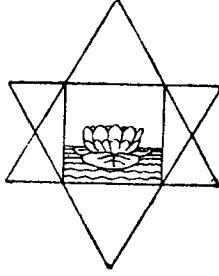


MOTHER INDIA

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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

Managing Editor
K. R. PODDAR

Editor:
K. D. SETHNA

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K. M. MUNSHI AND SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

K. D. Sethna

A veritable beacon lifted above the general obscurity and drift of India's mind at present is the article by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, K. M. Munshi, which appeared in numerous journals all over the country on Independence Day, as well as in booklet form—*Aurobindo Ashram. A Pilgrimage*

The drift of the Indian mind is under two kinds of darkness. One is a forgetfulness of the essence of our culture, an ignorance of the spiritual Light which for centuries was felt as the inmost power of the genius of our land, an overclouding by influences of materialism and secularism. The other is a misconstruction of the activity of that essence, an emphasis on the spiritual power to call beyond the world's values and movements, an oblivion of the inmost Truth's pressure of self-manifestation in the outermost being. Perhaps the two darknesses are interrelated—the strength of the first increased by the second, for in an age of science and sociology the idea that the kingdom of the Spirit is not of this world is bound to encourage and even vindicate materialist and secularist tendencies.

The name of K. M. Munshi has always been a salutary check on both the obscurities. Without involving any recoil from contemporary conditions, he has served as a reminder of our nation's spiritual genius. Not that he has been a leader in direct spirituality: his role has been of the scholar and the littérateur when not of the politician and the minister. But he has never forgotten that his country is the birth-place of Sri Krishna the Avatar and Vyasa the Sage. Himself a dynamic character, he has without difficulty caught the dynamic sense of the spiritual Truth and responded to personalities who seemed to live from within outwards and to lay transforming hands on earthly movements. Any writing of his on a cultural and spiritual theme is, therefore, a significant event, a pointer in the right direction to all lovers of our country and of its real nature. It is also something that must make the most practical-minded sit up and take notice, since here is admittedly no day-dreamer registering nebulous impressions, no lotus-eater mouthing idle words.

In the article to which we have referred, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh writes: "In the course of my life, I came in living touch with

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three Masters. Sri Aurobindo, Mrs Besant and Gandhiji. Besant influenced me a little; Gandhiji intimately; Sri Aurobindo, whose contact goes back to my boyhood, profoundly” He hastens to add that when he says “Masters” he does not wish to be accused of or honoured with being a devotee: “I steer my frail bark my own way, grateful for the light given to me.” Perhaps this individualist warning enhances the value of the article and the meaning of the word, “profoundly”, characterising how Sri Aurobindo affected him For we get the feeling of a force that reached the soul in spite of all barriers

But, though the soul had been thus reached, there was up till now no direct recognition of what the Aurobindonian work in the world represented As he records in his absorbing and moving account, Munshi had sought an interview with Sri Aurobindo some years back. The interview was granted—all the more easily because he had been a student under Sri Aurobindo during the latter’s brief career as Professor in Baroda College and because the “militant nationalism” of Sri Aurobindo’s political days had moulded the pupil’s early outlook Munshi’s words about the interview are memorable “When I visited him after the lapse of more than forty years, I saw before me a being completely transformed, radiant, blissful, enveloped in an atmosphere of godlike calm He spoke in a low, clear voice which stirred the depths of my being”

Here is genuine response to the greatness that is not only Sri Aurobindo but also essential India, the Light which can bring our country its historical fulfilment and the world a new life But there was some misgiving as to whether the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo as organised, guided and developed by “the Mother” was really the right means of expression and manifestation for this “completely transformed being” Not that the reasoning mind could doubt Munshi told once the present writer: “I believe that a God-realised person like Sri Aurobindo can do nothing for self-interested ends or as a result of some delusion. If Sri Aurobindo is what I acknowledge him to be, then I must logically grant that the Mother cannot be anything other than what he tells us she is” Yes, he was clear-headed enough to see the nature of the consequence from the nature of the cause But clear-headedness is one thing and inner conviction another The heart has to leap, the soul has to accept, before a mentally perceived fact becomes a dynamic truth. Munshi had not inwardly come into contact with the personality of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual companion and co-worker

Perhaps the Master’s giant intellectual and Yogic stature filled his mind to the exclusion of all else—particularly as the Mother was not Indian-born We Indians have two opposite tendencies we are either bespelled by the West or antagonised by it We do not easily find a balance in our attitude to it Such a balance, however, is most necessary

and Sri Aurobindo's own life drives the necessity home. Educated in England, he was alert in full measure to the cultural values and powers of the West. An Indian in the profoundest sense because steeped in Yogic experience, he was fully awake also to the values and powers of the Orient. A creative synthesis of the two hemispheres on several planes of being, his work could not but be a fusion of the highest in the West with the highest in the East. And an outward symbol of this fusion was the co-operation between himself and one who though born in distant Europe had burned towards India with an unquenchable fire of soul and who by an intuitive flash had recognised his Masterhood as soon as she stood before him in 1914. Yet perhaps it was not easy for everybody to read the symbol in all its aspects, for too many irrelevant associations often confuse the outward-gazing mind. And Munshi had wondered how exactly the Mother fitted into the Aurobindonian scheme. All the more acutely this curiosity had worked in him after the passing of the Master who had loomed so large in his thoughts ever since that interview. Sri Aurobindo's passing was as an earthquake. This impression has been very effectively hinted in the article: "In December 1950 he died. I was the first to be told about it in Delhi on the telephone by our Consul General. For two hours my mind went blank. I did not know why. There was only a vague sense of being stunned. I did not feel like this even when Gandhi, who was certainly very near to me, died, and I saw him dying. But after that my mind went back to Sri Aurobindo again and again."

And the depth of the feeling aroused by the great departure is allowed to be seen a little by us in the passage where the visit to the "samadhi" is recounted: "Surrounded by the wings, the main building had a small compound, tastefully laid out. In the middle were a few trees. Under their shade stood the rectangular 'samadhi' with sides painted grey-green. Flowers of magnificent hue were spread over the top with rare taste—an unconscious tribute to one who thought and wrote profoundly about aesthetics as part of spiritual evolution. A cupola of flowers was in the middle. I was humbled. I felt waves of reverence surging up in me. Enclosed within this stone monument were the remains of the man who, for sixty years, had lived and taught the true message of India, who, for forty years, had stormed the fortress of the Unknowable in order that the world's life might be broadened into Divine Consciousness. Conscious, too conscious of my own imperfections, humbly I placed the flowers on the 'samadhi'."

It is in the context of the feeling here hinted that we must look at the urge that brought Munshi to visit the Ashram. One who had lived and taught the true message of India had withdrawn from his physical

body—but the wider physical envelope that held the visible workings of his spirit in the disciples was still there and functioning in undiminished vigour. the Ashram. And the centre of the Ashram was the Mother She was, according to all logic, “the true message of India” continuing in the most concrete form, and it was evident that whoever did not come close to her must feel he had lost touch with the Master who had gone out of sight. It was almost as if Sri Aurobindo had moved into the background in order to strike his country awake to the living Shakti of his Light, the radiant fountain from which a divine future could spring for man. No wonder Munshi writes:

“When I went on an official visit to the scarcity areas in Madras, in March, 1952, a visit to the Ashram was a foregone conclusion

“Another motive impelled me to go. I wanted to understand the Mother—Madame Paul Richard of fifty-two years ago; French-born occultist of a forgotten age, the Mira who in a far-off continent pined for the Lord Krishna of her dreams and found him in the Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry; the one who in actual life realised what I call the Undivided Soul and joined Sri Aurobindo in the search for the Divine; the inspired weaver of home-going spiritual messages and later, the Mother, accepted, recognised and canonised by the Master and all his disciples; this integrated part of the Aurobindonian ‘we’ was, and is, an enigma to many—even to me. I had held many discussions with friends about her. What is she? What is her spiritual stature? What is the source of her inspiration?”

“On March 12 morning, our car sped along towards Pondicherry, the National Flag on the hood fluttering in the breeze. Young Pithapuram and I turned to the enigma of the Mother again and again. A tennis-playing, silk-garmented lady of seventy-five, carrying a tenuous veil and saluting the Ashramites at the march past day after day was not exactly a symbol of spirituality to the normal Indian mind. Was she a miracle-worker or just an artist? Was she carrying forward the Master’s work? Was this how it should be carried on? As I have said, I was going to the Ashram to try to understand her.”

And it seems he has not failed in the attempt to understand. In the early part of the day in the Ashram he caught a glimpse of her while he was coming out of Sri Aurobindo’s room. Then, during the day, lying in his room in the Ashram’s guest-house, *Golconda*, that striking experiment in a new kind of functional architecture wedded to a strange beauty, he let his mind absorb the unfamiliar atmosphere of quiet and dwell reflectively on the impact of new sensations. “What,” he asked himself, “was the secret of this peculiar atmosphere, rich with the psychic influx of a disembodied Master? I could not help wondering at the skill of the

Mother who, almost invisible, played such harmonious tunes on this seven-fifty-souled orchestra. Why did I feel different from what I felt in Delhi, in Bombay? Was the spirit of my old professor blossoming into a living Consciousness in me?"

Similar questions thronged into Munshi's mind the same evening after he had made a tour of the various departments of the Ashram and witnessed its multifarious activities. "I saw a unique experiment, an experiment which enabled people to live a self-contained community life 'If the world were to be drowned in a flood again,' I told Charupad, 'you needn't have a Noah's Ark, if the Ashram is saved. It would be sufficient to set up the world again . . .' But what gave the Ashram this vitality and unity? And who created this wondrous atmosphere and how? And why did the Mother do it?"

Whether Munshi found the whole answer or no, he found something more precious than any answer in words—vibrant contact with the Mother. His description of the interview with her is worth quoting from.

"After seeing one or two institutions, we made for the parade ground. Mother came in tripping lightly from the tennis court dressed in the same manner as before, her blue-green scarf fluttering in the wind round her neck.

"Then she went into a small office, where a few minutes later I was ushered in. She sat on a high-backed small chair, her feet on a footstool. Her eyes were transparent, almost clear as crystal. I told her of my personal problems, of my old struggles, of Sri Aurobindo's message and the message of the Gangotri.

"She replied in a quiet, firm tone, in a simple straightforward way. There was no attempt on her part to play the teacher or mystic or someone of superior power."

Out of what she said, we may quote a few sentences. "Sri Aurobindo is still alive, as living as ever and will continue to live. We feel it every day. You told me that for many months he seemed to be haunting you. It is not only your experience but of many . . . We are determined—he and I—to complete what he lived for . . . India must maintain the spiritual leadership of the world. If she does not, she will collapse, and with her will go the whole world. About yourself, he was very clear. You follow the lines of your own development and, as he said, you will gain your soul. As regards the message which you received, it is clear to me. You must devote yourself to proclaiming your truth."

When the topic of the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre was brought up, she said: "I have been receiving letters from persons interested in his message who want to come here. I am receiving letters also from parents about sending their children. But I do not believe in

starting in an ostentatious way. I am building up slowly, step by step, but firmly, and in ten years you will see what this university will be like."

These are the accents of a true builder doubled with a true visionary. And the portent for our country is indeed bright when one so deeply vibrant with its cultural genius has undertaken to embody the spirit of Sri Aurobindo in an institution of international significance. The sense of this portent, enriched by several side-impressions of the Mother obtained on seeing her in the midst of children and as reflected in the personalities of her disciples and the varied harmony of the Ashram's work, appears to burn luminously in Munshi's mind if we may judge by the conclusion of his article. It is a conclusion of extraordinary interest, a blend of humour and homily, at once piquant and profound, inspiredly driving home a great truth with striking common sense. It deserves to be quoted and requoted.

"When I left for Madras, it was with infinite regret. And I thought of our criticism of the Mother. Yes, I, too, at one time had criticised her.

"Suppose the French-born lady were exactly the same in other ways, but dressed in the saffron coloured robes of a sannyasin—if the Ashramites, instead of modern drill, did the 'hatha yoga prakriyas', the physical exercises of a bygone world,—and instead of playing tennis, the Mother stood on her head in 'shirshasan' and spun the charkha—and if the Ashramites ground their own flour instead of having it ground through a machine, what would have been our judgment?

"India would have gone on her knees before her in ardent devotion.

"We ourselves put on silks, eat machine-ground flour, play tennis, but for our spiritual uplift we want only ways considered acceptable five thousand years ago.

"And that is why perhaps, sub-consciously, we keep the spirit away from modern life.

"Then what about Janak Videhi? And what about Sri Krishna, the Lord of Yoga Himself?

"If the spirit has to permeate and transform life, it must be through life as we live it, and that is perhaps the Ashram's speciality."

With these words the veritable beacon that is Munshi's article cuts most keenly through the twofold darkness enwrapping the Indian mind. The words evoke the authentic soul of Indian culture—a many-coloured dynamism of the depths—which it is the Aurobindonian ideal to manifest and which is at its Indianest by being fraught with the presence of the actual, the current, the contemporary. And since, in the closely interconnected modern world, what is actual, current and contemporary in one country is more or less characteristic of all countries, the Aurobindonian ideal becomes world-wide in meaning in the very instant of being

most Indian That is indeed why the Mother prophesies that if spiritual India whose cause is at Sri Aurobindo's heart and at her own, should fail, the world would collapse

A message is here, vital both to ourselves and other nations. And if the saving Grace is destined to radiate from our midst, the message is particularly of moment to us India must awake to the divine Shakti within her In order to awake, her millions cannot do better than echo in their heart-beats the steps of Governor Munshi's pilgrimage.

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

THE EARLY CONVERSATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Compiled from the Notes of Anilbaran Roy

INTRODUCTION

Before Sri Aurobindo went into seclusion in order to carry on a yogic-spiritual action by which he could prepare conditions in earth-life suitable for establishing the Supermind, he used to have long conversations with his disciples. During these conversations a number of subjects were discussed—Sri Aurobindo was asked questions on almost everything under the sun. According to his old disciples, his elucidation of the various problems put before him, whether of human life and thought, or of the practice of Yoga and of the play of spiritual and occult forces beyond the ken of the normal human intelligence, always revealed the same high wisdom and spiritual enlightenment that is apparent in his written works.

