-maned, marvel-eyed, with limbs of spotless fire  
To attack the forest's fortresses of night

## LOTUS FLAME

And set aflame the jungle's obscure heart  
As a signal for the golden orb to stoop  
With Its all-changing embrace of solar strength,  
With Its glorious battalions of light and power,  
With Its mustangs breaking the fence of death,  
And the armoured divisions of the heavenly blaze,  
Crossing the zones of inconstancy and of fall  
With Its imperial general of the sun  
Descending in a royal magnificence,  
Marshalling Its multitudinous weapons of force  
Like steeds that, guided by luminous reins of grace,  
Pulled Its gigantic chariot of oneness supreme.  
Thus shall descend the Apollo of the Noon.  
His coming on earth was a presaging dawn  
Of the marvellous midday of earth's emprise.  
Like a slow gradual lifting of the mask  
From the visage of our all-beloved soul,  
We saw by steps the spirit's dominions—  
Each step a birth, each pace an experience bright  
Of the growing gold communion with the flame  
Which burns within the cave-room of the Self,  
So the wide welkin would show its sapphire-heart  
By sparks and reveal its secrecies of Blue.  
And the leaning of this incarnation-gem  
Was the first approach towards the Wonderful's veil  
To be rent and dispelled from the laughing face of the sky.

*To be continued*

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# THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

## A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

### ACT II

#### Scene 2

*Two years have passed at the end of which BHOJRAJ dies on the battlefield. A month after, VIKRAM is enthroned as the Maharana of Mevar and is installed in the palace with due ceremony. Today is the holy Birthday of Krishna—Janmashtami—and Mira is celebrating it by throwing her private temple open to all. As the curtain rises Vikram is discovered in the palace garden, strolling moodily, frowning now and then on the stream of visitors—men and women, priests and Yogis—going up and down the temple steps. A subdued music, alternating with a mild incantation of MADAN, the temple priest, is audible, punctuated by intermittent silence. The sun has just risen*

VIKRAM (*shaking his head*) No. I can't... There again!

MIRA's voice is heard singing within the temple... He draws near and then, with a sudden decision, mounts the steps. Then he shakes his head again and turns round when he notices two bearded priests going up. They brush past him, evidently attracted by the music. He eyes them suspiciously and follows them. But he forgets his worries and everything as soon as MIRA starts singing in her rich contralto voice and then begins to dance in ecstasy before the IMAGE:

I will dance and dance to my Love, Everliving,  
Who was born earth's gloom to repeal,  
Till my anklets, timed to His whirling footfall,  
His mystical rhythms reveal.

In unison with my vision, His beauty,  
His glory and grace I'll proclaim  
And disowning my veil, His priestess of rapture,  
I will sing and dance to His name.

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One with the dust of His dawn-rose feet, I  
Shall glow in His Light of delight  
Till He comes to join in the dance—when Mira  
Will have broken her trammels of Night

*As the music trails off, VIKRAM heaves a deep sigh and comes down the steps back into the garden.*

VIKRAM (*shaking his head again*): No. It's out of the question. I can't. (*Suddenly he starts violently at the sound of footsteps behind and turns round to face UDAYBAI*).

UDAYBAI (*grimly*): But you must—and you know it

VIKRAM (*frowning*): Oh, don't. Let her be.

UDAYBAI (*reproachfully*): But how can we, brother? Remember you are now the King and as such dare not shirk your responsibility.

VIKRAM (*uneasy*): What responsibility?

UDAYBAI (*looking in the direction of the temple*): Can you still ask? Our dear brother died only a month ago—and look what she is doing: inviting all and sundry to the temple—our private garden! It's unseemly—almost indecent

VIKRAM: But don't let's be unfair, Uda! She asked my permission first.

UDAYBAI: Forced is the word. Shall I tell you what is wrong with you?—You love to vacillate and—and wallow in your absurd sentimentality.

VIKRAM (*nettled*): I don't.

UDAYBAI (*placing a hand on his shoulder*): Do not misunderstand me, dear brother! You must admit I have as good as brought you up and so know you better than you do yourself. Also remember: I have come not to make you uncomfortable and unhappy—I have come because I love you as—as I do.

VIKRAM (*touched*): I know, Uda! If you hadn't nursed me day and night when I had gone to pieces that day... (*he shivers*)—I may be vacillating, but not ungrateful.

UDAYBAI (*magnanimously*). But it's not your gratitude I want—but your happiness and honour besides, for both are at stake.

VIKRAM: But do not let us exaggerate things. She is not really as bad as you make out; besides, she can't help being a devotee, can she?

UDAYBAI: You call this being a devotee! Vikram, I warn you again: beware of her! She is a bad and unchaste woman—a serpent in human form.

VIKRAM (*hesitantly*): Are you not being a little dramatic—a little too severe?

UDAYBAI (*bitterly*): Have you no eyes in your head? No ears to take note of what people are saying about the scandalous way she is going on? Or do you pretend that you do not know that widows discard their golden bangles, refuse to do their hair and insist on wiping off the auspicious vermilion-mark on their forehead? But there she goes on riding her folly, as gaudily gay as ever, contending (*scathingly*) that since her Gopal is deathless she can never be widowed! Oh, for a woman to be lost to all sense of shame!

VIKRAM (*frightened*): Don't be upset like this, Uda!

UDAYBAI (*flashing back*): Upset? Can any decent woman ever bear witness to what is happening and yet remain as calm as a coral island? (*Hissing*) To go on consorting with all and sundry, singing and dancing in her temple in full view of the rabble—the so-called saints she herself takes good care to invite so that she may flaunt her holy bounty, feeding and pampering them all the time with *your* money!

VIKRAM: But that is not quite fair: it is her own money—

UDAYBAI (*exasperated*): Don't be stupid. Every Hindu knows a widow can claim not a single *kowri*. But she is free not only with your money but with your good name and ours. (*Bitterly*) O Vikram, if only I were born a man!

VIKRAM (*to make light of it*): But you do yourself a grave injustice, Uda—you who can challenge single-handed a round dozen of my bodyguard!

UDAYBAI (*nettled*): Remember: a King can only be frivolous at his own peril! It isn't levity which can save you but initiative and action. You simply cannot afford to sit by when the very dignity of the royal family is thrown to the winds by a reckless woman, enamoured of her own glamour.

VIKRAM (*miserably*): But what can I do, Uda?

UDAYBAI (*stamps her foot*): I won't speak to you again. Farewell! (*She turns to go*).

VIKRAM (*restraining her*): Oh, for mercy's sake, don't desert me—when—now I so sorely need your advice.

UDAYBAI (*concealing her pleasure*): I will do all I can. But it is for you to take action. I can't issue orders in your name.

VIKRAM (*after a slight pause*): I would...if I could. But... (*desperately*)... to be honest, I feel afraid—after—(*with a shiver*)—that incident.

UDAYBAI (*sarcastically*): A hero indeed—to be afraid of a mere witch he can so easily dispose of!

VIKRAM (*nervous*): A witch! Please don't utter such words.

UDAYBAI (*impatiently*): But do your pair of eyes plus reason

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tell you nothing? It is only her dark magic which gave you that nightmare—and only because you were weak. I wasn't and therefore she could not affect me at all. (*Gravely*) And that is just the reason why you should be strong and do something about it while there is yet time.

VIKRAM (*petulantly*): But what can I do? Surely you don't expect me to turn her out or...or give her poison?

UDAYBAI (*ominously*): And why *not*, pray? Are you not a trustee of the honour of your noble race—of Mevar's citizens? Did not our ancestors give poison to our mothers and sisters when the Muslim hordes were about to march in to claim them as their concubines? (*Wagging an accusing finger*) For the last time I warn you, Vikram: if you temporize now, be sure you will have to pay dearly for your folly: you shall be done to death as our dear misled brother was. You cannot hug your blindness with impunity.

VIKRAM (*dismayed*): But tell me—how *can* I possibly turn her out? We cannot lay our finger on anything she has *done* yet. How shall I face my Ministers when they ask for evidence? One cannot simply say: she must be exiled because I am told she wants to do me to death.

UDAYBAI (*after a reflective pause*): I will tell you what: I will have her watched closely. Iniquity and hypocrisy can never stand scrutiny for long. (*Lowering her voice*) I tell you I am as sure as sure can be that she has wrong relationships with these priests who come. I promise to catch her red-handed one of these days. Only, you must promise me in return that you will take action if and when she is proved to be an unchaste woman.

VIKRAM (*inspired at last*): That I will—with all my heart. (*Taking her hands in his*) Uda! God bless you for having shown me light in this darkness. I always cherished you as my sister and loyal supporter but from now on I will look upon you as my guide and adviser as well. (*Breezily*) Do you know, latterly I have often caught myself wishing that I could replace my Chief Minister by your far-seeing self!

UDAYBAI (*proptiated*): You have a heart of gold, Vikram! But that is just why I want you to be strong—a man who can be master of any situation. And now that you have fully confided in me, I will tell you something I have kept even from you so long! (*Dropping her voice*) Do you know, you referred, almost prophetically, to your Chief Minister you wished to replace?

VIKRAM (*unsettled again*): What on earth are you driving at?

UDAYBAI (*looking round warily*): I mean (*in a whisper*) she is plotting with him to have you—(*pausing*)—removed.

VIKRAM (*horrified*): Oh, don't say that, for heaven's sake!

UDAYBAI (*reproving*): Are you unmanned again! Fie, Vikram!

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VIKRAM: But for a woman to stoop so low—!

UDAYBAI (*with a sardonic smile*): My dear brother! You, men, can never see women for what they are. Only a hen knows how hens hatch. Of course there are women and women: what I mean is that a woman, rightly brought up, can and does rise to great heights, but just once let go of your hold and she will simply hurtle down the slope and never pause till the crash into the abyss. And she seldom crashes alone, I warn you!

VIKRAM (*unnerved*): O Uda! You really must help me. I will turn her out, I promise. Only you must make it a little easier for me: furnish me with some concrete evidence of her wickedness and—and I will do the rest.

UDAYBAI: Is it a bargain? (*Putting her hands on his shoulders*) You promise—you will be a man—and not a coward?

VIKRAM (*indignantly*): You must not talk like that, Uda! I may indeed vacillate a little now and then, but it's only because I am temperamentally tolerant. (*Forgetting his admission of fear in his growing impulse to vindicate himself*) Coward! You have yet to know me, I tell you! (*Shaking his fist*) I will get rid of the witch—I will—I'll show you I have a core of steel. (*Gnashing his teeth*) Plotting to have me removed! (*His voice rises*) Indeed, we shall see who removes whom!

*He starts as MIRA's voice is heard, singing in her temple.*

UDAYBAI: There again, she is going on in her reckless course, the shameless wanton, before even the burnt bones of her husband have had time to cool. (*Hissing*) And what airs! Do you know what she told me yesterday when I implored her not to meet all and sundry thus openly?

VIKRAM: What?

UDAYBAI: She gave me a superior smile and said: "I have no use now for the purdah any more, having no one to call my own except Him, my Gopal. I belong to none but Him, and He does not wish me to stand on my dignity."

VIKRAM (*scandalised*): You are joking.

