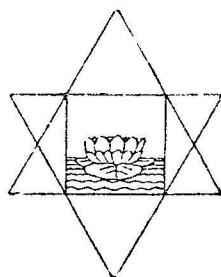


MOTHER INDIA

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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 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

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THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE

1953

Lord, Thou hast told us:
Do not give way, hold tight.
It is when everything seems
lost that all is saved.



ANANDA AND THE SAGE

“Synergist”

. . . Then little Ananda went to the top of the hill and spoke to the heavenly sage Narad, who sat there, his eyes gazing on all creation, “O wise one, the new year has come—how nearer are we to the divine manifestation?”

Narad looked up for a while, and his brow seemed to reach high heaven, and then as was his wont, he spoke “covering truth with covert truth”: “Much water has flowed under the bridge since we last met—both figuratively and literally. Didst thou not see the Diamond Waters of November wash human shores, break their banks and flood the caverns? Cast thy eye behind the veil—the White Light has granited the bulwarks of Falsehood, the Gold Light has brought down the Truth, and wave on flowing wave has moved on human soil.”

As Narad finished speaking, Ananda said, “Thou speakest in the language of signs and symbols”

“If I spoke more clearly I would be understood even less. Aspire, arise, if it is thy wish to know more.”

“But tell me, O Narad, when will the Supermind come down?”

This time Narad smiled and kept on smiling like one who tells a joke to himself and laughs, knowing well others will understand it not. He replied, “She is here—He envelopes the earth and pervades all, illumining, charging, intensifying the pervasion. They are the Supermind and all else too. They manifest it out of themselves. Wherever the Divine is, everything is—only, everything is not manifested at once, but progressively. Child, thinkest thou only in terms of aeroplanes?”

“But, Narad, thou sayest new things!” said Ananda

“Not new, they only seem new. A spiritual truth can be cast in many forms—put in many mental categories, not only in one. The seer perceives through the forms the truth, and mistakes not the shadow of the form for the substance. Be thou not deluded by words. Learn to read the golden hieroglyphs. The Light and the Power are there, the Presence is there; that is all thou needest to know. Dost thou wish me to speak in thy language?—It has come down, yet not manifested completely, the irradiation is progressive, but the essential Power has gripped human soil. Under-

ANANDA AND THE SAGE

standest thou?—This is true and that is also true.” Then Narad’s eyes looked through Space and his voice joined the anthem of the winds and he uttered: “Hearest thou not the music of Krishna? Seest thou not the Shining Ones with uplifted brows and slit wide eyes? Perceivest not thou Indra of the thunderous Illumined Mind, the lights of Vishnu, the outstretched wings and the marble mien of Shiva, and Brahma’s Bow of New Creation drawn again for a fourth time? And behind them all the Mighty One, wider than the sky holding the celestial firmament in His sun-gold Vastness?”

Ananda looked up and said, “Whom dost thou mean?”

Then Narad’s brow became like thunder on a wintry night, and he raised his voice in accents grim, “I speak not His name to hostile Time.—When the earth is ready He will come. If man cannot recognise God, he does not deserve God.” He looked at Ananda and compassion came on his face, and he said softly, “I give thee two powers to hasten the coming—Consecration and Invocation. Consecrate thyself totally, and invoke His manifestation intensely—call Him.” So saying the heavenly sage raised himself from the ground and mingled with the gold-mist that had gathered upon the hills, and faded away from Ananda’s sight, the low murmur of the breeze was all that remained of the chant.

Ananda came back to his people with the two mantras he had received—Consecration and Invocation

MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Nirodbaran

SRI AUROBINDO'S FORCE

(Continued from previous issue).

11-2-35.

Myself: I would like to know something about my "bad logic" before I write anything further to you.

Sri Aurobindo: Helps to finding out your bad logic.

I give instances expressed or implied in your reasonings.

Bad logic No 1. Because things have not been, therefore they can never be.

No. 2. Because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, his sadhana can have no meaning for humanity.

No. 3. What happens in Sri Aurobindo's sadhana cannot happen in anybody else's sadhana (i.e. neither descent nor realisation, nor transformation, nor intuitions, nor budding of new powers or faculties)—because Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar and the sadhaks are not

No. 4. A street beggar cannot have any spirituality or at least not so much as, let us say, a University graduate—because; well, one doesn't know why the hell not.

No. 5. (and last because of want of space). Because I am a doctor I can't see a joke when it is there.

(The last remark was in reference to something that had passed between us about my seriousness).

13-2-35.

Myself: (continuing the discussion of the 10th): Excuse me—I did not say that any street beggar or a proletarian can't manifest a great spirituality, I know that there have been cases where fishermen, barbers, and robbers have been transformed into spiritual men by the touch of great spiritual personalities and Avatars. So I don't deny the action and the effectiveness of the Divine Powers.

MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo's marginal comment: Then why bring in the poor street beggar at all?

Myself (continuing): But others say—and that was the central question—that wherever the Divine Power has successfully acted upon and miraculously changed those who were in their external nature robbers and social pariahs, there has most probably been in them interiorly a latent possibility. And they say—excuse my reiteration—that from those who have evidently no music or poetry in them the Divine cannot bring out these elements, in spite of His Omnipotence, unless they are latent.

Sri Aurobindo: What is the use of this argument based on a 'probably'? You say that in one in whom poetry and music are not *evident*, the omnipotent Divine is impotent to create poetry and music. Yet in one in whom virtue and sainthood is not *evident* at all, criminals, debauchees etc., he can produce sainthood and virtue. When it appears, it is supposed to have been 'probably' latent. But why can't poetry and music also be 'probably' latent even when they are not evident? To say that only moral capacities are latent and mental capacities cannot be, is a sheer absurdity. There are plenty of examples, of particular mental capacities manifesting in men who had them not before. A man makes one magnificent speech in his life, writes one or two splendid poems—all the rest is either silence or twaddle. The eye dull to beauty of painting becomes aware of line and colour; the man who was "no good" at logic or philosophy can develop into a logician or a philosopher. When he was no good these capacities were not evident,—they become evident only when they appear.

Moreover, what is meant by 'latency'—where do these things lie in their latency? If you say in the surface mind, show me how their secret existence can be discovered while they are still latent. Otherwise, how can we affirm an undiscoverable latency? If you say it is in the subliminal, I answer that the subliminal is the inner being which is open to the universal and plastic to it. All things exist in the universal, so it is impossible to say what will or will not manifest in the inner being, once the universal acts on it.

If the Divine is omnipotent, he can do it. If he can't do it, he is not omnipotent. What is this absurd self-contradiction of an Omnipotent who is impotent? If the Divine does not, it is because he does not choose to for some reason or another and I have tried to explain to you how the thing works—it is because he conditions his own working to suit his own self-made law and purpose.

Myself: When I argue with these people I say that maybe these things are latent, but even if they are not, the Divine *can* make them manifest if He chooses to. "Then you mean to say", they reply, "that a Muthu can be metamorphosed into a saint or an Avatar? A very big jump indeed!"

MOTHER INDIA

I tell them, "Leave out the Avatars; they are perilous examples. But a Muthu can surely be made a great spiritual figure by the omnipotent Divine; that is quite possible." Then these people answer, "Yes, maybe it is possible, but we are in no way wiser for it, because it is not done".

Now we don't know what is latent and what is not latent, but great Yogis and Avatars do, so we request you to tell us what is meant by *Mukam karoti bachalam*, and whether the Divine can sow a seed in a barren, unproductive plot of land and reap the harvest of music, poetry and spirituality out of it, or whether He brings these things out from seeds which are already there in the soil—latent?

Sri Aurobindo It (*mukam karoti bachalam*) means exactly what it says—that a man in whom there was no evident capacity can suddenly or rapidly manifest that capacity by the Divine Grace. Indeed such things happen even without the direct intervention of the Divine Grace—so *a fortiori* the Grace can do it—He can make barren, unproductive land productive and fertile. Even a man can do that, say, Mussolini or the Japanese agriculturist—seeds are thrown into the soil—they don't lie there for a thousand years and then sprout. But first make clear what is meant by the soil? The surface man? The subliminal man? In every human being there are these two and if you can say something about the first, how much can you say about the other?

Myself The examples of an unlettered Ramakrishna, or a St. Peter and others, do not prove much; one may say that big spiritual figures can and do take birth in humble social disguises. When all is said and done, the "latent" theory cannot be entirely waved aside. It seems that the Divine also follows normally the path of least resistance—I mean he brings out generally those tendencies, capacities etc. that one is born with, that is, those things which were latent.

Sri Aurobindo: It is a mere word—this "latent". It is like the materialists' "coincidence" and "hallucination" to explain away the appearance of the supernormal. At least it is so unless you define its action and modalities—Certainly it is the usual case. But the usual is not the limit of the possible.

Myself: Now, about your personal example. You speak of the evolution theory to prove that "it can be done", though the domain I touched upon was only the spiritual. If the scientists say that man has not been able to create living things up to now, and therefore he will not be able to do so in the future—that "it can't be done", what will be your answer? And it similarly, I say that a Tom, Dick or Harry cannot be a Rama, Krishna or Sri Aurobindo, what reply will you give?

Sri Aurobindo: I have brought in the evolution theory or rather fact of evolution to disprove your argument that because a thing has not been

MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

done. it is thereby proved that it could not be done.—I don't understand your argument. If a scientist says that, he is using bad logic.—I have never said it can't be done as I dare say some day in the right conditions the creation of life will become possible.—They may not be Rama or Krishna or Sri Aurobindo but they may become spiritualised super-Tom, super-Dick, super-Harry. I have answered about the Avatar

Myself I have never said that you are a big human person. On the contrary, you are not, and hence nobody can be like you. Nevertheless, I don't quite follow what you mean when you state that whatever you achieve is possible for humanity to achieve, your attainments opening the way for others to follow.

Sri Aurobindo: It is singular that you cannot understand such a simple thing. I had no urge towards spirituality in me, I developed spirituality. I was incapable of understanding metaphysics, I developed into a philosopher. I had no eye for painting—I developed it by Yoga. I transformed my nature from what it was to what it was not. I did it by a special manner, not by a miracle and I did it to show what could be done and how it could be done. I did not do it out of any personal necessity of my own or by a miracle without any process. I say that if it is not so, then my Yoga is useless and my life was a mistake,—a mere absurd freak of Nature without meaning or consequence. You all seem to think it a great compliment to me to say that what I have done has no meaning for anybody except myself—it is the most damaging criticism on my work that could be made. I also did not do it by myself, if you mean by myself the Aurobindo that was. He did it by the help of Krishna and the Divine Shakti. I had help from human sources also.

Myself: I should say that Avatars are like well-fitted, well-equipped Rolls Royce machines; they do have plenty of difficulties on their journey, but just because they are like Rolls Royce they can surmount them—whilst the rest of humanity is like either loose and disjointed machines or wag-gons to be dragged along by Avatars and great spiritual personages. Floating on the heights of the overmind, you have overlooked what this earth-bound clod crawling over plateaus has meant.

Sri Aurobindo: All sufficient to themselves—perfect and complete from the beginning, hey? Just roll, royce and ripple. Great Scott! What a penal servitude for the great personages and the Avatars! And where are they leading them? All that rubbish into Paradise? How is that more possible than creating a capacity where there is none! If the disjointed machines cannot be jointed, isn't it more economical to leave them where they are in the lumber-shed? I don't know about Avatars. Practically what I know is that I had not all the powers necessary when I started, I had to develop them by Yoga, at least many of them which were not in

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existence in me when I began, and those which were I had to train to a higher degree. My own idea of the matter is that the Avatar's life and actions are not miracles. If they were, his existence would be perfectly useless, a mere superfluous freak of Nature. He accepts the terrestrial conditions, he uses means, he shows the way to humanity as well as helps it. Otherwise what is the use of him and why is he here?—I was not always in 'the overmind if you please. I had to climb there from the mental and vital level.

