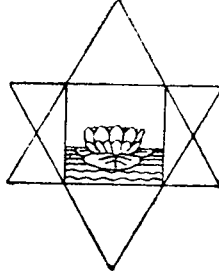


# MOTHER INDIA

JULY 1952

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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

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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Managing Editor  
**K. R. PODDAR**

Editor  
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# 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## The Unpublished Correspondence of Sri Aurobindo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 really 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

*“Synergist”*

### SECTION II: MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS

In the five preceding instalments of this Series, questions and answers regarding the Supermind and its descent upon the earth, the relation and difference between Sachchidananda and Supermind and between Supermind and the planes of higher knowledge below it, were published. This group of Sri Aurobindo's letters ends here for the present, and a new Section of miscellaneous letters begins. Henceforth, every issue will contain letters on different subjects related to the spiritual life, like visions and trances, the action of subtle forces, occult and spiritual experiences, difficulties in the sadhana and their solution, the Aspects of the Divine, etc. A few literary letters will also be included when they enter the domain of yoga and have some connection with states of consciousness or planes of being, or deal with inner receptivity to inspiration and revelation.

## MOTHER INDIA

### *The Right Aspiration*

Disciple: I try to keep myself always open to you, so that your Power may do the sadhana and work in me. But some personal effort is still necessary. I understand rejection and surrender; but what should be the exact form of my aspiration now?

Sri Aurobindo: The aspiration should be for the full descent of the Truth and the victory over falsehood in the world. 19-2-34.

### *Experiences*

#### (1) *The Widening of the Physical Consciousness*

Disciple (letter addressed to Mother): A surcharging calmness is trying to prevail in me. My sadhana is going on as usual. Last night while meditating I experienced the extension of my physical body beyond the range of my inner mental view. I used to have this sort of experience before too. Is it that which Sri Aurobindo calls the widening of the physical consciousness? Is there any special attitude to be taken with regard to this movement? It seems that, while in this condition, I can prolong its duration if I try.

Sri Aurobindo (underlined the words "physical body" and wrote back): It was not the physical body, but either the physical consciousness . . . or, perhaps, the most material part of it, the body consciousness.

Wideness and calmness are the basis of the Yogic consciousness and the best condition for inner growth and experience. If that can be established in the physical consciousness, it can be made into the basis for its transformation; in fact, without this basis of wideness and calmness the transformation is hardly possible.

#### (2) *The Descent of Ananda*

Disciple: I feel the Ananda flowing through the whole length of the spinal cord, but not as yet through the whole body and the outermost cells.

Sri Aurobindo. If it pervades the spine, then it means that it has made an opening in all the centres, but occupied as yet only the mind and the emotional part of the being

26-7-36.

### *A Difficulty and Its Solution*

#### *The Recurring Movements of Physical Nature*

Sri Aurobindo. It is the nature of the physical mind to be obstinate. Physical nature exists by constant repetition of the same thing—only a

constant presentation of different forms of itself. This obstinate recurrence is therefore part of its nature when it is in activity; otherwise it remains in a dull inertia. When therefore we want to get rid of the old movements of physical nature, they resist by this kind of obstinate recurrence. One has to be very persistent in rejection to get rid of it.

There are two aspects of physical Nature as of all Nature—the individual and the universal. All things come into one from the universal nature—but the individual physical keeps some of them and rejects others, and to those it keeps it gives a personal form. So these things can be said to be both inside it and coming outside from within or created by it because it gives a special form and also outside and coming in from outside. But when one wants to get rid of them, one first throws out all that is within into the surrounding nature—from there the universal Nature tries to bring them back or bring in new and similar things of its own to replace them. One has then constantly to reject this invasion. By constant rejection, the force of recurrence finally dwindles and the individual becomes free and able to bring the higher consciousness and its movements into the physical being. 22-1-37.

*Some Questions of Health*

(1) Disciple: I would like to ask something about my health. Some days back I informed you that I was not doing well. Since that time, almost every night I wake up in the middle of my sleep and find that I have caught a cold—I also feel as if I have got pain and fever; but I get up and open myself to the current of your Force and pray with a strong will, rejecting these things altogether.

By your Grace and to my surprise, I am quite all right in the morning.

Sri Aurobindo: There is a general suggestion in the air about catching dengue or influenza. It is this suggestion that is enabling the adverse forces to bring about symptoms of this kind and spread the complaints; if one rejects both the suggestions and the symptoms, then these things will not materialise. 10-12-38.

(2) Disciple: Yesterday an impression came that I will have fever, and today I have got cold. Is it that the cold came by the impression or by something else?

Sri Aurobindo: The impression opened the way for the cold to get in 17-6-33

(3) Disciple: (addressed to Mother) For more than a fortnight every time I receive your Gracious Touch after the Pranam I feel a sense of great

## MOTHER INDIA

nourishment affecting even my physical body which feels strong and weighty, though light, and when in your own way you playfully press your fingers on the opening point of the spinal cord at the back of the head, I feel something coming within, something subtle that makes my inner being overflow with causeless joy—but what it is exactly I do not know, nor can guess. I may add that the sense of nourishment (it is a feeling that a new substance is created within) is so strong that even when I am unwell and weak it completely dominates with its sense of joy and security. I should like to know what it all means.

Sri Aurobindo: As you suffer from ill-health, Mother presses the nourishment of the divine strength and health into your physical being, renewing its substance with that. 4-11-34.

### *Literary*

Disciple: Here is another Bengali poem I wrote some days back. The first two lines came to my mind in the evening while seeing the Mother. Will you kindly tell me whether this poem conveys a sort of magnified ego-sense of the mind proper or if it is in disguise an exalted outlook of the vital mind, as you term it, of course, I wrote it before your recent statement on the vital mind appeared. 29-6-35

Sri Aurobindo: These designations apply in sadhana but hardly to poetical expression which lifts or ought to lift to a field of pure personal or impersonal bhava. An utterance of this kind may express a state of consciousness or experience which is not necessarily the writer's personal position, but that of the Spirit. So long as it is so, the question of ego does not arise. It arises only if one turns away from the poem to the writer and asks from what mood he wrote it and that is a question of psychological fact alien to the purpose of poetry.

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## CANDLE-VISION

Along the sapphire margin of the sky  
Candles of vision burn in silver glow;  
Mysterious voices come snow-still and slow  
And move around strange haunts of secrecy.

White flames are they, born from a hidden fire;  
Bearing in their folds seed-miracles of delight  
They leave on the threshold of the brooding night  
A cry of some spirit's infinite desire.

Unknown footholds bring from a diamond shore  
A sacred memory of transcendent days,  
And wake in the heart of the time-wilderness  
New glimpses of widening life and more and more

An everlasting grandeur of the soul,  
While limned in lines of splendour marvellously  
Shines on the peaks of immortality  
A fathomless beauty and an aureole

*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.

*"Synergist"*

## MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

BY "AB"

The author of the Diary pointed out in the last issue how Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gradually built up a connection between his mind and the higher knowledge through which he received and is receiving till this day guidance in his sadhana. He explained that the descent of this knowledge was not objectively apprehended by him; as a matter of fact, in the early stages he was not even aware that he had opened himself to it. However, he came to know later that the knowledge descending from above

## THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

touched his mind in a way which made him feel that it was his own knowledge. Of course, the illumination and guidance from above do not always come in the manner described here, this particular movement is only one of the possibilities of the spiritual-mental development in the practice of yoga, and seems to have been worked out in the case of this sadhak.

In the following pages we see how in his day-to-day sadhana, AB was helped through this higher knowledge in actually overcoming his difficulties. This raises another issue which is involved in his spiritual development—the attitude towards difficulties.

Every sadhak meets with difficulties in his yogic life; no Yoga which makes it its aim to transform human nature in its entirety and divinise it can possibly be without them, but there will always be a difference in the manner in which various persons will confront them, and this will naturally make a difference in the action of the Higher Power working upon them, for this Power acts according to the nature, temperament, and the psychological turn of the being. One who entirely or even mainly depends upon his own efforts in the general run of his sadhana, appealing to Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's help only at critical junctures, will not be able to overcome his difficulties in the same way as one who relies upon his Gurus with absolute trust and confidence to remove them—himself doing his best all the time to co-operate. In the last analysis, it comes to a question of attaining results through tapasya with some aid from the Gurus as against attaining the same results through surrender to the Higher Power and reliance on the Divine Grace. The one who reacts to the difficulties in the second way will be able to tread the "sunlit path", while the tapaswi will have to fight most of his difficulties himself, which will be a considerably harder task. Not that the one who takes to the "sunlit path" escapes all difficulties, he may have his fair share of them, but, owing to his entire reliance upon the Grace and the Power he sees working through his Gurus, his being takes a different psychological and spiritual orientation from that of the tapaswi, resulting in a corresponding difference in the action of the Higher Power acting upon him. That is why Sri Aurobindo has asked his disciples times without number to follow the path he and the Mother have with such great labour carved out for them—the "sunlit path", and that is why he emphatically says that his Yoga does not make a gospel of difficulties and suffering. He writes to a disciple: "Sorrow and pain and suffering? The curious thing is that my Yoga does not approve of sorrow and suffering or of taking stumbles and difficulties too seriously as the Tapaswis do, or of viraha pangs as the Vaishnavas do or of varagya as the Mayavadis do." Here too, in reply to AB, he writes in the same vein about those who take a very long time and a number of processes to get over difficulties. As one goes

through the pages of this Diary one clearly sees how the right attitude of trust and surrender in the face of obstacles can help a sadhak. In the early stages of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga one may apparently progress to some extent depending on one's own efforts with a little help from the Guru—at least. outwardly it seems so to the person because the Higher Power works behind the veil to prepare the being, and allows the play of the individual will; under the circumstances, the Guru's help is not easily noticeable. But once the preparatory stage of the sadhana is over, it is well-nigh impossible to proceed without surrendering to the Divine, for it is Shakti Herself the Divine Mother, who descends into the *adhara* and works there on each level of the being, the best thing that the sadhak can do is to surrender himself to Her action totally and in all his parts. At this stage, to think of progress in the sadhana through one's own efforts without reliance on the Grace is an illusion.

One thing requires to be pointed out, that for treading the "sunlit path" the most essential factor is the psychic opening; the psychic must influence and eventually govern the whole being, for it is this influence which makes a person feel that he is the child of the Divine and makes him rely upon the Grace. All this is a general statement of the issue. In this sadhak's case, we have seen from the experiences already published the psychic turn of his being and his inner closeness to the Divine Mother, the title of his Diary: *My Sadhana with the Mother*, also indicates this. Both the psychic guidance from within and the higher knowledge from above became the means through which the Divine Power helped him in solving his difficulties. This is, of course, apart from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taking upon themselves the difficulties of the sadhak, which is the fundamental fact of their Guruship.

\* \* \*

#### "GIVE EVERYTHING AND SEEK NOTHING"

6-4-35.

AB. This morning there were some signs of getting control over the inertia that has come up since the last few days; but, after receiving your letter, somehow the whole thing became worse.

Sri Aurobindo. That is because you allowed something in you to be touched by not receiving answers to what you had written. That is an old malady which was the cause of a long interruption to the movement—you must not allow it to revive again.

AB. It seems that since yesterday you have decided to observe an absolute silence over my present condition.

Sri Aurobindo. What do you expect me to write. I have nothing new to say about it.

## THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

AB. Who knows if you wanted to bring up my subconscious vital by doing so!

Sri Aurobindo. I wanted to bring up nothing—the only thing meant is for you to get rid altogether of the old movements, not to call them up again.

AB. Kindly let me explain. The inertia in itself, however strong and insistent it may be, does not usually matter so much—at the most it can cause a delay. What is important is to take special care not to offer it any new reason through which the adverse forces can take advantage to pull down the sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo. There is no new reason. It is always for the old reasons or else for no reason that these things come. Some vital demand tries to rise up. If you allow yourself to be troubled then it becomes an obstacle to the sadhana, otherwise the sadhana cannot be stopped.

AB. In spite of the inertia, till yesterday my inner being could make its way upwards, no part of my being paid any attention to the inertia. But I don't know why after reading the letter the whole consciousness came down. Now it is difficult to rise up again or even to remain concentrated.

Sri Aurobindo. The reason is apparent—there was a suggestion of some demand or some expectation of answer and you did not get any. But this demand rises from the lower subconscious nature—why do you identify with it even for a moment?

AB. What we saw as conquered in the lower nature was perhaps only a mental part of it. Now the vital side too seems to have come up for the transformation. Let us work on it and finish it, so that it will put a stop even to the passive resistance.

Sri Aurobindo. Get out all demands—oblige the vital subnature to consent to demand nothing—then there will be the release.

AB. In whatever condition I may be, I must not forget my important all supporting stick with whose help alone I can climb the Mother's mountains safely and swiftly. That golden stick which I have called "give everything and seek nothing".

Sri Aurobindo. If you keep to that the whole difficulty will fade away.

AB. This particular difficulty of mine I have already described a hundred times. There are certain points in it which cannot be properly stated in a letter. They can only be described properly in a personal interview with the Mother. You know that I never ask for such a personal meeting unless it is found to be an absolute necessity.

Sri Aurobindo. That is not at all the right way to deal with it—it would be the beginning of an expectation in the vital and it would start the habit of getting unruly so as to have a reason for being called by the Mother. This is what has happened to many and it has been disastrous for them. The true remedy you have yourself indicated, "Give everything and seek

nothing ”

AB. When I went for the Blessings how wonderfully the Mother removed the obstinate inertia that had come up I had thought that it would take some days for Her to work out such a strong and obstinate resistance of my physical. But it was my mind which thought so, not the psychic. For the latter always knows that however bad our condition may be—full of inertia, attacks, and difficulties—all is set right as soon as we get the supreme physical touch of the Mother. Therefore it is rather surprising that some people find no difference in their condition even after they see Her at Pranam. Is it because of their lack of faith or trust in Her and in Her divinity?

Sri Aurobindo Naturally, when there is not the opening they will feel nothing, for the consciousness will not respond—the Force then works behind the veil to prepare things, but gives no immediate visible result

AB. I don't think any true yogi would say that in spite of getting the physical touch from the Divine Mother his disturbed state of consciousness did not improve. He may not perhaps be aware of the change at once, but he will find it out sooner or later, according to his inner opening.

Some of the yogis, even true and sincere ones, are often ignorant of the action of the Divine Grace. We read or hear that when certain weaknesses, defects or imperfections come up, so many days and so many processes are required to set them right!

Sri Aurobindo. That is when one relies wholly on one's own tapasya

AB. Most of the other yogas are done under Gurus with limited perfection. Truly speaking there is no guru here, and no definite rule to guide us; we have the Divine Mother Herself to carry us towards Herself

The first necessary condition, that we should remain absorbed in our inner self, is not so difficult, but the second in which we should feel the Divine in all and all in the Divine will take time to be realised. I think, if we remain merged in the first realisation for a sufficiently long time the other will come by itself

Sri Aurobindo At least it will come easily without the laborious meditation by which people usually try to arrive at it.

AB. There was a desire lurking somewhere for getting your help through answers to my letters I don't know why such a demand should still be there. You have heaped on my head an inexhaustible knowledge which never gets tired of helping, enlightening and lifting me up

It was precisely the vital that began to respond to the wrong suggestions. I would very much like to know who threw such strong suggestions at me in order to erect a wall between me and the Mother? Were they only the lower forces?

Sri Aurobindo. It is the lower forces at work, but the Hostiles are

## THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

there behind pressing and ready to take advantage if they find the sadhaka accepting or identifying himself with the suggestions. That is why one must be immediately on guard if there is the least movement towards any such thing.

7-4-35.

AB. For some time past I have been receiving suggestions from the lower forces that the Mother does not love me; but since the last few days they have had to withdraw that form of the attack on finding that She not only loved me but was showering me with Her love

The last form of their attack was, "You have no love for the Mother." Kindly tell me clearly, Lord, why they make some part of my being feel so.

Sri Aurobindo. But that is surely very evident nonsense. If you feel love for the Mother, how can they say you have none or, if they say it, what value has such an obvious lie and why should any part of you assent to it?

AB. It really surprises me sometimes to see that on the one side I feel for the Mother an immense love deep within me, while in my outward expression I see nothing at all!

Sri Aurobindo. What do you mean by the outward expression. Love is a thing of the heart and does not depend on outer expression.