Exact verbatim reports of all talks were not taken down, but some of the disciples used to keep notes. Anilbaran Roy was in the habit of writing down after the conversations were over most of the things that had been discussed.

It is true that Sri Aurobindo later changed his views on some matters to a certain extent, not so much in their fundamental truth as in their application to life amidst the fast-changing conditions of the world; also, as his mastery over the world-forces increased he was led to alter some of his views with regard to the working of the Higher Power in the earth-consciousness. Nevertheless, the fundamental truths he had previously expressed he did not reject but incorporated them in a larger and more complex unity.

At some places the notes taken down may not capture the correct tone of Sri Aurobindo's exposition and bring out the precise shade of meaning, or again they may fail to catch the right turn of phrase and the immaculateness of the expression, making the philosophical formulation suffer stylistically to some extent, but on the whole the journal does justice to the informal discourses Sri Aurobindo used to give to his disciples before he went into seclusion, and definitely succeeds in recreating the atmosphere of that period—an atmosphere of erudition and spiritual enlightenment, of friendship and good humour, of love and goodwill, an atmosphere that can only be possible among men who live together in brotherhood for the pursuit of a high spiritual ideal and look up to their God-realised leader to give them light and realisation.

“Synergist.”

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

Anilbaran records two very interesting conversations the disciples had with Sri Aurobindo in June 1926 on problems relating to health; the laws of hygiene, the body-consciousness, the necessity of taking food, and the drawing of vital energies directly from Universal Nature were some of the points discussed. Both the conversations are presented here in the order in which they were held.

As usual the disciples came and sat around Sri Aurobindo for the evening conversation. At first some questions regarding the Supermind's expression in life were asked, after which the conversation turned to politics. Then at the end someone asked a question on food and health, and Sri Aurobindo took up this subject. He began: "We must reject all formed ideas and *samskaras*—all formations we have received from our parents, from our past life, and so forth. Our likes and dislikes are only matters of habit, and these habits can be changed. Even from what appears to be offensive to you at present, you can learn to take what it has to give. I have no likes and dislikes—from everything I can take the essence, the *rasa*."

Then someone asked: "On eating a green plantain I suffer from biliousness and cough. Mr. N says that I must throw the idea out from my mind that it will produce biliousness and cough, and then go on eating it. Is this fixed idea or *samskara* in the mind responsible for the disorder or is there something intrinsic to the plantain itself?"

"Both the things are true," replied Sri Aurobindo. "There is the *dhrabiaguna*, the particular nature of the food, as well as fixed ideas in our beings. But the removal of the idea from the mind alone does not free you from it. You must become conscious of the same idea in your vital being and remove it from there as well. The vital also has strong likes and dislikes like that. I have removed all such fixed ideas from my being down to the physico-vital and can now take any food whether hot or spiced, good or bad; I can now take the essential *rasa* out of any and every kind of food. In my case this desire for and antipathy to certain kinds of food is still there in the atoms of my physical being. If that can be removed, then it may be possible that even a cup of poison will not affect me. There is not one law for everything. We are affected even by the ideas in our environment, as for instance, there is a rigidly fixed idea about poison and its killing properties in our environment down to the lower animal kingdom. In dealing with things, you have to see the nature of each, your power to meet and overcome its play and so many other factors before you can hope to succeed. You may abstain from a particular kind of food for a time, not with the idea of rejection, but as a temporary measure while the whole system is reconstituted from above

and you have developed sufficient power to be able to remain unaffected by it."

Here the conversation ended. The next day someone asked: "What is the relation between the health of a man and the observance of the laws of Nature?"

Sri Aurobindo replied: "What are the laws of Nature? Have they been ascertained? Do men have disease because they go against the laws of Nature?"

"Suppose a man observes the laws of hygiene—will he not keep in good health?"

"The laws of hygiene are more or less artificial rules, and they do not take us very far. Often a man apparently healthy breaks down under unexpected attacks while a man in poor health lives through many vicissitudes. All that can be said is that a vigorous life in fresh open air is congenial to health and longevity."

"What is it then that really helps the man to keep in good health?"

"Diseases are attacks on the vital being. For every individual there is a sort of balance between his vital being and the external forces; if he can keep the balance he keeps in good health. The body is in a way conscious of this balance and if left to itself is likely to adjust itself to circumstances, but generally this body-consciousness is disturbed and obscured by mental ideas. We have formed habits and *samskaras* which are responsible for many of our bodily ills."

"Is this body-consciousness a sort of an instinct?"

"Yes. This instinct is much stronger in animals. In man it has been hampered by artificial rules and habits. But one can become fully conscious of this vital balance, and consciously maintain oneself in good health. Sometimes, even through blunders and mistakes a man can accidentally stumble on the vital balance, and then he has a fair chance of a long life."

"Is this instinct very strong in animals?"

"They also commit mistakes which arise from circumstances. When an animal is very hungry it eats things which it rejects in normal circumstances."

"We desire certain kinds of food while we dislike others; are these desires safe guides?"

"The desires come from the vital being and they demand satisfaction irrespective of the well-being of the body. The body-consciousness referred to by me is not desire—but an awareness in the body of its own needs. A man who has this consciousness will not take any food because he feels a hankering after it, nor will he reject food because he dislikes it—after all, likes and dislikes are matters of habit and *samskara*—but

he will select food which he perceives to be necessary for the maintenance of the body, *shariradharna*."

"Is food absolutely necessary for the body to keep alive?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Is sleep to be reduced when one fasts?"

"I slept normally during my second fast. But during the previous fast in jail I had to bear a great pressure of *sadhana*; consequently, I had to do without much sleep."

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”

A PROBLEM OF KARMA YOGA

This month instead of the Section of *Miscellaneous Letters*, we are publishing Sri Aurobindo's marginal comments on a letter written to him by a disciple regarding certain experiences he went through after his return from a visit to the Ashram.

The disciple first had a “darshan” of Sri Aurobindo in 1936. After the “darshan” he went back to his home town and began to practise the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. There he passed through a very difficult period and had a spiritual crisis because of an unfortunate decision he made in the Karma Yoga part of his sadhana. When some time had elapsed he wrote to Sri Aurobindo a letter explaining in detail all that had taken place, and asked him to throw light on some of the happenings. This letter is reproduced below. Sri Aurobindo made marginal comments on it, explaining at each crucial point the inner implication of what had happened.

The Disciple's Letter

*Sri Aurobindo's Marginal
Comments*

A few weeks after my return from the first "darshan" in February 1936, I could, through your grace, apply my mind to the sadhana to a considerable extent, also, I felt to my pleasant surprise the Mother's Force pouring upon me. Then suddenly everything changed—the honorary trusteeship of a Temple Estate was thrust upon me, making me uneasy, and I clearly felt a counteracting force coming upon me. I then wrote to you quite egoistically that I would not accept the post without your consent and permission. Instead of getting a reply from you to my letters, I heard within me clear voices warning me against accepting the offer. The voices were somewhat like this: "Where is the difference between repairing a house and a temple? It will bring you honour but also bring about your downfall (spiritual). By that you cannot realise God. Nothing else could bring about your downfall." But circumstances combined in such a way that I felt too weak to reject the offer, and in the pride of my heart to do a divine work even at the risk of your temporary displeasure,—I had faith that, after all, you would not cast me away when you had 'accepted' me,—and being supported by the explanation of the Gita's slokas 32 and 33 in Ch. II, which suited my vanity, I took up the work in right earnest. But I soon found my mind in anguish, unbalanced and restless. I tried my best to resign from the post but circumstances conspired against me and I found myself lacking in courage to make a clear break. While praying to God to

give me immediate relief from the work, I again heard a feeble voice within, saying "It is not yet time to leave the work." That was the last voice I heard within myself—unfortunately I am hearing them no more. Now I took up a little courage, but I soon felt a terrible uneasiness within—I felt as if a very heavy force, a mighty weight, was bursting forth from my heart and was going to tear away my ribs, heart and head. I fail to describe what it was really like, but you know everything. I cried to the Mother for help, which I received. Occasionally that force or a force like that, but in a lesser intensity, tormented me. Instead of venturing to refer the matter again to you—I did not because I thought I had disregarded your warning—I spoke about it to some of your disciples and Dr. MS when I met them. The disciples were divided in their opinion but Dr. MS said that it was nothing to be afraid of for the force was nothing but the Mother's force acting within me. He also advised me not to give up such work as he said that you would not like that men should give up work of such a noble and religious nature. He added that voices from within did not always come from the psychic plane, but also from mental and vital planes to delude us, and that they should not be relied upon¹.

In despair I wrote another letter to the Mother admitting the fact that I had accepted the post and work as a Trustee in spite of not receiving your sanction; I was all the while trying to think that I was doing your work and worshipping you in a way, because I tried to identify you and Mother with "Ram-Sita" and "Radha-Krishna" who were being wor-

1 *That is true. One has to discriminate*

shipped in the temple. In the letter I also sought for Mother's grace and protection. Truly speaking the work was amazingly successful and the continued progress and success in the work brought me name and fame and goaded me to continue the work, though with a troubled mind forgetful of my sadhana. I could not sit for meditation and contemplation; some force from within made me get up often.²

I know from my heart of hearts that without your grace and protection such work could not have been finished within so short a time in spite of heavy odds. If I remember aright, on the night of 15th August, 1937, when I was sitting in meditation before your photo, I saw the colour of your face change suddenly into reddened gold, like the colour of the morning sun. I perceived, too, that Hanuman in a very miniature form came to salute you from your right-hand side, and from the left-hand side of the Mother the head of a pretty deer appeared in the air, and left the place immediately. This scene amazed and delighted me much and I drew two possible conclusions from it: one is—that I need no more serve any other lesser gods, as you represent all the Gods, as you are identified with the Almighty God. Another conclusion was, that by serving Ramchandra and Sita, I was serving you, and to make it intelligible to me, Hanuman came there to pay his respects to you—as you represent Ramchandra in this age. That force from within occasionally tormenting me compelled me to resign the post when I thought that my services were not of further use.

I now find clearly that the acceptance

2 *That means that the vital got externalised and was doing the work for a vital interest losing its interest in sadhana*

of the work has done me incalculable harm, as I lost the capacity to concentrate and meditate on you and go within my heart. I lost all capacity to control myself and cannot still discern what is right from wrong or divine from undivine. The mind instead of rising to a higher level, sank back to its original level. I think that my "fall" was complete. Now I cannot "pray", nor can I meditate or concentrate.

The questions that arise in my mind are:—

Was I not totally wrong in disobeying the first voices that warned me against accepting the work? Were they not from the psychic?

If so, what was the significance of the contrary voice that said, "It is not yet time to leave the work."³ This contrary voice still puzzles me.

The answer that suggests itself to my mind is, that work which brings uneasiness in mind and disturbs its balance and makes us forgetful of our true aim in life, even though temporarily, should not be undertaken. But if that be so, the question arises: what is the significance of the Gita's slokas 32 and 33 in Ch II? And was not the work of a more religious and spiritual character than the daily routine work of a pleader of our type?⁴

I tried to do the work without any self-interest, but I could not keep my mind calm and quiet. I became proud of my success, I became elated with joy, and I think that I prided myself on your protection and grace.

I still believe that I should not have accepted the work in spite of all the pressure from outside.

Another question that arises in my

3 *It may have simply meant that having taken it up you would have to go on for some time more with it.*

4. *That is of little importance. There are those who have done the lawyer's work with the Mother's force working in them and grown by it in inward consciousness. On the other hand religious work can be merely external and vital in its nature or influence.*

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

mind is, that if you pull the chain from behind in all our movements, why did the Mother give me strength and support for such a long time to pursue the work,⁵ knowing full well that I would be "fallen" thereby? Was it to prove to the hilt the truth of the first warnings that you or the "voices" within me gave?

Then the question again comes up: What is the significance of the voice that I heard for the last time? Was it a false voice—coming from the vital or the mental plane?⁶

Was the work thrust upon me by "you" or by some undivine forces to test my sincerity, to see if I would undertake the work without your approval or if I wanted anything except you?⁷

5. *You used the Force for the work, and it supported you so long as you preferred to stick to that work. What is of first importance is not the religious or non-religious character of the work done, but the inner attitude in which it is done. If the attitude is vital and not psychic, then one throws oneself out in the work and loses the inner contact. If it is psychic, the inner contact remains, the Force is felt supporting or doing the work and the sadhana progresses*

6. *The earlier voice must have come from the psychic. As for this one it simply said that the time had not come when you could give up, not that you should cleave to it as the right thing.*

7 *In life all sorts of things offer themselves. One cannot take anything that comes with the idea that it is sent by the Divine. There is a choice and a wrong choice produces its consequences.*

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Other questions that crop up are:
Was it Mother's force which made me
feel panicky and disturbed?⁸

What was the significance of the vision
of Hanuman and the head of the deer that
appeared before you?⁹

I ardently pray for solution of these
doubts and questions.

I still believe, as I have repeated, that
I departed from my path of yoga in under-
taking the work, and that my fall has
been almost complete as I have created
thereby untold "dangers and difficulties"
for myself, from which I have not been
able to come out in spite of my effort,
feeble and ignorant that I am . . .¹⁰

8. *It is not clear, but from
your description it might
have been the Mother's
force or the psychic force
from the heart trying to
break through the confine-
ment by the vital.*

9 *Hanuman=c o m p l e t e
bhakti,
The deer=speed in the
spiritual path.*

10. *It was evidently a mistake,
as it threw your vital out-
ward and stopped the inner
sadhana. But it is possible
that if you had done it
without interference of
vital ego, it would not
have had that result.*

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"

5-4-35.

AB. In order to avoid unnecessary halts and delays in the sadhana I must become more active, firm, vigilant and strong. I have come to an inner understanding with the Mother that I must not lose Her inner nearness, and must keep the fire in the psychic burning day and night, also, that no part of my being should ever lose courage and faith in Her and in Her victory.

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Sri Aurobindo. All that is necessary. The old nature does not give up until there is a settled active peace, purity and strength of the true consciousness in every part of the being.

8-4-35.

AB. It is easy to be able to feel joy and happiness when the Divine Mother gives Herself to us; but it is extremely difficult to offer ourselves completely to Her when outwardly She seems to give no response, at least so it seems to our physical mind always looking at external things.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the only way to a real self-giving—otherwise the ego always remains in spite of experiences and progress.