You may not have mentioned it but it was implied in it without your knowing that it was implied. Logic has its own consequences which are not apparent to the logician. It is like a move in chess by which you intend to overcome the opponent but it leads, logically, to consequences which you didn't intend and ends in your own checkmate. You can't invalidate the consequences by saying that you didn't intend them.

Let me remind you of what I wrote about the Avatar. There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions of Nature and it uses it according to the rules of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipotent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

As for the Muthu affair, that was only a joke as ought to have been clear to you at once. Nobody has any intention of making Muthu a saint or an Avatar. But that is only because the Divine is not going to play the fool, not because he is impotent. Muthu's only business in life is to prepare himself for something hereafter and exhaust some of his lowest tendencies in the meantime. That is not the question—the question is whether as a general rule rigid and unalterable man is bound down to his outward nature as it appears to be built at the moment and the Divine cannot or will not under any circumstances change it or develop something new in it, something not yet "evident", not yet manifested, or is there a chance for human beings becoming more like the Divine?* If not there is no use in anybody doing this yoga; let the Krishnas and Ramkrishnas rocket about gloriously and uselessly in the empty Inane and the rest wriggle about for ever in the clutch of the eternal Devil. For that is the logical conclusion of the whole matter.

* Sâdrishya mukti, sâdharmyam âgatah

AHIMSA AND IMPERIALISM

A Letter by Sri Aurobindo to a Disciple

Disciple. It seems to me that Gandhi's theory of Ahimsa is based on assumptions that cannot be supported logically; I feel like writing an article refuting it. . . And what about the question of Imperialism? World Imperialism be allowed to continue indefinitely? Will it not end when your supramental Will begins to work? Please write something about it, I pray.

I would prefer to avoid all public controversy especially if it touches in the least on politics. Gandhi's theories are like other mental theories built on a basis of one-sided reasoning and claiming for a limited truth (that of non-violence and passive resistance) a universality which it cannot have. Such theories will always exist so long as the mind is the main instrument of human truth-seeking. To spend energy trying to destroy such theories is of little use; if destroyed, they are replaced by others equally limited and partial.

As for imperialism, that is no new thing—it is as old as the human vital, there was never a time in known human history when it was not in existence. To get rid of it means to change human nature or at least to curb it by a superior power. Our work is not to fight these things, but to bring down a higher nature and a Truth-creation which will make spiritual Light and Power the chief force in terrestrial existence.

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL
THE EARLY CONVERSATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO
Compiled from the Notes of Anilbaran Roy

COMPILER'S NOTE

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. Exact verbatim reports of these 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 formation 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"

NOTES ON THE VEDAS

(The Hymns of Madhuchhandas)*

In 1926, Anilbaran wrote a review of Nolini Kanta Gupta's Bengali book, *Madhuchhandas*, which was based on Sri Aurobindo's own inter-

* Rig Veda

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

pretation of the Vedas. This review was adversely criticised by a writer in one of the Indian papers. On reading it, Sri Aurobindo asked Anilbaran if he was going to write a reply to the criticism. When Anilbaran explained what he intended to write, Sri Aurobindo made a brief statement on the matter to help him, saying, "Some direct answer should be given". Anilbaran has recorded this statement in his Journal with the other conversations, it is here published for the first time.

"No fanciful meaning has been sought to be given to the words 'Agni' and 'Yajna'.—I accept the current etymological meaning of the words. 'Agni' is 'Fire', and 'Yajna' is 'Sacrifice'. But these things are symbols; they stand for an inner meaning and I wanted to indicate this inner meaning.

"Agni means fire and the God of fire—but what do these stand for? In the inner soul of man there is an aspiration towards the Eternal, the Supreme Godhead and the flame of Agni represents this inner aspiration. In the psychological sense this flame stands for what is called the 'Will' or 'Tapas Shakti'. Hence when Nolini puts 'Tapas Shakti' he does not intend it as a literal rendering but as an indication of what the psychological sense might be. So with Yajna—its etymological meaning of sacrifice is not discarded. But the real sacrifice is not the external ceremonial rites; it is something inner. The sadhaka offering his whole being up to the Highest Power; that is what the real sacrifice is, and the external Yajna is only a very expressive symbol of that inner sacrifice.

"There are also other meanings of Yajna in the Vedas: like *battle* and *journey*; all these meanings are meant to represent symbolically the inner self-giving, the battle against the lower nature, the upward journey of the soul; they give the inner significance of the external rite of sacrifice. The psychological sense of Vedic 'Sacrifice' becomes much more clear when in the Veda itself we find the sacrifice described also as a 'journey' and as a 'battle'.

"The etymological and grammatical meaning is not difficult to find but the inner sense, the spiritual significance behind these etymological meanings is difficult to find. The Vedic Rishis themselves have taken advantage of some words which had more than one meaning wherever the etymology expresses both the outer and the inner significance. Thus the word *Go* means cow as well as Light. But it was not possible everywhere to connect the two meanings etymologically. The Veda is not a work of mere ritual—it is a work containing truths and experiences of the spiritual life of the Rishis and when we study the Veda our aim is not so much the approach of the Pandits as an attempt to indicate the inner significance of the text. With the mere aid of grammar and etymology it is well-nigh impossible to find out the inner meaning everywhere

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“Then again we must be able to appreciate the central thought, the outlook of the Vedic Rishis which found expression through the mantras, and it is wholly impossible to grasp this by mere grammatical researches. The Vedic Rishis reached the truth through spiritual vision and the core of their teaching can be revealed only to such spiritual insight.

“The critic has indicated that the proper way to study the Vedas is to study all the different commentators, compare their expositions, and then come to a conclusion. Already the different commentaries have led to a great confusion, and what the critic advises would complicate it still farther. This method is not the right one,—it will only result in a combination of the blunders made in the past. Mere scholarship is not sufficient for the interpretation of these ancient scriptures—what is wanted is mental tact and intuition, which most scholars and Pandits sadly lack.”

This is only a negative answer to the critic (who is not himself worth answering) and it is not possible to explain fully the main principles and methods of interpretation followed by Sri Aurobindo. We hope to deal with these things more fully in the future. The first translations that Sri Aurobindo made of the Vedas and the translations given by Nolini are not meant for Pandits—they are only intended to bring forward and emphasise the inner meaning and significance of the Vedic mantras and rites. The translations which were later prepared by Sri Aurobindo followed literally the etymological sense yet expressed the inner meaning contained in the words.

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

COMPILER'S NOTE

In recent years Sri Aurobindo's teaching and his Ashram at Pondicherry have attracted a great deal of attention. People from India as well as abroad who visit this spiritual centre are greatly impressed by its numerous activities and by the perfect organisation of the collective life of its seven hundred and fifty residents. Nevertheless, many of them, though they appreciate the outer side of the Ashram life, find it difficult to understand in what way exactly the actual sadhana of the Integral Yoga is done, in the absence of a set form of discipline which they can see being followed by all alike, they are unable to have a clear grasp of the inner yogic life of the sadhaks and their spiritual development.

It is therefore felt that an account of typical day-to-day sadhana of different disciples written by themselves and published in the form of a diary, will greatly help people to have an insight into the working of the inner life of the Ashram.

The account published below is entitled 'My Sadhana with the Mother'. This account is all the more interesting and valuable because under each statement there is Sri Aurobindo's comment—often brief, but always illuminating. As the reader will go through it, he will understand, apart from other things, the extremely important part played by the Mother in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Transformation, and how She and Sri Aurobindo have established a spiritual poise by which they act together on the sadhaks. He will also begin to realise how this Yoga cannot be done and followed to its logical consummation by one's own efforts, but only through the Mother.

"Synergist"

MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

By "AB"

(The following account of an experience he had on 18th April, 1935, was sent by the author of the Diary to Sri Aurobindo as usual. He had this experience in the Meditation Hall when the Mother came down there for General Meditation.)

7-15 p.m.

(1) O Soul, who was it that came down at 7-20? Was it a Man or Woman?

(2) Was it the beautiful Queen of the world?

(3) Was She a statue made of rubies and diamonds? And is that why She was shining so brilliantly?

MOTHER INDIA

(4) Why do you not speak, O Soul? Was She a Goddess or some heavenly being come here in all her splendour?

(1) O fool! She was neither a man nor woman. It is in thy ignorant world that there are such rigid distinctions.

(2) What a foolish question have you put! Never try to compare Her Beauty with the beauty of your earth.

(3) You saw Her like a statue because of her Calm and Silence which are so one with even Her most material part that, in spite of Her movements, you felt and saw Her as if She were standing still.

Why put your glittering gems on a level with Her supra-terrestrial Beauty? Remember that it is a self-existent Beauty in the Divine. Do not be surprised that what you felt as too great and too high a Beauty for you to understand is merely the Beauty of Her most outer aspect. The Beauty of Her higher realms is so great and powerfully intense that one has to prepare oneself in order to bear even a glimpse of it.

(4) She is not a Goddess or a heavenly being. She is the very Mother who is amongst us, the Divine incarnate. At first one feels otherwise because one is not yet aware of the intermediate planes between human nature and the perfect Divine Nature.

* * *

O Divine Mother, in what a wonderful form I beheld you today! Such Splendour and Beauty! My pen fails to describe it.

You never come in the same form and beauty. They vary every time we meet. That is why I perceive you as a new Mother each time.

Some people may say, "But then we see Her and Her Beauty to be the same whenever we look at Her!" That is because they don't really see Her, though they think they do.

Mother, as you give to each according to his inner needs, so do you reveal yourself in different forms and aspects according to each individual's necessity

7-30 p.m

I saw your face radiating great light and beauty. My mind is unable to give an adequate expression to all this; but my heart and my physical have kept the experience within them and feel it present constantly. It was so solid and positive that it cannot be erased from them.

During the Meditation the consciousness felt as if it were rising very high, much higher than the seventh centre.

Again I have to admit my inability to tell the nature of the planes through which You, my divine Guide, carried me to some high summit.

The peace, the silence, the whole atmosphere of these intermediate planes was quite new to me. The consciousness I once experienced of a

THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

wide Silence cannot be compared to the consciousness on these planes.

How swiftly we passed from one plane to the other! And yet how normally! Though these planes were all foreign to my old consciousness, yet when we reached there, it seemed as if even these were as intimate to my being as the others which I had been familiar with.

I saw You. Mother, as you really are—a Supreme Majesty standing on the staircase, bringing down something of your highest riches. All-successful was the great descent. It was, no doubt, too high, too heavy for this poor weak nature to receive, yet somehow Yourself and my Soul did not fail to make it open and accept.

What was once given to me as knowledge about the two "fires"* for a complete and rapid transformation is now turned into practical action; for example, today your high working has awakened both the fires which kept on burning all the time.

You have brought the higher vital intensity down into my physical. I don't think that it will ever decrease in its pitch.

Your descent was so strong that it seems as if there were scarcely anything left to be done with the lower nature. What constitutes my lower nature, like the external mind, vital and physical, has been separated from the general Nature, and has withdrawn into a quiet detachment; and the general Nature appears to have left me to myself, keeping itself far from my atmosphere—at least, this is what I feel.