AB. What is the necessity of my writing to you all sorts of suggestions caught by the lower and unregenerate parts, and describing them, as if these things required an answer? Let me attend to and put before You only what comes out from the depth of my soul or comes down from the Self above. Shall I?

Sri Aurobindo. Yes, certainly, you can do that.

*To be continued*

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# THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

(7)

## THE CHARACTER OF ENGLISH POETRY

(2)

What kind or quality of poetry should we naturally expect from a national mind so constituted? The Anglo-Saxon strain is dominant and in that circumstance there lay just a hazardous possibility that there might have been no poetical literature at all. The Teutonic nations have in this field been conspicuous by their silence or the rarity of their speech. After the old rude epics, saga or Nibelungenlied, we have had to wait till quite recent times for poetic utterance, nor, when it came, was it rich or abundant. In Germany a brief period of strong productive culture in which the great names of Goethe and Heine rise out of a mass of more or less vigorous verse talent rather than poetical genius and after them again silence; in the North the solitary genius of Ibsen. Holland, another Teutonic country which developed an art of a considerable but a wholly objective power, is mute in poetry. It would almost seem that there is still something too thick and heavy in the strength and depth of the Teutonic composition for the ethereal light and fire of the poetic word to make its way freely through the intellectual and vital envelope. What has saved the English mind from a like facturnity? Certainly, it must have been the mixture of racial elements, sublimating the material temperament, with the submerged Celtic genius coming in as a decisive force to liberate and uplift the poetic spirit. And as a necessary aid we have the unique historical accident of the reshaping of a Teutonic tongue by French and Latinistic influences which gave it clearer and more flowing forms and turned it into a fine though difficult linguistic material sufficiently malleable, sufficiently plastic for Poetry to produce her larger and finer effects, sufficiently difficult to compel her to put forth her greatest energies. A stuff of speech which, without being harsh and inapt, does not tempt by too great a facility, but offers a certain resistance in the material, increases the strength of the artist by the measure

## THE FUTURE POETRY

of the difficulty conquered and can be thrown into shapes at once of beauty and of concentrated power. That is eminently the character of the English language.

At any rate we have this long continuity of poetic production. And once supposing a predominantly Anglo-Saxon national mind to express itself in poetry, we should, ignoring for a moment the Celtic emergence, expect the groundwork to be a strong objective poetry, a powerful presentation of the forms of external life, action and character in action, the pleasant or the melancholy outsides of Nature, the robust play of the will and the passions, a vigorous vital and physical verse. Even we might look for a good deal of deviation into subjects and motives for which prose will always be the more adequate and characteristic instrument, nor should we be surprised at a self-styled Augustan age which would make them the greater part of its realm and indulge with a self-satisfied contentment in a "criticism" of external life, the poetry of political and ecclesiastical controversy, didactic verse, satire. There would be considerable power of narrative and a great energy in the drama of character and incident, but a profounder use of the narrative and dramatic forms would not be looked for; at most we might have in the end the dramatic analysis of character. The romantic element would be of the external Teutonic kind sensational and outward, appealing to the life and the senses, not the delicate and beautiful, the imaginative and spiritual Celtic romanticism. We should have perhaps much poetical thinking or even poetical philosophy of a rather obvious kind, sedate, or vigorous, prompt and direct, or robustly powerful, but not the finer and subtler poetical thought which comes easily to the clear Latin intellect. Form too of a kind we might hope for, though we could not be quite sure of it, at best bright and plain or strongly balanced, not either those greater forms in which a high and deep creative thought presides or the more exquisite forms which a delicate sense of beauty or a subtle poetic intuition creates. Both the greater and more profound and the subtler intensities of style and rhythm would be absent; but there would be a boldly forcible or a well-beaten energy of speech and much of the more metallic vigours of verse. This side of the national mind would prepare us for English poetry as it was until Chaucer and beyond, the ground-type of the Elizabethan drama, the work of Dryden and Pope, the whole mass of eighteenth century verse, Cowper, Scott, Wordsworth in his more outward moments, Byron without his Titanism and unrest, the poetry of Browning. For these we need not go outside the Anglo-Saxon temperament.

That also would give, but subject to a potent alchemy of transforma-



tion, the basic form and substance of most English poetry. That alchemy we can fairly attribute to the submerged Celtic element which emerges, as time goes on, in bright upstreamings and sometimes in exceptional outbursts of power. It comes up in a blaze of colour, light, emotion and imaginative magic, in a hungering for beauty in its more subtle and delicately sensuous forms, for the ideal which escapes definition and yet has to be seized in forms; in a subtler romance; in a lyrical intoxication. It casts into the mould a higher urge of thought, not the fine, calm and measured poetical thinking of the Greeks and the Latin races which deals sovereignly with life within the limits of the intellect and the inspired reason, but an excitement of thought seeking for something beyond itself and behind life through the intensities of poetical sight. It brings in a look upon Nature which pierces beyond her outsides and her external spirit and lays its touch on the mysteries of her inner life and sometimes on that in her which is most intimately spiritual. It awakens rare outbursts of mysticism, a vein of subtler sentiment, a more poignant pathos; it refines passion from a violence of the vital being into an intensity of the soul, modifies vital sensuousness into a thing of imaginative beauty by a warmer aesthetic perception. It carries with it a seeking for exquisite lyrical form, touches narrative poetry to finer issues, throws its romantic beauty and force and fire and its greater depth of passion across the drama and makes it something more than a tumultuous external action and heavily powerful character-drawing. At one period it strives to rise beyond the English mould, seems about to disengage itself and reveal through poetry the Spirit in things. In language and music it is always a quickening and refining force, where it can do nothing more, it breathes a more intimate energy and, where it gets its freer movement, creates that intensity of style and rhythm, that force of imaginative vision and that peculiar beauty of turn which are the highest qualities of English poetry.

The various commingling or separating of these two elements marks the whole later course of the literature and they present as their effect a side of failure and defect and a side of achievement. There are evidently two opposite powers at work in the same field, often compelled to labour in the same mind at a common production, and when two such opposites can coalesce, seize each other's motives and become one, the very greatest achievement becomes possible. For they fill in each other's deficiencies, light each other up with a new light and bring in a fresh revelation which neither by itself could have accomplished. The greatest things in English poetry have come where this fusion was effected in the creative mind and 'soul of the poet. But that could not always be done and there arises an uncertainty of motive, an unsureness of touch, an oscillation. It does not

## THE FUTURE POETRY

prevent great triumphs of poetic power, but does prevent a high equality and sustained perfection of self-expression and certainty of form. We must expect inequality in all human work, but not necessarily on this scale or with so frequent and extensive a falling below what should be the normal level

To the same uncertainty may be attributed the abrupt starts and turns of the course of English poetry, its want of conscious continuity,—for there is a secret and inevitable continuity which we shall have to disengage. It takes a very different course from the external life of the nation which has always been faithful to its inner motive and spirit and escaped from the shattering and suddenly creative changes that have at once afflicted and quickened the life of other peoples. The revolutions of the spirit of English poetry are of an astonishing decisiveness and abruptness. We can mark off first the early English poetry which found its solitary greater expression in Chaucer, indeed it marks itself off by an absolute exhaustion and cessation. The magnificent Elizabethan outburst has another motive, spirit, manner of expression, which seems to have nothing to do with the past, it is self-born under the impulse of a new age and environment. As this dies away, we have the lonely figure of Milton with his strenuous effort at an intellectual poetry cast in the type of the ancients. The age which succeeds is that of a trivial intellectuality which does not follow the lead of Milton and is the exact contrary of the Elizabethan form and spirit, the thin and arid reign of Pope and Dryden. Another violent breaking away, a new outburst of wonderful freshness gives us the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Blake with another spirit and another language of the spirit. The Victorian period did not deny their influences; it felt them in the form of its work, and we might have expected it to have gone forward with what had been only a great beginning that did not arrive at its full fruition. But it did nothing of the kind, it deviated into a new way which has nothing to do with the finer spirit of the preceding poets and fell off into an intellectual, artistic, carefully wrought, but largely external poetry. And now we have this age which is still trying to find itself, but in its most characteristic tendencies seems to be a rejection of the Victorian forms and motives. These reversals and revolutions of the spirit are not in themselves a defect or a disability; they simply mean that English poetical literature has been a series of bold experiments less shackled by the past than in countries which have a stronger sense of cultural tradition. Revolutions are distracting things, but they are often good for the human soul, for they bring a rapid opening of new horizons.

Here comes in the side of success and achievement. By the natural

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law of compensation it is gained by a force which answers to the defects and limitations; it has those for its price. For nowhere else has individual genius found so free a field, been able to work so directly out of itself and follow so boldly its own line of poetic adventure. Form is a great power, but sureness of form is not everything. A strong tradition of form gives a sure ground upon which genius can work in safety and be protected from its own wanderings; but it limits and stands in the way of daring individual adventure. The spirit of adventure, if its path is strewn with accidents, stumblings or fatal casualties, brings, when it does succeed, new revelations which are worth all the price paid for them. English poetry is full of such new revelations. Its richness, its constant freshness, its lavish expenditure of genius exulting in freedom, delivered from all meticulous caution, its fire and force of imagination, its lambent energy of poetic speech, its constant self-liberation into intensest beauty of self-expression are the rewards of its courage and its liberty. These things are of the greatest value in poetry. They lead besides to possibilities which are of the highest importance to the poetry of the future.

We may briefly anticipate and indicate in what manner. We have to accept one constant tendency of the spirit of English poetry, which loves to dwell with all its weight upon the presentation of life and action, of feeling and passion, to give that its full force and to make it the basis and the source and, not only the point of reference, but the utility of all else. A strong hold upon this life, the earth-life, is the characteristic of the English mind, and it is natural that it should take possession of its poetry. The pure Celtic genius leans towards the opposite extreme, seems to care little for the earth-life for its own sake, has little hold on it or only a light and ethereal hold, accepts it as a starting-point for the expression of other-life, is attracted by all that is hidden and secret. The Latin mind insists on the presentation of life, but for the purposes of thought; its eye is on the universal truths and realities of which it is the visible expression,—not the remoter, the spiritual or soul-truths, but those which present themselves to the clarities of the intelligence. But the English mind looks at life and loves it for its own sake, in all its externalities, its play of outer individualities, its immediate subjective idiosyncrasies. Even when it is strongly attracted by other motives, the intellectual, the aesthetic or the spiritual, it seldom follows these with a completely disinterested fidelity, but comes back with them on the external life and tries to subject them to its mould. This turn is not universal,—Blake escapes from it,—nor the single dominant power,—Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth have their hearts elsewhere; but it is a constant power, it attracts even the poets who have not a

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real genius for it and vitiates their work by the immixture of an alien motive.

This objective and external turn might be strong enough in some other arts,—fiction, for instance, or sculpture,—to create a clear national tradition and principle of form, but not easily in poetry. For here the mere representation of life cannot be enough, however vivid or subjected to the law of poetic beauty it may be. Poetry must drive at least at a presentation from within and not at simple artistic reproduction, and the principle of presentation must be something more than that of the eye on the visible object. It is by a process from within, a passing of it through some kind of intimately subjective vision that life is turned into poetry. If this subjective medium is the inspired reason or the intuitive mind, the external presentation of life gives place inevitably to an interpretation, a presentation in which its actual lines are either neglected or subordinated in order that some inner truth of it may emerge. But in English poetry the attempt is to be or at least to appear true to the actual lines of life, to hold up a mirror to Nature. It is the mirror then which has to do the poetising of life; the vital, the imaginative, the emotional temperament of the poet is the reflecting medium and it has to supply unaided the creative and poetical element. We have then a faithfully unfaithful reflection which always amounts to a transformation, because the temperament of the poet lends to life and Nature its own hues, its own lines, its own magnitudes. But the illusion of external reality, of an "imitation" of Nature is created,—the illusion which has been for so long a first canon of Western artistic conceptions,—and the English mind which carries this tendency to an extreme, feels then that it is building upon the safe foundation of the external and the real; it is satisfied of the earth even when it is singing in the heavens.

But this sole reliance on the temperament of the poet has certain strong results. It gives an immense importance to individuality, much greater than that which it must always have in poetical creation: the transformation of life and Nature in the individuality becomes almost the whole secret of this poetry. Therefore English poetry is much more powerfully and consciously personal and individual than that of any other language, aims much less directly at the impersonal and universal. This individual subjective element creates enormous differences between the work of poets of the same age; they cannot escape from the common tendencies, but give to them a quite independent turn and expression, subordinate them to the assertion of the individuality; in other literatures, until recently, the reverse has oftener happened. Besides, the higher value given to the intensity of the imaginative, vital or emotional response favours and is perhaps

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a first cause of that greater intensity of speech and immediate vision which is the strength of English poetry. For since the heightening cannot come mainly from the power and elevation of the medium through which life is seen, as in Greek and ancient Indian poetry, it has to come almost entirely from the individual response in the poet, his force of personal utterance, his intensity of personal vision.

Three general characteristics emerge. The first is a constant reference and return of the higher poetical motives to the forms of external life, as if the enriching of that life were its principal artistic aim. The second is a great force of subjective individuality and personal temperament as a leading power of the poetic creation. The third is a great intensity of speech and ordinarily of a certain kind of direct vision. But in the world's literature generally these are the tendencies that have been on the increase and two of them at least are likely to be persistent. There is everywhere a considerable stressing of the individual subjective element, a drift towards making the most of the poet's personality, an aim at a more vivid response and the lending of new powers of colour and line from within to the vision of life and Nature, a search for new intensities of word and rhythm which will translate into speech a deeper insight. In following out the possible lines of the future the defect of the English mind is its inability to follow the higher motives disinterestedly to their deepest and largest creative results, but this is being remedied by new influences. The entrance of the pure Celtic temperament into English poetry through the Irish revival is likely to do much; the contribution of the Indian mind in work like Tagore's may act in the same direction.

If this change is effected, the natural powers of the English spirit will be of the highest value to the future poetry. For that poetry is likely to move to the impersonal and universal, not through the toning down of personality and individuality, but by their heightening to a point where they are liberated into the impersonal and universal expression. Subjectivity is likely to be its greater power, the growth to the universal subjective enriched by all the forces of the personal soul-experience. The high intensity of speech which English poetry has brought to bear upon all its material, its power of giving the fullest and richest value to the word and the image, is needed for the expression of the values of the spiritual, which will be one of the aims of a higher intuitive utterance. If the pursuit of the higher godheads into their own sphere will be one of its endeavours, their return upon the earth-life to transform our vision of it will be its other side. If certain initial movements we can even now see in English poetry outline themselves, this long stream of strong creation and utterance

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may arrive at a point where it will discover a supreme utility for all its past powers in another more comprehensive motive into which their strands can be successfully interwoven: it may achieve clear and powerful forms of a new intuitive utterance in which the Anglo-Celtic spirit will find its highest self-expression. The Elizabethan poet wrote in the spacious days of its first birth into greatness,

*Or who can tell for what great work in hand*

*The greatness of our style is now ordained?*

*What powers it shall bring in, what spirits command?*

It has since brought in many powers, commanded many spirits; but it may be that the richest powers, the highest and greatest spirit yet remain to be found and commanded.

*To be continued*

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# LOTUS-FLAME

## Romen

### PART V: THE INCARNATION

*Continued from previous issue*

Unknown was the ray supernal and infinite,  
Unreached and unconquerable to man's littleness  
Like stars to the ice-white foam of the sea,  
Essaying to blot out Its indifference sublime  
With its tempestuous arms of outleaping waves.  
Not through revolt and dark insolence of wrath  
Can heaven step down from Its pure starry peaks  
But through a prayer-calm upwardness of heart  
Can heaven stop down from Its pure starry peaks  
Like a wizard veil of silent radiance  
And robe the sea with Its engulfing light.  
The great incarnation of the Lotus-flame  
Adventured on earth to still the globe's unrest,  
And make waveless the heart of the universe  
And appeal the far golden thunder to possess  
The soul and matter of the terrestrial whole.  
A flame from the worlds of voiceless intensities  
Tenant became within Time's unsure tents  
And, moving with the caravan of twilight and sleep,  
Sought to kindle the perpetual gleam of God  
From the immanent fount of his own godhead's heights—  
Setting aflame the burnt-out candles of earth  
Which would become star-flares on our desert-sky  
A god-child, he came to lead the children of earth,  
The eyeless infant-mob of penury  
A flamen of Light, he came to inaugurate  
The advent of the Peacock of the Blue;  
A seraph, he came to pave the path of the blaze.