9-4-35.

AB. Very often before finishing a full sentence I need to withdraw even the part through which Your Force is noting down the higher or inner knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo. Yet to write is necessary.

AB. Many here say, "With Thee, Mother, I tread the path" I don't understand them, for I see that I do not tread the path with Her. It is rather She who marches on, keeping me in Herself

Sri Aurobindo That is the deeper realisation.

10-4-35.

AB. Some sadhaks complain that they don't have many experiences. I think it is due to a lack of withdrawing capacity. Whenever I feel so, I just peep deep within myself and find that so many experiences are developing themselves. They denote that with the present untransformed outer nature it is difficult for them to remain on the surface all the time. That is why they veil themselves from the external being at times, and wait until it is ready or till they make it ready for the next occasion.

Sri Aurobindo. That is so, so long as the whole consciousness is not open or so long as one cannot live always in the inner consciousness, looking at the outer when necessary but not involved in it.

11-4-35.

AB. Why does it seem that my sadhana has come to a standstill since the last two days?

Sri Aurobindo. You have first to take care not to be disturbed by the interruption. Remain quiet and confident till all opens again

AB. What was it that pressed on the head so powerfully?

Sri Aurobindo. The force from above.

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

AB. What was its purpose in doing so?

Sri Aurobindo. It must have been to make a fresh opening.

AB. But why was there such a strong resistance to it?

Sri Aurobindo. When there is a pressure for a fresh opening, there is often a strong resistance from below

AB. Which part of the being is again interfering with the action of the Mother's Force?

Sri Aurobindo. It is always the same—the lower nature admitting the contrary pressure from below.

AB. I describe certain knowledge in my letters to You. When the letters come back to me, I just cannot believe that it was really I who wrote them. Why is this so?

Sri Aurobindo. The knowledge comes from above—it is not yours in any personal sense.

AB. There is a sort of competition between the mind, the vital and the physical to reach a new depth of inner emptiness. The vital may succeed first, for there is an unimaginable depth in the lower abdominal region.

Sri Aurobindo. That is good.

AB. The pressure of the Force is the same. From the head it is slowly coming down. Now I am able to hold any amount of Force. It was in order to bring about such a result that the Mother spent a long time in building up first peace and silence in me.

Sri Aurobindo. All that is very good. The deeper the peace established, the more the Force that can descend and the less the outer Nature can send in its disturbing forces.

12-4-35.

AB. There is a state in which one feels no experiences even though they are there developing in the inner and the higher regions. It is a blankness.

Sri Aurobindo. If the experiences are going on, there must be something within the blankness that feels them.

AB. I feel that the pressure is much reduced today; it is not as strong as it was yesterday. Does it mean that the higher Force has now cleared its way by overcoming the resistance?

Sri Aurobindo. Usually it means that.

13-4-35.

AB. The outer parts that were once resisting the Mother's transforming Force are themselves aspiring for it now. How even my physical observed a silence during the inner being's unity with the Mother!

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Sri Aurobindo. The same must happen with the subconscious.

14-4-35

AB After the Pranam, I find myself poised above the head all the time. It seems as if the Mother has lifted my fundamental consciousness to one of Her higher levels.

Sri Aurobindo. That is good. It is the station on the higher consciousness.

AB The higher knowledge should be for us an enlightening of our obscure and ignorant nature and not merely a means for writing great intellectual things. What is its value if it does not come down with a dynamic force and will to be one of the means to transform our nature?

Sri Aurobindo. Quite right.

AB. May the Mother's Knowledge not be misused here as in the world outside, where people learn only in order to teach or expound it to others!

Sri Aurobindo. Not always. Some learn in order that the mind may look in a complete and accurate way at things. But that is of course a mental, not a spiritual knowledge.

AB The whole of today has passed without any inner sadhana, and the same is the case with every non-pranam day.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the old physical sanskar.

AB. My subconscious is at present in full activity. I see my whole past life passing before me like a cinema film. I have to remain like an alien who looks at it but does not indulge in it.

Sri Aurobindo. Yes. You have to see it when it comes up and dismiss it with the feeling "that is no longer mine."

AB. The present activity of my subconscious is due to a pressure of the Mother's higher Light which presses on it more and more to change its old nature. But it does not want to change as easily as the other parts have done.

Sri Aurobindo. The other parts or at least some of them were also very recalcitrant before. They yielded afterwards easily because of the long work done on them. It is now the subconscious that is going through the same process.

AB. When the deeper or higher pitch of the sadhana falls, the Mother's gift of Knowledge does not leave me. It is really Her wonderful Blessings which help me at all times and in all states of consciousness—from the highest to the lowest.

Sri Aurobindo. That is very good.

THE FUTURE POETRY

Sri Aurobindo

(10)

THE COURSE OF ENGLISH POETRY

(2)

Beautiful as are many of its productions, powerful as it is in the mass, if we look at it not in detail, not merely revelling in beauty of line and phrase and image, in snatches of song and outbursts of poetic richness and power, but as a whole, as definite artistic creation. this wealthiest age of English poetry bears a certain stamp of defect and failure. It cannot be placed for a moment as a supreme force of excellence in literary culture by the side of the great ages of Greek and Roman poetry, but, besides that, it falls short too in aesthetic effect and virtue in comparison with other poetic periods less essentially vigorous than itself, it has an inferior burden of meaning and, if a coursing of richer life-blood, no settled fullness of spirit and a less adequate body of forms. The great magician, Shakespeare, by his marvellous poetic rendering of life and the spell his poetry casts upon us, conceals this general inadequacy; the whole age which he embodies is magnified by his presence and the adjacent paler figures catch something of the light and kinship of his glory and appear in it more splendid than they are. Shakespeare is an exception, a miracle of poetic force; he survives untouched all adverse criticism, not because there are not plenty of fairly large spots in this sun, but because in any complete view of him they disappear in the greatness of his light. Spenser and Marlowe are poets of a high order, great in spite of an eventual failure. But the rest owe their stature to an uplifting power in the age and not chiefly to their own intrinsic height of genius; and that power had many vices, flaws and serious limitations which their work exaggerates wilfully rather than avoids. The gold of this golden age of English poetry is often very beautifully and richly wrought, but it is seldom worked into a perfect artistic whole; it disappears continually in masses of alloy, and there is on the whole more

of a surface gold-dust than of the deeper yield of the human spirit.

The defect of this Elizabethan work is most characteristic and prominent in that part of it which has been vaunted as its chief title to greatness, its drama. Shakespeare and Marlowe may be considered separately; but the rest of Elizabethan dramatic work is powerful in effort rather than sound and noble in performance. All its vigorous presentation of life has not been able to keep it alive; it is dead or keeps only, to use Mr Cousins' phrase, the dusty immortality of the libraries, and this in spite of the attention drawn to it in quite recent times by scholars and critics and the hyperbolic eulogies two or three eminent writers have bestowed on it. This is not to say that it has not merits and, in a way, very striking merits. The Elizabethan playwrights were men of a confident robust talent, some of them of real genius, they had the use of the language of an age in which the power of literary speech was a common possession and men were using language as a quite new and rich instrument, lavishly, curiously, exulting in its novel capacities of expression; the first elements of the dramatic form, the temper and some of the primary faculties which go to make dramatic creation possible were there in the literary spirit of the age, and all of them in more or less degree possessed these things and could use them. They have a certain force of vital creation, the faculty of producing very freely a mass of incident and movement, much power of exuberant dialogue, a knack of expression both in verse and prose and of putting the language of the passions into the mouth of cleverly constructed human figures which walk actively about the stage, if not in quite a natural manner, yet with enough of it to give for the time the illusion of living creatures; and they had eminently a vigorous turn for the half romantic, half realistic reproduction of life and manners. Especially, it was a time in which there was a fresh and vivid interest in life and man and action, in the adventure and wonder and appeal of the mere vital phenomenon of living and feeling and thinking, and their work is full of this freshness and interest. All this, it might be thought, is quite enough to create a great dramatic poetry; and certainly if we require no more than this we shall give a prominent place to the Elizabethan drama, higher perhaps than to the Greek or any other. But these things are enough only to produce plays which will live their time on the stage and in the library; they are not, by themselves, sufficient for great dramatic creation. Something else is needed for that, which we get in Shakespeare, in Racine, Corneille and Molière, in Calderon, in the great Greeks, in the Sanskrit dramatists; but these other Elizabethans are rather powerful writers and playwrights than inspired dramatic poets and creators.

Dramatic poetry cannot live by the mere presentation of life and action

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and the passions, however truly they may be portrayed or however vigorously and abundantly. Its object is something greater and its conditions of success much more onerous. It must have, to begin with, as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit idea of life and the human being; and the vital presentation which is its outward instrument, must arise out of that harmoniously, whether by a spontaneous creation, as in Shakespeare, or by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will as with the Greeks. This interpretative vision and idea have in the presentation to seem to arise out of the inner life of vital types of the human soul or individual representatives of it through an evolution of speech leading to an evolution of action,—speech being the first important instrument, because through it the poet reveals the action of the soul, and outward action and event only the second, important, but less essential, reducible even to a minimum, because by that he makes visible and concrete to us the result of the inner action. In all very great drama the true movement and result is really psychological and the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are only either its symbol or else its condition of culmination. Finally, all this has to be cast into a close dramatic form, a successful weaving of interdependent relations, relations of soul to soul, of speech to speech, of action to action, the more close and inevitable the better, because so the truth of the whole evolution comes home to us. And if it is asked what in a word is the essential purpose of all this creation, I think we might possibly say that drama is the poet's vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma, in an extended and very flexible sense of the word; and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathem*, "the doer shall feel the effect of his act," in an inner as well as an outer, a happy no less than an austere significance, whether that effect be represented as psychological or vital, whether it comes to its own through sorrow and calamity, ends in a judgment by laughter or finds an escape into beauty and joy, whether the presentation be tragic or comic or tragi-comic or idyllic. To satisfy these conditions is extremely difficult and for that reason the great dramatists are so few in their number,—the entire literature of the world has hardly given us more than a dozen. The difficult evolution of dramatic poetry is always more hard to lead than the lyric which is poetry's native expression, or than the narrative which is its simpler expansion.

The greatness of a period of dramatic poetry can be measured by the extent to which these complex conditions were understood in it or were intuitively practised. But in the mass of the Elizabethan drama

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the understanding is quite absent and the practice comes, if at all, only rarely, imperfectly and by a sort of accident. Shakespeare himself seems to have divined these conditions or contained them in the shaping flame of his genius rather than perceived them by the artistic intelligence. The rest have ordinarily no light of interpretative vision, no dramatic idea. Their tragedy and comedy are both oppressively external; this drama presents, but does not at all interpret; it is an outward presentation of manners and passions and lives by vigour of action and a quite outward-going speech; it means absolutely nothing. The tragedy is irrational, the comedy has neither largeness nor subtlety of idea; they are mixed together too without any artistic connection such as Shakespeare manages to give to them so as to justify thoroughly their co-existence. The characters are not living beings working out their mutual Karma, but external figures of humanity jostling each other on a crowded stage, mere tossing drift of the waves of life. The form of the drama too is little more than a succession of speech and incident, as in a story, with a culminating violent or happy ending, which comes not because psychologically it must, but because a story has to have a release of ending or, if tragic, its point of loud detonation. To make up for their essential defects these poets have to heap up incident and situation and assail us with vehement and often grossly exaggerated speech and passion, frequently tearing the passion into glaring coloured tatters, almost always overstraining or in some way making too much of it. They wish to pile on us the interest of life in whose presentation their strength lies, to accumulate in a mass, so as to carry us away, things attracting, things amusing, things striking, things horrible; they will get at us through the nerves and the lower emotional being,—and in this they succeed eminently,—since they cannot get at us through a higher intellectual and imaginative appeal. The evolution of the action is rather theatrically effective than poetic, the spirit and the psychology melodramatic rather than dramatic. Nor are these radical dramatic defects atoned for by any great wealth of poetry, for their verse has more often some formal merit and a great air of poetry than its essence,—though there are exceptions as in lines and passages of Peele and Webster. The presentation of life with some poetic touch but without any transforming vision or strongly suffusing power in the poetic temperament is the general character of their work. It is necessary to emphasize these defects because indiscriminate praise of these poets helps to falsify or quite exclude the just artistic view of the aim of sound dramatic creation, and imitation of the catching falsities of this model has

* Ben Jonson is an exception. He has the idea of construction, but his execution is heavy and uninspired, the work of a robustly conscientious craftsman rather than a creative artist.

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been the real root of the inefficacy of subsequent attempts in the dramatic form even by poets of great gifts. It explains the failure of even a mind which had the true dramatic turn, a creator like Browning, to achieve drama of the first excellence.

Marlowe alone of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists stands apart from his fellows, not solely by his strong and magnificent vein of poetry, but because he knows what he is about; he alone has some clearly grasped dramatic idea. And not only is he conscious of his artistic aim, but it is a sound aim on the higher levels of the dramatic art. He knows that the human soul in action is his subject and Karma the power of the theme, and he attempts to create a drama of the human will throwing itself on life, the will egoistic and Asuric, conquering only to succumb to the great adversary Death or breaking itself against the forces its violence has brought into hostile play. This is certainly a high and fit subject for tragic creation and his highly coloured and strongly cut style and rhythm are well-suited for its expression. Unhappily, Marlowe had the conception, but not any real power of dramatic execution. He is unable to give the last awakening breath of life to his figures, in the external manner so common in English poetry and fiction he rather constructs than evolves, portrays than throws out into life, paints up or sculptures from outside than creates from within, which is yet the sole true method of poetic or at least of dramatic creation. He has not, either, the indispensable art of construction; only in one of his tragedies does he vitally relate together its characters and their action throughout, and even that though a strong work falls far short of the greatness of the masterpiece. He had too, writing for the Elizabethan stage, to adopt a model which was too complex for the strong simplicity of his theme and the narrow intensity of his genius, and he had, working for that semi-barbarous public, to minister to tastes which were quite incongruous with his purpose and which he had not flexibility enough to bring within its scope or to elevate towards its level. In fact, Marlowe was not a born dramatist. His true genius was lyrical, narrative and epic. Limited by his inborn characteristics, he succeeds in bringing out his poetic motive only in strong detached scenes and passages or in great culminating moments in which the lyrical cry and the epic touch break out through the form of drama.