UDAYBAI: Is this a joking matter? And why are you shocked, may I ask? Did you do anything to check her after our dear brother's death? You let her have her own way all through and crowds began to come... (*Pointing in the direction of the temple steps*) Just look—what you have brought on yourself and us—a flock of fools out to prostrate themselves before her! (*Gripping his elbow*) And what wise fools too!—Look at those two bearded stalwarts bowing before her! (*Scathingly*) Only this I will say for her: she knows how to act the part of an angel without wings. There, do you see how they are bowing to her again—oh, it's becoming perfectly intolerable!

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

VIKRAM (*intrigued*): Yes, I happened to notice them a little while ago. They seemed to me...I don't know what But I felt suspicious.

UDAYBAI (*straining her eyes*): For once you are right, Vikram! For I will stake my head they are outsiders...there, look...she is giving them her rarest smile... they are going in. I will lay—they are not Rajputs. (*Suddenly*) Come, let's mount guard at the door. I smell something. Come on, no—not a word.

*She almost drags him behind her to the temple. They run up the steps till, reaching the temple, they stand outside the threshold, eaves-dropping. MADAN, the temple priest, comes up to receive the King. VIKRAM signs to him to stand near him and the trio listens*

MIRA (*inside the temple*): You come from Prayag, did you say?—Oh blessed man, to be wedded to such a holy place!

AKBAR (*disguised as a Hindu priest*): May I venture to submit that you who are so well acquainted with blessedness should know also that it is a man's achievements that win him blessedness—not the place where he is tied to. I recall one of your own songs which says:

Who have loved Him in their inmost hearts  
Know more than all the learned arts.

Who have—(*he halts*)

TANSEN (*promptly*):—seen but once His marvel face,  
They—only they know blessedness.

MIRA (*interested*): Who may you be, brothers, to know so much about me?

AKBAR: Every leaf knows the passing breeze—although the breeze passes and remembers no more.

TANSEN: My friend is wise, Maharani! For it is for the recipient to cherish what he receives: the donor quickly forgets—as he should.

MIRA (*to TANSEN*): You have not told me your name.

AKBAR: He calls himself Kailas. It's he who has dragged me here. He heard you sing once a few years ago.

MIRA (*to TANSEN*): Indeed! And when was it?

TANSEN (*evading*): Oh, who has not heard you, Maharani? Or, having heard once, not longed to hear you again?...My noble friend is passionately fond of music. So I brought him here although (*smiling*) I wonder why he used the word 'dragged' seeing that he resisted so little!

MIRA (*smiling*): Possibly because you knew the art of cajoling better than he the art of resisting, the less as (*looking at AKBAR*) he looks too aristocratic to resist.

TANSEN (*flushing with pleasure*): He is nothing if not aristocratic and noble—my master. If only you could know him, Maharani! He has the soul of a King, he has, indeed!

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AKBAR (*hastily*): Pray take him not at his word. He merely means—I am not as common as I look.

MIRA (*smiles*): But you look anything but common—and surely none knows this better than you yourself!

*An awkward silence falls during which UDAYBAI gives VIKRAM a significant look.*

MIRA (*to AKBAR*): And who was *your* Guru?

AKBAR (*pointing on high*): The great Al- (*checking himself*)-mighty. UDAYBAI gives VIKRAM another significant glance.

MIRA (*after a pause*): Well, may He give you the guidance you need. . . For on the way one needs it all the time, doesn't one? (*Sighing*) But then you are strong and so perhaps need no help.

TANSEN (*not knowing what to say*): Do you imply—

MIRA (*smiles sadly*): That I am weak myself? Yes. That's why I need a guide—a human Guru—as my Gopal keeps telling me.

AKBAR: You mean (*pointing at the IMAGE*): Him—or—(*indicating the sky*) the one on high?

MIRA suddenly starts singing:

I had glimpsed the lone in the bliss of my heart,  
In the hush of the mountains, the hum of the mart,  
In the laughter of sun, and stars in trance,  
In the smile of the moon, in the ocean's dance:  
But I miss Him now in the fire of my pain—  
When my self-love is burnt, I shall find him again.

AKBAR (*in a moved voice*): You are blessed, indeed, Maharani! And yet. . . perhaps I should not presume. . . but your songs seem to me. . .

MIRA: Go on.

AKBAR: Do not your songs move one to sadness and pain rather than joy?

MIRA (*meditatively*): One can only sing of what one has seen. Supposing I myself saw pain as the reverse side of joy. . . the dark side of the moon?

AKBAR (*at a loss*): I do not know how to answer your question. . . But what you say. . . doesn't it amount to idolising pain?

MIRA: I am not idolising pain. I am only accepting it in the way He wants me to accept, or, shall I say, to transform a difficulty into an opportunity.

AKBAR: I do not know. . . but does not acceptance of something amount, in the end, to rejecting its opposite? I mean. . . can one travel towards pain without travelling away from its magnetic opposite—joy?

MIRA: But even to reach joy must not one pass through the ordeal of pain? (*Almost to herself*) To soar. . . to soar aloft. . . yes. . . but can

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one mount the sky and yet stay close to the earth?

*She sings again:*

"Oh, give me the will to break my cruel chain,

See: how it hurts my feet"—

I cry to thee on high.

Thou answerest. But then I sing in pain:

"My sigh was soft and sweet!"

Still a sigh remains a sigh!

*(Smiling)* Does it meet your question?

AKBAR: A song has a strange power...but may it not, for that very reason, foster an illusion, sometimes...I mean...I feel unaccountably moved but...still the question, like the sigh, remains: can a really compassionate Almighty have created this world that we may bid it adieu with a sigh however sweet? Can one really sigh for a sigh?

MIRA: Perhaps I am becoming a little too sentimental. *(Smiling sadly)*: Women will be women, you know. But I did not imply that one could sigh for a sigh any more than one could welcome pain. And yet...when all is said...supposing you could abolish pain here and now from this world, would you not be abolishing something more precious than the joy you would put in its place?

AKBAR: I am not sure that I see the drift of your argument.

MIRA: Have you ever tried to conceive—a world without pain?

AKBAR *(hesitantly)*: I may have...at times.

MIRA: Then tell me: how would you imagine people reacting to life in such a world? What would it be like?

AKBAR: You baffle me.

MIRA *(with a faint smile)* Then I will tell you as I see it. In such a world, where there is no pain or sorrow, there may be everything one could desire but there would be two elements missing: nobility and impulse to sacrifice what is certain for something uncertain. Would you prefer such a world to ours?

AKBAR *(moved)*: Maharani, I came here expecting to see a devotee. But I have glimpsed something greater: a seer.

MIRA: Pray do not give me a title I cannot hold. For I am only a humble seeker who sought Him purely through one light: that of the heart. In its revealing gleam I have indeed seen Him—but to realise again and again, through my pain, that to see Him is not enough; one has to surrender one's whole being at His feet. *(Smiling sadly)* So you do not thrill me at all when you call me a seer. For what little I have seen has only made me sigh the more for what I could not achieve: the surrender of all I have and am to my All-in-all.



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*She starts singing again:*  
In life and death my one Stay!  
I call to thee night and day.

Wisdom nor discipline is mine,  
Nor the way of trance austere.  
I only know thy lotus feet  
And seek repose, Lord, there.  
I am the boat and thou—the Shore,  
I am dusk, thou—the golden Ray,  
In life and death my one Stay!

I own no friend nor foe in the world,  
Nor comrade on whom to lean:  
On the rosary of my heart thy Name  
I repeat, O Evergreen!  
To none but thee in pain or joy  
Will Mira sing or pray.  
In life and death her one Stay!

AKBAR (*wiping a tear*): Forgive me if I misunderstood you...if only because...such love is not easy to understand.

MIRA (*smiling*): There can be no question of forgiveness because I understand why you do not understand. (*After a pause*) You will stay with us a few days, I hope?

TANSEN (*interposing*): I am afraid we must leave immediately, Maharani!

AKBAR (*taking the hint*): Yes, I am afraid we must, much as I would give to comply with your wish. (*Stifling a sigh*) Only...may I... (*he hesitates*).

TANSEN (*cutting in*): My master wants me to ask of you one last favour.

MIRA (*to AKBAR*): Favour?

AKBAR: I want to offer something at your holy feet.

*He makes a sign to TANSEN who instantly produces a diamond chaplet. AKBAR takes it and, bowing down, lays it at the feet of MIRA.*

MIRA (*in surprise*): Why, it is a—

AKBAR: Mere nothing. Nevertheless, you must accept even though those who have little to give can make but little return to one who has God's plenty at her command.

*MIRA closes her eyes and stands for a while before the IMAGE. Then she smiles and, nodding, takes the chaplet lying at her feet and places it on the head of GOPAL.*

MIRA (*clapping her hands in childlike glee*): Oh, look: how

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lovely He looks! O Gopal! Bless them, bless them.

TANSEN: My heart's homage, Maharani!

AKBAR: And mine. Farewell!

MIRA: Farewell, my brothers! May He bless you always.

VIKRAM *beckons excitedly to MADAN to follow them. As they depart, he steps inside followed by UDAYBAI.*

MIRA (*in joy*): Look, Vikram! How gorgeous He looks, My Gopal!

UDAYBAI (*gasps*): It...it's diamonds!!

VIKRAM (*going near the IMAGE*): And of the first water, too!  
(*Turning upon Mira*) Who is the man?

MIRA: A priest from Prayag, I think. He has never been here before.

VIKRAM (*gruffly*): What is his name?

MIRA: His name? He did tell me...but I forget.

UDAYBAI: Don't pretend. One does not forget the name of an old acquaintance.

MIRA (*surprised*): Old acquaintance? Did I not tell you he had never been here before?

UDAYBAI: Sister-in-law! You may have learnt little, but one thing you know: how to cover the face of sin with the mask of innocence.

MIRA: I do not understand you.

UDAYBAI (*goes near the IMAGE and takes up the chaplet*): Look, Vikram! This is no ordinary chaplet: clearly of Muslim design and craftsmanship.

VIKRAM (*closely inspecting it*): O My God! the man must be followed. There's not a moment to be lost. My horse—my horse—

*He runs out in excitement.*

UDAYBAI (*crying out*): Vikram! Listen—don't go alone and unarmed. (*Turning to MIRA*) You are caught now—at long last, you de-praved woman. Just wait.

*Before MIRA can answer she rushes out*

MIRA, left alone, stands for a while in silence before the IMAGE.  
*Then tears course down her cheeks*

MIRA (*folding her hands before the IMAGE*): Gopal! I know not what to think. What is all this that is happening? You said: one who loved you could not be humiliated. Why then have I been slandered and reviled by all? There was only one who stood by me. But even him you have taken away. I stand alone now. Will you not come to show me light in this darkness? You said I have not learned to see you in all. But how can one see who is born blind? You put a bird in the cage and let it pine for the sky. But how can mere pining for freedom give freedom? It can only beat its bleeding wings against the iron bars. You

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came to me day after day and assured me that all was well. But only darkness deepened and clouds gathered till not one star was to be seen. Then came the sudden storm and all my lights went out. How is one to walk in gloom? You told me, you could never fail one who loved you. Have I not then loved you—only lived in a world of make-believe? Then whose fault was it if I was made to believe in an unreahty? (*Shaking her head*) No. I will not disbelieve. Eyes may err, feet may falter, but the heart never makes a mistake. I *have* loved you with every fibre of my being. I *have* staked my all for you, depending only on your Grace. How then can your Grace leave me stranded on a desert? . . . Is it because I have been proud? But can one who has seen your face disown the pride of love born of the Vision? Can the eagle soaring in the sky be as humble as the worm burrowing in the mud? No: I defy you to take this pride away from me. I will break but never bend. They can tear me limb from limb but my soul shall never know defeat.