## LOTUS FLAME

He was an iridescent petard of might  
To dynamite the sealed portals of gloom;  
A harbinger and summoner of the Day;  
A deep burning dawn-rose of the Infinite;  
He was the bright forerunner of a Grace  
That would one day clasp this insignificant globe  
And put Its undying stamp on each passing thing.  
A stalwart spirit beaconing to the unknown,  
To the lone ageless source and fount divine,  
Like a pharos with white arms of signalling beams.  
A cygnet from the everlasting lake of Noon  
Calling the high diamond swan from the pool  
Of spirit's sun-oceans of trance and might unbarred;  
A heaven-child semaphoring with pennants of fire  
To the distant outposts of the solar gleam,  
The photosphere of perennial solitude;  
A plenipotentiary of the Supreme,  
He came with the white-rayed signature in his heart  
To negotiate with the continents of shade.  
He was the incognito of the Absolute  
Apparelled with the passing vesture of clay,  
Within whose bosom slept the thunder's power  
And whose soul was the gold-white throne of God.  
A wall-less mind of luminous dominion  
Was the resting-place of his wide sapphire thought,  
A heart that embraced all the creation's folds  
Quivered palpable under his timeless breast;  
A vast life of untrepidant tranquillity,  
Not crowned with foam's ever-changing passion-spray  
But glowing with the pulse of a spirit-life  
Free and perpetual, limitless and bright,  
Housing the incarnation's silver-blue gleam.  
A serpent-charmer of supernal ecstasies  
Fluting his empyrean reed he came on the soil  
Through the waste air of hueless monotone  
Down to the globe of double twilight and gloom  
Upon the Morpheus-haunted bedrock of night  
Where slept the great hidden anaconda of might,  
To awaken its drowse deep like the ageless seas  
In whose womb was the covert sun-gem of light;  
To retrieve the lost opal treasure of the Vast  
For the diadem of the Inscrutable King.



## MOTHER INDIA

A tireless miner of labour infinite,  
He tunnelled his path to find the diamond source  
Buried in the far hold of the brute abyss.  
A flaming magician from the altitudes,  
An alchemist-mind on the soil's dusty path,  
And a wizard of the Incommunicable,  
He opened wide the argent gates of the sky.  
Through him the Olympian grandeur and bliss and force  
Swept down into the ken of gloom and drowse.  
The milk of grace from the high Elysian teats  
Rained on the parched upward mouth of the world.  
In him the lid of the Immaculate Fire  
Opened its great doors of beauty divine,  
And through the flawless channel of his being  
Flowed earthwards the stream of ageless Perfection's heart  
With the soul-flood of the one beautiful All.  
Somewhere under the dreamless dome of the void  
A entity of a supernal mind  
Awoke by the touch of the Transcendent's Ray.  
And the companion from an illimitable height  
Winged over his giant brow of awakened Fire  
Like a vast dream-white peacock of paradise.

*Part V concluded*

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# THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

## A DRAMA

Dilip Kumar Roy

### ACT III

#### Scene 1.

*Two years have passed. MIRA, now a wandering mendicant, reaches Brindaban at last after having endured untold privations on the way, thrown literally on the streets, begging her food in Krishna's name, insulted by all and sundry and deceived even by those she had trusted with all the native ardour of her childlike soul. When she reaches the outskirts of Brindaban she is on the verge of sheer despair, for Krishna has never once come to her during these two years of unrelieved gloom.*

*As the curtain rises, she is discovered asleep under a bakul tree on the bank of the Jumna. The vermilion rays of the morning sun fall full on her face. It is a lonely spot, there is not even a ghat, properly speaking. Now and then, a few village women pass with pitchers on their heads which they dip into the Jumna. A cuckoo starts singing on a bough just above the head of the sleeping figure. When the bird has trilled forth her melody for a while, a group of four giggling women are seen approaching the Jumna to have their morning dip. Evidently they know one another well.*

FIRST WOMAN: But I can't help laughing even when I am tickled the

SECOND WOMAN: You are priceless, Sarala! Now you laugh and the next moment start chiding us for having amused you!

FIRST WOMAN: But I can help laughing even when I am tickled the wrong way. One is born human though one has, I suppose, to outgrow one's limitations.

SECOND WOMAN: Don't be pompous. We can't go on being solemn like owls. Be natural or you will come to grief like the woman whom I turned out last night. I was on the point of giving her a bowl of rice when she started singing something about death. I told her to clear out. One who ends up begging shouldn't start lecturing. (*Suddenly noticing MIRA*) Good Lord! Here she is, the same beggar woman!

FIRST WOMAN. I am sorry you turned her out. For (*looking at her closely*) she is no more a beggar woman than the morning sun is a disc of gold.

SECOND WOMAN (*angrily*): Oh, don't talk nonsense.

THIRD WOMAN (*gives an involuntary cry*): But Sarala is right. Look at the Image she is clinging to! No, she has seen better days, I tell you, Sarama!

SECOND WOMAN (*contemptuously*): But that only makes it worse. (*Scrutinising her*) Yes, I agree with you, Kamala! (*Sarcastically*) It seems a clear case: the old old story! Her gallant butterfly sucked her dry and then left her for another who could still offer honey.

FOURTH WOMAN (*giggling*): You have spoken like a sage, Sarama. And still girls will go on trusting men, what can you do?

FIRST WOMAN (*sharply*): And matrons will go on being blind about women. As if you can ever seduce a woman who does not want to be seduced! But then why talk of the devil before her, a devotee?

FOURTH WOMAN (*offended*): That is the besetting sin of superstitious folk. They simply *will* see fireflies as shining stars.

SECOND WOMAN: I agree. (*Witheringly*) To call her a devotee simply because she carries an Image of Gopal to flaunt her holiness! Holiness indeed! As if they do not know full well that their only chance lies in posing as bright angels whom we, poor humans, can never hope to understand!

FIRST WOMAN: I don't like to hear you people talking as though we are omniscient and so can judge everything, calling men arch-fiends and women actresses, only the present company excepted of course!

SECOND WOMAN: How dare you, you mean, jealous, insolent—

MIRA (*starting out of her sleep*): Oh...who...where am I? And who are you?

FIRST WOMAN: You are in Brindaban, sister! And—(*ironically*)—we are your judges, immaculate and infallible.

SECOND WOMAN: May your tongue be blasted—

THIRD WOMAN: Wait—till we get home—

FOURTH WOMAN: Let's go for our bathe—

*They make for the Jumna, in high dudgeon.*

MIRA (*staring at her sympathiser*): Why didn't you go with them?

FIRST WOMAN: I said you were a devotee. They said: you were a lost soul. So we fell out.

MIRA (*smiling wanly*): But you pleaded a lost cause, my kind sister! Do not even tread my shadow. I bring trouble wherever I go. That is why I had to leave my home for—(*pointing at the IMAGE*)—Him, because He commanded me to. (*Sighing*) But alas, as soon as I broke away from my

THE BEGGAR PRINCESS

moorings, He disappeared. So (*she smiles sadly*) in this instance it was your sympathy that was wrong and their hard hearts right as, I dare say, they generally are.

FIRST WOMAN: Don't say such bitter things, sister! The world is dark but still one is given the power to light a little candle. And when one can, it is better to light it than to go on cursing the darkness.

MIRA (*looks at her fixedly*): You are wise, sister! And, I. I was wise too—once upon a time. But you have misunderstood me in this instance. I have disowned the world, but not Gopal. If in life I have not attained to Him, then death must bring me to him because because life hides...but death reveals.

FIRST WOMAN. Do not talk of death, sister. Come to my house

MIRA: No, kind heart, I will only bring you trouble. Please do not insist. Go. Already, you see, they have disclaimed you—and only because of me. Besides, I want to be left alone with—Him

FIRST WOMAN (*ruefully*): But you look ill. Who will look after you?

MIRA. Millions of straws are swept away by the flood. Each perhaps thinks it is being led by the tides. But do the tides bother? They only hurtle along. (*Forcing a smile*) No, I have been bitter. But nothing lasts, sister, not even the gloom of Patala. I have suffered and yet have I not found some joy even in my deepest suffering?

FIRST WOMAN (*heaving a sigh*). All right, sister. It is getting late. But promise me you will come to me when you feel hungry. My cottage is just round the corner—in front of that temple. My name is Sarala. Will you remem—

*The three women return, impelled by curiosity which, with women, is even stronger than righteous indignation. The FIRST WOMAN turns her back upon them and makes for the Jumna.*

THIRD WOMAN: What is your name, woman?

MIRA: Call me by any name you like. It makes no difference to me.

SECOND WOMAN: I would call you a beggar woman, and mad. besides

MIRA (*smiling*): You are right. We all are.

FOURTH WOMAN (*furiously*): We are anything but mad, and we never beg.

MIRA: So much the worse for you. For till you learn to beg for His Grace you must stay where you are—ignorant even of your ignorance. And such ignorance is a shade worse than what you choose to call madness

THIRD WOMAN (*interposing*): Wait, I must give her a piece of my mind. (*Turning upon MIRA*): Woman! In one point we were mistaken.

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you are no beggar woman. But I pity you for what you are doing: con-sorting with all and sundry, casting away your veil, a thing no gentle woman will do. You should be ashamed of yourself.

*MIRA smiles, bows to the IMAGE before her and sings:*

How can I blush for shame, my friend?

And why shall I veil my face?

When I have only staked my all

To meet thy flawless Grace?

*They look at one another, at once charmed and perturbed by her magic voice.*

*MIRA continues:*

Some call me mad and vaunt they are sane,

But Mira knows, Lord, this:

They flaunt Illusion's dark festoons,

She weaves thy wreath of bliss.

*As soon as she stops the spell is broken and they find tongue.*

THIRD WOMAN: Indeed! We are all living in illusion and she is the blessed one! She is nothing if not self-complacent.

FOURTH WOMAN: Self-complacent? You put it rather mildly, Kamala!

SECOND WOMAN: But what is all this? Are we really going to take any notice of such wantons on the street? It is undignified, to say the least. Let's go.

THIRD WOMAN: Wait, let me get even with her for once. (*Turning fiercely upon MIRA*) Woman! You have told us what you think of us in verse. Let me return the compliment in prose. (*In a rising crescendo*) We took pity on you at first. But we were deceived. You do not deserve even pity, since you not only sin but (*sneeringly*) vaunt your iniquities, you poor lost Soul! But remember when the day of reckoning comes, as it must, you will have to pay and pay dearly for your pretensions. You are trading in falsehood; you pose as a God-lover knowing full well you are irreclaimable. Come, Sarama! Kamala! Come. The very air is foul!

*They make off in the direction of the Jumna MIRA gazes at them absently. Soon they are lost to view. . . The sun is by now well up in the sky. On MIRA's face beads of perspiration are seen glistening in the sunlight which filters through the leaves For a while she remains sitting in a half-trance. Then she turns her eyes towards the IMAGE.*

MIRA (*her eyes fill*): Did you hear them, Gopal? They say nothing can happen on earth without your sanction. Did you then sanction their cursing and insulting me as they did? (*She shakes her head and wipes her tears*) No. I will not try to melt His heart with tears when I have

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failed to move Him with my love. And perhaps...who knows...He grants me release in this way because otherwise I would remain blind! Perhaps only such insults could have opened my eyes to what I am!...Yes, perhaps I am not what I thought I was: I was only play-acting at love without wanting really to give myself to Him. Perhaps that is why He has not come to me for two long years. Yet... (*her eyes fill as she looks up at the IMAGE*) ...one thing I fail to understand, Gopal! Did I not leave everything I cherished at *your* bidding? I had only to go to my father and he would have received me with open arms. But why did I have to feel that he—even he—was an alien? Strange is thy *lila*, Lord!

*She looks wistfully at the IMAGE and sings, in tears:*

The way to union with thee, Lord,  
Is beyond the appraising mind!  
Bewildering is thy mystic lilt  
Of leading humankind!

I learned to laugh through tears of gloom,  
Lost all thine All to gain  
And reached thy Bourne when merged my self  
Into thy fathomless main!

Thou weandest me, how relentlessly,  
From my lesser loves and kin  
Till even the mate I once had hailed  
Loomed far-off—alien!

Now dead I'm grown to fear and shame  
In my lone quest for thee:  
Strange, none befriends when thou becom'st  
One's Friend, O Mystery!

*Then she lies down, exhausted, repeating the name of Gopal, till she drops off to sleep with the IMAGE in her arms.*

*Two vicious-looking robbers, passing that way, halt before her prone form.*

FIRST ROBBER: Look, a poor beggar woman! But what a lovely, pure face!

SECOND ROBBER: Now, now, don't be sentimental again—your besetting sin! (*Bending over her*) But look, she is holding an Image clasped to her breast! She is no beggar woman, I tell you.

FIRST ROBBER (*bending likewise*): You are right. For look, the Image has two diamond earrings.

SECOND ROBBER (*sceptically*): Not likely. How can they....

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(*bending down nearer to inspect the earrings closely*) ... you are right. God is merciful. We will be rich overnight.

FIRST ROBBER (*suddenly*): No, brother, let her be.

SECOND ROBBER (*in surprise*): Let her be? Have you lost your senses? Such chances don't come one's way everyday. God is merciful.

FIRST ROBBER (*cutting in*): Oh don't let us claim God as our ally. We must turn over a new leaf. It is high time too. I see the hand of Providence in it. She is a holy woman. Wait, I will get some water for her. She must have fainted.

SECOND ROBBER: Have you gone stark, staring mad, you moon-calf? She is. . .you know very well what. . .a wicked seduced woman. (*Sarcastically*) Don't we know her sort? Brindaban is infested with such strumpets who—

FIRST ROBBER: Don't you dare to mouth such filth, I feel like calling her my mother.

SECOND ROBBER (*sarcastically*): Bravo, to find out your long-lost kin! A born burglar should have just such a mother to be redeemed by. But time is passing. People will be coming to bathe. It would be sheer folly to let this go by—(*he tugs at the IMAGE*)

FIRST ROBBER (*holds his hand firmly*): No. I won't allow it.

SECOND ROBBER (*exasperated*): Don't be an imbecile. Let go of my hand, I say. . .or I'll kill you.

MIRA (*waking up*): What? . . .O Gopal! .Gopal! (*She frantically clasps the IMAGE to her breast.*)

SECOND ROBBER gives his fellow robber a violent push and then, as MIRA resists madly, slaps her viciously on the temple. MIRA falls down on a stone; he wrests the IMAGE out of her arms and runs off.

FIRST ROBBER (*recovering himself*): Don't worry, mother!