Shakespeare stands out alone, both in his own age when so many were drawn to the form and circumstances were favourable to this kind of genius, and in all English literature, as the one great and genuine dramatic poet but this one is indeed equal to a host. He stands out too as quite unique in his spirit, method and quality. For his contemporaries resemble him only in externals; they have the same outward form and crude materials, but not the inner dramatic method by which

he transformed and gave them a quite other meaning and value; and later romantic drama, though it has tried hard to imitate the Shakespearian motive and touch, has been governed by another kind of poetic mind and its intrinsic as distinguished from its external method has been really different. It takes hold of life, strings together its unusual effects and labours to make it out of the way, brilliant, coloured, conspicuous. Shakespeare does not do that, except rarely, in early imitative work or when he is uninspired. He does not need to lay violent hands on life and turn it into romantic pyrotechnics, for life itself has taken hold of him in order to recreate itself in his image, and he sits within himself at its heart and pours out from its impulse a throng of beings, as real in the world he creates as men are in this other world from which he takes his hints, a multitude, a riot of living images carried on a many-coloured sea of revealing speech and a never failing surge of movement. His dramatic method seems indeed to have usually no other intellectual purpose, aesthetic motive or spiritual secret: ordinarily it labours simply for the joy of a multiple poetic vision of life and vital creation with no centre except the life-power itself, no co-ordination except that thrown out spontaneously by the unseizable workings of its energy, no unity but the one unity of man and the life-spirit in Nature working in him and before his eyes. It is this sheer creative *ananda* of the life-spirit which is Shakespeare; abroad everywhere in that age it incarnates itself in him for the pleasure of poetic self-vision.

All Shakespeare's powers and limitations,—for it is now permissible to speak of his limitations,—arise from this character of the force that moved him to poetic utterance. He is not primarily an artist, a poetical thinker or anything else of the kind, but a great vital creator and intensely, though within marked limits, a seer of life. His art itself is life arranging its forms in its own surge and excitement, not in any kind of symmetry,—for symmetry here there is none,—nor in fine harmonies, but still in its own way supremely and with a certain intimately metric arrangement of its many loose movements, in mobile perspectives, a succession of crowded but successful and satisfying vistas. While he has given a wonderful language to poetic thought, he yet does not think for the sake of thought, but for the sake of life; his way indeed is not so much the poet himself thinking about life, as life thinking itself out in him through many mouths, in many moods and moments, with a rich throng of fine thought-effects, but not for any clear sum of intellectual vision or to any high power of either ideal or spiritual result. His development of human character has a sovereign force within its bounds, but it is the soul of the human being as seen through outward character, passion, action, the life-soul, and not either the thought-soul or the deeper psychic being or the

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profounder truth of the human spirit. Something of these things we may get, but only in shadow or as a partial reflection in a coloured glass, not in their own action. In his vision and therefore in his poetic motive Shakespeare never really either rises up above life or gets behind it; he neither sees what it reaches out to nor the great unseen powers that are active within it. At one time, in two or three of his tragedies, he seems to have been striving to do this, but all that he does see then is the action of certain tremendous life-forces which he either sets in a living symbol or indicates behind the human action, as in *Macbeth*, or embodies, as in *King Lear*, in a tragically uncontrollable possession of his human characters. Nevertheless, his is not a drama of mere externalised action, for it lives from within and more deeply than our external life. This is not Virat, the seer and creator of gross forms, but Hiranagarbha, the luminous mind of dreams, looking through those forms to see his own images behind them. More than any other poet Shakespeare has accomplished mentally the legendary feat of the impetuous sage Viswamitra; his power of vision has created a Shakespearean world of his own, and it is, in spite of its realistic elements, a romantic world in a very true sense of the word, a world of the wonder and free power of life and not of its mere external realities, where what is here dulled and hampered finds a greater enlarged and intense breath of living, an ultra-natural play of beauty, curiosity and amplitude.

It is needful in any view of the evolution of poetry to note the limits within which Shakespeare did his work, so that we may fix the point reached, but still within the work itself his limitations do not matter. And even his positive defects and lapses cannot lower him, because there is an unfailing divinity of power in his touch which makes them negligible. He has, however much toned down, his share of the Elizabethan crudities, violences, extravagances, but they are upborne on a stream of power and end by falling in into the general greatness of his scheme. He has deviations into stretches of half prosaic verse and vagaries of tortured and bad poetic expression, sometimes atrociously bad; but they are yet always very evidently not failures of power, but the wilful errors of a great poet, more careful of dramatic truth and carried on by his force of expression than bound to verbal perfection. We feel obliged to accept his defects, which in another poet our critical sense would be swift to condemn or reject, because they are part of his force, just as we accept the vigorous errors of a great personality. His limitations are very largely the condition of his powers. Certainly, he is no universal revealer, as his idolators would have him be,—for even in the life-soul of man there are things beyond him,—but to have given a form so wonderful, so varied, so immortally alive, in so great a surge of the intensest poetical expression,

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to a life-vision of this kind and this power, is a unique achievement of poetical genius. The future may find for us a higher and profounder, even a more deeply and finely vital aim for the dramatic form than any Shakespeare ever conceived, but until that has been done with an equal power, grasp and fullness of vision and an equal intensity of revealing speech, he keeps his sovereign station. The claim made for him that he is the greatest of poets may very well be challenged,—he is not quite that,—but that he is first among dramatic poets cannot well be questioned

So far then the English poetic spirit had got in the drama, and it has never got any farther. And this is principally because it has allowed itself to be obsessed by the Elizabethan formula; for it has clung not merely to the Shakespearian form,—which might after due modification still be used for certain purposes, especially for a deeper life-thought expressing itself through the strong colours of a romantic interpretation,—but to the whole crude inartistic error of that age. Great poets, poets of noble subjective power, delicate artists, fine thinkers and singers, all directly they turn to the dramatic form, begin to externalise fatally; they become violent, they gesticulate, they press to the action and forget to have an informing thought, hold themselves bound to the idea of drama as a robust presentation of life and incident and passion. And because this is not a true idea and, in any case, it is quite inconsistent with the turn of their own genius, they fail inevitably. Dryden stumbling heavily through his rhymed plays, Wordsworth of all people, the least Elizabethan of poets, penning with a conscientious dullness his *Borderers*, Byron diffusing his elemental energy in bad blank verse and worse dramatic construction, Keats turning from his unfinished *Hyperion* to wild schoolboy imitations of the worst Elizabethan type, Shelley even, forgetting his discovery of a new and fine literary form for dramatic poetry to give us the Elizabethan violences of the *Cenci*, Tennyson, Swinburne, even after *Atalanta*, following the same *ignis fatuus*, a very flame of fatuity and futility, are all victims of the same hypnotism. Recently a new turn is visible; but as yet it is doubtful whether the right conditions for a reñovation of the dramatic form and a true use of the dramatic motive have all come into being. At any rate the predestined creator, if he is to come, is not yet among us.

DEDICATION

TO MIRABAI WHO CAME TO ME

Dilip Kumar Roy

Dilip Kumar Roy's drama "The Beggar Princess" came to an end in our last issue. The following is the dedicatory poem to the Devotee and Saint who has been felt in inner experience by the author to be inspiring and guiding his drama on her life as well as influencing his yogic career.

O endless cadence, how shall my soul's lyre
Be tuned to thy mystic dominant of flame
Whose mighty overtones awe our timid hearts?
In my cradle I was fed by thy far lore
That set my soul a-heave as, avidly,
I drank in the lone legend of thy love
Cajoling the Formless to wear the mask of Form
And play even as a human mate with thee!
The blue of sky was pent in a mortal plasm:
Incredible, yet how indubitable,
Like sprays of sungold quelling phalanxed night!
What none could even dare conceive came true.
The epiphany of Krishna, the God of gods,
Upon life's humdrum plains, and a Queen of queens
Electing at one stroke to abandon all
We cherish here below for what had loomed
At best as a faery tale an irised myth!
Oh, that 'an airy nothing' should have come
To companion, woo and wrench thee from the world
To be reclaimed by the Gleam beyond our glooms!
A life lived upon this our dismal planet
Of flying traces and swift-fading lusts,
A quest mocked by proud Reason which yet proved
An apocalypse of star—a hymn sung by
Love's lightning voice grown intimate! Hail, O

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Thou flickerless beacon in life's waste of eddies,
Ensign of sky who cam'st to burn on earth
As an oriflamme of challenge to Destiny,
Staking thy all in a godly enterprise
To wrest deep laurels envied of the angels!
Frail pilgrim, who yet daredst to assault the peak
Which none but the sturdiest mountaineers could climb!
Oh, that such a Rose of fire should have leaned
To a thing of clay and, taking him by the hand,
Guided his aspiration in compassion,
Addressed a human in a human tongue.

"I, Mira, am no modern messenger
Nor a lover of what is wafted on the surge
Of circumstance ephemerals of foam
Glittering on the phantom strands of Time
And leaving a legacy of broken bubbles
I haunt no more life's restless stadium
Where footlights go out swiftly and actors grope,
Where lightning-flares entail but a deeper gloom
I am inebriate of distilled starshine;
The smokeless miracle Fire lights me home,
The perennial fountain plinshed by the Lord,
The Source of nectar, I bathe in The One
Whose absence makes all earth-hues shimmer like mists
And whose one sun-frank smile makes life a fête
Is my aim of wakefulness and sleep's last dream
The Eternal Evergreen is my one Swan,
Beyond the clouds and mists my one Polestar
The truths that, leaping, swoon like wing-clipped moths,
The million-crested waves that hurtle along
And break on the shoals of Destiny I pass by
I stay a denizen of the unfathomed deeps
Even as you, my ward! And so I claim
Your spirit as my kin since you, too, pine
For One for whom I pined from birth to birth.
It is His gospel I have come to preach
Enjoined by Him this I enjoin on you
'Live only for Him, speak only of His Grace,
Think, meditate on His unrivalled Beauty,
Nurture the flower of His lavish Bounty
In the garden of your heart. Sing night and day,

DEDICATION—TO MIRABAI WHO CAME TO ME

With all the fiery fervour of your Muse,
Of Him, the unseen Beloved, the mystic Minstrel
Who changes love's heart by His miracle touch
Into a Brundaban of bloom and bliss,
A carnival where His Flute calls to all
To swell His dance of Ras. Follow the Flute
Which, once heard, can be unheard nevermore
Reclaim thy birthright: be a citizen
Of the Kingdom where His Grace is legislator,
Knowledge the dynast and Beauty banner-bearer.
The modern cry of life for drab life's sake,
Of illusive gleams whose aftermath is gloom,
Or the vagrant will-o'-the-wisp of puerile Art
Or Science that, bewildered, scans in vain
Its island sparks of baffling information,
Presuming to explain the inexplicable
Twinkling feebly in an uncharted sea,
Or fool statecraft that robs more than it gives
Are not for you. You are not what you seem
To your own eyes: a lonely acolyte
Of lonely Reason. And so you turned from these
Half-lights, world-weary, orphaned, disenchanting—
To the one Light no cloud can ever quench,
Of the Orb beyond the hazes. Radiant Krishna.
The much-vaunted earthly music sated you
Because you hearkened to the magic Flute
Beside whose concord the loveliest strains on earth
Seem dissonance itself. I'll open more
Your ears to His apocalyptic music.
The more you hear its call the less you shall
Cling to your cherished moorings, and the less
You count your cost the richer you'll become
Till, chasing the Flute, you meet the hidden Flutist
Whose notes are as soft as their call resistless
Through the aeonic wheel of cosmic Time.
But be thou warned: the modern seers will laugh
And challenge: 'How can a rustic Primitive
Keep pace with time? How can a Lotus-eater
Guide us in our sophisticated cravings
Or wean us from our modern pabulum,
So varied, complex, strong, intoxicating?
A picturesque and fabulous figure might

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Have served a purpose once but now's outmoded:
The Creator is evolving with His creatures
What titillated once as mystic anklets
Sound now, alas, as toy bells rung by children,
Affording at best pleasant interlude.'

· "The Lord outspies His scoffing prosecutors
And suffers them to follow the rich illusion
Of their Valley of False Glimmer and goes on still
Flashing His signals calling, singing, dancing,
Biding His time, attending even upon
The rebels who deny Him in ignorance,
Ready to lead them back to His everlasting
And never-aging Bower of bliss and beauty.
The one unfailing peak and plinth of all,
Incognito, He pilots even those
Who, mocking Him, vaunt they can steer safe home
Their self-will's cars unheeding His red lights
He is guiding all—from fools and prodigals,
To saints and seers, sages and avatars,
Leading all to the last Haven—His Light
And Love and Grace and all-redeeming Wisdom
Not one sere autumn leaf falls from the tree
But He, the Upholder, gives His final sanction
I have come down to you because He willed
That I shed some light on your mystic groping
For the journey's end—the Harbour of His Love
Where one day must all sailors come to port
I would today deliver you, my son,
From thunder-storms to blue repose and, lastly,
From the maze of words to Love's experience
The one asylum of all sentient souls
Words helped you once, but the fateful hour has gonged
When emerge you must from out their cosy coves
To dare the giddy heights beyond the reach
Of words however flawless and heart-warming
Steep is the path that leads to the pinnacle
Of unhorizoned vista of His Bliss
Whence He calls all—the Supreme Tantaliser
Who, beckoning, recedes behind the veil'
But whether you will or no, know you are gripped
By the last Abductor, Him resist no more

DEDICATION—TO MIRABAI WHO CAME TO ME

Till, finding Him, the Nest of golden sleep,
You live and move in His all-absolving Will
Playing in time, or poised in His Timeless hush,"

O Beggar Queen! my heart accepts thy lead
But can one do aught else who once has heard
With his mortal ears thy disembodied Voice?
Or, having heard, stray back again from thy
Compassion's clasp—or, having answered once,
Decline to seal what the heart has ratified?
Thy words and songs, thy life of fabulous trials,
Thy world-oblivious Love's one-pointedness
Now hold me in thrall I can elude no more
Thy inescapable clutch to which my soul
Has capitulated lead me as thou wilt
Free Spirit, owned by Him, make me His own,
His humble servant hearken to my prayer
May thy Dawn-diapason of delight
Resound in my dark vault O stainless One
From Hades' abyss deliver me to His Sun

SRI AUROBINDO'S TRANSLATIONS

R. Bangaruswami

Sri Aurobindo's exquisite verse renderings in English of a few gems from Sanskrit and Bengali literature form part of his *Collected Poems and Plays*, for they are indeed, in addition to their being excellent translations, 'poems in their own right'.¹

It is a matter for regret, however, that his translations into English verse of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* or *Cloud Messenger* and of passages from the Indian Epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which he wrote during the days of political activity in Bengal could not be included in the Collected Edition as the manuscripts were lost in the hazardous and hectic life of that period

The virtue of a translated piece of poetry is best judged by some generally-accepted standards of criticism. One, it must faithfully convey the idea contained in the original. Two, it is not enough to be merely literal but it is essential that the translation should bring out the underlying spirit, the very soul. Three, the translation should, as far as possible and practicable, adopt the original framework or pattern, prose for prose, poetry for poetry. Four, the verbal and visual beauty of the original imagery should not be lost.