*Enter VIKRAM in fury with a drawn sword in his hand, followed by UDAYBAI and MADAN.*

VIKRAM (*trembling*). You-you-you—I will kill you now. Come out.

MIRA (*calmly*): What has happened?

VIKRAM: Do you know who they were—your donors?

MIRA: They were priests.

VIKRAM (*shouting*): You lie.

UDAYBAI: Now, now, Vikram! Remember your promise! (*To MADAN*) Tell her.

MADAN: I followed them. In a few minutes I overheard the older priest addressing the other as "Shahanshah".

MIRA: Shahanshah? You mean Emperor Akbar?

VIKRAM (*exploding*): Yes, and a Muslim who has defiled our sacred temple and who dared because *you*—the Queen of Mevar—invited them to come here clandestinely to joy in the hospitality of your beauty! We could not catch them—they rode off. But you shall not escape. I will behead you in the courtyard before all. Come out, I say!

UDAYBAI: Don't behave like a lunatic, brother! Calm yourself, I pray. She shall, indeed, atone for it with her life. But it should be done in the proper way. It will not do to infuriate the populace.

VIKRAM: But what is the proper way?

UDAYBAI: I have come equipped.

*She signs to MADAN who is holding a cup in his trembling hand.*

MADAN: It is poison, sire!

VIKRAM: Poison?

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UDAYBAI: Which she is to drink and (*commandingly*)—here and now.

VIKRAM (*exultantly*): Yes, yes, yes...and writhe in agony till... till she dies before her beloved Gopal.

UDAYBAI (*virulently*): And we shall see which is greater: the Grace of Gopal or the wrath of a king!

VIKRAM (*triumphantly*): And the world will see it too.

MIRA (*turning calmly towards MADAN*): Give me the cup

MADAN (*trembling*): I...I...cannot, Maharani!

UDAYBAI (*indignantly*): Give it to me, you less than man!

*She wrests the cup from his hand and gives it to MIRA who drains it at one gulp and then lets the cup drop. They stare alternately at her and the IMAGE...MIRA sways gently but does not fall when, suddenly, the IMAGE is clearly seen to tremble and then, in a few seconds, turn blue-black like a human being who has quaffed poison.*

MADAN (*cries out in joy*): Oh, merciful Saviour!...He has taken the poison upon Himself. . .Our beloved Maharani is saved, saved, saved! *He falls prostrate, trembling, between the IMAGE and MIRA.*

UDAYBAI (*staring in terror*): What is this?..(*Then, with a piercing scream*) O Lord, spare me. I...I...cannot bear it any more.

*She holds her own head between her two hands and sways.*

Vikram (*horrified*): Am I awake? But there...I can see the poison coursing through His veins .a dark fluid!...(*shrieking*) Help! I am going mad .O Lord, save me...save me!

UDAYBAI: Come, Vikram, if you want to be saved! We must fly... She is a witch, a black witch...

*She rushes out in a frenzy of fear, followed by Vikram, yelling. "Hell! Hell! save me, save me!"*

MIRA stands before the IMAGE like one petrified .MADAN now rises, tottering; then folds his hands, and finally turns to MIRA who stands absolutely still in the same posture.

MADAN (*in a fearful voice*): Mother Divine!

MIRA (*starts*): Oh—it's you!

MADAN (*blubbers between his tears*): Yes, Mother.. and a deep sinner .Forgive me for what I have done. I did not know...

MIRA (*placing a gentle hand on his shoulder*): Grieve not, my son! For you committed no sin.

MADAN (*mastering himself somewhat*): I did, I did, Mother!... I...I...lost my head when... I discovered that they were Muslims. That is why I...I...brought you that deadly poison myself—not realising y-you were a Divine being.

MIRA (*smiling ruefully*): But I am not a Divine being...On the

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contrary, it's because I am human...too, too human...that He...(*her eyes fill*)...He had to take the poison into Himself.

MADAN (*wringing his hands*): But I...I...cursed you, Mother—you whom the Lord Himself protects constantly, as Vishnu's discus used to protect Ambarish. (*Falls to sobbing again*) O Mother, you...m-must forgive me...even though...what I have d-done is un-unforgivable.

MIRA (*in a thick voice*): My son, listen. My Gopal has told me: there is nothing a man can do which cannot be absolved through repentance and surrender at His feet. We, in our infinite ignorance, must always misunderstand His infinite compassion. It could not be otherwise, for so we are constituted, like the eye which a dazzling light blinds even more than darkness. (*Touching his humped shoulder*) Do not cry. If He can save a mere woman by taking her poison into Himself (*beads of tears trickle down her cheeks*)...then you too can surely expect redemption for whatever you have perpetrated unknowingly. Go now and pray to Him that you may be His and...and...know no harm can come near the shadow of one armoured by His holy name.

MADAN *kisses her feet and then goes out, weeping.*

MIRA, *left alone, gazes wistfully at the IMAGE. Then she shivers and starts a song, as usual, improvising in ecstasy while tears stream down her cheeks:*

Rings the marvellous hour  
When, from bower to bower,  
Fares Mira, the minstrel, singing His Name.  
Who as Queen once presided  
On a throne's now derided  
By all as gone mad for a phantom Flame!  
Only those who have passed,  
Under skies overcast,  
Through the Night of despair know pain's grim story,  
Till, orphaned and lone,  
Like her they disown  
The world's jeers for the Evergreen's beauty and glory.  
The waves that rolled  
For the Deep who would hold  
Could ought quell the soul who for Him her all staked?  
Even poison that killed  
The nectar revealed  
To Mira who drank and her thirst, lo, was slaked!

*As she sings the last line, KRISHNA comes out of the Image.*

MIRA (*falls at His feet to which she clings*): Gopal..Gopal..Gopal!..

KRISHNA *raises her and sings to her the last verses*

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To His Grace will she wend  
And the holy befriend,  
For she thrills now in nought but His love upon earth.  
Fate! where is thy sting  
When her voice will sing  
But of Him who's beyond what they call death and birth?  
*Mira takes it up and dances with Him as they sing together.*  
To His Grace will she wend  
And the holy befriend,  
For she thrills now in nought but His love upon earth.  
Fate! where is thy sting  
When her voice will sing  
But of Him who's beyond what they call death and birth?  
MIRA (*falls prostrate at His feet*): Gopal...Gopal.....Gopal!  
KRISHNA (*raising her tenderly*): Mira...Mira...Mira...  
MIRA (*smiling through her tears*): What now, Gopal?  
KRISHNA (*holding her eyes*): Only one thing. You must leave  
everything and go to Brindaban where he awaits you.  
MIRA: Who?  
KRISHNA: My devotee and your Guru—Sanatan. •  
MIRA: But why, Gopal—now that I have found you?  
KRISHNA (*smiling quizzically*): But have you?  
MIRA: Have I not...after...after what I have seen?  
KRISHNA: What have you seen?  
MIRA: Why...myself in you, my Lord—the drop in the Deep.  
KRISHNA (*nods*): Yes. But...there is something more you have  
yet to see.  
MIRA: What is that?  
KRISHNA: The Lord in your Guru—the Deep in the drop.  
MIRA *bows her head when Krishna enfolds her in an embrace as—*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

*To be continued*

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## SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

### Some Verbal Subtleties and Technicalities

(THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT BEFORE THE ANSWERS)

(Is there any advantage in changing the phrase—

*as though a press*

*Of benediction lay on me unseen—*

to

*as though the press*

*Of a benediction lay on me unseen?)*

“No, no. The first was immeasurably better. ‘A press of benediction’ is striking and effective; ‘the press of a benediction’ is flat and means nothing. Besides, it is not good English. You can say ‘a press of affairs’, ‘a press of matter’; you can say ‘the pressure of this affair,’ but you cannot say ‘the press of an affair.’” (1931)

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(As between the forms—“with a view to express” and “with a view to expressing”—the Concise Oxford Dictionary calls the former vulgar.)

“I don’t agree with Oxford. Both forms are used. If ‘to express’ is vulgar, ‘to expressing’ is cumbrous and therefore inelegant”

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(The Oxford Dictionary seems to leave one no choice as regards counting the number of syllables in the word “vision” and its likes. I quote below some of the words explained as monosyllables in the same way as “Rhythm” and “prism”:

Fa<sup>˙</sup>shion (-shn)

Passion (pa<sup>˙</sup>-shn)

Pri<sup>˙</sup>son (-zn)

Scission (si<sup>˙</sup>shn)

Trea<sup>˙</sup>son (-ēzn)

Vi<sup>˙</sup>sion (-zhn)

As Dilip would say, *qu'en dites vous?* Chambers's Dictionary makes “vision” a dissyllable, which is quite sensible, but the monosyllabic pro-

nunciation of it deserves to be considered at least a legitimate variant when H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler—the name of Fowler is looked upon as a synonym for authority on the English language—give no other. I don't think I am mistaken in interpreting their intention. Take "realm", which they pronounce in brackets as relm; now I see no difference as regards syllabification between their intention here and in the instances above.

P.S. I must admit, however, what struck me after typing the preceding. In the preface to the Oxford Dictionary it is said that it has not been thought necessary to mention certain pronunciations which are familiar to the normal reader, such as that of the suffix -ation (ashn). Does this mean that a word like "meditation" is to be taken as three syllables only? According to my argument there seems no alternative; and yet the example looks very much like a *reductio ad absurdum*.)

"You may not have a choice—but I have a choice, which is to pronounce and scan words like vision and passion and similar words as all the poets of the English language (those at least whom I know) have consistently pronounced and scanned them—as dissyllables. If you ask me to scan Shakespeare's line in the following manner to please H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler,

<sup>u</sup> — <sup>u</sup> — <sup>u</sup> — — <sup>u</sup> —  
 In ma|den med|itation | fan|cy free,

I shall decline without thanks. Shakespeare wrote, if I remember right, 'treasons, strategems and spoils'; Shelley, Tennyson, any poet of the English language, I believe, would do the same—though I have no books with me to give chapter and verse. I lived in both northern and southern England, but I never heard vision pronounced vizhn, it was always vizhun; treason, of course, is pronounced trēz'n, but that does not make it a monosyllable in scansion because there is in these words a very perceptible slurred vowel sound in pronunciation which I represent by the ' ; in poison also. If realm, helm etc. are taken as monosyllables, that is quite reasonable, for there is no vowel between l and m and none is heard, slurred or otherwise in pronunciation. The words rhythm and prism are technically monosyllables, because they are so pronounced in French (i.e. that part of the word, for there is a mute e in French): but in fact most Englishmen take the help of a slurred vowel-sound in pronouncing rhythms and it would be quite permissible to write in English as a blank verse line, "The unheard rhythms that sustain the world".