During the morning meditation I saw a flower—the one signifying "Divine Consciousness"—in your place on the throne. I wonder whether this was to show to my outer being who you really are—the Divine Consciousness Itself.

There is a definite change in my outer and inner life after this evening meditation with you.

An entire, deeper, higher plunge has been taken.

* The Psychic's fire and the Self's fire referred to in the previous issues.

BOON

May I love as thou wouldst have me love, O Lord!
Be allegiance to the Shoreless my password.
None lives but hungers for the light:
Why then descends the pall of night?
Answers my soul: "Those who, in gloom, will stay
Loyal to thy Sun shall claim the eternal Day."

However heavy the load thou wouldst have me bear,
If my heart would vow: "I will nor shirk nor fear,"
Then my shackles shall my anklets be
On my lonely pilgrimage to thee:
And so I pray: "May I welcome all that thou,
In Grace, wilt impose upon me here and now "

At every bend I hear two voices still
One calls: "To Him," the other: "To your self-will "
This dark refrain of "I and mine"
I court no more: now make me thine
Be thy path my only one this boon concede:
For then I know—I shall win thy Flute-notes' meed.

DILIP KUMAR ROY.

A PERSONAL ESSAY IN PLATONICS

K. D. Sethna

No student of Western Philosophy, who has also an ingrained Eastern sense of Spirit as the supreme reality and considers the quintessence of life to be those rare moments when the mind seems—in the Platonic phrase—to “reach in the flash of a quivering glance to that which is”, can help making Plato a starting-point in conceiving of the universe. For it is he who of all philosophers in the West gave the first vivid expression to the intuition fundamental to the Upanishads that the multifarious world we inhabit tends phenomenally to articulate divine idealities, a one yet many-sided Spirit. To speak, therefore, in his manner is to share the privilege antiquity accorded to Zeus when it cometh the famous epigram that if the Father of the Immortals ever condescended to use the language of men, He would assume the voice of the Platonic Socrates. But though one may begin with Plato one may not end with him, for it is really difficult to say where Plato himself ends. His system of thought is a marvel of splendid incompleteness, a sort of magnificent titan’s quarry from which each lover of the deific can build to suit his heart’s desire and mind’s delight. Hence one can never with impunity clam to be an impeccable expositor of Plato: one can only catch the infection of his *enthousiasmos* and, borrowing his terms to say things anew, make a personal essay in Platonics.

Were I to venture on such an essay I would choose to translate into the phraseology of the dialogues the world-view which Sri Aurobindo stands for in India today. Since the archimages dear to the great Academician reside in the bosom of what he calls the supreme “self-subsisting Life,” I would conceive It to be a Unity eternally self-differentiated into a perfect harmony of individual forms, an ideal kingdom of divine soul-truths. This kingdom, though transcendent in the sense of being not fully revealed here and now, is necessarily within: it is to be attained of man by “reminiscence”—by his going deep into his own consciousness to *transcend* his present superficial nature and touch what is in direct contact with perfection, with the supreme Ideality which in the rôle of a “Demiurge” or creative Power has brought out of the infinite

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depths the soul-truths into manifestation, formulating the various shades, so to speak, of the ultimate Light and Life in a phenomenal mould in which the perfect is only partially expressed.

In view of the common argument, drawing upon the *Timaeus*, that Plato holds this Demiurge to be an Intermediary between the mutable and the Eternal and not the same as the spiritual self-subsisting Life, I would insist that even he precisely says the reverse. Does he not designate the World-Fashioner as the best and highest Soul self-guided to create replicas of His own divine Goodness? Is not, therefore, the Intermediary of the *Timaeus* none else than the ultimate Life and Ideality regarded as a prime mover, as a dynamic unfolders of His own immutable ultimate Value? This Value Plato called the Good and he is always at pains to differentiate it from the contentless "unmeaning fixture" apotheosised by Parmenides and he mentions it in the *Philebus* as the first cause of all being and becoming, the highest origin of their "combination", while in the *Phaedrus* he unmistakably defines it as "the self-moving source of all movement." In other words, the supreme Archetype one and yet so many-sided which, as said in the *Phaedo*, the soul of man, originally abiding in God, contemplates is but the everlasting Self of the supreme Artist Himself in which that soul has its innermost home whence it can look below on the reflection of that reality in a universe fashioned out of the possibility of what is enigmatically termed "non-being," a seeming initial absence of all that is divine and true in essence. But this non-being need not be something independent in its own rights: it may be regarded as just a mode in which the Supreme can manifest Himself, the possibility inherent in His omnipotence to figure as a "matrix" His own opposite, a self-limitation as if in a mighty wager with Himself for the purpose of self-recovery through a process beginning with self-concealment.

So this universe of evolutionary conflict between "mechanical necessity" and archetypal order is nothing save the Demiurge in a phenomenal guise—to quote Plato, "a god in the course of becoming"; and the soul of man is at once divine in His divinity and phenomenal in His cosmic self-formulation. In its outer being it is "a fallen god" revolving in a procession of rebirth and metempsychosis until at last its consciousness awakens by experience to the voice of its own inner reality, its secret "daimon," and, becoming in its heart of hearts one substance with it, dwells even here and now in the eternal beauty of the superhuman Artist in order to help with its irradiant presence those that have not yet emerged from the "Cave of Shadows." It is by self-knowledge, by Socratic "tendance of itself," that it comes to know the Truth which hides behind all, for its own psychic ideality is concentric with that of

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everything else, all things being derived from the same source, the multiple yet unified splendours of the Sun of Truth. This self-knowledge is, as that wonderful banquet-talk, the *Symposium*, leaves no doubt, the *scientia visionis* which surpasses the discursive reason and is achieved only by the *amor mysticus* spoken of by all saints, yogis and god-intoxicated men, through which one is enabled to find one's self and nature to be in essence inalienable part and portion of the Divine Beloved.

If, therefore, it should fall to my lot to open an Academy, its message to the modern world, tired of the materialistic denials of the last century and eager once more to realise in life transcendent values, would be that not by mere morality but by a spiritual communion with the Divine, a direct contact with the supramental Gnosis and Beatitude, can we best consummate our manhood. Nor, again, would its call be to the wilderness or the Stylites Pillar: the Kingdom within is to be reproduced without in a transformed humanity, in a perfect commonwealth on earth governed by the ineffable Master of all with the light that will shine forth in men through a spiritual, a yogic interfusion with the Life of life. The new Academy would surcharge with ancient wisdom the idealistic vision which the West of today owes to Bergson's subtle reading of biological data. It would agree with Bergson that life is not just the adaptation of internal to external relations. "A very inferior organism," it would say after him, "is as well adapted as ours to the conditions of existence, judged by its success in maintaining life: why then does life, which has succeeded in adapting itself, go on complicating itself and complicating itself more and more dangerously? Why did not life stop wherever it was possible? Why has it gone on? Why indeed unless it be that there is an impulse driving it to take ever greater and greater risks towards its goal of an ever higher and higher efficiency?" The truth seems to be that "adaptation explains the inner windings of evolutionary progress, but not the general direction of the movement, still less the movement itself." Hence biology is bound to assume a creative *Élan Vital*, a Vital Force which strives to achieve some high ideality in physical embodiment. But an Aurobindonian essayist in Platonics would say "manifest" rather than "achieve," for to him the evolution of a high ideality has a meaning only if there is the previous involution of a supreme Value in Nature, of which the hint as well as the effectuating dynamis in our consciousness is the religious impulse towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom and Immortality. By this imperative impulse Nature is seeking to evolve the necessary organs and faculties to incarnate the self-subsisting Life that has acted as the divine Demiurge moulding archetypes out of material substances after formulating Matter itself as an antithetical mode of Its own self-expression. What he would still further point out to Bergson

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is that the *Élan Vital* must be the energy of a multiple oneness, an ideal unity-in-difference because it endeavours to manifest Itself, Its spiritual quality, in a variety of patterns, in a diversity of individual expressions. Each of us, in that case, is no ephemeral wave on the universal stream but an outward and superficial reflex of an abiding spiritual fact in the one Self of the secret Lord of all that is, veiled by His own phenomenal aspect which we call the universe but revealing Himself progressively by the outflowing of ideality through individuals.

And this outflowing must be nothing less than the descent of the Spirit into our normal humanity. The mystical aspiration must be not towards a heaven beyond but, as Sri Aurobindo puts it in an early poem,

*The body with increasing soul to fill,
Extend heaven's claim upon the toiling earth
And climb from death to a diviner birth
Grasped and supported by immortal Will.*

For, if in fact there is only one multiplex spiritual Force at work in the cosmos and all that is phenomenal is but an inverse unfoldment of divine verities, which starts with terms that appear to be the direct antinomy of the ideal and the godlike, an evolution climbing grades of a laborious progression to man the mentalised animal with a *nisus* towards super-humanity,—then surely in the profundities of the supreme Life there must be an ideal reality corresponding to all that is here figured in the living body of man, so that the whole man, not only his soul but even his substance, not only his mental but also his physical life, must be capable of being naturally converted, by an intense effort to manifest the Divine, into archetypal value. That will mean the transformation and divinisation of the body itself, an abrogation of the so-called natural laws which hold it in thrall, a luminous conquest by the Spirit of the limitations which make for suffering, disease and death.

“A delusive chimera!” cries the unimaginative obscurantist at this prospect, burdened heavily with the notion of humanity’s present incompleteness and forgetting that evolution has always proceeded by an astonishing reconciliation of seeming opposites, so that the emergence of a supramental all-transmuting Consciousness and Power in us is no more and no less a miracle than that of vitality and mentality in the brute nescience of Matter. On the contrary, that such a plenary display of the Spirit in Time and Space is the very goal towards which man gropes is evident the moment we ponder the most outstanding problem of his history, namely the constant alternation of faith and denial in his psycho-

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logy. He cannot rest content with scepticism: he has an insuperable intuition of Godhead and his own divine origin. But on the other hand he cannot but look askance at religion, because he has also a deep dissatisfaction with all that looks beyond the earth for the scene of his fulfilment. He seems condemned to swing painfully between the extremes of other-worldliness and materialism until he should find the sovereign equation which perfectly reconciles Matter with Spirit. But the reason of his unease, says Sri Aurobindo, is precisely that such a comprehensive equation is intended to be discovered. There is no other explanation possible, though surprising to our conventional ways of thought may appear the vista of evolutionary consummation which Sri Aurobindo discloses. However, it is not in mere theory but after years of patient practical self-accomplishment in Yoga that he holds before us the promise of an entire remoulding of our nature into the stuff of Spirit. With a voice of authority he calls on us to bring to birth a new race divinising itself by following in the steps of the method with which, synthetising the essential significances of all the disciplines India had tried in the past in order to fructify in life her spiritual idealism, he has moved forward to a still wider affirmation of the soul's potentialities, a total dynamic materialisation of the idealities which all true seers had intuited and which Plato's intellect also, opening some inward eye, had glimpsed.