No wonder the translator's work is seldom an easy task. Again and again he is beset with a number of obstacles. Ancient ideas and notions do not easily fit into current language. It is no child's play 'to coax them to change their robes'.² The pitfalls of being too literal or too free must be constantly avoided. The translator must have so mastered the intricate technicalities and potentialities of both the languages as to harness and drive them together, as it were,

Two coursers of ethereal race

With necks in thunder clothed and long-resounding pace.

He must also constantly endeavour 'to present his age in its own language a work of art which belongs to a different age. He must at all costs make it seem as familiar and as intimate as possible. He must be contemporary.'³

When the translator also happens to be a poet of acknowledged abi-

1 & 2 Dr. K R Srinivasa Iyengar's *Sri Aurobindo*, pp 46, 49.

3 C M Bowra in the *Sewanee Review* (Summer 1950) p 495.

lity, as is the case with Sri Aurobindo, the difficulties of the translator become greater, because by nature Pegasus refuses to be cabined or cribbed with too many limitations. In the field of translation it seeks to enlarge its boundaries by attempting some polish of the original material or by infusion of its own peculiar genius. That is why Sri Aurobindo holds the view that 'a translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses; he can make his own poem out of it, if he likes, and that's what is generally done.'⁴ That is also why Aurobindo's translations shine of their own effulgence. But the spirit, the framework, the beauty of the original is still there bright as a diamond but scintillating in the foil that Sri Aurobindo's genius has given to it.

THE CENTURY OF LIFE

Bhartrihari's *Niti Sataka* is, as the title, implies a collection of a hundred poetic pieces of practical philosophic truths for life's guidance. Their beautiful language has made the work immortal. Successive generations of boys and girls have drunk the honeyed words of wisdom, treasured them in their memories, and I am sure, benefitted by them. It may here be observed, in passing, that in practising good ethical and moral principles the real difficulty comes only in their application to everyday events and happenings. 'Well-born souls feel that gentleness and humanity are virtues to be admired and are instinctively inclined to practise them; but once they are faced with action they often remain in doubt. Is this really the right moment? How far should one go? Is one not mistaken about the object in view? A hundred perplexities intervene.'⁵ Bhartrihari here seeks to untie the knots of a hundred perplexities, indicating, 'the rule of successful as well as the law of ideal conduct and gives scope for observation of all the turns and forces determining the movement of human character and action.'⁶

In its passage through time *Niti Sataka* has gained a twenty-five per cent accretion of verses of analogous merit and the *Century of Life* comprises these also: the first thirteen of the entire body of epigrams deal with Folly, the second thirteen with Wisdom, and a similar number with Wealth. There are ten verses each dealing with Wickedness and Pride, seven on Firmness and seven on Fate, nine on Karma, seventeen on Virtue, and a miscellany of twenty-five on kindred topics.

In the customary way of all great Sanskrit writers Bhartrihari opens his subject with an invocation to God. This quatrain is itself infinite

4 Quoted in Sri Aurobindo, p. 46

5. Abbé Prévost in *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*.

6. *Collected Poems & Plays*, Vol. II, p. 165.

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riches in a small compass, a marvel of brevity and beauty At one stroke of the pen we find ourselves elevated to a plane wherefrom we marvel, muse and meditate on the author of all life and matter, here and beyond, past, present and future.

*To the calm light inviolable all hail
Whom Time divides not, nor Space measures, One,
Boundless and Absolute who is alone,
The eternal vast 'I am' immutable¹⁷*

With Bhartrihari speaking through Sri Aurobindo we learn that there is no cure on earth for tomfoolery, that even Paradise will not be welcome if it is to be 'mated with fools', on the other hand 'company of good men is a very soil of plenty, yielding all high things to man', that 'Nature, not age is the high spirit's cause that burns in mighty hearts and genius high'. that 'he who has wealth, has birth, gold who can spill Is scholar, doctor, critic what you will', that the evil man is the 'human cobra', that 'the noble nature in beneficence lives'; and that 'Thorns are her (a woman's) nature but her face the rose'; and many other sparkling truths to lead the way through life's dark cavern The advice contained in Universal Religion is of wide significance:

*'Tis this:—Abstain from slaughter, others' wealth
To covet cease, and in thy speech no stealth
Of falsehood harbour, give in season due
According to thy power, from ribald view
Or word keep far of women, wife or maid,
Be mild obedience to thy elders paid,
Dams longing like a river, each act beneath
Show mercy and kindness to all things that breathe⁸*

Sheer beauty of expression is achieved in many lines like—

*Billow on billow thundering, without pause⁹
Sprinkling truth's fragrance sweet upon the speech.¹⁰
The lotus slumbering in the darkened lake¹¹
His soul grows radiant like a flower full-blown¹²*

The epigrammatic and aphoristic brilliance of the pieces in the *Century of Life* is possible of achievement only at the hands of a master-craftsman in verse and this Sri Aurobindo was even at the outset of his poetic career, for it should be remembered that much of the translation of this work belongs to the nineties of the last century, when he was a Professor in Baroda College In translating *Niti Sataka* one fancies Sri Aurobindo's mind beating in sympathy with C R Das's—

My mind has grown a lye

*Whose hundred strings thy tones inspire.*¹³

And

*A hundred glimmering memories break like flowers.*¹⁴

SONGS OF THE SEA

Superb in its English garb, scaling at times the limits of sublimity, *Songs of the Sea (Sagar Sangit)* by C R Das is a contemporaneous work Sri Aurobindo translating C R Das is an instance of the deep answering to the deep. Fervent, philosophic, patriotic and poetic, these kindred souls were also inspired with a passionate love for the sea. Again and again we find in Sri Aurobindo's verses references to the glowing endearment of its beauties and its manifold significance. The fascination of the subject, the greatness of the original work as a fine embodiment of splendid poetry, the mutual friendship and regard which the two great men entertained for each other, and lastly the artistic genius of Sri Aurobindo which touched the gold of Das's poetry with finish—these factors have made the *Songs of the Sea* a thing of beauty and everlasting joy

The forty stanzas that comprise the poem are uneven both in point of length and structure but the range of poetic imagery is wide and powerful making the sequence a 'continuum of poetic iridescence'¹⁵ and giving a rich feast of 'music with its subtle undulations of dissolving sweetness'¹⁶ The opening line—'O thou unhopèd-for elusive wonder of the skies' in its melodious setting of a meticulously fine imagery is a ready promise of a good harvest to follow

With far-reaching humility Das thinks 'that he has no art of speech, no charm of song, Rhythm nor measure nor the lyric pace.' What has been expressed in such extremely felicitous verse, he confesses, is due to the inspiration that he has received from the sea both in its most boisterous and in its most solemn, silent moods

*My mind has opened only to thy song
And all my life lies like a yearning flower
Hued, perfumed, quivering in thy murmurous power
And all my days are grown an infinite strain
Of music sung by thee, O shoreless main*¹⁷

Mysterious, multi-tongued, multitudinous, the sea is all the same a symbol of the vast Immensity that spreads through God's Eternity. Not only a symbol but a symphony of 'Infinite Voice' that contains within it

9—14 *Collected Poems & Plays*, Vol II, pp 172, 180, 200, 202, 252, 256

15 & 16 Sri Aurobindo, pp 46, 49

17 *Collected Poems & Plays*, Vol II, pp 253

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sounds innumerable that wake into a wealth of music for those whose ears are attuned to Nature. Das thus portrays the sea as a mighty musician playing a million-billion magic strains of unpremeditated art: 'O sea where floats Song timeless.' Nor is that all Magnificent and munificent the sea is also a veritable painter with a blaze of colours—'green and pearl and blue and countless hues'—luxuriating over illimitable space; a great historian and philosopher 'recalling endless ages' and 'regretting countless lives'; a 'vast worshipper', a 'soul-filler'; an 'adorer'; a 'loud blind conqueror', a 'friend'; a 'brother', a 'king of mysteries'; and so many other things.

Byron's address to the sea at the end of Canto IV of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* has been long considered as unique in the history of English Poetry. The passage surges with sound like the sea and its very opening is simple, beautiful and grand:

*Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore, upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deeds, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffin'd, and unknown.*

Shelley has an equally beautiful description—

*I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be,
And such was this wide ocean; and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as I then rode; for the winds drove
The luxing spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;
And from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aerial merriment*

Artistically fine though the descriptions are, the spiritual outlook that equates the sea to the manifestation of the great power that creates, nourishes and destroys everything from a blade of grass to the distant star is wanting. *Songs of the Sea* supplies this element in all its beauty

and beatitude as seen and enjoyed by the Hindu sages and seers of old and as revealed in our Upanishads and Puranas. And the yearning cry of the poet goes forth in one passionate appeal to the sea—

*The light of Him I have seen, Himself I reach not, O sea
Silent I'll wait, make me one formless soul with thee.*¹⁸

This, however, does not mean that the poem is deficient in the outward description of the sea as a part of glorious Nature Sparkling lines like—

*The fathomless depths leap up to mix the sky;
Winds of destruction's sport walk tenebrously
Masses of driving death go chanting by,
The dreadful laughters of eternity.
No lightning cleaves the night thy thunders fill;
Thy wounded bosom pours out clamour and wail,
The myriad serpents of infinitude
Their countless hoods above thy waves extrude.*¹⁹

And—

*The sunbeams fall and kiss thy lips and gleam
Calm and profound like thy own majesty*²⁰

And—

*Evening has not descended yet, fast sets the sun,
Darkness and light together seize on them as one.
Gazing upon thy luminous dusk the clouds float by,
The charmed wind over thy troubled light sings murmuringly.*²¹

The twin souls—Das and Sri Aurobindo—that speak through *Songs of the Sea* have enshrined in its metre and melody not only the sweeping, seething notes of the sea's buoyancy, its solemn and sombre cadences of wailing woe, but also the intimate longings of their Soul.

GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG ASPIRANT

Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters

COMPILER'S INTRODUCTION

More and more people are daily drawn towards the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. Attracted by the ideal of the divine life which is being given a concrete shape there by the Mother as regards both individual perfection and collective living, men and women come and settle down at Pondicherry with their families

The International University Centre that is being created round the parent body has given an added impetus to these people to keep their children under the Mother's care to get educated into a new way of life. This has led to the formation of quite a large group of boys and girls.

As those in the higher grade have already begun to study the smaller books of Sri Aurobindo, and aspire to participate in the new Creation, a special Series of questions and answers has been prepared from the unpublished letters of Sri Aurobindo with a view to give them help in understanding his teachings. As most of the letters published here were originally addressed to a young boy, they were written in a manner which would enable him to understand things easily. Nevertheless, their value for the elders is equally great, for they succeed in elucidating matters on yoga which are sometimes a little difficult to understand from the letters addressed to the more advanced sadhaks.

"Synergist"

Questions and Answers on the Divine

- Q What is God? Is it not that the Supreme Truth means God?
A. The Divine is the Supreme Truth because it is the Supreme Being from whom all have come and in whom all are. 20-5-33

* * *

- Q Truth is the Supreme Being of the Divine in which we live. If it is so then why do people sometimes speak untruth and do actions which go against the Divine?

GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG ASPIRANT

A. All live in the *Divine*, but not in the Truth of the Divine which is her Supreme Being . . . They live here in the Divine but unconsciously, in Ignorance. 28-5-33

* * *

Q. What do we find if we go beyond the Divine, in the Supreme Truth?
A. You do not get beyond the Divine by reaching the Supreme Truth—you only get to the Supreme truth of the Divine. 29-5-33

* * *

Q. What does 'Divine' mean?
A. The Divine is that from which all comes, in which all lives, and to return to the truth of the Divine now clouded over by Ignorance is the soul's aim in life. In its supreme Truth, the Divine is absolute and infinite peace, consciousness, existence, power and Ananda. 31-5-33

* * *

Q. What is exactly meant by The Divine Mother?
A. The Divine Mother is the Consciousness and Force of the Divine—which is the Mother of all things 24-6-33

: + *

Q. When can the Divine do all actions through us?
A. There is this much truth that the Cosmic Force works out everything and the Cosmic Spirit (Virat Purusha) supports her action. But this Cosmic Force is a Power that works under the conditions of the Ignorance—it appears as the lower nature and the lower nature makes you do wrong things. The Divine *allows* the play of these forces, so long as you do not yourself want anything better. But if you are a Sadhak, then you do not accept the play of the lower nature, you turn to the Divine Mother, instead, and ask her to work through you instead of the lower nature. It is only when you have turned entirely in every part of your being to the Divine Mother and to her alone that the Divine will do all actions through you. 27-5-33

* * *

Q. What is opening to the Divine Consciousness?
A. It is an opening when the consciousness is able to receive the Divine

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Consciousness or Force (or whatever else it opens to) and feel its effects. 19-6-33

* * *

Q. How can I become one with the Divine ?

A. Open yourself to the Mother's Force and aspire—in time you will become one with the Divine. 15-6-33

* * *

Q. What is the Mother's force and how to open to it?

A. It is the Divine Force that changes the nature. Make yourself quiet and turn only to the Mother. 22-6-33

* * *

Q. How can one open to the Divine Mother?

A. By faith and surrender in a quiet mind 18-6-33

* * *

Q. In what way is it possible to take a plunge in the Divine?

A. By strong aspiration and concentration 16-6-33

* * *

Q. How can I remember the Divine whilst reading?

A. You can remember at the beginning and offer your reading to the Divine and at the end again. There is a state of consciousness in which only a part of it is reading or doing the work and behind there is the consciousness of the Divine always 28-6-33

* * *

Q. How is one to remember the Divine even in sleep?

A. It depends on the growth of the consciousness. But first you must be able to remember the Divine always in your waking hours.