"This is my conviction and not all the Fowlers in the world will take it away from me. I only hope the future lexicographers will not 'fowl' the language any more in that direction; otherwise we shall have to write



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lines like this—

*O vizhn! O pashn! O fashn! m'd'tashn! h'rr'p'lashn!  
Why did the infern'l Etern'l und'take creash'n?  
Or else, creat'ng, could he not have afford'd  
Not to allow the Engl'sh tongue to be Oxford'd?*

P.S. I remember a book (Hamerton's? some one else's? I don't remember) in which the contrast was drawn between the English and French languages, that the English tongue tended to throw all the weight on the first or earliest possible syllable and slurred the others, the French did the opposite—so that when an Englishman pretends to say strawberries, what he really says is strawb's. That is the exaggeration of a truth—but all the same there is a limit." (27-9-34)

(Of course a language is not made altogether according to logical rules. Originally, or aboriginally, it came, I suppose, out of the entrails and in spite of all Volapuks and Esperantos natural languages will flourish. But I should like to ask you a few questions suggested by your falling foul of the Fowlers. The poetic pronunciation of words cannot be accepted as a standard for current speech—can it? On your own showing, "treason" and "poison" which are monosyllables in prose or current speech can be scanned as dissyllables in verse; Shelley makes "evening" three syllables and Harin has used even "realm" as a dissyllable, while the practice of taking "precious" and "conscious" to be three syllables is not even noticeable, I believe. All the same, current speech, if your favourite Chambers's Dictionary as well as my dear Oxford Concise is to be believed, insist on "evening", "precious" and "conscious" being dissyllabic and "realm" monosyllabic. I am mentioning this disparity between poetic and current usages not because I wish "meditation" to be robbed of its full length or "vision" to lose half its effect but because it seems to me that Shelley's or Tennyson's or any poet's practice does not in itself prove anything definitely for English as it is spoken. And spoken English, very much more than written English, undergoes change; even the line you quote from Shakespeare was perhaps not scanned in his time as you would do it now, for "meditation"—as surely "passion" and "fashion" also and most probably "vision" as well—was often if not always given its full vowel-value and the fourth foot of the line in question might to an Elizabethan ear have been very naturally an anapaest:

— u u —  
*In mai|den me|dita|tion fan|cy free.*

When, however, you say that your personal experience in England, both north and south, never recorded a monosyllabic "vision", we are on more solid ground, but the Concise Oxford Dictionary is specially stated to

be in its very title as "of Current English": is all its claim to be set at nought? It is after all a responsible compilation and, so far as my impression goes, not unesteemed. If its errors were so glaring as you think, would there not have been a general protest? Or is it that English has changed so much in "word of mouth" since your departure from England? This is not an ironical query—I am just wondering.

P.S. Your exclamatory-interrogatory elegiacs illustrating the predicament we should fall into if the Fowlers were allowed to spread their nets with impunity were very enjoyable. But I am afraid the tendency of the English language is towards contraction of vowel-sounds, at least terminal ones; and perhaps the Oxford Dictionary has felt the need to monumentalise—clearly and authoritatively—the degree to which this tendency has, in some cases more definitely, in others less but still perceptibly enough, advanced? The vocalised "e" of the suffix -ed of the Spenserian days is now often mute; the trisyllabic suffix -ation of the "spacious times" has shrunk by one syllable, and "treason" and "poison" and "prison", all having the same second-vowel sound if fully pronounced as in the second syllable of -ation, are already monosyllables in speech—so, that "passion" and "fashion" which too have lost their Elizabethan characteristic like "meditation" should contract by a natural analogy, carrying all "ation"-suffixed words as well as "vision" and "scission" and the like with them, looks quite as one might expect. And if current speech once fixes these contractions, they will not always keep outside the pale of poetry. What do you think?)

"Where the devil have I admitted that 'treason' and 'poison' are monosyllables or that their use as dissyllables is a poetic licence? Will you please quote the words in which I have made that astounding and imbecile admission? I have said distinctly that they are dissyllabic,—like risen, dozen, maiden, garden, laden and a thousand others which nobody (at least before the world went mad) ever dreamed of taking as monosyllables. On my own showing, indeed! After I had even gone to the trouble of explaining at length about the slurred syllable e in these words, for the full sound is not given, so that you cannot put it down as pronounced maid-en, you have to indicate the pronunciation as maid'n. But for that to dub maiden a monosyllable and assert that Shakespeare, Shelley and every other poet who scans maiden as a dissyllable was a born fool who did not know the 'current' pronunciation or was indulging in a constant poetic licence whenever he used the words garden, maiden, widen, sadden etc. is a long flight of imagination. I say that these words are dissyllables and the poets in so scanning them (not as an occasional licence but normally and every time) are much better authorities than any owl—or fowl—of a dictionary maker in the universe. Of course the poets use licences in length-

ening out words occasionally, but these are exceptions; to explain away their normal use of words as a perpetually repeated licence would be a wild wooden-headedness (5 syllables, please). That these words are dissyllables is proved farther by the fact that 'saddened,' 'maidenhood' cannot possibly be anything but respectively dissyllabic and trisyllabic, yet 'saddened' could, I suppose, be correctly indicated in a dictionary as pronounced 'saddnd'. A dictionary indication or a dictionary theory cannot destroy the living facts of the language.

"I do not know why you speak of my 'favourite' Chambers. Your attachment to Oxford is not balanced by any attachment of mine to Chambers or any other lexicographer. I am not inclined to swear by any particular dictionary as an immaculate virgin authority for pronunciation or a papal Infallible. It was you who quoted Chambers as differing from Oxford, not I. You seem indeed to think that the Fowlers are a sort of double-headed Pope to the British public in all linguistic matters and nobody could dare question their dictates or ukases—only I do so because I am antiquated and am living in India. I take leave to point out to you that this is not yet a universally admitted catholic dogma. The Fowlers indeed seem to claim something of the kind, they make their enunciations with a haughty papal arrogance condemning those who differ from them as outcasts and brushing them aside in a few words or without a mention. But it is not quite like that. What is current English? As far as pronunciation goes, every Englishman knows that for an immense number of words there is no such thing.—Englishmen of equal education pronounce them in different ways, sometimes in more than two different ways. 'Either'-neither' is a current pronunciation, so is 'eether' 'neether'. In some words the 'th' is pronounced variably as a soft 'd' or a soft 't' or as 'th'—and so on. If the Oxford pronunciation of 'vision' and 'meditation' is correct current English, then the confusion has much increased since my time, for then at least everybody pronounced 'vizhun', 'meditashun', as I do still and shall go on doing so. Or if the other existed, it must have been confined to uneducated people. But you suggest that my pronunciation is antiquated, English has advanced since then as since Shakespeare. But I must point out that you yourself quote Chambers for 'vizhun' and following your example—not out of favouritism—I may quote him for 'summation'—'summashun', not 'shn'. The latest edition of Chambers is dated 1931 and the editors have not thought themselves bound by the decisive change of the English language to change 'shun' into 'shn'. Has the decisive change taken place since 1931? Moreover in the recent dispute about the standard Broadcast pronunciation, the decisions of Bernard Shaw's Committee were furiously disputed—if Fowler and Oxford were papal authorities in England for current speech (it was current speech the Committee was trying to fix through

the broadcasts), would it not have been sufficient simply to quote the Oxford in order to produce an awed and crushed silence?

"So your P.S. has no solid ground to stand on since there is no 'fixed' current speech and Fowler is not its Pope and there is no universal currency of his vizhn of things. Language is not bound by analogy and because

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'meditation' has become 'meditashun' it does not follow that it must become 'meditashn' and that 'tation' is now a monosyllable contrary to all common sense and the privilege of the ear. It might just as well be argued that it will necessarily be clipped farther until the whole word becomes a monosyllable. Language is neither made nor developed in that way—if the English language were so to deprive itself of all beauty by turning vision into vizhn and then into vzhn and all other words into similar horrors, I would hasten to abandon it for Sanskrit or French or Bengali—or even Swahili.

"P.S. By the way, one point. Does the Oxford pronounce in cold blood and so many set words that vision, passion (and by logical extension treason, maiden, garden etc.) are monosyllables? Or is it your inference from 'realm' and 'prism'? If the latter, I would only say, 'Beware' of too rigidly logical inferences. If the former, I can only say that Oxford needs some gas from Hitler to save the English mind from its pedants. This quite apart from the currency of vizhns. (20-9-34)

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(I am sincerely sorry for mistaking you on an important point. But before my argumentative wooden-headedness gives up the ghost under your sledge hammer it is bursting to cry a Themistoclean "Strike, but hear." Please try to understand my misunderstanding. What you wrote was: " 'Treason' of course is pronounced 'trēz'n', but that does not make it a monosyllable in scansion because there is in these words a very perceptible slurred vowel sound in pronunciation which I represent by the ' ; in 'poison' also." I think it must have been the word "scansion" which led me astray—as if you had meant that these words were non-monosyllabic in poetry only. But am I really misjudging Chambers as well as the Fowlers when I draw the logical inference that, since a dictionary is no dictionary if it does not follow a coherent system and since these people absolutely omit to make any distinction between the indicated scansion of "prism", "realm", "rhythm" etc. and that of "treason" and "poison", they definitely mean us to take all these words as monosyllables? If Chambers who writes 'vizhun' but 'trezn' and 'poizn' just as he writes "relm" and "rithm", intends us to understand that there is some difference between the scansions of the latter pairs he, in my opinion, completely de-dictionaries his work by so illogical an expectation. He and the Fowlers may not say

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in cold blood and so many set words that "treason" and "poison" are monosyllables but it is their design, in most freezing blood and more eloquently than words can express, that they should fall into the same category as "realm" and "rhythm". Else, what could have prevented them from inventing some such sign as your ' to mark the dissimilarity? My sin was to have loved logic not wisely but too well where logicity had been obstreperously announced in flaring capitals on the title page and throughout the whole book by a fixed system of spelling and pronunciation. My Othello-like extremity of love plunged me into abysmal errors, but oh the Iagoistic "motiveless malignity" of lexicographers!

I am grateful to you for disabusing my mind of its trust in these self-appointed Popes. Your contentions I accept: I also see that the beauty of the English language is at stake when these Fowlers and their ilk start their word-clipping business. You could at least turn to Sanskrit or French or Bengali, but I without English would be quieter than the grave).