*He runs off in chase of the other.*

MIRA (*rises into a sitting position; her left temple is hurt and blood streams down her cheek*). Who am I? Mira, the Queen of Mevar? Or perhaps it has all been a dream of somebody who wished to be a Queen and ended by dreaming she was one? (*Looks about her*) And where am I, the dreamer? In Brindaban? The river there. . .is she the blue Jumna I have cherished in my dreams? . . .(*She shakes her head*) Am I off my head? No. I am Mira, once a Princess. . .now a beggar. Surely it cannot be a dream. I am gazing at the Jumna under the shade of a *bakul* tree. There, the cuckoo is singing! How can this be a dream? My Gopal directed me to come here to find—whom? Yes, my Guru, Sanatan? But where is my Gopal? (*Stifling a rising sob*) How can the Guru be real when the One who commanded me to seek him is no more? Can a form be unreal and yet its voice real? (*Peering up into the leaves*) Who is this, sing-

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ing? A cuckoo, are you singing His praises in glee? . . . Beware! For I also sang and sang His praises once and with tunes much more varied than yours. But be wise, and see where my ecstasy has led me. Do you want to be as helpless—stranded on the shoals of despair? Then sing on—if you won't be warned. (*She cons her hands*) But what is this? Am I not Mira, the Queen, who went mad because she wanted One who was nowhere to be found, who longed to hug a shadow, an airy nothing? (*She looks about her*) Everything is there and yet nothing is left now my Gopal is gone! (*Bursting into a passionate sobbing*) O Gopal! Where are you? Why did you come to me and make me love you? What is this play? You said I was dearer to you than the sky to wings, light to flowers, water to earth. And yet where has your love brought me—in the end? Only pain and trials, insult and stigma, agony and gloom! Why have you, being the soul of light yourself, led me into this womb of night? How have I sinned? You asked me to leave my all and journey on foot to Brindaban to realise you in my Guru. But you yourself disappeared. Days ran into weeks, weeks into months and months into years. For two long weary years you have deserted me you have not come to me once—not even in my dreams. You have only made me know one thing endlessly: that darkness can be endless . . . that one learns to bear only to be able to groan the more. And still this mockery goes on your cuckoos singing, trees murmuring, rivers babbling. Why? To keep up the illusion that this world is an abode of bliss and beauty . . . that it is not all maya? Then how do you account for what has happened? Here I am—in rags . . . starving . . . bleeding. and only one possession I had—your little Image, dearer to me than my very breath—and now even that one possession had to be taken away from me! (*She wipes her tears and then, with sudden decision, rises and stumbles forward to the brink of the Jumna*). Yes, it is the end. Let the curtain fall on one whom there will be none to miss or mourn. It is indicated. Let what remains of me float on the careless tides of the blue-flowing sleep. What end could be more fitting to one who could not keep even her Gopal? (*She sways perched on a sand-dune and looks up at the sky*) Only one last prayer, Lord! Do not judge me by whatever I may have said in bitterness. For though we fail to understand you, you—as the Resident of every heart—must understand. So you will forgive the blindness which is in the heart of night. I withdraw all I have said. I must have deserved it all. But still I appeal to you to give me one thing I have not deserved: your Grace. By loving you I have, indeed, lost everything. But I will not complain. Only you, Lord, who must know why our mind disowns what our heart cherishes with its last breath, forgive me and grant me this one boon—when the last flicker of light is quenched from my tired eyes—that I may pray to you and you alone with my last breath . . . . . and . . . . . and . . . . .



## MOTHER INDIA

should I be born once more—give me a grateful heart so that I may not weep again when your star-love will come to wean me from the phantoms of the night. I could not reach it in this life because I did not choose to be grateful to your Grace which had come to deliver me from my blindness to which I clung. I willed myself into the shadows till the mounting pain made me wake up to my infidelity. And then I saw, to my bitter pain, that I had wanted to bargain with you, agreeing to love you only so long as you gave me joy. But the moment you showed me *your* way I found it unacceptable and insisted on your coming to me on *my* terms. After this I cannot bear to live on. One who has not kept faith with faith should die. I will cast my body now into the Jumna. (*Her voice chokes with tears.*) I know not where I shall be or if I shall be at all when my heart will have ceased to beat in this body. But in case I be born again, grant me one boon, Lord, in your infinite mercy: that I may cling to you and you alone and welcome the darkest pain that leads to your lotus-feet rather than the light of a thousand suns promising worldly happiness.

*As she is about to throw herself down into the Jumna she visions Krishna standing, smiling, before her.*

MIRA (*swaying, about to fall*): O Gopal...Gopal.. Gopal...

KRISHNA (*holding her in His arms*): Mira...Mira...Mira...

MIRA (*resting her head on His shoulder*): O Gopal! (*Suddenly she draws back*) No, no, it must be just another dream or a phantom light which will vanish presently to consign me to an even deeper darkness. (*She quivers in ecstacy*) Oh. .Oh. .Oh...What dream is this in full consciousness? I see you everywhere! All...All is you, Gopal...each speck of dust...every stone and tree. .the cow licking her calf...the dew glistening on the grass. .the ants running...butterflies flitting...the chameleon staring at its prey...all, all is instinct with you! There's the cuckoo...but it is *you* singing—not the cuckoo! (*A breeze passes*) The leaves rustle. .but it is *your* voice I hear through the murmur!...Even the two thieves are you, Gopal! I can see them clearly. (*Peering*) They are quarrelling...now they come to blows (*She cries out*) Oh, the Image is dropped and with it the man who was guarding it. The other picks it up and is running in this direction O Gopal, what is going to happen?

KRISHNA (*ironically*). Nothing world-shaking: he is going to restore the Image to you

MIRA (*claps her hands*). O Gopal! I will only sing and sing and dance and dance.

KRISHNA (*sighing*). And I will only sigh and sigh till I am no more because my rival, the Image, has won against me.

MIRA (*laughing*): Everybody changes, but you remain the same! .

KRISHNA (*in an accusing tone*): How can you say such a thing

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when I am growing wiser, if a trifle sadder, all the time?

MIRA (*pouting*): You, sadder? You who go on laughing and playing your heartless flute while we sigh and sob and storm till we lose faith in life itself?

KRISHNA. That is your shout, not mine. For what can I do if you insist on pain as your meed and reject my bliss?

MIRA (*gasping*): You stagger one, Gopal! You say we reject your bliss! Was I then only play-acting when I was on the point of throwing myself into the Jumna, frantic with the pain—

KRISHNA (*cutting in*). What pain? Give me an instance.

MIRA: Instance? Why, look at my temple, bleeding—

KRISHNA (*innocently*) One has a lot of blood and to spare The physicians sometimes apply leeches—

MIRA: Oh do not drive me mad again My temple is smarting.

KRISHNA: Nonsense. Feel it with your finger. The wound may be there, but I do question the pain

MIRA (*not knowing how to take it*): You question the pain which comes from a wound? (*She places her finger gently on her open wound*) But how is this? There is, indeed, no pain at all!

KRISHNA (*embracing her*): And there won't be either, from now on. You have won to the last liberation from the world of karma and pain. This time I have come to you and come to stay. But I must go now to my *bhakta*—your Guru For remember it is him you must serve in this last Act of your life.

MIRA: Catch me trusting you again! You are going to elude me.

*As Krishna is about to dodge past her, she grips Him frantically.*

KRISHNA (*wrenching Himself free*): Catch! (*Laughing triumphantly*). See, I can leave any time I like. (*He remains standing, at a distance, smiling—tantalising.*)

MIRA, *in retaliation, improvises a song:*

My hand, a woman's, is not strong,  
So how can I, Lord, hold for long  
    You—in my arms, my King!  
But I defy you to depart  
For even a moment from the heart  
    Of thy weak underling.

KRISHNA *laughs and composes a repartee:*

But when did Krishna ever seek,  
To leave the hearts that felt so weak?  
But the underlings He came to hail  
Would every time His Grace repel  
    While calling Him their King!

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(*Smiling ruefully*) So I must wait till you find me acceptable.

MIRA (*appealingly*). Oh, don't go—at least stay to give your blessings to the good man who is coming this way to restore me your Image—it's the least you can do for him—

KRISHNA (*with a bewitching smile*) Mira! Know that from now on my blessings, such as they are, shall be with any one who will be with you.

*He vanishes as the FIRST ROBBER enters with the IMAGE.*

ROBBER (*placing the IMAGE before her*). Mother, here is your Lord (*Bowing his head*) Bless me so that He may have mercy on me.

MIRA: My son! (*In a thick voice*) You—you are blest already by Him

ROBBER (*in tears*) No, mother I am a sinner—a low thief—unworthy of His Grace.

MIRA: My son, nobody is ever so high but can call himself worthy of His Grace and none so low who can be dubbed unworthy. Krishna's Grace has its own lights to go by

ROBBER (*falling at her feet*) Mother, Him I do not know—nor His Grace I only know that my heart bowed down to you the moment I saw you. It told me that if your Holiness were to bless me He would exempt me from Hell.

MIRA: But I tell you, my son, I can lay no claim to holiness. I am but a woman—a mere beggar in His name

ROBBER (*smiling*): Mother, do not try to deceive me. Do you know what happened? I felt—for the first time in my life—a deep bliss when I touched you, accidentally. And I heard a Voice, a clear Voice. "Only She—the embodied Grace of Krishna—can save you." Otherwise do you think I could have possibly maimed my own brother a little while ago?—But there, somebody is coming this way I must fly. I will come again to your holy feet, Mother—later

*As he makes his exit to the left, RAO RAJA RATAN SINGH enters from the right, followed by MADAN, the temple priest of Udaypur.*

MIRA: Oh! Father!

RATAN SINGH: At long long last—

*Mira flies to him who enfolds her in a deep embrace. After a while he releases her and wipes his eyes.*

RATAN SINGH (*ruefully*). Oh—my daughter! That I should have lived to see—this! (*He strikes his forehead*)

MIRA (*gripping him, deprecatingly*): Oh, don't—father!

RATAN SINGH (*disconsolately*): O Lord! Why—Oh why

MIRA (*cutting in*): Because, father, it had to be.

RATAN SINGH (*shaking his head violently*). No, Mira, I can't accept

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that, for it could have been otherwise and—and would have been if--if your father had not been—what he was—your enemy

MIRA: Oh, do not speak in this strain, father, I beseech you You have been my greatest friend

RATAN SINGH (*covering his face with his hands*) A blind—blind—blind—

MIRA (*firmly*) No, father Your blindness, such as it was, made me see what I would otherwise never have seen namely, the maya of it all.

RATAN SINGH. Maya? What maya? I married you by force, stooping to a low ruse—

MIRA (*cutting in*). The ruse also had to be For had you not resorted to it, I should never have married and, had I not married I would be living today the life of a pampered Princess, instead of being what I am now—a beggar in His blessed name.

RATAN SINGH: Do not mock at me, Mira! I may have been blind but I am not a fool. To see you blood-stained and in rags—a shadow of your former self—begging your food in the streets—has it not been punishment enough?

MIRA: I implore you to believe, father, that I did not say it in mockery. On the contrary I have seen today, as never before, what would have been in store for me if you had not, unknowingly, forced me to go through what I did.

RATAN SINGH (*in a thick voice*): I know, Mira. This good man (*indicating MADAN*) has told me all But I came to know after you had left Mevar. I sent my men out everywhere, but you could not be traced. I offered vast rewards, but in vain. I saw you mightily in my dream, had no peace, could not attend to anything till I fell ill—but let that pass. I had to expiate my sin. Let us not go on regretting what had to be, as you put it, since what is done cannot be undone. But come back to me now.

MIRA: No, father! A burnt seed does not bear. I belong here—to dust and poverty, not to palaces and equipage any more. (*Her eyes fill*) Do not sigh for me, father. No vainglory can give what I have won to—by His Grace. A call heard can never be unheard again.

RATAN SINGH. I appeal to you, daughter, not to torture me like this. You may have lost everything but so long as I live you shall want for nothing. Your brothers and sisters and my subjects will all receive you with open arms—

*He stops as MIRA's expression changes suddenly and she starts singing, in ecstasy*

My heart is wed to the Evergreen and only for Him longs.  
I only dance to His joy-lilts...I only echo His songs.

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Who plays the Magic Flute and whirls like lightning on His feet,  
Whose beauty thrills the eyes like sun whom yet they dare not greet,  
Who's crowned with plumes of peacock and blooms—for Him my heart  
still longs:

I only dance to His joy-lilts . . I only echo His songs.

I have forsworn all pomp of wealth and pride of royal birth,  
Disowned my father and mother and friends I dearly loved on earth,  
I am cowed no more by calumny, my soul to saints belongs,  
I only dance to His joy-lilts . . . I only echo His songs.

My die is cast: the world knows: Mira is no more the Queen:  
A drop returned at last to the Ocean—sorrowless, serene!  
A disciple havened at her Guru's feet for whom she longs.  
I only dance to His joy-lilts . . I only echo His songs

MADAN (*supplicatingly*): But, Mother, if you will pardon me for my presumption, you can dance to His rhythms anywhere since He is yours for ever. Your father has already made it clear to you that you will be welcome back in his palace. But may I also petition you on behalf of the citizens of Mevar? There have been droughts there year after year ever since you denied us your holy presence. We all appeal to you to come back—you who are looked upon today by all as the Devi of Mevar. (*Tentatively*) And I may as well tell you that your sister-in-law had to pay dearly for her villany. She was killed by the populace who were furious when they came to know that she had made you drink poison. The Maharana also told me that in case I could trace you he would come personally to crave your forgiveness. He is not really a bad-hearted man—

MIRA (*cutting in*): I know, my son. Krishna made him too, did He not? I have seen Him in all and all in Him. After that, can any grievance survive against anybody? I see His hand in everything now—in a way I cannot hope to make you understand

RATAN SINGH: May I say something? We may not even glimpse what the holiness in you sees. But what we do see makes us infinitely sad. To see you a beggar on the street, you who were reared in a palace, to see you literally begging for alms, suffering privation, insults and pain—

MIRA (*interrupting*). Father, believe me, what I have seen has changed me completely. I am no more the Princess you dandled on your knees years ago. I have won through to the last Refuge and have seen that all pain is an illusion—a make-believe. No, dear father, argue no more—leave me where I belong—at His feet, my haven. I cannot be happy again in the empty life of a palace Princess any more than you can be in the full life of a poor devotee. I bless you all for whatever I have received

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at your hands, for I am fulfilled. After that, how can one have any regrets—when one has everything?

RATAN SINGH (*disconsolately*): Everything? In this penury and suffering? You amaze me, Mira! I meet you after years in a God-forsaken place, exposed to the gaze of all and sundry...I see you sick and sore and bleeding, an orphan of the storm, a beggar living on alms .. (*his voice chokes*)...my daughter! I am a broken old man...do not refuse me. You do not belong to misery: you cannot! Even for holiness, the price may, sometimes, be more than what one can afford

MIRA (*her eyes fill*). Penury. father? I—who have—

....*She starts singing in ecstasy*:

Krishna I bought with my life, O friend!

“Too dearly bought,”—say the wise.

But how can the prudent guess His worth?

Only Mira knows His price.

Wealth nor wisdom ever could give  
The pearl of pearls I won:  
Genius nor gifts was mine—with love  
I earned His union.

Elusive is He, but I too was subtle·  
He loaned to me His name:  
I invested it till I grew in wealth  
And paid what He would claim.

By my eyelids veiled now stay He must  
In my orbs everlastingly:  
No thief can rob me of my treasure,  
Nor death part Him from me.

For aeons had Mira roamed in vain  
Till in Him she found her nest:  
And His name is Krishna whom she bought  
With her life His love has blest.

RATAN SINGH (*wipes his eyes*)· But where will you live?

MIRA: I have told you—at the feet of my Gurudev.

RATAN SINGH· Your Gurudev? Who is he?

MIRA (*smiles*): The one who gave (*pointing at the IMAGE*) Him to me. Gopal has told me I have to serve him till I die—at his feet.

RATAN SINGH: But—

MADAN: May I, mother—

MOTHER INDIA

*They stop as they hear a song: SANATAN comes in, singing, for his morning ablution in the Jumna, attended by his disciple, BIHARI:*

Oh, come to me, my Lord and King, in this thy land of bliss,  
Where thou abidest still as Light which only the eyeless miss.  
O Ocean, whither rush all hearts a-heave to merge in thee!  
How can I learn to tread thy way unless thou come to me?

RATAN SINGH: O Gurudev! *(He falls at his feet)*

SANATAN: A Raja again? I see no rich men now-a-days.

MIRA *(making her obeisance)*: But, Gurudev—

SANATAN *(averting his face)*: Bihari, tell her.

BIHARI *(to MIRA)*: Mother, Gurudev has taken a vow not to look upon the face of a woman.

MIRA: Then he cannot be the person I took him to be.

BIHARI: I do not understand you, mother!

- *In reply MIRA starts singing again, in sudden ecstasy:*

O come to me, my Lord and King, in thine one land of bliss,  
Where every heart's a Gopi-soul, a-heave thy feet to kiss!  
O Bridegroom of Brindaban! answer Mira who cries to thee!  
Can one who calls himself a male thy maid and minstrel be?

*SANATAN's eyes glisten.*

SANATAN *(stretching out his arms)* Mira, the holy Princess?

MIRA *(falling prostrate at his feet)* No, Gurudev, Mira the beggar Princess

RATAN SINGH and MADAN make their obeisance, as THE CURTAIN FALLS.