27-6-33

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchand

CHAPTER XII

MIND AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART 11

The entanglement of the parts and functions of the antahkarana being bafflingly great, we have to fix upon something in it which will lend itself more easily and with a better grace than the others to the work of purification, but it must be something which is the most evolved in the nature and able to lead it to a higher poise and a more efficient working. For, the secret of dealing successfully with the instrumental nature is to use the most developed part of it as the grappling hook for the hauling and overhauling of the other parts and steadily diffuse its influence everywhere. If one part is sufficiently purified, there is every possibility of the others following suit sooner or later. But no part can be perfectly purified till all are perfectly purified, for even the slightest imperfection of one impinges upon the others and affects the general working. Therefore we have to find out the part which is most developed in us individually and set about its purification, extending at the same time its hold and influence upon the whole nature.

The Purification of the Buddhi

In the majority of men it is the buddhi or the intelligence, with its will, that is the most developed. Not that it is considerably developed in most men, but whatever its development, it can take the lead in the work of purification, inasmuch as it has the capacity to command a certain height and a certain detached superiority to the blind and knotted action of the lower members. Taking our stand in the buddhi, we can watch the movements of our nature and attempt to change or correct them. The initial superficial perception of the sense-mind and the understanding can be developed into a crystal cognition, a detached observation and knowledge of at least something of what passes within. And the buddhi has not only the power of observing and knowing, but also of directing and controlling, which it can exercise upon the rebellious parts of nature. Its will is a potent means of purification. It can get beyond the data of the

sense-mind and, by reflection and imagination, arrive at truths which are inaccessible to them. It can correct and control the receptive sensational mind which lies at the mercy of the outer touches of things and impose upon it a rhythm and a true law of perceptive and aesthetic enjoyment. It can teach the emotions of the heart a sense of symmetry and proportion and cure them of their sloppy effusions or violent heavings. It can put a brake on the random impulses of the reactive sensational mind and subject it to the rule of an ethical mind, bent upon achieving what is right and just in thought and word and deed.

But whatever the competence of the buddhi and its potentiality as the leader of the lower nature, it labours under many defects, some intrinsic and some contingent, which have to be overcome, if it is to be used as a primary agent of purification. The first defect is its subservience to the action of the vital, the prāna. This action is essentially infected with desire so long as it takes place in the conditions of the ignorance. All the preferences, predilections and prejudices of the buddhi can be traced to the action of desire. It is true that a man of sufficient intellectual development can deliver himself from the crude cravings and hungers that beset the average men, especially those who live mostly in the vital-physical consciousness, but he too finds it extremely difficult to rid himself of the subtler desires, the subtler preferences, the universally approved and admired affiliations of his being to certain cherished mental principles which, though basically unsound, appear to claim allegiance as gospel truths. Indeed, it can very well be said that there is no thought or opinion or judgment formed in the normal human mind but is cankered or warped by some desire or other. But the buddhi which is liable to be thus tarnished has the power in it to detach itself from the lower antahkarana and stand immune to the assaults of desire. It can, if it chooses, free itself even from the restless action of the senses and the turmoil of the heart's emotions and refuse to be clouded or overborne by them. This power of detachment is the secret of the mastery of the intelligence and the lever of the nature's ascent and purification.

The detachment from desire must be carried to an absolute perfection "The intelligence coloured by desire is an impure intelligence and it distorts Truth, the will coloured by desire is an impure will and it puts a stamp of distortion, pain and imperfection upon the soul's activity."* Man's real manhood begins when the domination of desire ends. Whatever the power and scope of the intelligence, and whatever its brilliance, it cannot turn towards Truth or live in its light, so long as it allows desire to sully its purity and fetter its freedom,—it remains a slave of the lower

* "The Synthesis of Yoga," Vol VI

nature in spite of its potential superiority. There is no dearth of examples of a developed intellect committing gross errors of judgment or glaring acts of injustice or perfidy, not unconsciously, but consciously, driven by the desires and passions of the lower nature, and even deliberately. In such cases, the intellect, because it submits to the importunities of desire, has perforce to play second fiddle to the unregenerate prâna and forfeit its prerogative of being the leader of the nature. It is his animal nature that leads man, and not his humanity, so long as desire has the whip hand of his being. His immaculate divinity remains sealed in his unsuspected depths.

The second defect of the average buddhi is its habitual dependence on the data of the senses. The intelligence that suffers limitation by the misleading impressions of the fugitive appearances of things cannot be an adventurer of new truths,—ideative, imaginative truths which tend to elevate and enrich life and touch it into beauty and harmony. All the higher possibilities of life would remain unrealised if the buddhi failed to transcend the reports and reactions of the sense-mind. The dreams of the poets and artists, the visions of the seers and prophets, all would be quenched and blown away by the chill breath of the sense-mind or the reasoning mind refusing to look beyond the physical facts of life. It is the tyranny of the reasoning mind swearing by the exclusive reality of Matter that is responsible for the poverty of the higher intelligence in modern man and the remarkable paucity of any outstanding intellectual creation, either in art or literature, music or philosophy. The remedy for this enslaving dependence lies in developing higher idealism, a yearning for the Infinite and Eternal, a tension towards the Absolute. A one-pointed aspiration for the Divine will release the mind from this thralldom of the senses and launch it upon an exploration of the Infinite. And in proportion as it is delivered from its preoccupation with Matter and the gross pursuits of the material life, it will grow in lightness, limpidity and transparency, and develop its higher powers and faculties which will open to it new realms of vision and experience. An increasing power of stillness and silence accompanying the power of detachment will go a long way to purify the mind and prepare it for the final transformation. But, let us insist, the most effective means to fortify the detachment and deepen the silence and widen it, is to intensify the upward look, the hunger and thirst for the Divine and to dedicate all intellectual activities to Him. The buddhi has not to be left fallow, for it is an important instrument in the work of the reorganisation of life; but it must be freed from all lower subjection, fully developed in all its parts and powers, and held up to the higher Light for its direct descent into it. “*Mavyarputamanobuddhi*” is the formula prescribed by the Gita, after the Samkhya process of detach-

ment has been practised, for the silencing of the mind and its turning to the Supreme. In the Integral Yoga both detachment and surrender of the mind go hand in hand, and their conjoint action induces not only a turning to the Supreme, but also a potent purification and conversion of the mind's customary fuctions and energies.

Another serious defect in the buddhi is that, being the seat, *pratishthá*, of the ego, it labours under the fatal limitation of a separative consciousness, and in spite of all its attempts at self-enlargement, finds itself hopelessly spinning in the fixed orbit of a bounded perception and action. The ego is nowhere so powerful and dominant as in the buddhi, and nowhere so subtly, elusively and pervasively active. Whether it turns to the ways of light or of darkness, it has the potentiality to constrain and lead the nature to its own separative ends. It is only when it opens to a higher light and surrenders itself, poignantly conscious of its crippling limitation, that the human mind, particularly the human intelligence, moves towards the discovery of the truth of existence and the recovery of the unity of its vision. But the truth and unity it seeks lie beyond its present orbit and can be attained only by a self-transcendence. A conscious movement of self-transcendence and self-widening polarised to the Supreme Being of infinite Light and Bliss and Power, the One without a second, the Omnipresent Reality, will be the greatest means of deliverance of the buddhi from the meshes of the ego.

There is yet another limitation in the buddhi, that, when it comes to perceive something luminous and high-uplifted beyond its petty circlings and futile strainings, it feels a double urge to advance towards it and reflect it in the nature. This double urge in the buddhi signifies a double intention in purification. For, the buddhi is at once a means of ascent and a medium of transmission—an ascent of the consciousness to the unscaled heights of the being and a transmission of the Light and Power and Bliss and freedom of the heights to the nature parts below. But when it finds to its chagrin that the nature parts are much too opaque and obscure to be able to reflect the higher glory, it abandons its work of transmission and reflection and strives to shoot straight into the Beyond. "This it may do by seizing on some aspect, some principle, some symbol or suggestion of reality and pushing that to its absolute, all-absorbing, all-excluding term of realisation or by seizing on and realising some idea of indeterminate Being or Non-Being from which all thought and life fall away into cessation. The buddhi casts itself into a luminous sleep and the soul passes away into some ineffable height of spiritual being."*

In the Integral Yoga this unilateral tendency of the buddhi is neutralised by a wide aspiration for an integral union with the Divine and

* "The Synthesis of Yoga"—Vol. IV—by Sri Aurobindo

for His manifestation in life, and a dynamic surrender of the whole nature to the Mother's transformative Force. The magnetism of the peaks is balanced by the call of the base and the Light that descends responds to the rays (the cows of the Vedas) that are released and ascend from below. The destiny of the buddhi is not to abolish itself in the Immutable, but to act as a bridge between the summits above and the plains below, and a channel of the splendours supernal. In order to fulfil this destiny, the buddhi must not only give up its basic egoism, but also its smug complacency in its own achievements, its petty thoughts and erring ideas and its bounded horizons of perception and imagination. There can be no hope for its progress if it does not become acutely conscious of its own be-setting limitations and the luminous infinitudes stretching far beyond.

A thorough purification of the buddhi—of its perfection we shall speak later—is an indispensable preliminary to the purification of the rest of the nature, so far as the majority of men are concerned; but it must not be thought that the purified buddhi is only a fully developed intellect, brilliant in its work of reasoning and discernment. It is more than intellect,—it is intelligence, in which there is less of intellection and more of light. In the sense in which it is used in the Upanishads, it is a calm, inner light, burning like a star in the dimness of the nature and pointing to the distant goal, *paramadhâma*. It is suffused with a sweet feeling and athrob with the vibration of a potent will. Its guidance is a guarantee of purity and integrity, its steps are the steps of an unfaltering faith. To deliver this buddhi from the confused action of the lower nature is to be on the sure way to self-transcendence. A desireless, detached and high-aspiring buddhi is an ideal condition for the purification of the whole nature; but the ideal condition can be fulfilled only when the higher levels of consciousness begin to open and take up the action of the buddhi.

Purification of the Sense-Mind

The sense-mind reacts to the contacts of the sense-objects by the duality of mental pleasure and pain, which is a translation, in terms of the mind, of the primary duality of attraction and repulsion whose action we have already noticed in the working of the basic chitta. This reaction of the sense-mind is immediate and automatic, and often irrational or subrational. A man comes to me. As soon as I set eyes on him, there rises a sensation in me, immediate and automatic in its action, but nevertheless imperceptibly conditioned by many factors, such as the then state of my chitta, the surface mood in which I am at that moment, the active associations of my mind, the working of my sense of sight etc. All these factors combine to produce in me a sensation either of attraction or repulsion, that is to say, of mental sympathy or antipathy, which is a nervous-mental reaction,

generated by the outer impact. Then the same reaction is reproduced in terms of the emotions of my heart and I feel either pleased or displeased. All this tangled action of the antahkarana goes on on the basis of the sense-impressions, and that is why very often we find that we have been betrayed into regrettable errors—the first impressions prove to be very deceptive. It is clear, then, that the very basis of our knowledge of the world is a shaky one, dependent upon many accidental factors, which preclude any right perception of truth. This erratic action of the sense-mind has to be replaced by a steady action of the buddhi in it. Instead of the sense-mind imposing its first impressions upon the buddhi and leading it into blind alleys, the buddhi must hold the reins of the mind and impose upon it a dispassionate calm and equality, and discountenance its habitual, irrational movement of automatic liking and disliking. The action of the sense-mind should be controlled and enlightened from above by the buddhi, and not left to be wire-pulled by the primitive chitta or obscured and bedevilled by the accretions in the surface consciousness. Delivered from the past samskaras and the habitual reactions, it will proceed in the developing light of the buddhi and help in the organic advance of the whole nature towards Truth. In the Upanishads the sense-mind has been likened to the reins, and the senses to the horses which run through the pastures of sense-objects; and it is said that, if the soul which is the master of the chariot of the body, has to reach its destination, the Divine, it must have a purified buddhi as its charioteer, holding the reins of the sense-mind and controlling the wild senses. If the buddhi lets go its hold on the bridle, that is to say, the sense-mind, then the chariot goes tumbling and rolling into the nearest ditch. The buddhi, itself purified, must also reject the sense-mind's mechanical thoughts and ideas, its fruitless circling round its cherished objects, and establish in it a serene silence and a smiling readiness to serve the higher light.

As in the receptive, so in the active and reactive sense-mind, the insidious influence of the obscure chitta has to be completely inhibited. The impulses to action must come, not from any desires, overt or disguised, but from the will in the intelligence, till the divine will reveals itself and takes up the guidance of the being. A vigilant control of the buddhi over the active sense-mind will minimise, if not obviate, the resurgence of the turbid stuff of the chitta, which usually seeks to swamp our surface being and spurts out in sporadic action. But for a complete immunity of the sense-mind from the raids of the nether elements, a more systematic purification of the chitta itself is indispensable.

In the next article we shall consider in brief the purification of the chitta with a particular reference to the emotional mind, which is such a prolific source of trouble and disappointment to the beginners in Yoga.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL: NO 11.

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The appearance of this annual on 15th August always comes as a quickening message to the spiritual aspirants after a gap of interminably long summer months. Its most stimulating feature is the rich crop of Sri Aurobindo's unpublished writings which by their freshness and originality breathe a new vigour and life and again tempt us to scale the heights which almost appear inaccessible to the tread of earth-bound mortals. Sri Aurobindo the yogi-poet is perhaps the first in hammering out an expression that reveals in its full effulgence "the luminous tracts and heavens serene",

And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy,

which, as he assures us, are not mere visionary gleams beyond our ken but

Await discovery on our summit selves

This year's annual opens with the poem, *The Descent of Ahana*. This is "The earlier and original version of the poem from which a *portion* was taken out and published first as *Ahana*... and later on included in the *Collected Poems and Plays*, under the same title but considerably revised and enlarged." The later version is much more compact, terse and rises to dizzy heights and surveys with great profundity the whole field of human quest for Light, Freedom and Immortality, but precisely for that reason its radiance is too dazzling for the mortal's "half-closed eyes" which get screwed because of their long habit of darkness. He himself says

Heavy is godhead to bear with its mighty sun-burden of lustre

The earlier version is complete and the light is more tempered and diffused and the theme also is keyed to a simpler strain, and is more easily understandable. The ascents are not abrupt and steep and there are many tiers to "bridge our earthhood and heavenhood."