"It seemed to me impossible that even the reckless Fowler—reckless in the excess of his learning—should be so audacious as to announce that this large class of words accepted as dissyllables from the beginning of (English) time were really monosyllables. After all, the lexicographers do not set out to give the number of syllables in a word. Pronunciation is a different matter. Realm cannot be a dissyllable unless you violently make it so, because l is a liquid like r and you cannot make a dissyllable of words like 'charm', unless you Scotchify the English language and make it char'r'r'm or vulgarise it and make it charrum—and even char'r'r'm is after all a monosyllable. Prism, the ism in Socialism and pessimism, rhythm can be made dissyllable; but by convention (convention has nothing to do with these things) the ism, rhythm are treated as a single syllable, because of the etymology. But there is absolutely no reason to bring in this convention with treason, poison, garden or maiden (coming from French *trahison*, *poison* and some O.E. equivalent of the German *garten*, *madchen*). The dictionaries give the same mark of pronunciation for thm, sm and the den (dn) of maiden and son (sn) of treason because they are phonetically the same. The French pronounce *rhythme*=reethm (I make English sound indications) without anything to help them out in passing from th to m, but the English tongue can't do that, there is a very perceptible quarter vowel or one-eighth vowel sound between th and m—if it were not so the plural rhythms would be unpronounceable. I remember in my French class at St. Paul's our teacher (a Frenchman) insisted on our pronouncing *ordre* in the French way—in his mouth orrdrr; I was the only one who succeeded, the others all made it auder, orrder, audrer, or some such variation. There is the same difference of habit with words like rhythm, and yet conven-

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tionally the French treatment is accepted so far as to impose rhythm as a monosyllable. Realm on the other hand is pronounced truly as a monosyllable without the help of any fraction of a vowel." (30-9-34)

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(Why have you bucked at my "azure" as a line-ending? And why so late in the day? Twice before I have used the same inversion and it caused no alarm. Simple poetic licence, sir. If Wordsworth could write

*What awful perspective; while from our sight . . .*

and leave no reverberation of "awful" in the reader's mind, and if Abercrombie boldly come out with

*To smite the horny eyes of men*

*With the renown of our Heaven*

and our horny eyes remain unsmitten by his topsyturvy "Heaven"—why, then, I need not feel too shy to shift the accent of "azure" just because of poor me happening to be an Indian. Not that an alternative line getting rid of that word is impossible—quite a fine one can be written with "obscure". But how does this particular inversion shock you? There is nothing un-English or unpoetic about it—so far as I can see, though of course such things should not be done often. What do you say?

Your "through whom" in place of my "wherethrough" in another line is an improvement, but it is difficult to reject that word as a legal archaism inadmissible in good poetry. Your remark about "whereas" in my AE. essay seemed to me just in pointing out the obscurity of connection it introduced between the two parts of my sentence, but the term itself has no stigma on it of obsolescence as for instance "whenas": in poetry it would be rather prosaic, while "wherethrough" is a special poetic usage as any big dictionary will tell us, and in certain contexts it would be preferable to "through which", just as "whereon", "wherein", and "whereby" would sometimes be better than their ordinary equivalents. I wonder why you have become so ultra-modern: I remember you jibbing also at "from out"—a phrase which has not fallen into desuetude yet, and can be used occasionally even in a common context: e.g. "from out the bed".)

"I can swallow 'perspective' with some difficulty, but if anybody tried to justify by it a line like this (let us say in a poem to Miss Mayo):

*O inspector, why suggestive of drains?*

I would buck. I disapprove totally of Abercrombie's bold wriggle with Heaven, but even he surely never meant to put the accent on the second syllable and pronounce it Hevénn. I absolutely refuse to pronounce 'azure' as 'azúre'. 'Perspective' can just be managed by making it practically atonal or unaccented or evenly accented, which comes to the same thing. 'Sapphire' can be managed at the end of a line, e.g. "stróng sapphire", be-

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cause 'phire' is long and the voice trails over it, but the 'ure' of 'azure' is more slurred into shortness than trailed out into length as if it were 'azyoore'.

"I didn't suggest that 'whereas' was obsolete. It is a perfectly good word in its place, e.g. He pretended the place was empty whereas in reality it was crowded, packed, overflowing; but its use as a loose conjunctive turn which can be conveniently shoved into any hole to keep two sentences together is altogether reprehensible. None of these words is obsolete, but 'wherethrough' is rhetorically pedantic, just as 'whereabout' or 'wherewithal' would be. It is no use throwing the dictionary at my head—the dictionary admits many words which poetry refuses to admit. Of course you can drag any word in the dictionary into poetry if you like, e.g.:

*My spirit parenthetically wise  
Gave me its obiter dictum; à propos  
I looked within with weird and brilliant eyes  
And found in the pit of my stomach the juste mot.*

But all that is possible is not commendable. So if you seek a pretext wherethrough to bring in these heavy visitors I shall buck and seek a means whereby to eject them.

"P.S. It is not to the use of 'azure' in place of an iamb in the last foot that I object but to your blessed accent on the last syllable. I will even, if you take that sign off, allow you to rhyme 'azure' with 'pure' and pass it off as an Abercrombiean acrobacy by way of fun. But not otherwise—the accent mark must go." (2-10-36)

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# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchand

## CHAPTER X

### THE HIGHER NATURE AND THE LOWER

The relation between the higher nature and the lower is of capital importance in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. If a shuffling off of all nature were the aim, the postulate of the higher Nature would not be called for,—the Sankhya position would be perfectly valid for the purpose. The Nature of the three gunas would be regarded as the sole Nature responsible for life and creation and the soul's bondage to them, and a withdrawal of the soul from her its final release and salvation. The passive status of the liberated individual soul, as in the Sankhya, or its traceless merger in the eternal Immutable, as in the later Vedanta, would be the crowning achievement of all spiritual endeavour.

But the aim of the Integral Yoga is not a rejection, but a transformation of Nature for the manifestation of the Divine in the material world. A naked soul, divested of all nature, cannot surely manifest either itself or the Divine. It must have a nature through which it can pour out into life the inexhaustible riches of the Spirit it holds within itself—it must have an executive and expressive medium.

But how can this bounded Nature of the three gunas (qualitative modes of sattwa, rajas and tamas), afflicted with perpetual instability and working with narrow confines, reflect or reveal the infinite Divine? Even sattwa, the highest of her gunas, is a limited and limiting principle; it binds the being by the modicum of happiness and the modified light it imparts to it as the Gita puts it. Within the cramping formula of this Nature of the three gunas, there can, therefore, be no freedom, no recovery and expression of the soul's universal and transcendent attributes. This Nature of the three gunas has to be transcended.

Where will this transcendence lead? Is there a dynamic principle above this Nature of the three gunas—a principle of divine dynamism unfettered by the lower gunas and working in the infallible light of an infinite knowledge? If there were no such principle, transcendence would



only lead to self-extinction in a limitless Void or a worldless Immutable. But the Gita, following the Vedic and the Upanishadic tradition, speaks of a higher Nature, Parâ Prakriti, which is superior to the three gunas and by which this entire universe is sustained and upheld. The lower Nature is a derivative of the higher, controlled by the Will and Force of the higher, and yet given sufficient autonomy to work out, in its own way, the tangled possibilities of its evolutionary ignorance. The control is veiled and indirect,—the lower must go seeking and blundering through darkness till, surrendered and consecrated, it is washed clean of its impurities and caught up in the freedom and glory of the higher.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is based upon the essential truth of this double Nature—the higher and the lower, parâ and aparâ. His contention against the world-shunning ascetic tendency is that, if this lower Nature that binds and darkens the soul is derived from the higher, it can be converted back into that and, instead of the dualities and discords that it displays, it can be made to manifest the Light and Peace and Bliss, the Unity and Harmony of the Nature of the Divine. To cast away Nature because, in its present formulation, it is ignorant and discordant, is to cast away altogether the possibilities of God's manifestation in life. Divisions and dissonances are the transitional terms of a life which is evolving from a base of dark inconscience. They have to be faced, grappled with, conquered and converted to their spiritual counterparts, and not fled away from and left in their undisputed sway over human life. Death, division and discord are the legacy of our origin in the Ignorance; we have to pass through them so long as we live in the Ignorance, in the separative consciousness of the ego—*avidyayâ mrityum teertvâ*. But is it not partly because of them that we aspire and yearn for an existence of unity, harmony and immortality? Is it not the recurrent wrench of death, the distressing limitation and incapacity resulting from division, and the confusing and tormenting discords of life that drive us towards their very opposites? But where is that existence of unity, harmony and immortality to be found? Is it to be discovered and attained beyond all Nature and life? Then the solution of life's problems, if there is any, can only lie in an extinction of life itself, and not in its conquest and transfiguration. The persistent instinct of mankind has, however, always been towards the discovery of a solution of life's problems in life itself, whatever may have been the aspiration and endeavour of exceptional individuals impatiently avid of the Beyond. The one solid good they have done for humanity is to point again and again towards the essential and eternal truth of its existence. But the instinct of man for a victorious solution of all life's problems can be fulfilled not by a discarding of Nature, but by an ascent to the Supernature and a radical transformation of the lower by the power of the higher.

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In the very heart of division lies the secret of unity; behind the black mask of death is the unfading light of immortality, and suffering is only "a violent backwash of the waters of universal delight." An ascent of the human consciousness to the Supernature and a descent of the Supernature into the human consciousness and nature can alone release these divine principles and accomplish the evolutionary purpose of the material existence.

### What is the Higher Nature?

By the higher Nature to which we have to climb and by the power of which we have to transform the lower, Sri Aurobindo does not mean the spiritualised mental nature. It is not a perfect flowering of the sattwic nature of a relative poise and purity and light and happiness, which is the common idea of it. Sattwa, even at its best, is a mental quality, belonging to the lower nature; it can be a wide gate opening on the Infinite, but in itself it is a dealer in finite virtues and cannot move in the immeasurable vastness of the Spirit. By Supernature Sri Aurobindo means the authentic, eternal Nature of the Supreme, the Consciousness-Force of Sachchidananda as the creatrix of the world. Supernature is the supramental Nature, the self-Nature (Prakritim Swâm) of the Divine. In Supernature there is no duality of Purusha and Prakriti—they are one. Consciousness and Force, Knowledge and Will, status and dynamism form the warp and woof of the same infinite and indivisible existence. The Supernature or Parâ Prakriti contains the spiritual counterparts of the three lower gunas—what is sattwa in the lower Nature is there jyotih or prakash, rajas is there tejas or tapas, a self-flowing force of all-achieving potëncy; and tamas or inertia is there shanti or shama, an eternity of fathomless peace. The three lower gunas are therefore derived from jyotih, tejas and shanti. In the Supernature these three spiritual dualities are not in constant instability as are the lower gunas in our ignorant nature; they form a creative trinity, acting in luminous harmony. Interminable activity wells out of an impregnable peace and calm, the Creative Word leaps out of an eternal silence.

In the higher Nature all knowledge is knowledge by identity. The object of knowledge is one with the subject itself, a part or aspect or facet of the subject, or a principle of its infinite being or a form of its manifold self-becoming. It is perceived in the subject and not outside it; and this perception is not only of the invariable essence of the object, but also of its varying appearances. Unity and diversity do not stand out as contraries in that all-comprehensive knowledge of the higher Nature, they represent and reveal an indivisible existence at once one and multiply self-reproducing. Nothing can be hidden from this knowledge, because

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it embraces all existence, phenomenal and eternal. To it past, present and future are not separate segments of time, but one continuous flow arising from the Timeless and disappearing in it. Unlike the essential knowledge, jñāna, attained by absorbed contemplation or trance, in which the relativities of the world are drowned and lost in the blinding lustre of the bare Absolute, the knowledge in the higher Nature or Supernature reveals also the truth of the dynamic principles and potentialities of life, the secrets and mysteries of creation, and sees in each finite object, each little ripple of energy, the living face and Force of the Infinite. It is for this comprehensiveness of its vision that it is called Vijnana, in which the Divine is known not only in His immutable being, but also in his mobile and multitudinous becoming.