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Sri Aurobindo

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THE MOVEMENT OF MODERN LITERATURE

(1)

Poetry as the fullness of imaginative self-expression of the entirely modernised mind begins with the writers of the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. They are the free, impetuous but often narrow sources of these wider flowings. We see the initial tendencies which undergo a rapid growth of meaning and changes of form in the subsequent decades, until now all their sense and seeking have reached in the early twentieth a subtle intensity, refinement and variety of motives, a tense straining on many lines to find some last truth and utterance which must end either in a lingering decadence or in a luminous and satisfied self-exceeding. From the beginning this modern movement, in literature as in thought, takes the form of an ever widening and deepening intellectual and imaginative curiosity, a passion for knowledge, a passion for finding, an eye of intelligence awakened to all the multiform possibilities of new truth and discovery. The Renaissance was an awakening of the life spirit to wonder and curiosity and reflection and the stirred discovery of the things of the life and the mind; but the fullness of the modern age has been a much larger comprehensive awakening of the informed and clarified intellect to a wider curiosity, a much more extensive adventure of discovery and an insistent need to know and possess the truth of Nature and man and the universe and whatever may lie hidden behind their first appearances and suggestions. A long intellectual search for truth that goes probing always deeper into the physical, the vital and subjective, the action of body and life, mind and emotion and sensation and thought is now beginning to reach beyond these things or rather through their subtlest and strongest intensities of sight and feeling towards the truths of the Spirit. The soul of the Renaissance was a lover of life and an amateur of knowledge; the modern spirit is drawn by the cult of a clear, broad and minute intellectual and practical Truth;

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knowledge and the power of knowledge are the dominating necessities of its being. Poetry in this age has followed intellectually and imaginatively the curve of this great impulse.

Continental literature displays the mass of this movement with a much more central completeness and in a stronger and more consistent body and outline than English poetry. In the Teutonic countries the intellectual and romantic literature of the Germans at the beginning with its background of transcendental philosophy, at the end the work of the Scandinavian and Belgian writers with their only apparently opposite sides of an intellectual or a sensuous realism and a sentimental or a psychological mysticism, the two strands sometimes separate, sometimes mingled, among the Latins the like commencement in the work of Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Chénier, Hugo, the intermediate artistic development of most of the main influences by the Parnassians, the like later turn towards the poetry of Mallarmé, Verlaine, D'Annunzio, stigmatised by some as the beginning of a decadence, give us a distinct view of the curve. In English poetry the threads are more confused, the work has on the whole a less clear and definite inspiration and there is in spite of the greatness of individual poets an inferior total effectivity; but at the beginning and the end it has one higher note, a lifting of sight beyond the stress of the intellect and the senses, which is reached either not at all or much less directly realised with a less pure vision in the more artistically sound and sufficient poetry of the Continent. Still the principal identical elements are distinguishable, sometimes very strongly pronounced and helped to some fullest expression by the great individual energy of imagination and force of character which are the most distinct powers of the English poetic mind. Often they thus stand out all the more remarkable by the magnificent narrowness of their self-concentrated isolation.

Earliest among these many new forces to emerge with distinctness is an awakening of the eye to a changed vision of Nature, of the imagination to a more perfect and intimate visualisation, of the soul to a closer spiritual communion. An imaginative, scrutinising, artistic or sympathetic dwelling on the details of Nature, her sights, sounds, objects, sensible impressions is a persistent characteristic of modern art and poetry; it is the poetic side of the same tendency which upon the intellectual has led to the immeasurable development of the observing and analysing eye of Science. The older poetry directed an occasional objective eye on Nature, turning a side glance from life or thought to get some colouring or decorative effect or a natural border or background for life or something that illustrated, ministered to or enriched the human thought or mood of the moment, at most for a casual indulgence of the imagination and senses in natural beauty. But the intimate subjective treatment of Nature, the penetrated human response to her

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is mostly absent or comes only in rare and brief touches. On the larger scale her subjective life is realised not with an immediate communion, but through myth and the image of divine personalities that govern her powers. In all these directions modern poetry represents a great change of our mentality and a swift and vast extension of our imaginative experience. Nature now lives for the poet as an independent presence, a greater or equal power dwelling side by side with him or embracing and dominating his existence. Even the objective vision and interpretation of her has developed. where it continues at all the older poetic method, a much more minute and delicate eye and touch in place of the large, strong and simply beautiful or telling effects which satisfied an earlier imagination. But where it goes beyond that fine outwardness, it has brought us a whole world of new vision; working sometimes by a vividly suggestive presentation, sometimes by a separation of effects and an imaginative reconstruction which reveals aspects the first outward view had hidden in, sometimes by a penetrating impressionism which in its finest subtleties seems to be coming back by a detour to a sensuously mystical treatment, it goes within through the outward and now not so much presents as recreates physical Nature for us through the imaginative vision.* By that new creation it penetrates through the form nearer to the inner truth of her being.

But the direct subjective approach to Nature is the most distinctly striking characteristic turn of the modern mentality. The approach proceeds from two sides which constantly meet each other and create between them a nexus of experience between man and Nature which is the modern way of responding to the universal Spirit. On one side there is the subjective sense of Nature herself as a great life, a being, a Presence, with impressions, moods, emotions of her own expressed in her many symbols of life and stressing her objective manifestations. In the poets in whom this turn first disengages itself, that is a living conscious view of her to which they are constantly striving to give expression whether in a large sense of her presence or in a rendering of its particular impressions. On the other side there is a sensitive human response, moved in emotion or thrilling in sensation or stirred by sheer beauty or responsive in mood, a response of satisfaction and possession or of dissatisfied yearning and seeking, in the whole an attempt to relate or harmonise the soul and mind and sensational and vital being of the human individual with the soul and mind and life and body of the visible and sensible universe. Ordinarily it is through the imagination and the intellect and the soul of sensibility that this approach is made; but there is also a certain endeavour to get through these

* I am speaking here of Western literature. Oriental art and poetry at any rate in the far East had already in a different way anticipated this more intimate and imaginative seeing.

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instruments to a closer spiritual relation and, if not yet to embrace Nature by the Spirit in man, to harmonise and unite the spiritual soul of man with the spiritual Presence in Nature

Another widening of experience which modern poetry renders much more universally and with a constant power and insistence is a greater awakening of man to himself, to man in this warp and weft of Space and Time and in the stress of the universe, to all that is meant by his present, his past and his future. Here too we have a parallel imaginative movement in poetry to the intellectual movement of thought and science with its large and its minute enquiry into the origins and antiquity and history of the race, into the sources of its present development, into all its physical, psychological, sociological being and the many ideal speculations and practical aspirations of its future which have arisen from this new knowledge of the human being and his possibilities. Formerly, the human mind in its generality did not go very far in these directions. Its philosophy was speculative and metaphysical, but with little actuality except for the intellectual and spiritual life of the individual, its science explorative of superficial phenomenon rather than opulent both in detail and fruitful generalisation, its view of the past was mythological, traditional and national, not universal and embracing; its view of the present limited in objective scope and, with certain exceptions, of no very great subjective profundity; an outlook on the future was remarkable by its absence. The constant self-expansion of the modern mind has broken down many limiting barriers; a vast objective knowledge, an increasingly subtle subjectivity, a vivid living in the past, present and future, a universal view of man as of Nature are its strong innovations. This change has found inevitably its vivid reflections in the wider many-sided interests, the delicate refinements, fine searchings, large and varied outlook and profound inlook of modern poetry

The first widening breadth of this universal interest in man, not solely the man of today and our own country and type or of the past tradition of our own culture, but man in himself in all his ever-changing history and variety, came in the form of an eager poetic and romantic valuing of all that had been ignored and put aside as uncouth and barbarous by the older classical or otherwise limited type of mentality. It sought out rather all that was unfamiliar and attractive by its unlikeness to the present, the primitive, the savage, mediæval man and his vivid life and brilliant setting, the Orient very artificially seen through a heavily coloured glamour, the ruins of the past, the life of the peasant or the solitary, the outlaw, man near to Nature undisguised by conventions and uncorrupted by an artificial culture or man in revolt against conventions, a willed preference for these strange and interesting aspects of humanity, as in Nature for her wild and grand, savage and lonely scenes or her rich and tropical haunts or her

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retired spots of self-communion. On one side a sentimental or a philosophic naturalism, on the other a flamboyant or many-hued romanticism, superficial mediaevalism, romanticised Hellenism, an interest in the fantastic and the supernatural, tendencies of an intellectual or an ideal transcendentalism, are the salient constituting characters. They make up that brilliant and confusedly complex, but often crude and unfinished literature, stretching from Rousseau and Chateaubriand to Hugo and taking on its way Goethe, Schiller and Heine, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats and Shelley, which forms a hasty transition from the Renaissance and its after-fruits to the modernism of to-day which is already becoming the modernism of yesterday. Much of it we can now see to have been ill-grasped, superficial and tentative, much, as in Chateaubriand and in Byron, was artificial, a pose and affectation; much as in the French Romanticists merely bizarre, overstrained and over-coloured; a later criticism condemned in it a tendency to inartistic excitement, looseness of form, an unintellectual shallowness or emptiness, an ill-balanced imagination. It laid itself open certainly in some of its more exaggerated turns to the reproach,—not justly to be alleged against the true romantic element in poetry,—that the stumbling-block of romanticism is falsity. Nevertheless behind this often defective frontage was the activity of a considerable force of new truth and power, much exceedingly great work was done, the view of the imagination was immensely widened and an extraordinary number of new motives brought in which the later nineteenth century developed with a greater care and finish and conscientious accuracy, but with crudities of its own (and perhaps with a less fine gust of self-confident genius and large inspiration

The recoil from these primary tendencies took at first the aspect of a stress upon artistic execution, on form, on balance and design, on meticulous beauty of language and a minute care and finished invention in rhythm. An unimpassioned or only artistically impassioned portraiture and sculpture of scene and object and idea and feeling, man and Nature was the idea that governed this artistic and intellectual effort. A wide, calm and impartial interest in all subjects for the sake of art and a poetically intellectual satisfaction,—this poise had already been anticipated by Goethe,—is the atmosphere which it attempts to create around it. There is here a certain imaginative reflection of the contemporary scientific, historic and critical interest in man in his past and present, his creations and surroundings, a cognate effort to be unimpassioned, impersonal, scrupulous, sceptically interested and reflective, though in poetry it loses the cold accuracy of the critical intellect and assumes the artistic colour, emphasis, warmth of the constructive imagination. There is amidst a wide atmosphere of sceptical or positive thinking an attempt to enter into the psychology of barbaric and civilised, antique, mediaeval, and modern, occidental and oriental

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humanity, to reproduce in artistic form the spirit of the inner truth and outer form of its religions, philosophic notions, societies, arts, monuments, constructions, to reflect its past inner and outer history and present frames and mentalities. This movement too was brief in duration and soon passed away into other forms which arose out of it, though they seemed a revolt against its principles. This apparent paradox of a development draped in the colours of revolt is a constant psychological feature of all human evolution.