*To be continued*

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# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

## Rishabhchand

### CHAPTER XI

#### THE PURIFICATION OF NATURE

Purification has a special sense in the Integral Yoga. In the other Yogas except the Tantra, it means the simplification or stilling of most of the functions of antahkarana, which comprises chitta or the basic consciousness, manas or the sense-mind, buddhi or the intelligence and ahankara or the ego. There are different processes in the different Yogas for the purpose of this stilling and simplification, but the common ultimate objective is a release of the central being from the complex working of nature and its union either with the immutable Brahman or with God or with its own unconditioned Self or Status, as the case may be. If the nature has been purified enough to let the central consciousness sink into its depths or soar above the body, the principal spiritual end of purification is taken to have been achieved, and the ethical being sees to it that the purity and peace experienced in the depths or on the heights are reflected to a certain extent in the character and conduct of life. That is all one ordinarily understands by purification. But for the Integral Yoga it is utterly inadequate, for the aim we pursue is not only the liberation of the soul but also of nature, culminating in the supramental transformation as the *sine qua non* of divine manifestation. No simplification is attempted, rather an aggrandisement and enrichment of the whole nature by an awakening and quickening of all its faculties, including even those that are normally latent or only half active. Instead of stripping the soul bare and carrying it to the Infinite, as do the other Yogas, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo offers the soul and nature both into the hands of the Divine for their liberation and perfection and their effective utilisation for the fulfilment of His Will in the material world. Purification has, therefore, a much wider sweep and a deeper plunge in the Integral Yoga than elsewhere, and becomes almost a process of a rich and complex perfection. Each part of the being is taken up in itself along with all its faculties and energies, and cleaned and developed, and its hidden potentialities are brought out



and harnessed to the spiritual purpose of life. And it is taken up at the same time in all its relations with the other parts; its egoistic moulds are broken, its closed passages opened up, its functional defects remedied and its basic characteristics quickened into a spontaneous concert with those of the other parts. In this way a great organic harmony and homogeneity and an unimpeded correlation and interaction are established in the whole nature, replacing the present discords and resistances. Besides, with the progress of the Yoga and an increasing action of the Mother's Force, there takes place a descent of the higher Light and Power and Peace and Purity which begin to effect a radical change in the parts of our nature and sublimate them into their spiritual equivalents. We shall have to consider some of the important details of this change in the subsequent chapters, when we follow the purification of the different parts of human nature.

### **The Incandescent Background of Purification**

In the Integral Yoga the urge to purification is not ethical or idealistic. It is not a practice of virtue that is sought in it, nor a remoulding of nature to a set mental pattern. The essential urge to purification comes from a perception, growing in clarity and intensity as the Yoga progresses, of the soul or the psychic being. In fact, a real, dynamic start in this Yoga is usually preceded by a perception, be it even in a flash, of the immaculate purity and imperturbable peace of the soul, its luminous whiteness and unclouded joy. The consciousness of the Yogi begins to feel an irresistible attraction towards the object of this perception and a corresponding recoil from what is contrary to it in the nature. So long as purification proceeds by mental construction or social conventions, it is an arduous affair, and not unoften rather painful. The whole consciousness of the individual broods over the impurities, wrestles with them, strives to grub them up, only to find that they are much too subtle for it and much too deep-rooted to be thus dislodged. A constant fight leaves a sense of bitterness and aridity in the nature and the greatest achievement of this kind of mental purification is a certain lull or a subdued or sub-soil working of the lower energies, hardly anything more. But if a perception of the soul precedes and initiates the movement of purification, the consciousness of the individual automatically feels a magnetic pull towards the object of that perception and a centre of gravity is, as it were, created there to counteract the lower gravitation. One begins to see more and more clearly in the radiating light of the soul the intricate mechanism of one's nature, and receives a developing guidance from within in regard to its purification. This purification is an ungrudging rejection of all that seems to conflict

with the peace and purity of the soul—a renunciation which is not at all painful, but rather joyous, spontaneous, enthusiastic. There may be, from time to time, a period when a pang or a wrench is felt in the process of renunciation or some desire or attachment seems to cling on with the tenacity of a leech; but that is usually a passing phase, unless, of course, the inner or higher attraction, which is another name for aspiration, is clouded or obscured, and the consciousness of the sadhaka falls spinning back into the beaten tracks of the old habitual energies

What is of paramount importance in the process of purification as followed in the Integral Yoga is (1) a steadily growing vision of the psychic being or the soul and (2) an implicit faith and trust in the divine guidance. The more one looks within, the more one is enamoured of the soul and its tranquil glory. And to be enamoured of the soul is to tend towards it. When one fixes one's gaze on the immaculate psychic, and contemplates its serene smiling radiance, its intense flaming love for the Divine, its infinite tenderness and sweetness, its boundless patience and forbearance with the evils of earthly life, and its consciousness of unity with all beings and things, one finds, deep in oneself, an iron will to reproduce all that glory in the parts of one's nature. This will to the reproduction of the glory of the psychic in the instrumental nature characterises the follower of the Integral Yoga. He cannot be content with a surface polish and refinement of his nature, nor even with an ethical or religious modification of it which leaves its roots untouched. He wants nothing short of a rebirth of the psychic in his active nature, *dwijatwa*, and that too only as a preliminary purification and transformation leading eventually to the divine supramental perfection. In proportion as the psychic influence permeates the nature and the consciousness of each part of the being is released from the toils of ignorance, a limitless love and devotion for the Divine grows in his being and a corresponding insistence to purify the nature in all its elements. Identifying himself with the psychic being, as much as he can, he looks into his nature, as if he was looking into something outside himself, and is, therefore, much better able than the psychologist or the psycho-analyst to study it in all its protean moods and energies. It is in this identification with the psychic being that the Yogi scores over the psychologist, for it gives him a rare vantage ground, a secure poise, from where he can observe and deal with even the least movements of his nature. The psycho-analyst tries to study human nature from within it, himself a part of it and helplessly subject to its shifting modes. It is, as it were, a study of the sea by one who is himself buffeting with its waves,—a fruitless endeavour. But a Yogi is one who has taken his stand in consciousness upon the shore and, away from the waves and whirlpools, can command a clear view of the sea in front. The psycho-analyst would

do well to take a leaf out of the Yogi's book, if he means to get beyond his tentative empirical methods and shaky hypotheses. He cannot know human nature, discover its secret motor forces and study the subtle inter-relations of its parts, until he has himself struggled out of it and taken his stand upon something that is independent of it and yet its master and guide. What is gleaned by his present empirical methods based upon the quick-sand of sense-data and imaginative and conjectural deductions is, even at its best, a cumulative experience of some of the more or less gross movements of human nature,—an experience which is unavoidably conditioned by the bias of his mind and his limited faculties of observation, reasoning and imagination. His individuality enters so largely into his experiments that it is no wonder that Freud and Adler and Jung and others vary so vitally in their basic concepts and final conclusions.

It may not be long before the earnest students of human psychology discover, as a few of them have already begun to perceive dimly, that there are two indispensable pre-requisites of a faultless study of nature—(1) transcendence and (2) identification. One who has not transcended his own nature, which comes to the same thing as transcending human nature, cannot command a full and clear view of it, and it is not by the normal mental faculties, but by an inner identification that this study can be made to bear perfect fruit. The whole subtle machinery of human nature can best be studied by taking a stable poise beyond it, either behind or above, and projecting a part of one's consciousness into it which, by identification, can precisely and accurately register all its fine and gross vibrations. The knowledge of the self or soul must then precede any true knowledge of nature. It is only in the light and the context of the infinite that the truth of the finite can be properly read. It is the Eternal alone that can explain and justify the temporal. That is why we find such an astonishing unanimity in the essential experiences and discoveries of the yogis and mystics, whose psychological researches proceed upon the granite basis of self-knowledge. If there are differences among them, they are due to their pursuit of different lines of knowledge or to the differing scope and range of their experiences, but not to the fundamental elements of the experiences themselves. Take, for instance, the common postulates of Indian philosophy. the five material elements, the five tanmatras, the three gunas of nature and their intricate interaction, the infinity and immortality of the self etc. There is no vital difference of opinion in regard to these basic truths and realities of existence, because they are truths of universal experience and admit of no doubt and denial. Most of the differences in regard to them are but differences of formulation, of intellectual expression and exposition. When we realise the essential truths, we realise them in the same way, and it is the light of these truths

that irradiates and reveals the reality of all things in the world. But the quintessence of all truths is the Self or Spirit, the sole eternal Reality, and it is only by knowing it, by knowing the omnipresent Atman, that all can be known—*tasmin vijnate sarvamidam vijnatam bhavati*. This is the declaration of ancient knowledge which no science or philosophy can ever challenge with impunity.

When, therefore, we retire into the incandescent background, we find ourselves in a position to watch and study all the mechanism and functioning of our complex nature, and there is no possibility of anything escaping our vision. Not only the surface movements, but also those that are most secret and subtle and elusive, not only the actions and reactions of our nature, but also their remote and recondite causes lie completely bared to our spiritual sight, and we feel that we have the power either to stop them altogether or considerably modify or even transform them. A constant consciousness of our soul or self is a constant guarantee against a blindness to or a false identification with the obscure movements of our lower nature. Poised in the psychic consciousness or even basking in its light, we feel each impure or ignorant movement of our nature, not as the puritan feels it, as something sinful and execrable which has to be stifled or slashed, but rather as a wrong or perverted play of energy casting a sombre shadow upon the glory of the psychic. It is this contrast, this living, poignant contradiction between the freedom, purity, peace and bliss of the psychic being and the shackled littleness and turbidity of our normal nature that supplies the unfailing motive force to the work of yogic purification. For, the psychic being has a will in it, a will of fire to manifest the Divine in its nature, and it cannot rest till it has converted and transformed its ignorant earthly nature into the divine nature.

### The Two Categories of Impurity

When we study the nature of our impurities, we find that they can be divided into two categories, born of two different causes. The first category is derived from the separative ignorance which has been the nature of our past evolution. Every element and every energy of every part of our nature works on the basis of a separative egoism, combining and conflicting with others according as it suits its self-interest, conscious or sub-conscious. This egoistic separativeness generates wrong will and perverse movements, which we call evil, and entails recurrent suffering. Individual human nature, which should be one organic whole moving and acting harmoniously among other individual wholes, is, under the separative influence of the ego, at war with itself and at war with others. This is a prolific source of impurity in the nature and can be eliminated

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only by the recovery of a dynamic consciousness of the unity of all existence

The second category of impurity derives from the successive process of evolution. Life emerges from Matter and is limited and conditioned in its development by the inertia and obscurity of Matter—it cannot blossom in an unconditioned freedom. Its sparkling *elan* is shaded and curbed by the dark weight of Matter. Similarly Mind, evolving from Life, is infected with Life's desires and shaken with its passions. Its intelligence cannot calmly contemplate the truth of existence, its imagination cannot wing straight towards the Infinite, its reason cannot hold the balance even between two contending persons or objects, because of the transfusion of Life's turbidities and Matter's inertia and obscurity into it, and the general sway Life and Matter exercise over it. Each part has, therefore, to be delivered from the cramping hold of the others and given the utmost autonomy to develop in its own natural way, and at the same time in happy and harmonious relations with all. This can be perfectly done only when the Mother's Force begins to act directly and freely in the nature, bringing down more and more of its supramental omnipotence

### The Three Steps of Purification

The beginning of the movement of purification is generally marked by a defiant persistence of the principal impurities, as if they seemed to doubt the sincerity and steadfastness of our will. They persist out of a dogged reluctance of the intransigent vital and general inertia of the physical consciousness, and refuse to cease or change. In the parlance of Yoga it is called the unwillingness of Prakriti to alter the nature of the play in which the being or Purusha has so long been taking delight. She reckons upon a renewal of his past sanction. But if a steady will is bent upon the elimination of the impurities and no indulgence or latitude is given them, they begin to take us seriously and prepare for a fight.

The second step is characterised by their resistance to our will. An unheeding persistence gives place to a determined resistance, sometimes aggressive and sometimes defensive. It implies an alertness and a resentful violence on the part of Prakriti, who begins to perceive that the Purusha in us is irrevocably set upon a shifting of the play, that he wants now a play of light instead of the play of darkness. Here again an intense and inflexible will and a total dependence on the Mother's Force are the best means of conquest: they wear down all resistance.

At the third step, the impurities, worn and worsted, wobble out of the nature, but may still be seen on the prowl in the environing atmosphere. They bide their time, and, taking advantage of the least opening

or any unguarded moment on our part, enter again into our nature. This is called recurrence. It can be very tiresome if we are not always vigilant and surrendered. A complete immunity from this recurrence can be assured only when the impurities have been flung far back into the universal nature from which they came and nothing in our individual nature ever responds to them again in any way.

### **The Initial Basis of Purification**

The initial basis of purification is a poise of quiet detachment from the flux of nature. Identifying oneself with the soul, one must be able to say in regard to the forces of the lower nature: "They are not mine, I have nothing to do with them. They belong to the universal nature of ignorance." This detachment should be accompanied by a withdrawal of sanction from the obscure movements of nature and an uncompromising rejection of them. One must accept only those movements which are conducive to spiritual progress and quietly reject—not repress—the rest. This is the poise of the witness or *sākshī Purusha* who is also the approver and giver of the sanction, *anumantā*. The calm will of the central being, rejecting the ignorant working of the lower nature, is the most important factor in the process of purification as followed in the Integral Yoga. No wrestling with the impurities, no panicky obsession with them, no concession or quarter to them in any form, but a silent, unflagging will of rejection, mighty and masterful in its confident reliance on the Force of the Divine Mother, is the secret of purification. The more calm one is in one's rejection of impurities and withdrawal of sanction from them, the stronger one becomes. The Vaishnavic and Christian pre-occupation with sin and repentance and self-chastisement is a pietistic religious attitude which, though partly successful in exceptional individuals, usually ends by weakening the nature and engendering in it a sort of morbid timidity and inferiority complex. It is far from being a Yogic attitude which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is one of a firm poise in the inalienable purity and freedom of the *Purusha*. Once this untrembling attitude of the detached *Purusha* is resolutely taken and adhered to in the teeth of all persistence and recurrence of the natural impurities, purification will put on the appearance of an automatic catharsis, a spontaneous working out of the wrong movements and erring energies, and a gradual cleansing of nature. What is of capital importance at this stage is a sincere and sustained personal effort to surrender the whole nature to the Mother's Force, so that the Force can enter into the nature and effect the purification in its own infallible way. The sooner the lead in the work of purification is transferred from the *sadhaka's* mind to the Mother's Force, the better for the

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sadhana. But the will of the sadhaka, concentrated upon the purification, must seek a greater and greater attunement with the Will of the Mother through aspiration, rejection of all desires and total surrender. There must be an active participation of the sadhak's will in the Mother's work, for this participation is a very effective collaboration, and hastens all realisation. Detachment, willed co-operation and surrender are the three strands of the initial basis of purification in the Integral Yoga.

### The Final Basis of Purification

As surrender progresses and tends to become integral, the personal effort of the sadhaka gives place to a direct action of the Mother's higher Force. Undisturbed by the mental preferences and vital self-will of the sadhaka, the Force deals freely with the impurities and follows its own inscrutable way of swift and radical purification, the sadhaka's will in tune with the Mother's. The detached, witnessing poise of the Purusha tends to merge into that of the Bhokta (enjoyer) and Ishwara (Lord) of nature, as the union with the Mother progresses. A whirlwind process of purification follows the transfer of the charge of the Yoga into the hands of the Mother,—a process which the human mind can never understand. It takes all the faith of one's being to lend oneself to this immense work of purification, which covers not only the waking and active parts of nature, but also those that are submerged and veiled. "The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine Shakti. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension, the measures of her movement are not its measures. Bewildered by the swift alternation of her many different personalities, her making of rhythms and her breaking of rhythms, her accelerations of speed and her retardations, her varied ways of dealing with the problem of one and of another, her taking up and dropping now of this line and now of that one and her gathering of them together, it will not recognise the way of the Supreme Power when it is circling and sweeping upwards through the maze of the Ignorance to a supernal Light. The Mother is dealing with the Ignorance in the field of the Ignorance . . . Partly she veils and partly she unveils her knowledge and her power, often holds them back from her instruments and personalities and follows that she may transform them the way of the seeking mind, the way of the aspiring psychic, the way of the bathing vital, the way of the imprisoned and suffering physical nature . . . There are conditions that have been laid down by a Supreme Will, there are many tangled knots that have to be loosened and cannot be cut abruptly asunder . . . The Divine Consciousness and Force are there

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and do at each moment the thing that is needed in the conditions of the labour, take always the step that is decreed and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come.”