The theme is the eternal Promethean fire of man's aspiration which

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“manifests in the divination of godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure truth and unmarred Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality” (*The Life Divine*). But this uphill task demands a strength from man which this frail terrestrial creature lacks and he cannot surmount the myriad difficulties that beset his path unless the Divine Grace herself descends on earth to ‘hew the ways of Immortality’ through intractable forests and rocks of granite. The Divine Grace, again and again, makes the great sacrifice, leaves her heavens of eternal trance where, as Ahana says:

Centuries passed me unnoticed, millenniums perished unnumbered
and ascends into clay, takes upon herself the whole burden of earthly nature and then manifests as much of Divine Light, Truth and Love as the earth in its evolutionary progress can receive and assimilate. But it is not all a smooth sailing, because, as Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*.

*Hard is it to persuade earth-nature’s change,
Mortality bears ill the eternal’s touch*

The Inconscient refuses to change and

Almost with hate repels the light it brings
and, what is worse,

*Inflicting on the heights the abysm’s law
It sullies with its mire heaven’s messengers
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of grace,
It meets the sons of god with death and pain.*

This, in brief, is the whole sense and significance of the Descent of Ahana, “the Dawn of God” who “descends on the world where amid the strife and trouble of mortality the Hunters of Joy, the Seekers after Knowledge, the Climbers in the quest of Power are toiling up the slopes or waiting in the valleys.” Their voices penetrate her home of Divine Felicity and Peace in Heaven and ultimately succeed in persuading the Compassionate Mother to make the great holocaust and plunge in the heart of darkness with her light and love. The magnitude of the sacrifice can never be imagined by the children of mortality. Its poignancy can be dimly felt in these words in the *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, “All the grades of consciousness appeared, all the successive worlds. Some were splendid and luminous, well ordered and clear; there knowledge was resplendent, expression was harmonious and vast, will was potent and invincible.” And then she “perceived in its entirety the hideous suffering of the world of misery and ignorance” and God’s “children locked in a sombre struggle, flung upon each other by energies that had deviated from their true aim.”

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The world calls Ahana from her "Silence vast and pure", but says she:
World? What wage had my soul when its strength was thy

*neighbour
Though I have loved all, working and suffering, giving them
pleasure?*

But the "Voices" know the Mother's heart and so are not driven to despair by this refusal for they are certain that her heart must ultimately thaw before their "fire-importunities" They persist

*other the nature he gave thee,
Scourged and indulged, to obey and to wrestle with strengths
that enslave thee,
Just as thy nature, thy task for the love and the laughter of ages;
Mighty thou art, but a slave, and the cham and the whip are thy
wages.*

Though Ahana comes to manifest the Divine Nature, Sri Aurobindo always garments her with humanity and she always speaks in terms of human feelings and agonies suffered with feminine delicacy and tenderness. She is reluctant to come down less perhaps for her own suffering than for the reason that these refusals intensify and even fortify the aspiration of the seekers. She says:

*Now I have done with space and my soul is released from the
hours;*

But those who have fully tasted the bitter-sweet of the earth and also have quivered to the touch of the higher Beatitude cannot give up the quest. They say:

*Snatches of pleasure we seized; they were haunted and challenged
by sorrow.
Marred was our joy of the day by the care and the dread of the
morrow*

They invoke her with first mild solicitations, and then, embodying what Sri Aurobindo elsewhere calls

*..Death's dire appeal to Eternity,
Earth's outcry to the limitless Sublime,*

come flooding these passionate lines:

*Come, come down to us, Woman divine whom the world
unforgetting
Yearns for still; we will draw thee, O Star, from the colourless
setting.*

*Lonely thou sittest alone in the fruitless vasts of the spirit;
Watest thou, goddess, then for some younger world to complete
or inherit?*

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Nay, if thou save not this, will another rise from the spaces?

Only the past fulfilled can conjure room to the future that presses.

The poem, though not a drama, has many dramatic situations and Sri Aurobindo has shown a unique craftsmanship in lending an objective vividness to an episode which takes place entirely in the Inner Worlds of consciousness. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* founders as a drama when it reaches its climax in the death of Jupiter. Shelley made it something akin to spiritual conversion and this knocked the bottom out of the whole plot, for "plot is character in action." The climax in *Ahana* comes when her heart gives way before the triumphant rapidity of the upward flight of the "voices" and feels as if she were going to be ravished. She says:

Lo, their souls are cast on my soul like forms in a mirror!

*Hark, they arise, they aspire, they are near, and I shudder with
terror.*

Man's soaring aspiration proves unconquerable and the Divine has to respond and so she condescends to come.

The next article is taken from Sri Aurobindo's unpublished *Thoughts and Glimpes*. They are epigrammatic in their sharpness and always pregnant with the profoundest truths of life and spirit. He is neither for discarding life out of a lure for the Spirit nor for an indulgence of its lower movements. Yoga is the way of fulfilment of life as envisaged by him. But in what way fulfilment? He points the finger of light: "The upward movement is towards Heaven, the downward movement towards Hell. The animal soul fulfils itself when it transcends animality and becomes human. Humanity also fulfils itself when it transcends humanity and becomes God."

The two commentaries, one on the first Rik of R̥gveda and the other on the first verse of Chhandogya Upanishad, are highly scholarly and bear the stamp of Sri Aurobindo's realisation by experience of what these ancient cryptic verses symbolise or suggest.

Nolini Kanta Gupta's articles based upon talks given by the Mother reveal him as the master of the laconic and lucid. They open new vistas of occult and spiritual knowledge. The human body assumes quite a new role and appears not only as a microcosm but as a control room of cosmic rhythms.

The Vak of the Veda by T.V. Kapali Sastry is characteristic of this great Sanskrit scholar. The true source of the "word" is a realm quite unknown to the Western World, a *terra incognita*, but the ancients knew it and Kapali Sastry presents it in a form which makes the whole subject understandable by the modern mind.

M.P. Pandit has the key to the cryptic symbolism of the Veda

mantras and his article on *Soma* brings to a close his exposition of the subject. He unfolds most consistently the symbolic meaning of all the terms used in connection with extracting of *Soma* such as the stone and the mortar and pestle.

According to him, "Soma, the wine of Delight in existence, is there in the being of man. To set it flow freed from obstruction and canalise its abundant streamings from the soul's offering to the gods is the object of the Yajmana, the mystic engaged in the sacrifice."

Rishabhchand's article, *The Philosophy of Education*, is an outstanding contribution and deserves to be widely read. There is a new light thrown on the whole nature of man, which is a fabric with tier on tier, viz. the physical, vital, mental and over and above these the psychic and the spiritual. It stems out of a vision which sees things steadily and sees them whole. It is bound to prove a landmark in giving a new orientation to the system of education.

The annual is very reasonably priced and the publishers are to be congratulated upon the profound articles that they have been able to elicit. Professor Arabinda Basu's *Divine Maya* is very cogent and Professor S. K. Maitra's *Sri Aurobindo and Goethe* is very interesting and scholarly.

R. N. KHANNA

FURTHER LIGHTS: THE VEDA AND THE TANTRA

By T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

(Sri Aurobindo Library, 369 Esplanade, Madras, Rs. 4).

While the political and social history of India has been characterised by a huge diversity in the rise and fall of kingdoms and growth of multifarious institutions, a single spiritual unity characterizes the Indian mind of all ages. It has recognized unflinchingly at all times that man is conscious only of a small fraction of himself and that in and around him there abound the forces of the Infinite. There have therefore been successive attempts for him to exceed himself and correspondingly establish in him the Forces of Light. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

*A deep surrender is their source of might,
A still identity their way to know.**

This basic unity, the spiritual and occult process of Invocation and establishment (*Pratishtha*) has been the characteristic unity in India as has been explained by T. V. Kapali Sastry in the invocations in the Apri Hymns and in his illuminating treatise on *Prana Pratishtha*.

Three successive stages are noticeable in the spiritual and cultural history of this country, the Vedic, the Upanishadic and Puranic or Tantric ages. The Vedic age has been characterised by Sri Aurobindo as "the early period of human thought when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed in a veil of concrete and natural figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated" (*Arya*—Vol. I). The second is the age of Dharma and Sastra when the inner truth was sought to be revived by meditation and extended as the law of the race to guide human activity. The third is the Tantric age when the impulses of the mind and emotions were taken up for transformation. In the book under review, which is a sequel to the author's other two books, *Lights on the Veda* and *Lights on the Upanishads*, the unity that has governed the spiritual mind of India has been emphasised and the two popular misconceptions that the Vedas in the main are meant only for rituals and that the Tantras are opposed to the Veda are rooted out.

Godhead and the Gods in Rig Veda Modern western scholarship walking on the crutches provided by the ritualistic commentary of Sayana, holds out that the Riks were sacrificial hymns, prayers and praises to the Sun, Fire, Winds and Waters, for material wealth and plenitude. But behind the veil of Vedic symbolism lies the real nature of the Vedic Godhead. Kapali Sastry has pointed out that the Vedic Gods with different names are but Powers of one supreme Godhead. In his own words, "the Gods of the Veda are not mere names but different Powers, have different functions, distinctive signs that mark them out, featuring their personalities, yet not absolutely separate from but closely allied to one another, not apart from the sole supreme Truth, the Godhead, but definite manifestations of that Indefinable." Tapas or spiritual force is the necessary condition for understanding the nature of Vedic Godheads. Citing a number of hymns from the body of the ten Mandalas, the author has stated that the One was known to the Seers. As Powers and Personalities of the One, the Vedic Gods have a cosmic function in the universe, but they have their domain in the psychological and spiritual function in man. It is therefore the conscious giving up of the respective domains to the various Godheads that is the origin for the Vedic inner-sacrifice. "Sacrifice is the law instituted by the creative Godhead, the Purusha for self-extension in the world-existence, it is the law by which creation is sustained and it is also the law by which enlargement and growth into the image of the immortal Godhead is pos-

sible." Having set out the general principle of sacrifice, the author illustrates the truth in respect of Agni, the first God

"Of all the Gods, he is the first to be born in man. He is the will of the Divine in man and once he is awakened, he rises and grows heavenward fed by the offerings of the sacrificer, the human soul. He is the Flame whose original home is in the great heaven. He contains in himself the seven essentials of the planes of cosmic existence so that when he accepts the offerings with the seven tongues they reach and satisfy the heads of the seven planes of being into which the soul is to be born. He is described as dwelling in the secret cave, *Guha*. Besides, he is the 'Knower of all births', 'seer-poet'. In the puranic pantheon the Vedic Agni is known as Skanda."

Apri Hymns Having set forth the nature of the first of the Vedic Gods, the author has taken up for detailed study the Apri Hymns to illustrate how the Mystic Fire unfolds his powers. However, the esoteric character of the Apri hymns has baffled western scholarship, i.e. Wilson in his introduction to Rig Veda Samhita says "Agni does not seem to have any subordinate multiples, except in the anomalous deifications called Apri, which, although including certain female divinities and insensible objects, such as the Doors of the sacrificial hall, are considered to be impersonations of Agni." However, the inner significance of the Apri Hymns is that they are an invocation to the seer-will, Agni, to come down and 'fill' the Rishi. The lines of inner worship by which Agni takes charge of the sacrifice and heavenward ascent of the aspiring soul in the Apri Hymns are as follows, largely in the words of the commentary:

The Rishi is awakened and the Divine will, distinct from human will, is born in him. The divine flame is kindled by devotional prayers and exclusive choice of the Divine. For the soul which is ready to make the offerings he is also the Divine voice. Agni is called upon at once to purify the Adhars as well as to worship the Gods. Well-kindled Agni, who has developed an intimacy with the earnest worshipper, is implored to formulate the worship by offering the sap of delight of all experiences. The Divine child born in the sacrificer, when he rises up, draws the gods to the sacrifice, the offering itself is well prepared by Agni, and he is implored to bring the Gods in his chariot. The next step is to keep ready the seats for the Gods, in due form, well prepared and in unbroken order.

Now, the Yajna has to rise and travel heavenward to reach ultimately the Godhead. The Doors that lead upwards which are usually closed must open for the sacrifice. The alternation of the two consciousnesses represented by Day and Night are invoked, Day representing the light of consciousness in which the worlds and planes and powers are beheld severally and *in toto*, and night representing a concentration and self-absorption.

The next step is to invite the powers above the earth-plane; the two divine priests are called upon to come on the path of the Life breath, representing the upward movement that reaches the subtle higher planes and the downward movement which brings something of the substance of the higher worlds to the human being. Next the aspiring soul reaches Ila, Goddess of the vision of knowledge, Saraswati of flowing inspiration, and Mahi, goddess of its Vastness. Then Twashtir is invoked to build the new life and give new shape to the old material in the human being. Then Soma is invoked to ensure to this self the joyous element in the offering. In the last hymn, the Rishi proclaims that he invokes the lord of Swar, illumined mind, to come to the offering in the company of other Gods. Thus, the Apri Hymns mark the ordered steps by which is reached the Home of Utter Bliss, the Immortal Life.

In the next article is described with equal clarity the rapid rite of a seer-priest called Anjah-Sava.

Tantras Side by side, there has been another comprehensive synthesis called the Tantric synthesis. Its antiquity is unquestionable. The Tantric texts, except those of Jainism and Buddhism hold the Vedas in high esteem. The whole field of life, including Bhoga or enjoyment is in it. It has its four parts, Jnana-pada, or philosophical basis, Yoga-pada, whereby the inner discipline as marked out by the Guru to the disciple is to be lived out, Kriya-pada, with external ceremonies and Charya-pada which lays down the conduct for men.