In this turn we are struck by its most glaring feature, the vehement waving of the revolutionary red flag of realism. Realism is in its essence an attempt to see man and his world as they really are without veils and pretences; it is imagination turning upon itself and trying to get rid of its native tendency to give a personal turn or an enhanced colouring to the object, art trying to figure as a selective process of scientific observation and synthesised analysis. Necessarily, whenever it is art at all, it betrays itself in the process. Its natural movement is away from the vistas of the past to a preoccupation with the immediate present, although it began with a double effort, to represent the past with a certain vividness of hard and often brutal truth, not in the colours in which the ideally constructive imagination sees it through the haze of distance, and to represent the present too with the same harsh and violent actuality. But success in this kind of representation of the past is impossible; it carries in it always a sense of artificiality and willed construction. Realism tends naturally to take the present as its field; for that alone can be brought under an accurate because an immediate observation. Scientific in its inspiration, it subjects man's life and psychology to the scalpel and the microscope, exaggerates all that strikes the first outward view of him, his littlenesses, imperfections, uglinesses, morbidities, and comes easily to regard these things as the whole or the greater part of him and to treat life as if it were a psychological and physiological disease, a fungoid growth upon material Nature: it ends, indeed almost begins, by an exaggeration and overstressing which betrays its true character, the posthumous child of romanticism perverted by a pseudo-scientific preoccupation. Romanticism also laid a constant stress on the grotesque, diseased, abnormal, but for the sake of artistic effect, to add another tone to its other glaring colours. Realism professes to render the same facts in the proportions of truth and science, but being art and not science, it inevitably seeks for pronounced effects by an evocative stress which falsifies the dispositions and shades of natural truth in order to arrive at a conspicuous vividness. In the same movement it falsifies the true measure of the ideal, which is a part of the totality of human life and nature, by bringing the idealism in man down to the level of his normal daily littlenesses; in attempting to show it as

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one strand in his average humanity, it reduces it to a pretension and figment, ignoring the justification of the idealistic element in art which is that the truth of the ideal consists essentially in its aspiration beyond the limitations of immediate actuality, in what our strain towards self-exceeding figures and not in the moment's failure to accomplish. Realism on both these sides, in what it ignores and what it attempts, lies open to the reproach aimed at romanticism; its stumbling block is a falsity which pursues both its idea and its method. Nevertheless this movement too behind its crudities has brought in new elements and motives. It has done very considerable work in fiction and prose drama; in poetry, even, it has brought in some new strains amid the greater powers, but here it could not dominate,—for that would have meant the death of the very spirit of poetry whose breath of life is the exceeding of outward reality. Realism is still with us, but has already evolved out of itself another creative power whose advent announces its own passing.

WHEN DREAMS UNFOLD . . .

When the long folded dreams unfold,
We know and love before we meet:
Because earth's shores are dark burnt gold
I have met You at the sunset feet;

White waters running from the wake
Of rising suns in endless stream,
I have drunk, and known your pureness slake
Me to the breaking of the dream...

Upon dark leaves each night is laid
The tender clearness of the dew;
When morning splendour, unafraid,
Takes it, then I'll be meeting You.

Love, just because your Beauty runs
Wild o'er the muddy wastes and sands,
I press the glory of your suns
So close with eager burning hands.

And, yet because the twilight's filled
With wing and song of homing birds,
My frightened sin shall yet be stilled
And find its shelter in your words.

So from my folded sleep unflake
Your lovelinesses, pleat by pleat;
O You who did the folding, break
In beauty through me, till we meet.

THÉMIS

ON PLUCKING FLOWERS

Jibendra

It is not in the sense of killing or assassination of men alone that the word 'murder' is used. Though that is its primary meaning, murder is also used to denote any act or conduct of men which outrages our sense of what is right, just and proper. We speak of murdering a language, of murdering a scheme, of murdering things. The word conjures up all that is horrible, monstrous and repellent to us. The word in abstract is enough to repel us. And what about the perpetrator of the deed, the murderer? We do not have a better regard for him.

A man's feelings and sensibilities are known by his conduct, not by his words. It is in relation to small things and apparently insignificant events of life that his real character is revealed. Take for example a habit common with most men, that of plucking flowers. Men love flowers—more so women—because of their colour, beauty, fragrance, grace, symmetry, etc. Flowers attract all lovers of beauty, art and aesthetics. But how many know the right use of flowers? Flowers are sacred and delicate things; they are not only pretty and charming but are meant for worship of the Divine. And the tradition, if not the shastric injunction on us, is to offer them unsmelt before the altar of the Gods. To smell them before offering is to desecrate them, it is an act of sacrilege. If so, then what about the men who pluck them not gently and carefully but with a violence and recklessness that would do credit to a murderer? There are men who cannot tolerate the presence of flowers in the plants that bear them but must remove them lock, stock and barrel. Others there are who do not scruple to sacrifice any number of buds for the sake of one or two flowers. There are yet others who lay hands on pretty flowers wherever and whenever found as if the plants were ever ready to welcome the fingers that deprive them of their blossoms no matter how often and at what odd hours of the day whether it be in the scorching sun or the still hours of the night. Some have no scruples to pluck immature flowers, destroying them in the bud. And the most saddening spectacle is when all these men enter into an unholy competition with one another and bring ruin and desolation to a fair and smiling garden.

Men are slaves of habits and the types indicated would go on with their depredations notwithstanding all protests and persuasions even when

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they know that they are wrong and suffer from qualms of conscience.

*A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye;
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky.*

What is our opinion of the man who removes by stealth or violence an only flower that cheers our spirit and delights our eye? Can we credit him with possession of feelings and sensibilities, the man whose sole concern is to aggrandise himself at the expense of the most tiny and delicate things on earth? All the finer moral and aesthetic sensibilities of the man whose single contact with flowers is the use of knives and scissors, must have been dulled and there is the incipient 'murderer' in him. The man who does not reciprocate or respond to the feeling reference and fervid appeal of the poet to approach flowers gently, "For, it is my faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes", or is callous to the beauty of the tender and moving quatrains evoked by the presence and sight of flowers,—

*I sometimes think that never blows so red
The rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head
And this delightful Herb whose tender green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lips it springs unseen,—*

—such a man, whatever his other qualifications, must be a heartless creature. It is a sacrilege to speak of offering to the Divine when the offering is stained with blood. The Divine appreciates our offering when it is feelingly and reverentially done. So the man who culls flowers for the Divine should be doubly sensible. First, he must remember not to injure the plants or trees from which they are gathered, neither to denude them completely as do some overzealous people, leaving nothing for their decoration, sometimes not even the buds. Everything has a natural habitat where it becomes best. We speak of a fish out of water. So with flowers. A tree in blossom even though sparsely is a much lovelier sight than many flowers artificially arranged in the room. Secondly, he must remember that all offerings to the Divine should be done consciously, in a spirit of worship, humility and service and not mechanically, unthinkingly, with levity or callousness of spirit and as a matter of dead ceremony and routine. The quantity does not count; the Divine looks at the quality and the spirit behind the offering. The man who plucks flowers for the Divine should take especial care not to degenerate into a murderer by

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his heartlessness nor into a vandal by a cruel and insensate orgy of destruction. We cannot with impunity make the Divine a cloak, a plea or an excuse for the justification of our unchastened desires and impulses.

Plants represent but one stage in the growing manifestation of the same Divine all-consciousness that has reached its present summit in the mental consciousness of man. Tender things should be dealt with tenderly and specially so when they are endowed with life and a consciousness like ours though not overtly mentalised. From the time of Manu, it has been known that plants are endowed with an inner consciousness and are capable of pleasure and pain, waking and sleep, exhilaration and depression of life dynamism. We know for a certainty that "when the sensitive plant shrinks from a contact, it appears that it is nervously affected, that something in it dislikes the contact and tries to draw away from it", just as we ourselves do. Would this not be a sufficient ground for being particularly careful, loving and gentle in handling them? How much more so when it is reflected that flowers are the psychic expressions of the material nature and are meant for offering to an omniscient and omnipresent God who is also a god of Love, Beauty and Harmony!

The fact that flowers evoke joy, admiration and an aesthetic appreciation in all those who are sensitive to their beauty, ought to be a sufficient guarantee against any rough and rude handling of the plants that bear those flowers after so much of care and toil. So the persons who rear the plants, feed them and take every possible care for their health, growth and development, have a tender, nay, a paternal solicitude for their welfare. They cannot stand the sight of plants being molested or roughly handled by anybody. Since plants have essentially the same vital and nervous consciousness as man's—though organised differently—and are equally sensitive to touch, they instinctively feel and distinguish a friend's hand from a vandal's. This point should be specially borne in mind by all those who cut flowers. Plants have their periods of rest and activity. To disturb them for flowers in the burning sun or when they are resting or as often as one likes, is the height of cruelty and indiscretion.

If these mute, patient and unresisting precursors of men (precursors from the point of view of the emerging Consciousness) were endowed with a tongue, they would certainly give us no entertaining stories of gentle ways and sweet reasonableness where man's puerile interests were concerned. Their torn limbs and bruised, broken and lacerated branches, their trampled roots and scattered leaves bear silent but eloquent and irrefutable testimony to the cruelty, insensibility and utter carelessness of man. As it is, they suffer all kinds of mutilation at the hands of one who ought to have a better regard for them than birds and insects, squirrels and cattle that prey upon them. The life history of a plant from its birth to death would be an interesting account since it would give

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us a complete picture of all the care and solicitude bestowed upon it on the one hand as well as all the wanton callousness and cruelty to which it is subjected on the other. If the poet could deplore in a passionate vein what "man has made of man", one wonders how much more poignant would be his feelings when all the gruesome tales of man's cruelty to plants came to his ears. All sympathetic hearts, hearts that are sensitive to beauty, must lament the inhuman treatment to which plants are often subjected by fellowmen in their hunt after flowers. Taste of blood, it is said, increases the thirst for blood. So with those who cut flowers indiscriminately. The more they cut and the more the habit grows upon them, the more their lust for flowers increases till at last it becomes a pleasure to destroy for destruction's sake. They find a perverse delight in cutting flowers so that even a solitary blossom withering on the plant becomes a sight too painful for them to bear. It is only when the plants are completely stripped, entirely denuded of all their flowers that their sadistic propensities are satisfied: their lynx eyes know for a certainty, almost instinctively, where a flower is left or when or where a bud is going to open. We may think that they are rapt in conversation with us, but no, their eyes are riveted on the flower yonder and the hand automatically moves in that direction in order to grab it. Of them it may be truly said that they are possessed by flowers as men are possessed by ghosts. Those who do not scruple to destroy buds for the sake of one or two flowers should remember that their action is tantamount to infanticide in human terms and as such is highly culpable.

For the Sadhak, flower-cutting, like the rearing of plants, is a delicate work that should be elevated to the status of a pure and holy art and undertaken in a spirit of humility and reverence. How should we approach Truth? Take her by the forelock forcibly, violently and in a spirit of nonchalance? Or touch the hem of her garment tentatively, feelingly and respectfully as befits the true seeker? So with cutting flowers. It is not a mechanical work that can be done mechanically by means of knives and scissors only. There must be a deep feeling of the sanctity and delicacy of the work. If we have contracted a mechanical habit of cutting flowers simply for the sake of cutting, or degraded a devotional approach to a mere formality and routine in which there is no life or feeling, it is time to cry a halt, see the error of our ways, retrace our steps and dedicate ourselves afresh with humility and devotion to the task of the Divine so that there may be a flawless execution of His work and we also derive the utmost merit and satisfaction from it. Rearing a plant for flowers is by itself an act of worship. To pluck flowers unnecessarily is not only to injure the plant; it amounts to stealing if we have not reared the plant or otherwise taken any care of it. To mutilate a plant deliberately or through negligence is sheer heartlessness.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

Rishabhchand

CHAPTER XIII

THE PHYSICAL NATURE AND ITS PURIFICATION

PART II

No purification of the physical being can be complete unless it deals effectively and radically with the subconscious and the inconscient: for, as we have already said, the roots of our physical being lie in them, and most of the habits, tendencies and impulses of our nature derive from them and are fed and fortified by their force of inertia. If our physical being is irresponsive to any higher light or any supersensory truth, it is due to the grossness and denseness of its texture, which is mostly a product of the subconscious and the inconscient. If it is mechanical in its movements and has an instinctive horror of any drastic or decisive change, that too is due to the same cause. Many of the obstinate illnesses to which our flesh is all too prone, many of the psychoneuroses which disfigure or damage our manhood, most of the causes of decay and death can be traced to the blind and chaotic action of the subconscious and inconscient elements of our being. It is, therefore, imperative that in any yoga which seeks to effect a radical transformation, and not only a superficial purification of the physical being, the subconscious and the inconscient must be completely conquered and illumined and brought under the direct sway of the central being. These nether domains of our being have to be made conscious and responsive to the higher Light.