This is the sovereign movement of purification which goes hand in hand with the developing work of transformation and imperceptibly shades off into it. It is a movement of unravelling the master knots of nature, of healing its basic divisions, of restoring its essential order and harmony and opening all its parts to the supramental afflatus. An exclusive reliance on the Mother's Force and its direct unimpeded and pervasive action in the nature constitute the final basis of purification. If the first basis prepares our liberation, the second consummates it. But liberation is only the initial decisive step in the Integral Yoga, not its culmination. When shuddhi or purification is complete, mukti or liberation is naturally attained; and after liberation there is a divine possession and enjoyment of Nature and its eventual supramental perfection and utilisation as the final object of the soul's incarnation, bhukti and siddhi.

*To be continued*

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\* ‘The Mother’ by Sri Aurobindo.



# THE SCIENTIFIC MIND AND THE MYSTICAL OUTLOOK

K. D. Sethna

The scientific mind and the mystical outlook figure in the popular imagination as eternal enemies. The temper, motive, demand, method and significance of the one are considered the exact contradictory of the other. Both are felt to be important but somehow irreconcilable in ultimate matters. It is worth inquiring whether the supposed irreconcilableness is anything else than a superficial impression and whether the alleged enmity exists beyond a science that does not go far enough and a mysticism that is not sufficiently wide and deep.

## I

We may remark at the very beginning that, historically, science and religion have not always stood in stark opposition. And most significantly the absence of stark opposition has been with regard to the science that is the very foundation of all sciences: physics. What is called classical or Newtonian physics was with Galileo and Kepler and Newton "the thinking of God's thoughts after Him" That is to say, physics was regarded as a discovery, by actual observation and by mathematical calculation, of the processes and laws of matter originating in a Divine Intelligence. In fact, they were considered intelligible precisely because there was not only human intelligence dealing with them but also a Divine Intelligence at their back. Newton, the supreme scientist of the world until Einstein came to share his status, was an extremely religious mind—and this not by dividing science and religion into two distinct compartments which though entirely different were vitally complementary he was religious in the very act of being scientific and not in his extra-scientific hours, much less in spite of his science. Physical Nature as a vast yet closely-knit and basically single-patterned scheme of infinite variety was Newton's world-vision as a scientist. He did not succeed in reducing all material phenomena to a basic single pattern, but his Law of Gravitation operating within the complex of his Laws of Motion went a long way towards it—holding together the smallest particles and the hugest heavenly bodies within the terms of the same mathematical equations. And this sense and discernment of unity and uniformity in the physical universe—this reduction of that universe to a harmonious seizability by the thinking mind which looks always for simple

fundamental all-integrating categories was most religiously meaningful for Newton: it showed him that behind the universe there was one great Mind systematically at work and laying itself out for discovery by its own small and diminished replica that is human rationality.

Nor was this the sole interfusion of religion with science in Newton's attitude and outlook. Religion entered even more directly into his scientific thinking. Everybody knows that he postulated absolute motion, absolute space and absolute time: he said that there was one universal homogeneous extension of space and flow of time, in reference to which there was a motion of things which must be called the true motion as compared to motions that are relative. Nothing that we observe with the senses is ever completely at rest: what seems at rest is so only in relation to what moves faster, it is itself in motion relatively to what is still slower. To find absolute motion, the real as opposed to the apparent, we must have as a first condition, according to Newton, a perfectly immobile frame or standard of reference present in all places, an absolute space. But he realised that there was no means of directly observing motion in absolute space. He wrote: "It is indeed a matter of great difficulty to discover, and effectually to distinguish, the true motion of particular bodies from the apparent; because the parts of that immovable space, in which those motions are performed, do by no means come under the observation of our senses." To give empty and absolute space the logicality it lacked from the viewpoint of sense-observation Newton introduced into science the religious concept of God's omnipresence in a literal sense. The diary of his friend and student, David Gregory, leaves no doubt that the unmoving uniform universal presence of God in the physical cosmos was the essence of his absolute space in reference to which absolute motion would occur. Of course the knowledge of absolute motion can be only with God whose being is its basis, but, as its postulation was for Newton a necessity of reason, both God's being and consciousness were integral part of Newtonian physics!

Today physics is Einsteinian and not Newtonian. Newton's absolutes have gone by the board. But Einstein, the exemplar *par excellence* of scientist in the post-Newtonian era, does not reject everything religious in connection with science. In his theory of the four-dimensional continuum of fused space and time, the new absolute entity replacing Newton's absolutes, he himself does not see any religious concept involved. No spiritual or mystical idea is acknowledged by him as integral part of his physics. There he differs from Newton's position. Though here too he does not rule spiritual interpretations of his continuum out of court so much as confesses inability to understand their relevance and though he is even willing to grant that the inability may argue a lack in himself and not necessarily want of validity in the interpretations, the fact remains that he the exem-

plary scientist refrain from subscribing to them. But all the same he no less than Newton looks on scientific truth as rooted in the existence of a Divine Intelligence. He goes further and states that a certain type of religious feeling in face of the universe is the real fountain-head of the scientific urge: in this connection he has said. "The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the sower of all true art and science." A God beyond the cosmos and working "miracles" or interfering with the cosmic formula is tabooed by him: Einstein has no proper philosophical grasp of transcendence and is evidently repelled by the too anthropomorphic conceptions current in the popular creeds. But a God *à la* Spinoza, a Pantheos, is in his view a prerequisite of science. For science is to him the discovery of the order, the system, the logic, the reason embodied in phenomena: it is the finding of the mathematical mind expressive in the constitution of Nature. A profound and enthusiastic sense of a sovereign structuring and ordering Intelligence in the stuff and movement of the universe is, for Einstein, the core of true religiousness and such "cosmic religious emotion", as he calls it, is also the spring behind scientific research. Correctly speaking, this emotion is, according to him, strongest and most pure in the scientific researcher, for he has the acutest and widest feeling of the structure and order of the world—namely, the feeling of precise mathematical relations and laws: the scientist is the best mystic. And, in Einstein's eyes, no scientist can be of the profoundest calibre unless he is a mystic, explicitly or implicitly. For, pioneer creation in scientific thought can never come without terrific exertion and intense devotion and a mighty and heroic turning away from common pleasures and immediate practical life—and all this single-minded idealistic pursuit of truth can never be possible without "cosmic religious emotion." "What deep faith," exclaims Einstein, "in the rationality of the structure of the world, what a longing to understand even a small glimpse of the reason revealed in the world, there must have been in Kepler and Newton!"

Einstein sums up his notion of science's dependance on response to a Superior Intelligence mathematically operative in the cosmos: "Science without religion is lame." And he goes on to state also that the scientific truth discovered on the spur of the religious or mystical feeling has in science itself no rational justification for its discovery: science cannot even provide the value of the very striving which constitutes it, the striving for a knowledge of physical truth. Why should we pursue this truth at even enormous self-sacrifice as if it were precious in itself? Science provides no answer: it can give us only the conceptual comprehension of the reciprocal relations among observed facts. To find real values, real norms, to arrive at a real support for our highest scientific aspirations we have to resort to the religious sense. And how does this sense find them? In Einstein's own

words: "They do not come into existence as a result of argument and proof, but instead by revelation, and through the actions of strong personalities. One should not attempt to prove them, but rather to recognise their essence as clearly and purely as possible."

These words set up a connection with another aspect of Einstein's "religiousness". For, the method that is set over against argument and proof is akin to what in another context he terms "intuition". And that context is of central importance. It is concerned with the discovery of the basic axioms of physics. Einstein says that these axioms are not reached by generalising from observed facts: the Theory of Relativity has decisively shown this. Experience may suggest certain lines of thought but by no process of induction the fundamental laws are derived. They are what Einstein calls "free creations" of the mathematical mind. They are a visionary structure and their contact with observed facts comes at the end of a long chain of deduction: it is the end-terms that are tested by experiment. Of course experiment has the last word, there must be observable facts answering to these end-terms if the free creations are to be accepted as valid. But the creations themselves cannot be inferred from experience. "There is no logical path to these laws", writes Einstein, "only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them."

So an authentic power of direct divination, a faculty not only supra-sensible but also supra-logical is granted by Einstein in even his scientific capacity. And although it is hedged round by several conditions, so that it is not taken to be a quite sovereign power of seizing truth, a most significant and far-reaching pronouncement is made when Einstein declares: "In a certain sense I hold it true that pure thought can grasp reality, as the ancients dreamed." This means that, while Einstein himself does not lend his authority to any spiritual or mystical interpretation of his theory or see any religious concept figuring in his postulates and in this respect differs from Newton, he definitely makes something of a spiritual or mystical mode of mental activity a fundamental ingredient of scientific methodology.

Here is a permanent pointer in the body of science itself in the direction of spirituality. Elucidating the development of science, Einstein has shown that the pointer was always there and that even the Newtonian concepts were "free creations" at bottom but that the pointer was clearly defined only with the advent of the General Theory of Relativity. After that theory had been formulated, scientific methodology, once and for all and quite openly, made room for the factor of intuition or divination at its very centre. No matter what limiting provisos may be set up about this factor, its essential character remains the same as in the philosophy of the ancients to whom Einstein refers in his dictum about pure thought and reality. Its admission, therefore, is a major revolution in the relations bet-

ween spirituality and science. It renders Einstein, for all his disavowal of a direct penetration of his theory by a religious concept and his non-committal attitude to spiritual views of his continuum, a more effective "mysticiser" of science than Newton.

Unfortunately, he is himself debarred from realising the full import of his rôle by his belief that the only way to knowledge, to truth, is the scientific way, of which the way of physics is the prototype. Even intuition or divination is regarded by him as never leading to knowledge and truth except when it has a mathematical form and is operative with scientific concepts. With this prejudice he pairs his epigram "Science without religion is lame" with a complementary phrase: "Religion without science is blind."

However, there is no whittling down of the typical character of the intuitive act. Between reality and the scientific mind there is, in Einstein's view, a "pre-established harmony" such as Leibnitz posited, by which after patient endeavour the scientific investigator can win to a knowledge of reality's depths: intuition is the instrument which his mind employs to disclose this intrinsic accord in an ever more profound degree until the whole and final truth stands bare. Indeed, in science the term "truth" has no assured meaning for Einstein without the "pre-established harmony". For, "truth" resides in fundamental theory's comprehension of the universe, but how are we to account for the universe's lending itself to this comprehension? Einstein once remarked, "The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible to our mind." To him the only explanation is "pre-established harmony" progressively revealed by intuition. Also, he cannot conceive the disinterested and self-sacrificing passion for truth which distinguishes the mighty pioneers of scientific research except as inspired by a faith that such a harmony exists to fulfil their terrific efforts and give them an insight into the Wisdom, the Beauty embodied in the world-structure.

Einstein's high sense of the intuitive act is not shared by the Positivists who choose to avoid words like "intuition" and "divination" and prefer to speak only of an enumeration of possibles and alternatives, a number of guesses out of which one is accepted with the aid of experimental verification. They also reduce the accepted alternative to the status of a purely subjective or rather inter-subjective construct, a thought-device for our own convenience, which has no "mystical" element in it like the grasping of reality by pure thought. And their argument is that it is evidently a construct of this kind since it is often far removed from phenomenal experience and is connected with it only at the terminal of a long chain of deduction from the fundamental axioms. But the very distance, the extreme length of the deductive chain, between verifiable propositions and the original theory indicates the peculiar nature of the theoretical process. For, while

one may give, with the Positivists, some colour of facility to those theories which seem near to sense-experience and look very much like inductions from empirical observations, the facile view is all too inadequate when the theory is far removed from phenomenal appearance. There is no question then of guessing in the ordinary way. And let us not forget that the gap which separates reality as conceived by theory and reality as perceived in empirical experience increases as theory copes with more and more empirical data. For example, the Riemannian "curved" four-dimensional continuum by which the General Theory of Relativity coped with the data of gravitation receded immeasurably more beyond observed phenomena than the semi-Euclidian or "hyperbolic" continuum of space-time by which the Special Theory dealt with uniform straight-line motion unaffected by a gravitational field. The concept of the latter, in its final synthesis of generalisations, is sufficiently distant from phenomena: that of the former is removed from them by a hiatus which is stupendous. The way to such a concept is very hard indeed. no logic, however subtle or concealed, prompts it from the empirical side, it cannot be derived in any way by implicative generalisation from phenomena or by probability or other inductive formulation. As Einstein puts it, "There is no method capable of being learnt and systematically applied so that it leads to the goal" of the theoretical physicist. To call the faculty which strives towards that remote goal a faculty of guess-work is to be ridiculous. No fundamental theorist, using guess-work, could go anywhere: it would not be worth his while to even try to go anywhere. Whether he errs or proves right, he has to attempt to use another faculty: his attempt may be futile but he has not the ghost of a chance to be correct if he does not strain towards an act of consciousness which can only be designated as intuitive in the authentic sense of direct insight into reality's nature. In other words, the act must be "mystical" though it has not explicitly to do with the spiritual contents of mysticism.

And this signifies that the fundamental concepts are not purely subjective constructs—utilitarian tools of the human mind and nothing more. Einstein, no doubt, calls them in one context "fictions", but with no derogatory motive, for he also calls them "inventions" and "creations": what he intends to convey is that they are not a datum of observed factuality, not a general summing-up of the empirical behaviour of phenomena but discovered by a play of the unrestricted imagination which takes the physically "given" as just a vaulting-board for its visionary leap. The leap, according to him, is for seizing the real in all its depth, for penetrating into truth, for arriving at concepts which are grounded in Nature's ultimate structure. Its arrival at a conceptual picture so different from the picture provided by empirical experience does not render the theory a subjective convenience: it only proves how different ultimate reality is from that experience.

Because of this difference the Einsteinian "intuition" becomes all the more a mystical activity. It not only functions mystically but also leads to a reality which is mystical in so far as it is not in the least limited by phenomenal fact except that the theorist "takes off" from the field of such fact and "touches down" there for final proof. A complete freedom the intuition has for presenting the most fantastic-seeming concept, the most unphysical-appearing formula: the only conditions to be fulfilled are that the deductions from the first concepts and formulas—from the "free creations"—should be strictly logical and lead to propositions open to physical tests. The length between the axioms and these propositions can be as great as one wishes. Indeed, the ideal is that the length should be very great, for it is found that then alone the largest body of phenomenal fact is comprehended and the simplest and fewest basic axioms compatible with this body are creatable, so that the utmost unity-in-multiplicity is achieved. The ideal is to go on increasing the length between the two ends of the theory and further and further "mysticise" those axioms. The function of the Einsteinian intuition is to reach mystically an extremity of what is best described as quantitative or mathematical mysticism.

It may perhaps be doubted whether one can legitimately speak of a mysticism that is quantitative or mathematical in the terms in which ultimate reality is described. The question is founded in some confusion of thought. It is the physical universe that is being explored by science and it is the basic structure of this universe that is sought to be conceived: the method of exploration is mathematical and also the conception of the basic structure has to be quantitative. Science cannot, by its very character, give us the living conscious reality of the Divine Existence which is the spiritual seeker's objective and which he seeks by non-mathematical means. But if the Divine Existence is, as the spiritual view implies, what has emanated or expressed itself as the physical universe, it automatically becomes, in the form of that universe, subject to quantitative treatment if such treatment is desired as by science. A mathematical exploration of the Divine Existence in its self-figuration as the physical cosmos is not irrelevant to mysticism. So, when the quantitative or mathematical terms in which the basic structure of physical reality is satisfactorily described are such that they carry an extreme freedom from limitation by the world of empirical experience and stand at a very great distance from this world's contents and permit the most unphysical-seeming formula they can legitimately be spoken of as, in a general sense, mystical.

Of course, if the quantitative structural description is itself demonstrated to have a mystical import—for instance, if the four-dimensional continuum of fused space and time is shown to be a mathematical replica of the mystic's *Totum Simul* (All-at-once) or *Nunc Stans* (Ever-standing

Now), the mysticism to which the Einsteinian intuition mystically leads would be more explicitly indicated. But that explicitness of indication is not our concern here. We are dealing with scientific pointers to mysticism which arise from a supreme scientist's own admissions and contentions.