The gods in the Veda figure also in the Tantric synthesis. Agni becomes Kumara, child of Siva. The mighty Indra of the Vedas and the Maruts function as Rudra and his pramatha gana, the Sun the supreme Godhead in the Veda functions as Vishnu in Tantric parlance and Aditi as the supreme Shakti.

The Tantric sadhana has developed a means by which the sadhaka gets into communion with the Ishta devata. For him the Mantra is the spiritual personality of the Godhead. The establishment of the identity between the Guru, mantra and the Godhead is the condition precedent for success in Tantric sadhana.

To illustrate that the Tantric sadhana has assimilated the Vedic spirit Kapali Sastry has taken the Shatakshari Vidya from Prapancha Sara Tantra. Next is taken up for consideration Chandi, famous as Durga. The Tantric Sadhana has its roots laid deep in Mantra sadhana which is of two distinct kinds, parayana or reciting audibly, and Dhyana or meditation. The seven hundred slokas of Saptha Sathi is a maha mantra and in places where it is recited a living presence of the deity is established. The author has pointed out that even an avowedly Tantric mantra as the Saptha Sathi has a Vedic basis in the 125 Hymns of the tenth book of Rig Veda.

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For the Tantric devotee, the outer symbol and installation of the God-head is indispensable. Prana is defined as 'the conscrous force emanating from the supreme soul, in which the individual being abides', and this can best be done only by purifying one's being by Bhuta Suddhi. The process as described in Meru Tantra is as follows (p. 243):

"When the body in its entirety becomes fit to commune with the Devata, one must restore and fix in their proper places the principles, tattwas, hidden in the self. (For this purpose) from the heart-lotus one must bring out the soul from the supreme self. And according to the rule (method) by means of the Hamsa Mantra one has to look upon the body as a luminous form of light and as having become quite competent for the worship of the Deity".

Above all,

*In the unfolding process of the Self
Sometimes the inexpressible Mystery
Elects a human vessel of descent,*

and the author has pointed out with a sure hand that "what is holy beyond measure for all spiritual aspirants and devotees is the spot where such a *Siddha* or *Vibhuti* or—and this is rare—a Divine Manifestation lives or lived in *Tapasya*, and shed the coil of mortality—the 'material envelope'."

Thus a huge synthesis is worked out between the Veda and Tantra and the underlying unity in the Vedic and Tantric *Sadhana* in the use of Mantra and progressive opening to the Godheads the *sadhaka* seeks to establish in himself has been emphasised.

BHARADWAJA VENKATARAMAN

MAHABHARATA

By C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

(Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2nd Edition, Re. 1-12.)

This volume in its first edition was the first book published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Book University, organised by Sri K. M. Munshi. The Book University has set before itself the laudable objective of giving to the public at cheap price the best literature in the world and particularly literature dealing with the fundamentals of Indian culture.

And the *Mahabharata* is certainly the most typical work on Indian culture, dealing as it does with practically all the aspects of human life. But the original *Mahabharata* is too big to be given unabridged in a book-series

like this, and hence this abridged version by Sri Rajagopalachari and his friends.

On a perusal of the book, one can clearly see that the author has got a knack of telling stories in a simple and fluent style, which immediately captivates the reader's interest. A rendering of the tales of the *Mahabharata* in simple English was a long-felt need and this book satisfies it to a great extent. It is not a book written to please the scholarly intellect, but as the author himself says in his preface to the first edition, "I imagined myself telling these stories to children clustering eagerly to hear the deeds of the godlike heroes of our motherland. I also hoped that the reading of these stories might enliven village evenings when rustics gather socially . . . after their work is done".

It is from this point that the book is to be judged. And one can say without any hesitation that it is a great success, but, like all other human works, not an unmixed success. For instance, when the author gives up his role of a narrator of stories and assumes that of a moralist the two things do not blend happily together. And again when he tries to see modern notions into the ancient atmosphere of the epic, it becomes a grotesque patchwork. Here are a few instances:

"The practice of staging a 'walk-out' from an assembly in protest against something is nothing new. We learn from the *Mahabharata* that a walk-out was resorted to even in ancient times". Here the reference is to the incident of Shishupala feeling insulted and leaving the Rajasuya gathering of the kings invited by Yudhishthira. Evidently there is no parallelism between a walk-out from a modern Legislative Assembly and this *Mahabharata* incident. The former is a method of showing one's protest against the ruling party, in a democratic form of Government, while the latter is only a matter of personal insult.

Equally irrelevant is the quite unwarranted digression about the evil of modern cinema and talkies in Chapter Fifty. An old epic like *Mahabharata* should not be made a mouthpiece of propagandist spirit of any kind. It is quite unbecoming in a story-writer.

Another instance is the following remark made by the author: "Our ancestors were well aware that wild life in the forest should be preserved". This too is a modern notion and it is too much to read it in an ancient text like the *Mahabharata*. The incident regarding which this remark is made is that in which Yudhishthira leaves one forest for another, being moved by sheer dint of mercy towards the wild animals and by no other motive; it was just an impulse of a good and kind-hearted man; that is all.

In another place the wrestling bout between Jarasandha and Bhima is described as "in catch-as-catch-can style". Whether the description is

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appropriate or not is not the question, but such a modern phrase applied to this ancient tale makes the latter look too grotesque.

All this is not to say that modern allusions are all bad. Even the author himself has given us an apt parallel between an ancient event and a contemporary one. The incident described is Drupada's sending an emissary to Duryodhana to talk of peace in order to gain time for the Pandavas to prepare for war. The parallel given from contemporary history is that of the Japanese carrying on negotiations with the Americans and, immediately on the break-down of those talks, their suddenly attacking Pearl Harbour in 1941.

Nor should it be supposed that the defects mentioned above are any major flaws in the book, however glaring they may be. They are not such as can not be removed, and they are few and far between in an otherwise lucid and powerful narration.

One small point is the rather humorous-looking translation of the Sanskrit name *Ashtavakra* as "Eight-crooks". It might better have been rendered as "one having eight deformities," in order to avoid the other meaning attached to the word 'crook'.

RAJANIKANT MODY

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SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S FUTURE

K. D. Sethna

The Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, affiliated to the international body of which the Honorary Presidents are Bertrand Russell, Jacques Maritain, Benedetto Croce, Karl Jaspers and Salvador de Madariaga, celebrated the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, last month. The Editor of "Mother India" was asked to be the Chairman of the gathering. The text of his opening speech is given below.

I think it is an act of inspired insight on the part of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom to commemorate the birthday of Sri Aurobindo. The meaning of cultural freedom cannot be more profoundly brought home than by considering it in the context of this great Indian's life and work. And the meaning shines out all the clearer for India in the fact that Sri Aurobindo's birthday happens to be also the day chosen by the Indian nation to commemorate the birth of its independence: August 15. The fateful "coincidence" is not just a reminder that Sri Aurobindo was at one time in the very van of this country's fight for political freedom. No doubt, eight momentous years he gave to nationalist politics at a most critical early stage. But what he fought for was no narrow nationalism, nor was mere political liberation his aim though self-government he always regarded as a legitimate end to be achieved. He wanted India to be the free radiating centre of a *vita nuova* in earth's history. For he was much more than a nationalist or a politician.

Culture in the widest and highest sense was what he embodied. From his 7th to his 21st year he was educated in England, first at a school in Manchester and then at King's College, Cambridge. He distinguished himself by rare mastery over Greek and Latin. English, of course, was as a mother tongue to him. Among modern European languages, he knew French, Italian, German and some Spanish. He specialised in the study of European literature and history. So, when he returned to India he came as one in whom the best that Europe's culture could give was a living force. Then he plunged into intimate study of the culture of the

East and particularly of his own country. Sanscrit was mastered and an efficient familiarity acquired with several modern Indian languages. The whole range of Indian literature, both sacred and secular, was explored. And soon there was not only the launching out into politics but also a contact with educational activity and, above all, a taking up of the inner discipline for development of consciousness which India calls Yoga. As in all other fields, so too, in this field of Yoga which became his major preoccupation, his was a diversity of experience: nowhere could he cramp himself or be tied down to a monotone, however brilliant. Liberty and largeness were the constant movement of his nature—a sense of the deep need of free and multiple evolution together with a response to the equally deep need to synthesise, harmonise and unify.

The East and the West met in Sri Aurobindo and became a many-coloured cultural creativity. His literary output covered problems of fundamental philosophy and spiritual realisation, art and criticism, sociology and international relations. A huge amount of noble prose and fine poetry stands to his name. But he brings to everything the experience of an inner illumination. His vast intellect is the instrument of a consciousness that has entered and organised within itself ranges of perception and power, of which the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita give vivid indications.

The range of spiritual experience and reality on which he lays central stress is what he terms Supermind, the top of a gradation of greater being, knowledge, force and bliss which lie concealed and unrealised in man—a more-than-human consciousness which would enable our complicated and bewildered and divided world to solve with success the enigmas confronting it.

For, the Supermind, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the whole source and secret of earthly evolution. It is not a grand annulment of things: it is That in which resides the supporting truth, the divine original, of all that gets manifested here through a difficult process out of an initial involution. Evolution is at first a play of brute matter: within this emerges sentient life: within that is the emergence of conscious mind. And in man, who is the highest mental evolute, there persists a vague striving to surpass himself, to establish ideal conditions inward and outward, to bring about a more-than-human order. At the back of this striving is the Supermind. And with the Supermind's advent there will not only be a realisation of some ineffable Beyond: there will also be a perfection of mind and life and even body, a completely consummated

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individual and social existence on earth itself, a divine organised harmony of oneness and manyness, single basic essence and illimitably different expression.

We may argue that this prospect of perfection is too much coloured with the impossible. But we shall not argue thus if we understand the meaning of the evolution already achieved. All evolution realises what in comparison to the original state is found to be a direct contradiction of the possible. All evolution is an accordance of apparently irreconcilable opposites. Just imagine what a contrast there is between dead brute matter and sentient adventurous life. Life's emergence is a tremendous paradox come true. Even greater is the realisation of the impossible in the rise of conscious mind and conscious will in life's active animalism and matter's blind mechanism—the sweep of poetic, philosophic and scientific thought, the drive of the ethical will that cannot be corrupted, the practical will that accepts no defeat, the cultural will that refuses to be bound or regimented. To hope, then, for a mind which is no longer a fumbler and stumbler after knowledge and value, a life-force which suffers no failure of energy or perversion of desire, a body which does not lose its health and stability—to hope for these perfections does not contradict the nature of things but logically completes a rule and an effort that is a fundamental method of progress. The evolution of the Supermind is therefore Nature at the peak of her naturalness and not a childish or fantastic crying for the moon.

Besides, we have already in the figures of saints and mystics and prophets an actual sign of this evolution. But when we say "actual sign" we must not think that what these wonderful men have achieved is sufficient. Even when spirituality has not been confined to one or other particular path, even when there has been a certain comprehensiveness of realisation, the spiritual gaze has been fixed too much on the hereafter or the transcendent—a Heaven, a Gokul, a Nirvana, a Parabrahman. The fulfilment of the human soul has been considered to lie in some supra-terrestrial state after a sojourn of virtue and sanctity and compassion here. But, in this, have we not a violation of the logic of evolution? The line of progress on earth is made to break off abruptly somewhere: the mind, the life-force and the body miss the perfection of their own earthly terms. That is why Sri Aurobindo, after compassing the traditional spiritual experiences, pressed on towards a dynamic divinity by which the logic of evolution can be satisfied. Great touches of this dynamic divinity he saw in the world's scriptures, but no methodised path to effect its full expression in all our human constituents. Always there was felt to be a

“Thus far and no further” This showed that the Supermind’s central meaning of evolutionary possibility had been overlooked. The Supermind’s evolution implies a revolution in even spiritual values.

But the advent of the Supermind cannot take place wholly in the manner in which that of the other powers did. Man is a state of self-awareness, and evolution through him has to be through a new mode of working: conscious co-operation. He must persistently aspire after the Supermind and open himself to it. Also, with the capacity of conscious co-operation there comes the possibility of reducing the scale of time. What would take aeons and millenniums and centuries by the other kind of evolutionary process can be intensely quickened and even compressed within a life-time. At present we are too slack and easy-going: our idealism is too watery. Even our great hours do not break through time’s triumphs into the mighty peace and the imperturbable power of the eternal Godhead that we are in the depths and on the heights of our undiscovered being.

To co-operate consciously with the secret Supermind is an immense necessity. The world is at a crisis. Dark dictatorial forces are all about us. And there is within even those who oppose these forces of night a twilight whose problem has been greatly increased by complicated modern conditions and by the fact that technological progress has outplacéd cultural progress. No mere revolving in our human consciousness, no mere intellectual or moral or economic novelty will radically help. Of course we must do the best we can to hold the ground our evolution has reached. Intellectual, moral and economic efforts cannot be relinquished. But they are certainly not enough. We need a distinctly spiritual re-orientation which goes far beyond them—not in order to escape into some *samadhi* which forgets the dangerous world and the need of our whole nature to be fulfilled here and now, but in order to bring earth’s evolutionary travail to a victorious efflorescence.

The mission of Sri Aurobindo is precisely to solve the world-crisis and show how the Supermind’s manifestation can be swiftly brought about. To make the supramental Light a possession of humanity he instituted his Ashram in Pondicherry where aspirants could concentratedly co-operate with the concealed Truth and from whose intense many-sided activity, as of a nucleus of a new organised society, inspiration could flow to all philosophy, art, science, religion, civic life, national and international politics and constructive industry. The Ashram is not a retreat for ascetics and world-shunners: it takes full account of modern ideas and needs: it

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is meant to spiritualise Matter and materialise Spirit. To aid further the spread of the supramental Light an International University Centre with residential accommodation has been projected around the Ashram, giving in their own languages to the various nationals free education in all accepted branches of study as well as in the Aurobindonian Yoga of freedom from Nature's bonds and freedom too from the incapacity to work divinely within Nature, freedom from individual egoism and freedom too from the tyranny of any collective ego, freedom in the inmost soul's personal uniqueness and at the same time in an illumined universality which makes all souls spontaneously cohere and unite. Sri Aurobindo, together with his spiritual co-worker whom the Ashram calls the Mother, has stood as the leader of a movement of cultural freedom in a supremely significant form, a movement which he has sought to render all-embracing. For, his ideal is in those words of his own epic poem, *Savitri*:

*A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.*