The first thing to do is to exert a central will for the opening of the physical nature to the Mother's Light and Force. It will mean, in practice, the projection of a part of our most developed consciousness and an infusion of its will and aspiration into the physical nature. The result may not be very encouraging at the beginning, for, the physical nature may repel the advances of the higher consciousness and refuse to be disturbed in its complacent darkness. But a quiet persistence is sure to prevail in making it open to the Mother's Light.

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“The opening of the physical and the subconscious takes a long time as it is a thing of habits and constant repetition of the old movements, obscure and stiff and not plastic, yielding only little by little. The physical mind can be more easily opened and converted than the rest, but the vital-physical and the material-physical are obstinate. The old things are always recurring there without reason and by force of habit. Much of the vital-physical and most of the material are in the subconscious or depend on it. It needs a strong and sustained action to progress there.”*

The next thing to do is to call down the Mother's Light and Force into the physical nature including the body and its constituent cells, and steadily direct them to its subconscious and inconscient bases below.

“The light brings the consciousness of what is there; the force has to follow and work on them (the obscure parts) till they change or disappear.”

The mind of the sadhak may not be able to see how the Mother's Force works in the parts of the being which are veiled from it, but the central will, once kindled and concentrated upon a thing, can never fail of its objective. The will, exercised with a quiet persistence, calls down the Mother's Force, which begins to act on the inconscient and the subconscious for their purification and illumination. Mental knowledge does not count for much in spiritual life, more often than not it proves an impediment in that it bars the being's progress with its unenlightened constructions. It is the psychic consciousness that must take the lead, exercise its will, foster the growth of the right attitude and help the development of the inner perception in all parts of the nature. The sadhak should try to identify himself with his psychic being or soul and “feel with the psychic nature and see with the psychic vision” the working of the Mother's Force in the submerged reaches of his being. In proportion as the purification of these reaches progresses, he will experience an increasing freedom from the compulsion of the lower appetites, the blind passions and the mechanical habits, which are so great an obstacle to the transformation of his nature. When the psychic perception develops, he will be not only aware of the action of the Mother's Force, but also able to expose the remote and recondite tracts of his nature to its transforming light. Purification renders the nature transparent and develops in it many new perceptive faculties which usually lie dormant in the unpurified human nature.

In course of the purification of the physical nature, a time comes when one finds oneself almost identified with one's external physical personality which is full of obscure and unregenerate elements. This is a stage which has to be passed through with the utmost care and vigilance. There is

* “Letters of Sri Aurobindo”—Vol. IV.

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almost invariably an upsurge of the muck of the subconscious sewers and a desperate repetition of the mechanical movements of the lower nature. Calm detachment, awareness of the Mother's Force working in oneself, patient vigilance, a persistent will and a perfect surrender and plasticity are the most helpful during this period. At a further stage, one may find oneself in the subconscious itself, which is a most crucial state and a poignant experience. But armed with the Mother's Light and Force and completely surrendered, one is always safe even there, and when one emerges from this experience, it is never without the laurels of a rare victory and the joy of an exceptional dynamic freedom.

"When the physical consciousness has to be changed, it is of course essential to work in the subconscious, as it has a great influence on the physical which is very dependent on it. The loss of consciousness comes naturally at first when the subconscious is being worked upon. You have to be careful that it does not become habitual. If you react with a will for the change of this tendency (no struggle is needed) it will pass in time."*

All kinds of lust, greed and sex-trouble usually stem from the subconscious and have to be faced with perfect equanimity and offered to the Mother's Force for purification and transformation. It would be very helpful to remember in this connection Sri Aurobindo's instructions in regard to the means of dealing effectively with these obscure movements of the subconscious.

As a general rule, Sri Aurobindo lays down that in all matters, small or great, we have to take the Yogic attitude and not that of the moralist or the religious man. In the Integral Yoga, in regard to the lower movements like greed or sex impulses, etc., the attitude should be "not one of forceful suppression but of detachment and equality". He makes a very illuminating remark that "forceful suppression (fasting comes under the head) stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains, in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression." It is a very important and liberating truth of purification which, if practised with intelligence and steadfastness, will certainly obviate much of the wearing struggle and frustration the spiritual seekers have to pass through in their desperate efforts to purify themselves of the lower passions.

Regarding food, Sri Aurobindo says, "It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life that is contrary to the spirit of Yoga. . . One must be calm and equal, not getting upset or dissatisfied when the food is not tasty or not in

* "Letters of Sri Aurobindo"—Vol IV.

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abundance . . . eating the fixed amount that is necessary, not less or more. There should be neither eagerness nor repugnance.”*

“Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you . . .”†

To be preoccupied with food—its quality or quantity—is the wrong way to solve the problem of greed. Many yogis waste much of their time and care upon it on account of their ignorance of the right way of tackling it. They wrestle with greed, as with other desires and passions, and strive to strangle it by all sorts of ascetic excesses which only entail repeated failures and disappointment.

“To be always thinking about food and troubling the mind is quite the wrong way of getting rid of the food-desire. Put the food element in the right place in the life, in a small corner, and don’t concentrate on it but on other things.”‡

On the question of the sex impulse and sex-relations, Sri Aurobindo is very emphatically definite. He does not countenance any the least laxity or camouflage in this matter. Sexual pleasure is a positive degradation and deformation of the divine Ananda, and those who seek to realise and express the latter in life must renounce all craving for the former. Sex enjoyment is absolutely incompatible with spiritual life. “. . . It is when one mixes up sex and spirituality that there is the greatest havoc. Even the attempt to sublimate it by turning it towards the Divine as in the Vaishnava *madhura bhava* carries in it a serious danger, as the results of a wrong turn or use in this method so often show. At any rate in this Yoga (the Integral Yoga) which seeks not only the essential experience of the Divine but a transformation of the whole being and nature, I have found it an absolute necessity of the sadhana to aim at a *complete mastery over the sex-force*; otherwise the vital consciousness remains a turbid mixture, the turbidity affecting the purity of the spiritualised mind and seriously hindering the upward turn of the forces of the body . . . One must, therefore, clear this obstacle (sex-desire) out of the way; otherwise there is either no safety or no free movement towards finality in the sadhana.”§

It is a perilous error to think that, though the sexual act is forbidden and harmful in spiritual life, some kind of sexual or vital relation may be permitted. Dispelling all doubts and disarming all subterfuges on the point, Sri Aurobindo says,

“In this Yoga . . . there can be no place for vital relations or inter-

* , †, ‡, § “Bases of Yoga.”

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changes with others; any such relation or interchange immediately ties down the soul to the lower consciousness and its lower nature, prevents the true and full union with the Divine and hampers both the ascent to the supramental Truth-consciousness and the descent of the supramental Ishwari Shakti. Still worse would it be if this interchange took the form of a sexual relation or a sexual enjoyment, even if kept free from any outward act; therefore these things are absolutely forbidden in the sadhana.*

Much of what is known and glorified as love is nothing but such a vital (pranic) relation tending to gravitate towards a sexual relation and always a grave menace to the purity and sincerity of one's being. The initial aim in the Integral Yoga being an absolute surrender and dedication of the whole being to the Divine, any human relation of love between the sexes, however romantic it may appear to our lower nature, is a fatal counter attraction and cannot but end in spiritual disaster. It does not, however, mean that there will be no love amongst friends and relatives, but there must be no exclusive attachment, none of those sweet-bitter spells of vital-emotional intoxication in which one gets glued to a person and cannot make the Divine, the Infinite, the Eternal the sole object of one's love and adoration. For a seeker of the Infinite to remain tied down to a transitory finite object would indeed be nothing short of a spiritual tragedy.

There is again a very misleading notion prevalent among educated people and somewhat reinforced by modern medical science that sex is a "necessity like food and sleep and that its total inhibition may lead to unbalancing and to serious disorders." Sri Aurobindo exposes the extreme imbecility of the notion in the following words:

"It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But I have observed that these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind,—I do not think harm occurs when there is a true spiritual effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, if it is genuine, is beneficial; for the element in the *retas* which serves the sexual act is then changed into its other element which feeds the energies of the system, mental, vital and physical—and that justifies the Indian idea of *brahmacharya*, the transformation of *retas* into *ojas* and the

* "Bases of Yoga."

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raising of the energies upwards so that they change into a spiritual force.”*

The purification of the physical being at its subconscious and inconscient roots will eliminate most of the causes of illness, decay and decrepitude and make for health and longevity and a general vigour and expressional efficiency in the outer personality. But a transformation of the physical being will go immeasurably much farther—it will bring about a radical conversion of the very basic principles of its working. A complete immunity from disease and decay, and even from death, will be the eventual result of the supramental transformation of the physical being.

The physical being is the façade of the self-manifesting Spirit, and as such, its purification and transformation are of the utmost importance in the manifestational Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, for, without them the manifestation in Matter can never be perfect. We propose to consider the question of the transformation of the physical being in a subsequent chapter.



* “Bases of Yoga,”

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

LIGHTS ON THE UPANISHADS

By T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

Sri Aurobindo Library, 369, Esplanade, Madras, Price: Rs. 2.

T. V. Kapali Sastry is an eminent Sanskrit scholar and his principal work, *Rig Veda Bhashya*, promises to radiate through the ages the Light that is ancient India. His greatest contribution in the field of Vedic interpretation is the removal of ritualistic dogmas that had encrusted the core of the spiritual Truth embodied in these sacred books. The flood of revealing light that he has shed on the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Tantras recalls to my mind the image of Hercules bringing the river Alpheus to cleanse the Augean stables. But that is a work in Sanskrit and the need of the hour is a vast diffusion of the ancient wisdom especially when more and more eyes are turning to India for the saving Light of Spiritual Truths discovered in ancient times and constantly renewed in the experiences of the unbroken line of her saints and seers. His books, *Lights on the Veda* and *Further Lights on Tantra*, will surely go a long way in clearing many a mist hanging about the eyebrows and pave the way for a deeper soul-interchange between the East and the West.

The book under review is not merely another commentary or another ingenious feat of scholarship but an unfolding of the actual living truths contained in the Upanishads. As Sri Aurobindo says:

“Only those Scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly renewed, relived, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as monuments of the past” (*Essays on the Gita*). And nobody who has read *Lights on the Upanishads* will deny that Kapali Sastry has brought out the spiritual significance of the Upanishads in a way that makes them the vehicles of eternal verities.

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The first chapter 'Skanda Sanat Kumara Bhuma Vidya' is an inspiring elucidation of a brief passage in the Chhandogya Upanishad which runs: "In the purity of nourishment, *Ahara*, lies the purity of the stuff of being, *Sattwa*; *Sattwa* being pure, the immediate remembrance becomes constant and fixed; by this remembrance, there is release from all the knots. To such a one, stainless, the Blessed Sanatkumar shows the shore beyond the darkness; they call him Skanda, yea, thy call him Skanda." In the hands of the author this sentence becomes a mine of spiritual knowledge, a finger of light leading the human soul 'from the lighted path to the self-subsistent Light' and the whole Upanishad appears, as he says, as one of the 'Manuals of Sadhana'! That is why he gives the warning, "there is no surer way to miss the significance of the whole passage than to rely upon any translation or lexicon, for these terms are significant and teem with a number of suggestions arising from the whole body of this Upanishad." What is the goal of the Bhuma Vidya? The full realization and not a mental knowledge of 'the Indescribable, the Vast *Bhuma*, the One, the Self, the seer of which sees neither death nor disease nor sorrow.'