In the higher Nature there is no disparity between knowledge and will, as we find in our mortal nature. Knowledge and Will are both ingrained in the very stuff and substance of its infinite consciousness. Whatever truth of the eternal existence floats up in its knowledge, finds an omnipotent Will ready to realise and express it in terms of Time and Space. It never happens that the Will falls short of the full realisation, or that the Knowledge lacks the plenary light. But the Will works through a Law and a network of self-imposed conditions and limitations which are inscrutable to the human mind, but impeccably designed to further and fulfil its universal end. There is nothing capricious or arbitrary in its action, but there is certainly a sovereign freedom in the creation of materials and conditions and in the adoption of the means which are intended to work upon them. An unfailing Light guides the steps of an unfaltering Force.

In the higher Nature all action is a spontaneous self-expression, an emergence and a deployment of the possibilities inherent in the infinite Being. It is a free and flexible play of illimitable energies faultlessly following the rhythms of the dynamic Truth and the silent impulsion of the supreme Will, the Truth-Will. Therefore, action, instead of being a bondage, is there the thrilled self-expression of an infinite freedom. It is an undammed flow of the self-manifesting Force of the Divine. There being no separative ego, there is no desire or attachment to any action and its result. All individual action is an indivisible part of the universal action and inevitably contributes to the self-fulfilment of the All-Being. And yet the individual persists as one of the multiple centres of the transcendent Consciousness, participating at once in the transcendent freedom and the universal movement, in unity and multiplicity, and finding its own fulfilment in the fulfilment of all. Light, Force, Bliss and Beauty reveal their inexhaustible riches in a mounting harmony of varied relations and descend towards the earth for a progressive self-embodiment in Matter.

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Absolute freedom, absolute purity and absolute peace base the incalculable movement of the rapture-drunk Force of the Supernature.

This, then, is the higher Nature, *pará prakṛiti*, from which our lower Nature of evolving ignorance is derived, and into which it is destined to be converted. Once we accept this truth, we realise the sublime folly of the ascetic repression and eventual rejection of all Nature. The precipitate impatience of the human mind, defeated and distracted by the complex problems of life and its conflicting forces, assumes a spectacular loftiness when it drives straight towards the cutting of the Gordian knot—the complete sundering of Purusha and Prakṛiti. The individual soul's retreat into itself or into the inactive Brahman is regarded as its release, and Nature is left unredeemed in her triumphant darkness swaying the destinies of countless captive souls. But the truth of the two Natures, the higher and the lower, which Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga affirms and uses as a lever of ascent into the fullness of the Life Divine, is not unfamiliar to the central body of Indian spiritual thought. It is implicit also in the thought of some of the old religions and philosophies of the world. But its practical application to spiritual life, which was the core of the Vedic spiritual culture, has long been forgotten or ignored, with the result that by Nature is meant only the lower Nature of the three *gunas* which fetters and obscures the soul; and, naturally enough, the souls that feel the agony of this shackled existence strive to slough off this Nature and depart into their incorruptible essence. It is a pregnant recovery of the ancient knowledge to insist, as Sri Aurobindo does, on the momentous truth of the higher dynamic Nature and the inevitable sublimation and transformation of the lower into it as the end of evolution. In the light of this truth the theory of illusionism (*Mayavada*) itself becomes illusory, and life is affirmed as not only real, but divinely and fruitfully real—real in its emergent values, real in its developing powers, and creatively real in the fullness of self-expression to which it leads the evolving soul. Starting from the darkness of Matter, the lower Nature justifies her existence by an eventual conversion of herself into the higher and an unobscured revelation of the infinite and immortal Spirit, her indwelling Master and Playmate. The individual soul then enjoys infinity and immortality in its uninterrupted union and communion with the Divine, even while it manifests Him in the setting of the material existence and fulfils His Will in every detail of its earthly life.

This ascent to the higher divine Nature is the supreme work of human life, both individual and collective. The collective lower Nature of the mental man has to be transformed and converted into the higher, so that man as a race may take the next higher step in evolution and live and work on earth as a supramental being, a vessel of the gnostic Truth and

Light and Bliss, instead of struggling and suffering in the dim light of his half-enlightened, egoistic mental consciousness. This divine perfection of the human race is the logical outcome of our acceptance of two truths upon which the whole conception of the Life Divine is founded: (1) the truth of the soul's evolution from the inconscience of Matter to the superconscience of the Spirit and (2) the truth of the sublimation and transmutation of the lower Nature into the higher. The unquenchable aspiration in the human mind for a harmonious perfection in individual and corporate life points to such a consummation; for, man, by the sole power of his mind, has not been able to achieve any perfection in his life. "We seek to construct systems of knowledge and systems of life by which we can arrive at some perfection of our existence, some order of right relations, right use of mind, right use and happiness and beauty of life, right use of the body. But what we achieve is a constructed half-rightness mixed with much that is wrong and unlovely and unhappy, our successive constructions, because of the vice in them and because mind and life cannot rest permanently anywhere in their seeking, are exposed to destruction, decadence, disruption of their order, and we pass from them to others which are not more finally successful or enduring, even if on one side or another they may be richer and fuller or more rationally plausible. It cannot be otherwise, because we can construct nothing which goes beyond our nature; imperfect, we cannot construct perfection, however wonderful may seem to us the machinery our mental ingenuity invents, however externally effective. Ignorant, we cannot construct a system of entirely true and fruitful self-knowledge or world-knowledge: our science itself is a construction, a mass, of formulas and devices; masterful in knowledge of processes and in the creation of apt machinery, but ignorant of the foundations of our being and of world-being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life."\*

"It is only if our nature develops beyond itself, if it becomes a nature of self-knowledge, mutual understanding, unity, a nature of true being and true life that the result can be a perfection of ourselves and our existence, a life of true being, a life of unity, mutuality, harmony, a life of true happiness, a harmonious and beautiful life . . . . If an evolution of being is the law, then what we are seeking for is not only possible but part of the eventual necessity of things. It is our destiny to manifest and become that supernature,—for it is the nature of our true self, our still occult, because unevolved, whole being."\*

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, because it seeks the perfection and fulfilment of the whole being of man, provides for the liberation and supra-

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\* "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

mentalisation of his soul, on the one hand, and the liberation and supramental transformation of his nature, on the other. It is aware of the tremendous difficulty of its endeavour. It is fully aware of the fate that overtook the powerful and prodigious experiment of Tantra. But it has hitched its wagon to the supramental Sun, and by a perfect use of the right relation between the two natures, promises to achieve its end, which is the inevitable end of evolution itself. What appears impossible to the limited capacity of the human mind need not be impossible to the omnipotence of the divine Force, the supreme Mother. What our personal effort may fail to achieve, the Mother's force will surely accomplish if we can realise an integral surrender to it, for, that Force is no other than the Vijnana Shakti or the creative Force of the Divine Himself.

And still the fact remains that the work of purifying and transforming the lower nature into the higher is a long and extremely arduous work entailing, as it does, first, the purification of each element, each fibre, each energy of the complex human nature by a synthetic self-discipline through knowledge, love and works in a growing attitude of self-surrender; and, next, the transformation of them all by the descent of the authentic supramental Force and a raising of the whole integrated nature into the Supernature. We shall now proceed to consider the elaborate work of the purification of human nature as it is done in the Integral Yoga.

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### Theseus

The darkness stands around me like stone-walls  
Impenetrable, solid, vast,  
I move among a labyrinth of halls,  
I move and move, aghast!

O Thou who hast pushed me to the minotaur dark,  
Hand me Thy all-slaying sword,  
The silken thread to return to the homeward bark,  
My guide, my friend, my Lord!

*PRAJARAM*

# BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

## IN THE MOTHER'S LIGHT: PART TWO

By RISHABHCHAND

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Ever since the shadow of Shankara's Mayavada overcast the azure firmament of India, spirituality has been almost divorced from life and human existence on this terrestrial globe has been looked upon as a silly misadventure of the soul which has somehow inconceivably managed to permit itself to be shrouded by an utterly illusory robe of Maya and its only salvation has been supposed to lie in its escape from that phantasmagoria into an all-dissolving unity of a transcendent, world-negating Absolute. But now once again, the dynamic side of spirituality is reasserting itself and this is especially so in the case of the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. For, to his vast vision 'all life is Yoga', and there is no aspect, no department of life he has left untouched, unillumined by the superhuman Light that he had under his command. The same is the case with the Mother.

And Rishabhchand's book follows in the footsteps of these two great luminaries. It is not a book dealing with orthodox or conventional spirituality in an orthodox or conventional manner. For, in the integral Yoga, nothing is outside its bounds. It does not deal merely with the superficialities of life nor merely with the profundities of metaphysics. It is an integral view and an all-encompassing view. And fittingly enough, Rishabhchand too deals in this book with the multi-sided material that life offers to us in its triumphant march towards some as-yet-unknown but still predestined goal. Asceticism and Money, Body and Mind, Desire and Love, the Subconscient and the Inconscient, Morality and Spirituality, are some of the subjects dealt with by him. And his treatment of them is not merely in the abstract, but is quite practical and concrete. What other spiritualities shun or dread, become in this book of integral Yoga an integral and natural part. While Ramakrishna, for instance, kept himself miles away from money, integral Yoga puts it in its proper place in the

value-scheme of an integrated living Transvaluation of all values, yes; but not in a scheme of *weltanschauung* that is human or demoniac. Says Sri Aurobindo, "Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine, it is delegated here, and in the ignorance of the lower nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose." And a beautiful sentence is given by Rishabhchandra in a devastatingly epigrammatic form, "Most of the present possessors of money are not, really speaking, possessors at all, but possessed," which almost vies with Sri Aurobindo's, "All wealth belongs to the Divine, and those who hold it are trustees, not possessors," and which reminds me of an equally nice epigram once given to us by a college professor of mine, who said, "Boys, when you enter life after you have finished your studies, make money, make as much money as you can, but do not make money your God."

This is only one of the many instances in which the common things of life—everyday actualities—receive their inner revaluation—or is it transvaluation?—although perhaps outwardly they remain the same. Another such interesting instance is the one about the modern mania of reading and "the tyranny of excessive intellectuality." "A sort of mental indigestion," he writes, "is a prevailing malady of the modern intelligentsia and accounts for the catalepsy of its intuitive powers." But can it be helped? one feels inclined to ask. But that feeling is only a short-lived one, for he does not denounce intellectual development altogether,—and no seeker for integral perfection can,—but puts it in its proper place. "A quiet and aspiring mind," he says, "is the nursery of intuition," which is a beautiful commentary on the Mother's "The mind has got to be made silent and attentive in order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it."

Perhaps this figure of nursery is the author's favourite image, for it finds expression elsewhere in a very different context. Both the figure and the context are equally interesting. The context is the Inconscient and the Subconscient in the integral Yoga and in psychotherapy. "It must be remembered—psycho-analysis ignores this truth—that though the Inconscient is the origin of our evolutionary birth and the Subconscient the nursery where our animal-human traits and proclivities are developed, Heaven is our eternal father . . ." Reading through the essay on the Subconscient and the Inconscient, one almost involuntarily takes a mental note that while the "unconscious" of psychoanalysis is not amenable to change nor to suggestions from the conscious, the Subconscient and the Inconscient of the integral Yoga have got to be completely transformed and conquered



in order to "effect a radical conversion of human nature into the divine."