What remains to be commented on is some further statements by Einstein on the intuitive act. An argument against his contention that pure thought can grasp reality is the question: Can there not be any number of systems of theoretical physics or at least more than one system with equal capacity to correlate observations? If the answer is "Yes", we have an arbitrariness which induces us to look upon all systems as no more than subjective constructs, speculative conveniences for ordering empirical material: there would be no unique intuitive correspondence to the secret structure of the real. Einstein opines that to decide the question we must glance at the history of physics. He says: "At any given moment, out of all conceivable constructions, a single one has always proved itself immeasurably superior to the rest. Nobody who has really gone deeply into the matter will deny that in practice the world of phenomena uniquely determines the theoretical system, in spite of the fact that there is no logical bridge between phenomena and their theoretical principles." In other words, there is in the world of phenomena a particular structure which rules out the claim of more than one theory to be competent to correlate empirical data: somewhere or other all theories fall short except that which harmonises with reality: in every age, in respect to the amount of empirical data available, there has been found to be a single valid theory. And history even indicates what sort of theory fulfils the function of uniquely harmonising with the fundamental structure of the universe. Einstein writes: "Our experience hitherto justifies us in believing that nature is the realisation of the simplest conceivable mathematical ideas." Of course, "simplest" does not signify for Einstein that the ideas are easy to understand or are expressed in equations we can tackle without difficulty. The ideas of Relativity Theory are neither. Simplicity means, in the first place, the minimum set of postulates for embracing the widest possible range of empirical data: no limit is put to the possible complexity of the ideas in the postulates themselves. Simplicity means, in the second place, the simplest form of mathematical equations possible for those ideas. Simplicity connotes the utmost logical economy compatible with the widest applicability to facts. It is, properly understood, Occam's Razor: "entities should not be unnecessarily multiplied." It is a criterion of essential rationality—eminently in keeping with Einstein's belief in a superior Intelligence mathematically manifest in the world.

Out of the historical perspective, however, emerges a point to which we have already referred when mentioning intuition's rôle *vis-à-vis*



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“pre-established harmony”: the change of theory, age after age. Einstein himself avers: “We must always be ready to change our notions of physical reality—that is to say, the axiomatic structure of physics—in order to do justice to perceived facts in the most logically perfect way.” Does this imply that every notion of physical reality is a bit of complicated fancy with no designation in it of the character of this reality? What then becomes of the intuitive act? Can an intuitive act lead to a theory which must be supplanted sooner or later? What happens to the alleged truth discovered by it? There is, for Einstein, a non-sceptical answer to each of the queries. Our scientific notions give us more and more adequate conceptions of reality’s structure: the degrees of adequacy do not render them elaborate fantasies. And the act of consciousness by which they are reached does not cease to be intuitive in the genuine sense just because they are not final. there is no other name except intuition for the way in which they are arrived at in order to correlate observations. The supplanting of successive intuitions is inevitable since the intuitive act is performed not sovereignly but within the context of certain data: as soon as the context critically widens a new intuition has to come into play. The alleged truth discovered by each intuition remains a truth, though not the whole truth, for truth is adaptive to the state of mind at work upon reality’s depths and what makes for truth is the profundity of the method of probing Nature—the intuitive method.

Einstein’s whole position, either explicitly stated by him or gathered from attitudes implicit in his words, is, within the scientific predisposition and bias of his intellect, both consistent and strong. And it is highly *en rapport* with the mystic’s *weltanschauung*. It proves that the scientific genius at its acme goes very far indeed not merely to be neutral towards the spiritual outlook but actually to permit, if not provide, to it a most helpful climate.

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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

### SRI AUROBINDO'S "SAVITRI": AN APPROACH AND A STUDY

By A. B. PURANI

(Sri Aurobindo Karyalaya, Anand. Rs. 6-8)

It goes without saying that to an epic of the scope and calibre of *Savitri* we need some detailed expository guide, especially in our first approach to this massive work. And what could fit this need better than a clear, thorough and scholarly study of the first three Books, by Mr. A. B. Purani who is admittedly an able exponent of this subject? It is important to know the background theme—the *leitmotif*, one might say, of the whole symphonic arrangement—in order to understand where we are, and whither we are being carried at each step in this divine drama. And this the author admirably achieves with his explanatory essays followed by the detailed summary, Canto by Canto, of the first three Books (Part I of *Savitri*).

First of all we are presented with a series of five essays which aim to put *Savitri* in its true place amongst the world's great literature, revelatory (such as the Vedic hymns and Upanishads), as well as the purely heroic literary (such as the great epics of the distant past). In the introduction the general scope of the work is surveyed. We might say at the outset that sooner or later *Savitri* must be recognised as one of the great contributions to English-written literature of all times. And if it is not yet accepted as "English" literature by the insular-minded, at least it must be admitted to be a most valuable contribution to the language. More discerning critics have seen it as heralding a new and greater Dawn in world Poetry, wherein the English language has become universalised, and indeed revealed as capable of ushering that new Spirit into the world. For it discloses the vast unexplored power of the language to clothe the highest spiritual imagery in a direct form of translucent beauty.

An important note on the symbolism in *Savitri* is given prominence in

this study, since that element plays a very significant role in the unfolding of this epic drama. The sub-title of course describes *Savitri* as a "legend and a symbol", and both these aspects are adequately dealt with in the Introduction. Here the symbolism is considered in two respects, firstly in relation to the symbolical tradition in English poetry (particularly of the religious and mystical type of Bunyan and Blake), and secondly in its close connection with the rich symbolism of the Vedas. To illustrate this second point a number of translations from the Rig Veda are placed alongside of corresponding passages from *Savitri*, showing that many images used therein are purely Vedic in their inspiration. The theme of the "legend" forms the central part of the Introduction. The background story as it appears in the Mahabharata is merely a framework for its fuller treatment in Sri Aurobindo's epic. The necessary modification to the original story is due to the fact that the epic is the unfolding of a real spiritual experience which has a present wide cosmic bearing, and the original story is only used in so far as it coincides with or is parallel to the destiny of man and the inner crisis that faces the present-day world life. The principle of Woman as the Divine Saviour—filled with the Beauty and Grace of God—is the significant and soul-stirring fact of both the original legend and Sri Aurobindo's epic, though in the latter the fact functions on a very different plane.

How *Savitri* compares with other great epics of the world is the theme of the first essay (following on the Introduction). Here a detailed comparison is made with the Indian epics of the past,—the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Bhagavata. These epic poems were fashioned to serve a greater and completer national and cultural function than the more historic-legendary epics of Greece and Rome. In a similar way we might say that *Savitri* is fashioned to serve a world-wide spiritual awakening and uplift of man's consciousness: to give the world a directly realisable actuality of the highest, widest and deepest spiritual experiences on which man may embark.

*Savitri* as poetic expression is taken up as the final portion of Mr. Purani's study. This is preceded by a thorough and very sympathetic survey of modern English poetry, particularly bearing on its inner motives. One can only say that the author is very generous in his award of a 'future' for the modernist poets. He picks out passage after passage from contemporary verse, and shows how light-gleams are even breaking through what would appear on the surface to be a morass of obscurity and introvert expression. What modern poetry has been vaguely and confusedly endeavouring to express—such as a realistic and dynamic imagery, certain inner psychological tendencies, an attempt to objectivise inner states and a seek-

ing after the mystic and creative power of the Word—are all brought out in their fullest and most powerful form in Sri Aurobindo's sublime epic. This latter indeed uplifts the whole of modern poetry out of the bog in which it has sunk,— if modern poets would only realise this fact. Mr. Purani brings out many striking comparisons between the leading exponents of modernist poetry and *Savitri*, showing that Sri Aurobindo was fully alive to the modern experiments and trends, while at the same time elevating their groping expression into a powerful and revealing poetic style. This is not surprising when we consider Sri Aurobindo's wide and life-long interest in poetry,—becoming most evident (apart from his own compositions) in his penetrating series of critical essays on the then contemporary trends and future possibilities in poetry, which appeared in the old monthly magazine *Arya*. Here Sri Aurobindo indicated certain more expansive lines of poetic expression which he has himself subsequently worked on and carried forward. It is good that Mr. Purani quotes an illuminating paragraph from *The Future Poetry* of Sri Aurobindo, to show how the poet of the future must explore the vast supernature, not as a symbol or as a mystic remoteness, as was done in the past, but “with the close directness and reality that comes from an intimate vision and feeling” (Sri Aurobindo). Certainly *Savitri* is Sri Aurobindo's own contribution to this ideal. Mr. Purani aptly concludes that *Savitri*, which takes as its theme the life of man and the movement of his soul over all cosmic planes, springs from the poet's vision “like a searchlight turning its revealing light from plane to plane where it brings into view worlds of being, unknown to the ordinary gaze, their working and their influences upon earth and man, and the part they play in the evolution from the Inconscient to the Superconscient”. Thus the whole cosmos is viewed, or rather reviewed,—including man, the cosmic Powers and Nature in its fullest sense. This is no small task for the reader to grapple with, but absolutely necessary if one is to gain a full understanding of this great epic.

It must be said that Mr. Purani's “study and approach” is a valuable possession for the student—and the growing generation must surely take up the serious study of *Savitri*, as even the finest flower of contemporary Indian poetry. But it also forms an indispensable companion for the general reader. Above all the detailed summary of the first three Books of *Savitri*, which occupies a good half of his volume, is as necessary a guide for us as is a map in journeying through new and unfamiliar territory.

N. PEARSON.

## POETRY AND FAITH

By AUGUSTUS RALLI

Bodley Head, London. Pp. 160. Price 16s. 6d.

Materialism has been trying to make more and more "bulges" in the world and wise people are perturbed by its deleterious push into poetry, criticism and literature in general. Philip Henderson's book on Literature is an example of the narrow view that literature is purely dependent on economic conditions. The so-called insistence on realism is another result from the same cause. The soul, the spirit, quality in general, are left aside, if not altogether cut out, in the obsession with objects, facts and material things. Also, the fact that life is the vale of soul-making, as Keats so beautifully put it, has no meaning for the critic with the materialist outlook. And such critics are so insistent and vociferous that the atmosphere today may be said to be too much vitiated by their unfortunate attitude of mind. It is against this disastrous position that Mr. Ralli's extremely thoughtful and well proportioned book is written.

The book may be divided into two sections. The two long essays Imagination and Reality and The Approach to Faith present the theoretical position, and the studies of Homer, Virgil, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth give the illustration and application of the theoretical position. Why is it that there is so much insistence on the material at the present time? Mr. Ralli suggests his explanation at the very beginning itself. He says, "The spiritual and economic troubles from which the world is suffering react upon each other. Anxiety for self-preservation depresses the spirit, and the depressed spirit magnifies the importance of material things." Further, leisure, silence, solitude and romance are necessary for the growth of the soul, and these are lacking in modern life. Hence that great faculty of imagination which is the thing in poetry is starved, and with that there is a whole empire of loss in the poetic perception. The result is a false claim of reality. Says Ralli, "We often hear people say with an air of superiority that they have learnt to look on things as they are. They merely admit themselves to be reverting to the beast and renouncing education and decency." He adds a sentence that educa-

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tionists and others will do well to ponder over: "Education should teach us to see things through a veil of idealism and imagination."

This last sentence shows that though this book is primarily concerned with poetry it is much more than that. It is concerned with life itself. At the same time it recognizes that "imaginative truth need not be moral truth" What the critic has to do is "to make a kind of Promethean theft of imaginative fire from the poets who live in the heaven of the sun and bestow it upon benighted mankind." That is a sentence which may give the unimpression that the poet is apart from life, that he lives in his ivory tower. But the fact is very much otherwise. The great poets have been intimately concerned with life. As the author shows in his essay on the approach to faith, knowledge by itself is barren; it must be related to action, to work. "Man must work to secure the enjoyment which is part of the environment he has to conquer" In discussing Homer, Ralli points out that Homer "is as much concerned with active, pulsing life as Shakespeare." But Homer and Shakespeare, Dante and Milton and Wordsworth while they have their feet on the earth are at the same time able to soar higher. The test of a mind's quality is the distance it can travel from the fact and yet remain true to itself. Chekhov defined culture as that which makes the heart ache for what the eye does not see

The specially, or truly, poetic treatment shows that there is something truer than the material world. After a running, brief commentary on Shakespeare's plays Ralli says, "The drama is not concerned with the world hereafter, yet from the mystery-silences that occur in reading Shakespeare the thought is born that the love of our fellow creatures is neither vain nor transitory, that there is something in the universe that justifies the fine frenzy of Romeo and Juliet, sympathises with Malvolio's fallen hopes, or Shylock's ill-treatment or Antony's defeat—that if we put our trust in human love we shall find our souls."

P L. STEPHEN.

# SHAKESPEARE : THE MAN AND HIS WORK

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

*Continued from previous issue*

Towards the close of the 19th century, Shakespeare criticism and Shakespearian scholarship seemed to have achieved something like sureness and stability. Even as the Victorians believed that Utopia was just round the corner, the Shakespearian scholars too must have fondly believed or hoped that there was little more to be done in the field. There appeared, in 1875, Dowden's *Shakespeare: His Mind and Art*, justly described by J. Isaacs as "the first book in English to give anything like a unified and rounded picture of the whole achievement of the dramatist."\* The arrangement of the plays by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio (1623) gives no clue to the order in which Shakespeare had written them. It was Malone who first set himself the task of ascertaining the order. The researches of later scholars (Furnivall, Fleay, Herzberg, Conrad and the rest of them) and the enunciation and application of the so-called metrical tests helped to define with reasonable certainty the chronology of the plays. "Chaos gave way to order; and, for the first time, critics became able to judge, not only of the individual works, but of the whole succession of the works of Shakespeare."† Many critics turned these results to capital use—and Dowden most of all. His "Four Period" theory received general acceptance, while his compact *Primer* brought his conclusions within the reach of the school-boy and common reader alike. The Cambridge Shakespeare, edited by Glover, Clark and Wright, had in the meantime achieved what was thought to be the definitive text of the plays, and indeed its vogue as the "Globe" Shakespeare has been truly phenomenal. Further, Sir Sidney Lee's *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1898) and A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* seemed almost to strike the note of finality and fulfilment. Was the subject exhausting itself, after all?

At the turn of the century, then, there appeared to be a broad measure

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\* Granville-Barker & Harrison, *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, p 301.

† Lytton Strachey, *Literary Essays* (1948), p 1

of agreement in the divers realms of Shakespearian scholarship and criticism. Shakespeare, it was assumed, was born on 23 April at 1564 at Stratford-upon-Avon; he married Anne Hathaway of Shottery in 1582; a daughter, Susanna, was born next year; and the twins, Hamnet and Judith, followed in 1585. Between 1585 and 1592 were the "lost years" of Shakespeare's life, and it was anybody's guess how Shakespeare spent his time during this period. It was assumed, too, on the strength of Ben Jonson's ambiguous phrase, that Shakespeare had but "small Latin and less Greek". Besides, Shakespeare must obviously have been a high-spirited and impetuous lad (didn't he rush into marriage at 18 with a girl 8 years his senior?)—he was involved in a case of deer-stealing in Sir Thomas Lucy's park—he didn't or couldn't get on well with his wife—and he left Stratford for London to start life anew, probably after the birth of the twins in 1585. The next sure landmark was Greene's jealous outburst in 1592:

" . . . there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Iohannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey."

Since Malone's time, this was taken to mean that Shakespeare had freely lifted verses from Greene and probably from others, and that Greene's indictment was that this actor-playwright was both unoriginal and vain. Anyhow, by 1592 Shakespeare was in London, and was thriving. It was clear that he had begun his career as a reviser of other people's plays, if not actually as a plagiarist: hence the "Workshop" hypothesis put forward by Dowden. Circumstances favoured Shakespeare: Greene, Marlowe, Kyd—they died one after another; and by 1595 the "University Wits" were either dead or were comparatively silent; Jonson, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher hadn't yet arrived; and so the interim was Shakespeare's, and he pressed his advantage and exploited his opportunities to the full. He wrote the Histories and the Comedies; he plunged into "the depths" of Tragedy; and presently, by an effort of will as it were, he landed "on the heights" of the Romances of the "last period." He bought property, retired to Stratford, and died there in 1616.