What was the method of initiation? "The teacher who was always a seer admitted the disciple for initiation on being convinced of his fitness for receiving the Vidya. He trained him for the life, put into him the necessary seed of realisation, allowed it to grow and bear fruit in the right season."

Kapali Sastry lays great stress on the realization of these truths and not stopping short at the mere mental understanding and appreciation of them. He does not deny the latter's great value "for the mental being: for it infuses a settled illumined faith in the mind. But still that is no realization, a brilliant concept in itself does not go far for a living experience of the truth that is concerned, however cherished it may be in the mind."

Purity of the mind, of the vital and even of the physical is the first pre-requisite of spiritual fitness. That is the significance of *Ahara Shuddhi* and *Sattwa Shuddhi*. *Sattwa*, as he shows, is not mind alone, but mind, life and power of expression. It is this that sustains the embodied existence here and is the vehicle of the soul in its journey to the other worlds and rebirth."

Then he explains the significance of the *smriti* the remembrance of which "is not a mere memory, but an intuition that carries with it a certain dynamism that cuts asunder the knots of ignorance"

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“What are those knots?” “They represent the desires, passions, attachments and a host of other binding factors by which the embodied being feels chained to the body, life and mind, feels them to be itself and mistakes for its own being the ego, a posing figure of the true Self.” Sanat Kumara turns out to be the Divine Grace that leans down from on high to save such a pure and true aspirant of the Truth and becomes the warrior who fights out for us our battles against the cosmic forces of darkness. Kapali Sastry has described the coming of the Divine as the Deliverer in a way that shows that here is no mere scholar displaying his erudition but one who has travelled the arduous path, borne the wounds inflicted by the enemy and above all experienced the sweet experience of the Divine carrying him secure in his arms of love. He writes: “Therefore to one well-equipped with the riches of the sadhana, strong and steady, prepared in the manner for the supreme event, the Deliverer comes with his gift, carries him safe across the ocean of darkness to the other side where reigns the Supreme Effulgence. He comes from beyond the range of the personal self, for his helping hand comes stretching from outside into the sphere of personal exertion in the sadhana to crown it ultimately with success, *Siddhi*.” Other chapters deal with Prana Vidya, Shandilya Vidya, Vaishnavara Vidya, the Kathopanishad and the Vedic Wisdom in the Vedanta. The last chapter, ‘Conclusion’ gives in a brief and clear manner the upshot of every chapter, the quintessence of the Upanishadic lore, what is common to all the sadhanas and justifies the concluding remarks: “The Upanishads are, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, ‘not philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to logicise truth or else to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by its dialectical reasoning.’ On the contrary, they are ‘the creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience and all their substance, structure, phrase, imagery, movement are determined by and stamped with this original character.’”

Although his learning peeps through in every page yet this book is singular in being free from any arid patches and unrewarding enigmas. Austerity and self-discipline mark every page of the book along with unhurried thought and mature consideration. The book deserves the attention of all who have a concern for the renewal of spiritual values in modern life.

R. N KHANNA

THE MYSTICS OF SPAIN

By E. ALLISON PEERS

Allen & Unwin, London. Price: 9/6.

The wind bloweth where it listeth; and special gifts and powers are revealed by people at various times in various places. Explanations may be suggested why there were golden ages of poetry in certain places at certain times. But it is doubtful if all can be fully or convincingly explained. In the same way with regard to the emergence of the spiritual gifts and all other unusual powers. Allison Peers tries to explain why there was such a wonderful efflorescence of the mystical power in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One questions if the explanation takes us very far. What is plain is that during those two centuries the mystical power was remarkably evident in Spain, and that this is a gift that is not confined to any clime or race or even religion. When it manifests itself it is found to be clearly indicative of something far transcending normal human nature and revealing secrets of existence that all aspiring minds are thirsting after. That is why the lives and works of the mystics are of such absorbing interest to all who are in the least spiritually alive.

The visions and ecstasies, the poems and prose treatises of mystics in general show that there is a common influence in them all. As a matter of fact the first important mystic of Spain, Ramon Lull (1233-1315), whose genuine books run to some two hundred and fifty, says that he drew upon some Moslem sources: "certain men called Sufis." His *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* has all the outlook and point of view of the devotee who all the world over, and in all mystical literature, represents himself and God as the lover and the beloved. This passionate feeling must be what gives such transcendent energy to the mystics. Many lead terribly austere lives, feed on scarcely anything, and yet do such tremendous work as to astonish and bewilder the common man. It is said that mystical writings in Spain are about three thousand, and all this had been done while preaching and teaching, founding institutions and administering communities.

The great practical activities of the mystics should remove a common erroneous view that mystics are so other-worldly that they are not interested in and are unfit for the practical concerns of life. But the lives of all the great mystics show that while they were enjoying direct spiritual visions they were capable of understanding and carrying out practical affairs. A very great mystic indeed was St. Teresa of Avila, and yet during her life-time how much of organization and administration she was able to get through successfully! St. Ignatius Loyola, the

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Founder of the well-known Jesuit Order, was also of the same kind. Nor was St. John of the Cross, who is called by Allison Peers the poet's poet and the mystic's mystic, lacking in practical ability and interest.

Perhaps what one may say after a study of these mystics is that it is not necessary that one should be a philosopher in order to be a mystic. How different is thus the common idea about the mystics and the truth about them: they need not be philosophers, they may be quite practical-minded. Though not necessarily philosophers, they had, as practical men, very good understanding of the human mind. The fact is that they combined idealism and realism in a wonderful way. Though given to contemplation and visions they lived "active, ardent, and militant" lives. That is why there is nothing maudlin or sickly about them, and that is why they are so full of inspiration and quickening force.

But of course the essential aspect of their lives and character is the spiritual. They follow the dictum: "Live in this world as though there were in it but God and thy soul, so that thy heart may be detained by naught that is human" Also it was the song of all of them:

*How tender is the love
Thou wakenest in my breast
When thou, alone and secretly, art there!
Whispering of things above,
Most glorious and most blest,
How delicate the love thou mak'st me bear*

The Mystics of Spain is the fifth book in the series *Ethical and Religious Classics of the East and West*. Mr. Peers has selected typical passages from the writings of the great Spanish mystics and translated them. His Introduction and the short notes on the lives of the mystics are very useful. To any one interested not only in mysticism but in general spiritual matters this book will have a great appeal.

P. L. STEPHEN

THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

Sisirkumar Mitra

(Continued from previous issue)

What the Rishis Achieved

What actually were the achievements of the inspired Mystics? Were they nothing more than their seeing golden visions of the Truth or having experiences of its working in the life and soul of man? By themselves, these are enough for the Seers to be regarded as immortal spiritual uplifters of the human race. But what in fact did they do to lay the foundation of a Yoga by which man as a race could rise to his perfection, a perfect living in the Truth? It is clear from what the Rishi says after he saw the advent of the Dawn that the power came to earth to help man develop his capacity to receive the Light at the great hour of its descent on earth, that the knowledge, too, of the Truth was revealed to enable man to chase away the darkness of his Ignorance. But the most glorious of these all was the assurance given by the ancient Fathers that the Light that would change man into a divine being was in the process of descending on earth. This was symbolised by the Dawn which the Mystics saw as the prelude to the everlasting Day when the Sun of Truth would shine for ever on the consciousness of man. Here is the joyous cry of the Rishi:

“We have crossed to the other shore of this darkness, Dawn is breaking forth and she creates and forms the births of knowledge.” And the fact that this Dawn—the discovery of the Light—had been already achieved by the Forefathers is so often proclaimed in utterances like:

“Our fathers found out the hidden light, by the truth in their thoughts they brought to birth the Dawn.”

That these Mystics did attain to the blissful heaven of Truth and rise into a state of spiritual and supramental illumination is evident from the whole trend of Vedic mysticism, in which are found positive references to the Fathers who first discovered the Light and possessed the Thought and the Word and travelled to the secret worlds of the luminous Bliss. That there were a number of them who by this illumination were raised to a divine status is equally clear from some of the hymns. The seven Angirasa Rishis, for instance, who were the founders of the Vedic knowledge,

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are described as 'personalities of the Light and the Voice and the Flame', *divya*, divine, who had descended from heaven and whose ascent to it the Veda chants as their victory by which they opened the path for the earth to travel to heaven. The Rishi declares

"Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry; they made in us the path to the great heaven; they found the Day and *Swar* and vision and the luminous Cows."

This path, the Rishi continues, is the path that leads to immortality.

The great Rishi Vamadeva often refers to 'the victorious attainment of the cow of Light', how 'the human fathers went forward to the possession of the Truth', how 'the souls opened by the divine word.' And when he declared 'Heaven shone out' he implied the manifestation of the three luminous worlds of *Swar*. But it is in a most plain and emphatic language that the Rishi reveals his own seerhood:

"All these are sacred words that I have uttered to thee who knowest, O Agni, O Disposer, words of leading, words of seer-knowledge that express their meaning to the seer.—I have spoken them illumined in my words and my thinkings."

Another victory of great importance is the hold of Rishi Agastya over Matter where lie the roots of Desire. Here are the words of a disciple:

"Agastya digging with spades, desiring offspring, the child and strength, he, the forceful Rishi, nourished both the colours (or either colour), reached in the gods the true blessings."

Here, offspring symbolises whatever comes into being as the crown of one's *sadhana*, child the new transformed personality, and the colours the human and the divine, both of which the Rishi developed in himself. And all these done and achieved, the Rishi rose into the Godhead and possessed the supreme Bliss and Beauty of the Truth.

The Vedic Mystics called the One Existence the *Deva* the supreme Godhead. He is the Blissful One, the goal of the upward movement of the gods. Each of the gods is a manifestation, an aspect, a personality of the *Deva*. As such, each may look to us different, but each in himself is all the *Deva*, and under him are subsumed the other ones. There are hymns that unequivocally declare this. Yet the One, the supreme Godhead is many a time mentioned as such by the Mystics. 'The One that exists sages affirm variously' is the note in a number of *riks*. "This One becomes the All". "The real essence of the gods is one" "All the gods form the body of this World-Soul." But the excelsior cry of the Rishi is:

"There is a Permanent, a Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun unyokes his horses. The ten hundreds (of his rays) came to-

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gether—That One I saw the most glorious of the Forms of the Gods.”

The Truth that hides the Permanent is of course an inferior Truth, and the Rishi breaks through it by the impetuosity of his soul's quest and arrives to the supreme Light, 'the fairest form of the Sun'.—an experience repeated in the Upanishads only in other terms. This is another victory added to the solar glories with which the spiritual endeavour of India was crowned in that magnificent past of the race. They are far from the truth who say that the Veda is polytheistic. Even henotheism is not the right term for the Vedic mysticism. The Seers visioned the Supreme in his infinite powers. They also saw the gods as aspects and personalities of the Supreme, who are ever at work to chase away the darkness of the earth and establish there a permanent reign of the Light. Not only this. It was their vivid perception that all the labour of the gods to this end is upborne by the power and will of the Supreme.

In order that the Light may descend upon the earth and manifest there, there must precede an ascent of human consciousness into the heavens of the Spirit, a free, direct communication with the super-conscious planes of existence. One of the most glorious achievements of the early Fathers was that they have made possible this ascension by themselves ascending to those heavenly peaks from where they visioned the dawns of Light. "I have arisen," asseverates the Rishi, "from the earth to the mid-world, I have arisen from the mid-world to heaven, from the level of the firmament of heaven I have gone to the Sun-world, the Light." "Beholding the higher Light beyond the darkness we came to the divine Sun in the Godhead, to the highest Light of all."