From the Subconscious to Dreams is but a smooth transition; and they are "an index to the mystery of life." Almost Freudian this sounds,—but only for a moment. For no Freud and no Jung ever dreamed of making one conscious in dreaming and one almost takes for granted with Bernard Shaw that "when one becomes conscious in dreaming that one dreams, the dream is about to disappear." But this is the very thing the integral Yoga wants one to do. "A coherent knowledge of sleep life, though difficult to achieve or to keep established, is possible" "The vast fields of sleep have to be carefully cultivated", says the author, "for they are capable of yielding a golden harvest. What we have to do, first of all, is to be conscious in sleep". This is diametrically the opposite of the western psychological notions. But Yoga is easily a far greater and profounder psychological system than the newly-born infant of the west

The six essays on "Yogic Action" are also, like the others, based on an integral outlook, and therein we find a reinterpretation of the old Karma-yoga in the light of what the Mother has said in her *Prayers and Meditations*. All action is simply the self-expression of the supreme Will of the Divine, but then that action gets perverted by the desires and attachments and egoism of man. A method is shown by which it can again become free from these baser motives and be lifted to the heights of its glorious fulfilment, by uniting our consciousness and will with the Will and Consciousness of the Divine. In the chapter on the human body too the same conception is maintained; asceticism and Stoicism may have their use in a limited measure, but the ultimate goal of the body is not its utter mortification or its setting aside in order to reach the heights of the Spirit, but its perfection. "The body is a material reflex of the soul, a crystallisation of its formative energy, its clay configuration. There is no gulf between it and the soul"

As an appropriate *finale* to this fine book comes the crowning chapter on "The Brazier of Love," in which the supreme aspect of Love which characterises the Divine Mother is expounded.

And let us end this brief survey with a beautiful quotation from the Mother's book, which is reproduced by the author:

"Without the Divine, life is a painful illusion, with the Divine, all is bliss."

"The world and those who live in it have always wanted to put human—social and domestic—duty before duty to the Divine, which they have stigmatised as egoism. How indeed could they judge otherwise, they who have no experience of the reality of the Divine? . . . Besides, has not mankind proved its utter incompetence in the organisation of its own existence? Governments succeed governments, regimes follow regimes,

centuries pass after centuries, but human misery remains lamentably the same. It will always be so, as long as man remains what he is, blind and ignorant, closed to all spiritual reality. A transformation, an illumination of the human consciousness alone can bring about a real amelioration in the condition of humanity. Thus even from the standpoint of human life, it follows that the first duty of man is to seek and possess the divine consciousness."

RAJANIKANT MODY

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WHERE ANGELS PASS

By DANIEL-ROPS

Translated by Emma Crauford. Published by Cassell and Co., Ltd.,  
37/38 St. Andrew's Hill, London, E.C. 4. Pp. 224. Price 9s. 6d.

The precious moments of our lives are all too few and we look forward to reviving them in the classics or in works of art. Then we find ourselves rejuvenated and in a world of angels where songs and adoration to the Great Unknown spring spontaneously. A book which brings us back to the poetry of life, to "the clouds of glory" we have left behind is here by the Frenchman Daniel-Rops.

The opening essay is "The Quest of the Presence" and prepares us for the good things of life and literature and lights our faces with a smile that is like unto a child's, craving in the insignificant, the merest detail, the humblest experience that "indescribable shock of realisation which is in truth poetic emotion" The weft and warp of life pass us like the flying Sylph of Paul Valéry and lo! we see an Angel brandishing his sword at the entrance to Paradise. It is a rapt moment, a "co-naissance." The next essay—"Gratitude to Rilke"—expresses the feeling that the author had for Rainer Maria Rilke who showed him how to track human misery down with "unrelenting gentleness" So great was the poet and so prophetic that only silence could do him justice; and his works, born of profound silence, recall the great verities of life which he eternalised wheresoever he went. Even now those who knew him feel his presence as they read his works. His contact with Rodin amply proves the width of his range and his enriched personality is traced in the third essay "Rodin and Rilke."

In "Emily Bronte" we see *Wuthering Heights* as the masterpiece of one who has engaged in a battle with the powers of darkness. Heathcliff

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is a man of Destiny, a Byron and a Hamlet combined. Emily expresses her dream that was both beautiful and fearful in the novel which Somerset Maugham classed as one of the ten great novels of the world. So much for Emily Bronte and we come to Holderlin in the essay "The Tragedy of Frederick Holderlin" and are in a position to account for his tragedy. Taken in as he was by predisposition for medium-like roles he could not help stripping himself of a major part of his human character which left him with nothing material in him. He thought that "the negation of the accidental" was complete and he might have ended his life happily. But he fell to the study of philosophy and studied Kant, Schelling, Hegel and Goethe and realised that he was out of joint with life. The heavenly fires can never be held captive. Life is a brief moment of vision soon "dissolved in mist." His dehumanisation became so terrifying that one could foresee Empedocles as suggestive of Holderlin himself, Nietzsche and several others. The Angel of Darkness had taken possession of him and he found himself consumed by flames which he could not vanquish.

In "First Meeting with Franz Kafka" we are introduced to the inimitable Kafka who brought to his person and writings "the mystery in broad daylight" of which his readers are aware. As Monsieur Wladimir Weidle says in his essay on him: "When reading Kafka one constantly has the impression of being at a concert where the pianist is playing the most natural melody on a silent piano, or of listening to a most animated conversation, in which all of a sudden one notices that the lips of those taking part in it are not moving, and that in place of eyes they only have the cavernous blackness of empty sockets." These ghosts are most terrible and remarkably lucid and break through the walls of so-called reality and we are unable to follow them because we are still living mortals. There is horror in his writings but he faces them in an original way. He is an "inspired lunatic," and to understand and appreciate him we need to confine our attention to the aesthetic plane.

In "Patrice de la Tour du Pin" we see the poet Du Pin and are aware of the mystery and dream world that he draws out of us in his enormously huge book of six hundred pages. The construction of sentences and the musical lilt arrest the attention of the reader and he sees the poet giving new names to everything as God gave to the first man and woman. The reader accepts his vocabulary, explores his regions and reaches "the other side of the world" and finds there fantastic beasts which he takes for granted. There is the influence of the Sagas and other Norse epics in the poem, with a tradition not far removed from the Apocalypse. The *Somme de Poesie* is the story in disguise of an inner adventure which as human beings we experience in the secret depths of our beings. There is Genesis, life animated by joy. Man appears and knows of the sleeping

giant greatness within him. A world is offered him and he scarcely crosses the threshold of the "unspoilt world"—childhood's Paradise—when he has a sense of frustration. Misery thickens round him and he finds it impossible to disentangle himself from the rest of humanity. Jean de Flatterre, Lorenquin, Laurent de Cayeux, Gorphoncellet and the Cortnaire himself are all damned because they seek joy in ways' that are vain and empty. Du Pin sees joy in experiences that are humbly human, like the expression on the face of a beloved woman and the cry of a little child.

"Poetry and the Powers of Night," "What the Poet can learn from Mystics" and "Poetry and the Gifts of Prophecy" are the last three essays that strike new chords in the reader and carry him beyond the realm of literature to the Infinite with a view to explaining true poetry and understanding the fount of life as expressed in literature. The time has come when everything is being questioned and literature is open to investigation. But while we investigate let us not as critics assume to ourselves the airs of omniscience but see in creative art a message which comes to those who are like little children, interested in the good things of earth and heaven. Or we fall into the trap of the angels of darkness. The "quest of the presence" is fraught with many perils because our life which communes with eternity is "on intimate terms with the Powers of Night." Daniel-Rops, like Milton, is aware of the Tree of Knowledge which is good and evil, in keeping with the Christian view of life with good and bad angels present near us all. *Where Angels Pass* is a remarkable book revealing the great figures of literature in terms of light and darkness and brings to us the experiences of a life-time in language that is sublime as it is poetic. "It is," to quote the Introduction, "as though our eyes, fixed at last on reality, were learning to penetrate beyond appearances, as though we already caught a glimpse of the supreme revelation of the Last Judgment."

WILLIAM HOOKENS.

## SHAKESPEARE: THE MAN AND HIS WORK \*

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

"Shakespeare," said Landor, "is not our poet, but the world's." It is true; Shakespeare is one of the great universalists. The withdrawal of Britain's political power from India hasn't affected—at any rate, seriously—the study of Shakespeare in our colleges and universities. The Shakespeare industry is a flourishing concern. The annotator, the printer, the publisher, the book-seller—Shakespeare keeps them busy and helps them to thrive. To judge from the numerous entries in the British Museum Catalogue, Shakespeare would appear to have become a part of humane education and of popular culture all over the world. Shakespeare's plays are evidently read with appreciation and his stories are widely current from China to Peru, from Siam to Paraguay. And one is almost certain that Shakespeare is very much alive even on the far side of the Iron Curtain.

On the other hand, the impact of Shakespeare on various national and racial temperaments is bound to give rise to varying degrees of liveliness. Consider the Himalayas, for example: always a majestic range. Still the Himalayas must strike beholders differently at different times, or when viewed from different angles. The Tibetan, the Kashmiri, the Chinaman, the Nepalese—they cherish their particular moments of vision in preference to, if not to the exclusion of, other equally striking facets. Shakespeare is a universalist,—still not all his plays appeal equally to all. The histories, for instance, cannot be expected to move a Frenchman, a Russian or an Indian as much as an Englishman. In Siam, I was told, Shakespeare is especially popular as the author of *The Merchant of Venice*. And doesn't the Shakespeare of the Comedians appeal more to some than the Shakespeare of the Tragedies? The British Museum Catalogue is neither exhaustive nor truly selective. But as one scans the entries, one inevitably starts speculating. While translations or adaptations of most of the Comedies and Tragedies, in one or more of the Indian regional languages, are listed, the histories—*King John*, 1 and 2 *Henry IV*, *Henry V*.

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\* William Shakespeare: *The Complete Works*: Edited by Peter Alexander. (Collins, 15/-).

A Shakespeare Primer By Peter Alexander (Nisbet, 4/6)

1, 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, and *Henry VIII*—don't seem to figure in the picture at all.\* But numerous are the versions of *Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like It*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*. Why do *Hamlet* and *Othello* appeal to Indians more than some of the other Tragedies? Does the Prince of Denmark obscurely remind us of Siddhartha, the Prince of Kapilavastu? Dr. Narayan Menon writes in his *Shakespeare Criticism* (1938) that *Hamlet* makes us think of Gandhiji—but what are the filiations between the former, a poetic creation, and the latter, a prepotent historical figure? Is *Othello* the tragedy of Caste—and is there a resemblance between the tragedy of the lost handkerchief and *Sakuntala*, the tragedy of the lost ring? Was Dr. Miller of the Madras Christian College right, after all, in reading *King Lear* as an unconscious picture of Indian politics? And do the Romances bear a close resemblance to the plays of our own Bhasa, Bhavabhuti and Kalidasa?