Years passed. Several of Shakespeare's plays were in circulation in the form of the Quartos which had been published in Shakespeare's life-time. Jaggard republished some of the plays in 1619, and *Othello* came out in 1622. It was, however, Heminge and Condell, Shakespeare's friends and fellow-actors, who undertook the monumental task of collect-



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ing all his plays and publishing them together. The (First) Folio of 1623 was the impressive result of their labours. In their address "to the Great Variety of Readers", Heminge and Condell claimed unique authority for their edition of the plays:

"It had been a thing, we confess, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings, But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to have collected & publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious impostors, that expos'd them "

This was taken to mean that the editors had branded all the Quartos as "stolne and surreptitious", although closer scrutiny showed that some of the Quartos had been practically reprinted in the Folio. Evidently, Heminge and Condell had protested too much. This, added to Greene's outburst and the interpretation that Malone and his successors had put upon it, made scholars question the authority of the Folio itself. How much of the "Workshop" period had been included by Heminge and Condell? How much of other people's work had Heminge and Condell passed off as Shakespeare's? The country lad with "small Latin and less Greek" couldn't have written in their entirety *Henry VI*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *Titus Andronicus* and other early plays which are far more tinged with classicism than the great Comedies and Tragedies. We had better confine our attention to the 7 or 8 great Tragedies, the tetralogy consisting of *Richard II*, 1 and 2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, and the Comedies and the Romances: here was the real Shakespeare, the eternal and transcendental Shakespeare.

Even as "orthodoxy" was thus defining itself, the other doxies started lifting their tails and gleefully wagging them. If Stratford-Shakespeare was but a country lad, with small Latin and less Greek, he certainly couldn't have written the plays; somebody else—Lord Bacon, Lord Oxford, or some other nobleman—must have written them! The Baconians are by no means hushed up yet, and in fact the immediate predecessor to the Tudor Shakespeare, also published by Collins, used to carry a note on the Baconian heresy which for a time must have enjoyed considerable vogue.

While the Baconians and the other cranky constellations, never very bright, were growing dimmer every day, the 20th century revolution in

Shakespearean scholarship and criticism started in other quarters. In 1904, Lytton Strachey attacked, in the course of a brilliant essay, the main assumptions behind Dowden's "Four Period" theory. E.E. Stoll in America and Levin Schucking in Germany raised the banner of revolt against Romantic criticism, which had had an almost continuous run from Morgann (1777) to Bradley (1904). On the other hand, Frank Harris gave full rein to his lurid imagination and made a fantastic jumble of drama, poetry, and poetolatry. The crystallizing certitudes of 19th century Shakespeare criticism thus suddenly underwent a rapid dissolution to the discomfiture of orthodoxy.

It was nevertheless in the apparently arid field of textual criticism that the most revolutionary, as also the most fruitful, discoveries were made. The great names here are A. W. Pollard, W. W. Greg, R. B. McKerrow, Dover Wilson and Peter Alexander. Heminge and Condell's reference to the "stolne and surreptitious" copies had been too readily or lazily taken to imply a condemnation of all the Quartos—a double lapse because some of the Quartos were not only good in themselves but had also been practically reproduced in the Folio. In his *Shakespeare's Folios and Quartos* (1909) and *Shakespeare's Fight with Pirates* (1915), Pollard earnestly addressed himself to this problem and persuasively made out a case for separating the "good" goats from the "bad" sheep, and also put forth the view—now universally accepted—that Heminge and Condell's detraction of the Quartos must have applied only to the four "bad" ones—*Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. The 14 "good" Quartos, on the contrary, were regularly entered in the Stationers' Registers, and had presumably received the personal sanction, if not supervision, of Shakespeare himself. The claim of Heminge and Condell had thus meant no more than the substitution of the authoritative texts for the mangled texts in the "bad" Quartos. While Pollard laid the foundations of the new bibliographical and textual study of Shakespeare, Percy Simpson in his monograph on Shakespearean Punctuation (1910) made the useful distinction between grammatical and playhouse punctuation, instances of the latter being abundant in the Quartos and Folios, and Sir E. Maunde Thompson, in his study of Shakespeare's handwriting (1916), submitted the MS of *Sir Thomas More*, now in the British Museum, to a rigorous analysis in the light of our knowledge of Shakespeare's known signatures, and concluded that three pages in the MS are definitely in Shakespeare's handwriting.

Greene's fulmination against Shakespeare had for long given currency

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*Pericles* (1609) was another "bad" Quarto, the play was not included in F1

to the view that Shakespeare had begun his career as a dramatist as a reviser or lifter of other people's work. The 3 Parts of *Henry VI* were among the plays usually named as containing very little of Shakespeare's own work. In 1594 and 1595 had appeared respectively *The First Part of the Contention between the two famous houses of Yorke and Lancaster* and *The true tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*, neither giving an indication of the author's name. Critics and editors had accordingly supposed that these were the originals of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*. In 1924, Peter Alexander published two papers in *The Times Literary Supplement*, which he later elaborated into the monograph *Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III'* (1929). Alexander had been put on the right track by his own teacher, the late Dr. J.S. Smart, but this in no wise diminishes the value of his own researches leading to the conclusion that *The Contention* and *The True Tragedie*, far from being Peele's or Greene's or Marlowe's work which Shakespeare had licked into the shapes of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, were really no more than "bad" Quartos of these plays. Alexander sustained his argument with great force and subtlety, and concluded by declaring that the 1594 and 1595 Quartos were only "pirated versions of 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, put together by two of the leading players in Pembroke's Company. . . These actors had in their possession certain manuscripts or portions of them; and they were no doubt helped in places by some of their fellows; but what they chiefly relied on was the memory, sometimes the possession, of their own parts, and the recollection of the plays as a whole that remained with them from frequent rehearsals and performances."\* Alexander similarly sought to prove, in the course of an article published in 1926 in *The Times Literary Supplement*, that the anonymous Quarto of *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594), was also a "bad" Quarto and not, as had been supposed hitherto, the source of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. This gives us eight "bad" Quartos in all—*Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives*, *Hamlet*, *Pericles*, *The Contention*, *The True Tragedie* and *A Shrew*. It is not unlikely that *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (1591) is yet another "bad" Quarto, making a total of nine.

Greene's reference to the "upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers" had long been wrongly supposed to apply to the playwright Shakespeare, and not, as now seems clear, to the actor. But ideas, however mistakenly entertained at first, often harden in course of time into definite mental habits or stratify into layer on layer of mounting absurdity. Even when

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\* *Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III'*, p 116 Alexander writes in his *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1939) that "the first to prove that *The Contention* and *True Tragedie* are no more than Bad Quartos of 2 and 3 *Henry VI* was Thomas Kenny in his *The Life of William Shakespeare*, 1864" But this book is little known, and Alexander himself hadn't read it in 1929

the premises are shown to be false, or not self-evident, the conclusions are made to support cloud-capped edifices of learned argument and wild conjecture. Shakespeare had begun as a dramatist by vamping Greene, Peele, Kyd, Marlowe; revision and collaboration were often resorted to in Shakespeare's time, and Heminge and Condell had protested too much. The Folio of 1623 was thus too inflated a mass to be accepted in its entirety as the authentic Shakespeare Canon. The methods of Sherlock Holmes had to be continuously and cunningly pursued before the truth—the whole truth—about the Canon could emerge. And so the disintegrators of the Folio joined issue with the Idolaters, and a veritable Homeric contest followed.

J.M. Robertson was the most outstanding, as he was also the most thoroughgoing, disintegrator of his time. With his many-sided equipment, he applied chronological, phraseological and metrical clues, contrasted what he thought were disparate styles in the plays, and, bearing in mind the supposed pattern of Shakespeare's own characteristic style, distributed different portions of different plays among the various Elizabethan dramatists. The process is a terribly complicated one, but the main conclusions are clear enough. Marlowe's hand was in *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*. Peele was largely responsible for *Romeo and Juliet*, Chapman was the man behind the "problem plays"; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was mainly the work of Greene. Shakespeare couldn't just have imitated these dramatists, as other critics sometimes alleged; Shakespeare wasn't given to "apery", and his own style was so distinctive that it couldn't be missed! Robertson's humourless researches landed him at last in the conclusion that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was Shakespeare's "first, and indeed only complete work."

Sir Edmund Chambers and Dover Wilson have also done some disintegration ("hand to mouth" disintegration, Robertson describes it), and Alexander rightly argues that it is these orthodox academic critics who have led the way to "the Robertsonian morass". Chambers disintegrated about 10 of Shakespeare's plays, and Dover Wilson, the bibliographical analyst, has disintegrated many more (of the 14 Comedies, only 4 are conceded by Dover Wilson to be Shakespeare's sole work). Chambers and Wilson were aghast when they realized where Robertson's researches were leading him; but by underestimating the authority of Heminge and Condell, and of the "good" Quartos and the First Folio, they had themselves invited the confusion and the chaos. "From mere inferiority", Dr. Johnson said, "nothing can be inferred; in the productions of wit there will be inequality. Sometimes judgement will err, and sometimes the matter itself will defeat the artist." The only safe course is to return

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to the main high road of Heminge and Condell, and accept the First Folio in its entirety (and *Pericles*) as Shakespeare's "owne writings."\*

Like the detractors of Heminge and Condell and the disintegrators of the First Folio, the detractors of the Man Shakespeare too meet in Professor Alexander a stout opponent. Shakespeare's marriage, for example, has given rise to much speculation. The trouble is mainly on account of the double entry in the Bishop of Worcester's records—one, dated 27 November 1582, authorising the marriage of William Shaxpere to Anne Whately of Temple Grafton, and the other, dated the very next day, in respect of the bond executed by 2 friends of Anne Hathaway's father freeing the Bishop from all liability in the event of any lawful impediment preventing her marriage to William Shakespeare. Besides, in six months' time, Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, was born. "A hasty wedding", says Parrott;<sup>1</sup> and Raleigh also finds "circumstances of irregularity and haste"<sup>2</sup> in the marriage. Were the 2 Annes—Whately and Hathaway—one and the same person, or were there two different William Shakespeares? "Anne Whately of Temple Grafton", says Professor Parrott, "seems a long remove from Anne Hathaway of Stratford."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, the clue to the mystery is here—the arrangement was that Shakespeare should marry Anne ('Whately' being the scribe's mistake for 'Hathaway') in the church at Temple Grafton, near Stratford. As regards the birth of Susanna six months after the marriage, Alexander convincingly argues that the fallacy usually perpetrated by Shakespeare's biographers is due to "the unhistorical conjecture that the church ceremony was then, as it would be now, the marriage ceremony."<sup>4</sup> Fripp too admits that Shakespeare and Anne "cohabited, as young couples not unfrequently did, between betrothal, which legitimised children, and marriage, which entitled to dowry."<sup>5</sup> Among Hindus also in present-day India, we have couples who undergo both the Vedic ceremony and the formality of registration in a Government office, the former to legitimise children and the latter to prevent bigamy!

The next question relates to Shakespeare's knowledge of the Classics. Ben Jonson chose, strangely enough, a commemorative occasion like the

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\* Shakespeare's *'Henry VI'* and *'Richard III'*, pp 148-154 Alexander argues that if *Pericles* was not included by Heminge and Condell in the First Folio, it was because the play was only partly by Shakespeare.

1 T. M. Parrott, *William Shakespeare: A Handbook* (1934), p 19

2 Shakespeare (E M L), p 42

3 Footnote to p 18 in Parrott's *William Shakespeare: A Handbook*.

4 Introduction to the *Tudor Shakespeare* (1951), p xii cf also Alexander's *Shakespeare's Life and Art*, pp 23-24, and *A Shakespeare Primer* (1951), pp. 23-24.

5 Shakespeare, *Man and Artist* (1938), Vol. I, pp 186-187.

publication of the First Folio to refer to Shakespeare's "small Latin and less Greek." This has been generally understood, at its face value, to imply that Shakespeare had hardly any classical education worth mention. This easily squared with the tradition that Shakespeare had stolen deer at Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, had given further offence to the Baronet by writing lampoons about him, and had accordingly been forced to leave Stratford round about 1585. Raleigh, after recounting these details from Rowe's *Life* (1709), adds: "All this is perfectly credible, the evidence that remains to us is unanimous in its favour; the allusions in the plays bear it out; and there is no solid argument against it."<sup>1</sup> This, in the face of Malone, who pointed out that as there was no deer-park at all at Charlecote (or even in the neighbourhood) in Shakespeare's time, he couldn't possibly have infuriated Sir Thomas by stealing his deer! More recently, the evidence against the whole story has been ably marshalled by two scholars, Dr. Smart in his *Shakespeare. Truth and Tradition* (1928) and Peter Alexander in *Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III'* and its successors. Fripp points out that Ben Jonson "was envious of Shakespeare, and not a little proud of his one claim to superiority. But scholarship does not lie in quantity. With his amazing grip of the *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare gained an insight into language, with another speech and, therefore, into his own, into the significance of words and their capacity of expression, entirely beyond the power of his contemporary"<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare had been brought up at the Stratford grammar school "with its ancient standing and succession of able masters, Oxford graduates and frequently fellows of their colleges",<sup>3</sup> he must have accordingly learned, not only to read Latin with facility, but also to compose Latin epistles. The next link is the entry in the antiquarian Aubrey's memoranda:

"Though, as Ben Jonson says of him, that he had but little Latine and lesse Greeke, he understood Latine pretty well, for he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the countrey."

Aubrey noted against this—"from Mr. Beeston", a person who, according to Alexander, was "most likely to be accurately informed concerning the fact related, for he was an actor and manager and son of Christopher Beeston, who had been one of Shakespeare's associates from 1594 to 1602."<sup>4</sup> Obligated to choose between Stratford gossip 65 years after Shakespeare's death and the authoritative testimony of Beeston, Alexander unhesitating-

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, p 43

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, Man and Artist, Vol I, p 114

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III', p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III' pp 129-130

ly votes for Beeston and concludes that "if we know anything about Shakespeare's employment between his leaving school and entering the theatre it is that he was a schoolmaster in the country."<sup>1</sup> As a country schoolmaster, Shakespeare had wooed the Muses—as many young schoolmasters still do. *The Comedy of Errors*, an adaptation of 2 Latin plays (the *Menaechmi* and the *Amphitruo* of Plautus), *Titus Andronicus*, a horror-tragedy obviously Senecan in inspiration and *Venus and Adonis* betraying the influence of Ovid, were perhaps Shakespeare's first efforts as a country schoolmaster—and their learning is not beyond that of an Elizabethan schoolmaster.<sup>2</sup> If we deem all this a plausible hypothesis, then we needs must push the beginnings of Shakespeare's career as dramatist and poet to the years 1586-7. By 1587 or 1588, Shakespeare took the right measure of his powers and inclinations, "threw down the schoolmaster's rod, closed his books, and took the road to London."<sup>3</sup>

The very simplicity of Alexander's hypothesis ought to be its greatest recommendation, and facilitate its universal acceptance. It resolves the paradox of illiteracy creating supreme works of literary art, of violence and recklessness blossoming into gentleness and sweetness; and it also accounts for the 7 or 8 "lost years" of Shakespeare's life. But traditional habits of thinking die hard. Prof. J. A. K. Thomson, after surveying all the available evidence yet once again, feels compelled to dismiss Beeston's testimony, and he adds further, evidently with Alexander in his mind, "But I find to my dismay that some of our best Shakespearean scholars prefer it to the first-hand evidence"<sup>4</sup> (of Ben Jonson). But even Prof. Thompson half-heartedly concedes that Shakespeare was by no means illiterate; that, on the contrary, "he had read a good deal, though rapidly and (if I may say so without profanity) not infrequently with an eye to what he could use"<sup>5</sup> Prof. Thomson's thesis is that, having made unsuccessful starts with "classical" themes and come under the fire of criticism from Greene, Nashe and others, Shakespeare gave up classical models for a time, but later began again under Plutarch's influence when he wrote *Julius Caesar*. While not discounting the influence of Ovid and the Ovidian stories on Shakespeare, Prof. Thomson nevertheless puts the main emphasis on Plutarch "I believe that it was from Plutarch that Shakespeare learned how to make a tragedy of the kind exemplified in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Lear*. It was, I think, in the course of writing *Julius Caesar* that he learned it."<sup>6</sup>

*To be continued*

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1 *Ibid.*, p 133

2 **A Shakespeare Primer**, p. 44

3 Parrott, **William Shakespeare**, p 21

4 **Shakespeare and the Classics** (1952), p 28

5 *Ibid.*, p 153

6 *Ibid.*, p 242