Popular culture—or must we call it proletarian culture?—has thus its own preferences in the different countries, but they are not necessarily an index to the real merit of the various plays. The university student, however, is—or ought to be—in a position to read Shakespeare critically and form attitudes little influenced by national or racial preferences. Even in countries like India where English is understood only by a mere fraction of the population, there is a minority—a microscopic minority that may still number several tens of thousands—to whom Shakespeare is as dearly cherished a classic as he is to Englishmen themselves. Whatever their profession, they have their Shakespeare within easy reach, and they can be caught re-reading a favourite play or checking up a wayward quotation.

Every country has its own Shakespeare industry—demand and supply being roughly proportionate in quality and quantity. There are also a few earnest, but widely scattered, researchers in India, in the universities and outside—but, denied adequate library facilities and the stimulating fellowship of brother researchers, they are as a rule foredoomed to labour alone and labour in vain. The tribe of enterprising annotators confine their attention exclusively to the undergraduates and their examinations, and so their work is mere rehashing at its best and reckless travestying at its worst. Thus the Indian devotees of Shakespeare—students as also others—very largely depend on Western scholarship and enterprise, not only to provide the authoritative texts of the plays, but also to give the right lead in the matter of criticism and aesthetic enjoyment.

During the early phases of English education in India, our university students were initiated into English letters by English scholars or by Indian

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\* I have, however, read a Tamil version of *Richard II* and seen it acted, indifferently I am afraid, in Madura. This was nearly 25 years ago.

scholars who had themselves sat at the feet of English teachers and were eager to prove worthy of the profession of literature. People then fanatically believed in the importance of being earnest, and circumstances too favoured them. The adventurous Madras firm, Srinivasa Varadachari, brought out an excellent edition or several of Shakespeare's plays under the general direction of F. W. Kelllett—Mark Hunter doing *Julius Caesar* and Michael Macmillan *Othello*. Rentala Venkata Subba Rao achieved a veritable *tour de force* with his *Othello Unveiled* (1906) and *Hamlet Unveiled* (1909). Mark Hunter gave also a classic address at Madras on the Substance of Shakespearian Comedy, while Dr. Miller lectured inspiringly on the great Tragedies. Later, Macmillan edited *Julius Caesar* for the Arden series, and Granville-Barker mentioned Hunter in one of the Series of his *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. With the multiplication of colleges and universities and with the drastic reduction in the number of Englishmen engaged in the teaching of English in India—both natural developments—the problem of preserving standards in English (for we know we need English still) is acquiring a special importance. This is not, of course, the place to go into this question, but one thing may be stressed here. If we wish to learn English—and we need English as a tool, if not also as a priceless cultural force—we should make the attempt wisely and wholeheartedly. And if we wish to acquire a little more than a mere smattering of English, the best means would be to study classical English poetry and prose. If we lived among Englishmen, crossing their life-ways at every point, we would learn the language as a matter of course. The only other way is to master the Grammar and study the classics from Chaucer to our own day. Surrender to English poetry, to the great masters of English prose,—and mastery of the language cannot long be delayed. Above all, the study of Shakespeare should not be dismissed as an out-of-date occupation, unworthy of the children of the atomic age. In the class-room or outside, Shakespeare humanizes us, Shakespeare now forms the fruitful core of English studies in our universities,—and this must continue.

But it is not enough that Shakespeare retains a place in our curricula of studies. How does it profit the student if, in the name of Shakespeare, he only memorises stereotyped answers to set questions, or is content to read Shakespeare wholly ignorant of the findings of Shakespearian scholarship during the past half-century or more? It is a tragedy that, notwithstanding the centuries-long connection between Britain and India, we have still no definitive translations of the Complete Works of Shakespeare in any of the Indian languages. Neither have we any scholarly biographies or original critical studies of Shakespeare in our languages, major or minor. The influence that English language and literature has exercised over our own languages and literatures is very considerable,

but the nature and precise extent of this influence hasn't yet been scientifically studied or surveyed. Sundry individuals in this sub-continent have mastered the English language, and some have also enriched English literature. But English studies in India have now got into a rut: no fresh thinking is done, no attempt is being made to relate the curricula of studies to the needs of a changed and changing world. Our students have in consequence no creative contact with the living stream of English literature and thought or even with the best Indian writing in English. Indian students of English literature have now a three-fold duty to discharge: firstly, to steep themselves in English literature; secondly, to diffuse English literature and thought—the best of it—among the Indian masses through translations and critical studies, and thirdly, to diffuse Indian literature and thought among the English-speaking peoples, and through them to the entire civilized world. It is a great responsibility, but it is a wonderful opportunity as well. To be the Suez Canal between India's culture and the culture of the West—this were indeed worth one's ambition. Yet the mastery of English literature comes first, and the mastery of Shakespeare, above all.

Like life in the atomic age, Shakespeare studies too have today become very complicated. People are constantly thinking and writing about him—and still we ardently seem to wish for more. But even in the atomic age—"in time of 'The Breaking of Nations'," as Hardy might put it—life is at bottom a very simple affair. Likewise, the student of Shakespeare may turn his eyes away from the facade of modern scholarship and rest content with losing himself in the worlds of Hamlet, Falstaff, Antony, Lear. A phrase acts like magic; it is as though one has inadvertently muttered 'Open Sesame', there is a quick jumble of the categories of space and time, and one experiences a dilation of the soul, a flutter in one's heart, and a quickening of the tempo of life. What more does one want? It is nevertheless a false simplification of the problem. The clean text that makes such escape, such emotional or spiritual excitement, possible is, after all, the result of the labours of countless researchers, scholars and critics. All the myriad conundrums that tantalize us in life pursue us even when we turn to the study of Shakespeare—the apparently obvious is seen to be a complex of surmises, and logic is found overreaching itself and imagination turning sour by its own excess. It is no doubt very pleasant to handle a beautifully produced volume like the new Tudor Shakespeare, edited by one of the great Shakespearians of our time, Professor Peter Alexander of the University of Glasgow.

*But oh, what labour!*

*O Prince, what pain!*

With a writer like Shakespeare—a writer, not a shorthand symbol for a committee of authors—we wish to know something of his life, we



wish to read his works in the form in which he originally wrote them, and we wish to study them in the context of his life and environment and also in terms of universality,—in other words, we desire both to grasp their meaning in relation to time and to apprehend their significance in relation to eternity. Of Valmiki and Homer we know next to nothing; of Goethe and Byron, of Tagore and Shaw, of Ibsen and Tolstoy, we know practically everything. These extreme phenomena set fewer problems to the literary student than Shakespeare. We can surrender to the *Ramayana* and forget its creator or creators; with Byron, on the other hand, we can, if we choose, prefer poetolatry to the poetry. But with Shakespeare we are really in a quandary. We know a something about him, and that something is a veritable microcosm reproducing the contradictions and chaos of the visible world. One's curiosity is roused but not satisfied; one's energies are engaged but not always rewarded; and one either bravely perseveres in the seemingly hopeless task, or one turns in despair from Shakespeare to Shaw or from Hamlet to Hornblower. There are a few scholars, however, who are not only happily endowed with the right complement of qualities but are also willing to practise the virtue of resolved limitation. They are unhurried, they wield with equal mastery the weapon of the dialectic and also the sensitive tuning fork of imaginative sympathy; they are ready to retreat or advance as the occasion may require; they are moles, fighters, and creators rolled into one. Such men are duly rewarded by the feelings of having reclaimed some small region at least from chaos and old night. But what they have won they are happy to share with other devotees of Shakespeare. Scholarship at its best is a matter of consecration—and the great Shakespearians are entitled to our deathless gratitude for the devotion with which they have pursued their labours.

The "common reader" starts with the plays in a suitable edition; and there is no dearth of editions, of the collected works as also of individual plays. Why cannot we have an authorized edition—like the Authorized Version of the Bible—and be done with it? But a little knowledge of the circumstances under which Shakespeare wrote his plays makes us conclude that a truly definitive edition of Shakespeare's Plays must for ever be beyond realization. Shaw personally supervised the issue of the collected edition of his plays and prefaces, and we therefore know where exactly we are. But Shakespeare did no such thing. Probably death intervened before he could see the job through, before he could even start work on it. After all he was only 52 when he died. At 52 one is apt to think that one has extending before one long dull years, to attend at leisure to such labours as finalisation of copy, proof-reading, and so on. But Shakespeare died too soon, and the plays had to be put together and given to the

world by other hands. Shakespeare didn't figure till recently as a compulsory subject in school or college; in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries people read Shakespeare for enjoyment, not for passing examinations or for obtaining doctorate degrees. The demand for the plays was there, no doubt, and the demand was steadily increasing, and successive editions came out, not always zealously supervised. Each editor "corrected some errors and added some more", as the author of a scientific primer once confessed with unconscious irony. The more Shakespeare became a universalist, the more scholarship got busy, the more light and darkness contended unendingly for mastery,—and while doubtless we are advancing inch by inch, we shall never, it seems, reach the very limit of the perfect text or the completely satisfactory picture of Shakespeare's life. It is rather like one of those exasperating phenomena in mathematics—one of those limiting series—where the nearer we approach the goal the more unrealizable seems the goal itself. So near, yet so tantalizingly beyond reach! Yet therein lies, I suppose, the thrill and the romance of the chase, the agonies and arduous of the adventure, the pang of possible failure, the throb of imminent triumph.

Shakespeare—the Man and his Work—is a single theme, however, we may seem to split it up in practice. Prof. C. J. Sisson, after mentioning Peter Alexander's *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1939), points out that the moral of the book, and of similar books, is in the title: "...it is in vain to attempt to separate historical fact from the writings of a poet, which are also facts in their own right, in the records of a great life."\* Variety and opulence are the key-notes of Shakespeare criticism, and although the student may be baffled at first he will soon realize that every exhibit has an integral relation to the central theme. The circumference of Shakespearean scholarship is stretching out further and further,—yet the centre miraculously holds all together. There are studies that attempt to reconstruct Shakespeare's life—his "external" life in so far as it may be deduced from local gossip or contemporary records, and there are studies that attempt to portray his "inner" life in so far as it may be inferred from his own writings—the plays and the sonnets. From Shakespeare the Man it is but natural that we should proceed to a study of his backgrounds, social, political, linguistic; in other words, to endeavour to see Shakespeare in relation to his time, to the actors and playwrights who were his contemporaries, the companies with which he was associated, the theatres wherein his plays came to life, the printing-houses where his plays often went through a veritable sea-change, the conventions of his time which he couldn't reject, the climate of thought which proved so favourable to the full blossoming of his genius. There is, finally, Shakespeare's Work—

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\* Shakespeare Survey, Vol. III, p. 8.

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the plays and the poems Various questions arise at once: text and chronology; revision, collaboration, corruption; handwriting and punctuation; piracy and unauthorised publication. We next study the dramatic artist who achieved mastery of all the three genres of Comedy, Tragedy and History, the craftsman who by the subtle alchemy of his intellect and imagination transmuted the freely borrowed material into burnished gold, and the poet who glanced from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven. We study too the poet's imagery and versification, his spirals of meaning, his topical significances, his verbal wizardry. And one may round off the course with a study of the vicissitudes of Shakespearian scholarship and criticism during the past 350 years—a veritable history of literary taste, in fact. Biography, history, textual criticism, literary detection, psychology (even psycho-analysis), statistics, imaginative identification,—all are involved in the process; but the *end* is the same.

*To be continued*

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