But the early Fathers did not rest content with mere declaration of their sublime visions and experiences, neither did they propound only the mystic doctrine based on those experiences showing the path to the realisation by man of his divine destiny. There is an even greater meaning in all that they uttered out of the depth and intensity of their soul intoxicated by the wine of supreme Beatitude. However rich, varied and powerful their contributions to the spiritual make-up of India's soul, the one basic, essential and of far-reaching import was the *élan* they gave to her soul by sowing in the already fertilised race-consciousness the fire-seeds of her undying quest of the Divine, of the ever-increasing flame of Agni. In fact, it is the visions and realisations of these inspired Mystics that for the first time activated the soul of India to become what it has always been, to grow and deepen in its longing for the Spirit, the longing that motived all its later expressions in which is perceived the ancient idea implanted in its mind and heart by the Ancestors of the race. These early Founders of Indian civilisation were impelled by the Shakti that India is to voice however symbolically what the inner being of the race seeks for

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its fulfilment in a larger life in the Spirit. The soul of India is a consciousness growing out of the first touch of the Spirit which it had from the visions the Rishis saw of the Truth, the Truth that liberates. And did not these visions encompass heaven and earth in the unity and infinity of that creative power of God which is ever at work to bring into birth 'a new heaven and a new earth', a perfect order of life?

When did India start on this quest? The Rishis of the Rigveda affirm and reaffirm time and again that there were earlier Dawns that had visited their former Forefathers. Indeed the truths revealed in the Veda cannot be sudden flashings on the intuitive mind of man. There must have been long and continuous periods of intense spiritual striving before the seers were vouchsafed these visions and realisations out of which were evolved the mystic doctrines whose origins may be traced to those dim days of antiquity when the artificialities and complexities of the modern civilisation were not, when life was simple enough for free movement and expression, and mind, unsophisticated and fresh, was open to the intuitive planes of consciousness with which the 'Forefathers' readily began to have direct communications. Mystic experience holds that almost immediately after man's emergence into his 'modern' form 'the ephiphany was disclosed'.

The Age of Mysteries may be said to have their inchoate beginning in that early stage of man's earthly career, of which no record exists. The myths and legends of the world are distorted and confused annals of those 'early dawns' when man opened his eye of intuition towards the rays of the Light, first, perhaps in the sights and sounds of physical nature, and then, in the deeper truths that these phenomena symbolised.

It is not possible to ascribe any specific date to the Veda. In its present form, as already said, it is only a fragment belonging to the later ages of Intuition, most of the hymns of the earlier ones having been lost or forgotten. And even the real meaning of the existing riks remained unknown for thousands of years, though they indirectly influenced the growth of India's spiritual and religious thought all through her long history. Behind these riks lie thousands of years during which the questing soul of man in India had contact with the luminous worlds of the Light, the higher heavens of the Truth. And with this vision man started on his journey. Maybe, when the neolithians were making fire by rubbing together pieces of wood or stone, there were groups of humans who were illumined in their consciousness by the light of heaven.

There is truth in the traditional belief that the Veda is undatable, since nobody can say when the truths were first seen. The Veda is a 'Book of Knowledge' which came to the Seers over a long course of time beginning with the first rays of the Light that had fallen on the intuitive

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gaze of man. There may be some truth in the suggestion made by some Indian scholars on the basis of astronomical evidence that the Vedic age had three epochs in it. The first epoch covering two thousand years from about 6,000 B.C. saw its earliest beginnings when the mystic doctrines were known but not exactly in the same form as the Rigvedic riks; the second was for about 1,500 years from 4,000 B.C. when these riks were composed in which could be traced at least two different periods one subsequent to the other: to the last epoch are attributed the three later Vedas. But these dates, as said before, are tentative: orthodox opinion pushes back the date of the second epoch much earlier than that of the first.

When the historian of India tries to fix a date for this period he must remember that this hitherto-unknown but very long period of intense spiritual activity contains in it the seed of all later developments in the history of the country and that it is a secret which will remain a secret so long as we do not understand the meaning of India's soul, the meaning of her purpose in history, the meaning that was given to her by the ancient Fathers for revelation in the future, when the time for it would come.

India enshrines in her soul the vision that her Seers saw of man's divine destiny, the "divine race" for whose "creation" they invoked the gods. This is the Ideal for which she stands, its flowering in the manifold expressions of her life forms the fabric of her historic development. The history of India is a process every stage of which is only an aspect of the adventure of India's soul through the ages, a step in her onward march. And by her creative activities in each epoch she has been enriched in her being, receiving from them a series of new experiences which increased her strength, her capacity and readiness for the great hour of the world when she would recover her ancient vision, declare it to the world and become the leader of man's evolution. Thus will the Rishi of the past fulfil himself in the Rishi of the future, the Dawn of yesterday in the 'everlasting day' of Tomorrow

Who the Rishis were

But who were these Rishis? What place did they occupy in the cultural life of the people? What was the kind of life they led? are among the questions that the pragmatic modern mind may ask. Next to nothing will be said of them if we merely state that they were the Aryas who founded Aryan civilisation. Ethnic appellations are not enough to indicate the character, nature and tendencies of a people. It is its culture that shows what a people really is. The culture of the Aryas, at least as it was in those early days, had already had its basic foundations laid on

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the intrinsic values that the race had by then made its own. And it is these values that have ever been the bedrock of all later achievements of its creative endeavours every one of which was in the main motivated by these values that they might find their sublimest forms in the perfect culture of the future.

The quest for the Infinite has always been the one dominant passion of the Indian mind. The result of it was the growth of an intuitive insight through which the seekers mastered the truths of God, life and the universe. It is out of these truths that the ancients evolved the social, political and cultural patterns that form the fabric of Indian civilisation. It is these truths again that held before man his path to perfection, the crowning end of his human journey. An Arya was one who was a seeker, a traveller of this path and who, by whatever progress he has made, would invariably develop both in his inner and outer life certain characteristics that marked him out as one who belonged to that particular culture that carried in it the seed-soul of future dawns of consciousness. But it was something much more than refinement. It was the growth of man into a new consciousness, almost a new nature, which led him to regard God as the sole truth of life and to build his life into the glory of that truth, the divine centre of his life. Knowledge, therefore, was the aim of the Aryan seeker and knowledge was also the means by which he attained to higher states of superconscious existence. And this knowledge is that by which man becomes what he knows. And when he knows the Truth, he becomes the Truth. Fundamentally, all India's history is a history of her children living this ideal or striving to live up to it and translating its realisation into both their individual and collective life.

The Vedic Rishis are the earliest propounders of this supreme goal of human existence. What they aspired for was not merely an inner mastery but also a mastery of the outer conditions of life which were necessary, they knew, for solving the problems of life. There was therefore an all-out effort to achieve that end; the Rishis were all aflame with the fire of Agni by which they intensified the aspiring will in man to grow and mount upward and win all that Agni could give him in his effort to overcome all opposition and attain to a larger life, a higher consciousness, a diviner perfection. The prayer therefore goes forth from the Rishi:

“When, O Mitra, you have your far-voyaging vision and we are the illumined seers, may we arrive in the effort of our journey to a self-empire spread out widely open and governing its multitudes.”

Here the original word for self-empire is *swarajya* which goes with the other word *samrajya*, meaning respectively perfect empire within and perfect empire without, rule of our inner being and mastery of our environments and attendant circumstances,—the ideal of the Vedic sages.

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These early Fathers have repeatedly said that this ideal becomes real in man's life when he ascends beyond his finite, half-lit mentality to the luminous Truth of his being, the supramental infinities on the spiritual plane of his existence. An Arya is one who is a seeker after this mastery, this perfection; this is the intrinsic significance of the word. The Vedic Rishis and their followers were Aryas in this sense. The culture that evolved out of this basic idea is the Aryan culture; it acquired its ethnic association as its adherents increased and the whole people—the children of Bharata—adopted it. And this adoption used to be symbolically expressed as a consecration to Agni, the Divine Flame representing the aspiring will in man, the centre of all his upward endeavours. It has been suggested in the previous chapter that the so-called Aryas and Dravidians are most likely original settlers in India derived from one common stock. Culturally also they appear to have been one for a long time, from at least the beginning of the first millennium B.C., if not earlier, as the Agastya tradition is believed to be of Vedic origin. In the Vedic literature the Aryas are sometimes mentioned as worshippers of Agni, and this not because they followed the fire-cult as the end in itself but as a first step or a gateway to a vaster life.

The Vedic Rishis were the inspired inaugurators of the age of the Spirit in India when Aryan culture was born in the light that dawned on the heart and soul of the Mystics and illumined them to be the earliest builders of Indian civilisation. This age, so far as the Vedic beginnings in it are concerned, cannot however be said to be the starting-point of India's spiritual history. The Rigvedic Rishis, as said before, often refer to earlier Fathers who were the original Seers of the truths revealed by them, the Vedic Rishis, tracing their lineage as well as the line of their inner development to their remote Ancestors whom they regarded as the true initiators of the adventure of India's soul. This line of inward growth and fulfilment followed a mystic path and had therefore a hidden meaning which could be understood only by occult experience.

Each of these lines started with a type of spiritual victory by a particular Rishi who was naturally recognised as its founder. And consequently, the lines that were followed by others would often go by the names of the founder-Rishis representing each a particular spiritual achievement in a particular line. It may be that many of the Vedic Rishis bore the names of these earlier creators of these spiritual lines, to whose achievements the race owes all the mighty beginnings of its unique spirituality. This granted, the nomenclature follows as a natural corollary.

But what do these names signify? And what bearings have they on the evolution of Vedic mysticism? It is difficult, if not impossible with the scanty evidence so far available on this point, to give any compre-

hensive answer to questions like these. Yet there are revealing suggestions in the very etymology of the names, when of course they are taken in their esoteric sense. In fact, these names also are symbols as are the Vedic gods, forces of Nature and sacrificial objects. The seven Angiras Rishis, for instance, are often referred to as born in Agni, therefore flaming powers of Agni, forces of Light, which is the root meaning of the word. And we know from the Rigvedic hymns that these Rishis discovered the Light, made the sun shine, and ascended to the heaven of the Truth: and there are quite a number of Rishis who attained to such semi-divine states. So the name of this house or family or group of the Rishis as that of others pursuing other lines was clearly derived from their spiritual achievement, or the achievement peculiar to the line of their house.

Incidentally, many of the Rishis belonged to a collective spiritual life. Very many hymns are chanted in the first person plural,—which shows that the Rishis, probably of the same house, took to the same line of spiritual seeking. Of course, there are evidences of a Rishi-father handing on to his son or disciple the whole or part of the Vedic lore of which he was in custody or which was his own work. In this way knowledge in ancient India was transmitted from generation to generation and preserved in the memory of the race, for it was an oral method that was then mostly in use, and deliberately chosen too, lest the sanctity of the Word should suffer desecration in publicity, lest its occult force should lose in value through indiscriminate use. It was believed that *Shruti* or Veda should appeal to the ear, through the ear to the heart and to the deeper and wider parts of the being and not to the eye, and was not therefore to be reduced to writing. Always to be kept white, in the whiteness of purity and not in black and white. The Mahabharata condemns to hell those who would write the Veda.

The name of the great sage Parashara means 'the supreme overcomer', that of Gotama 'most full of light'; Vasistha is 'the most shining one', Viswamitra, 'the friend of all' or 'all-loving'. Dirghatamas is one who was 'long in darkness', in the night of the soul before his emergence into the full blaze of the solar light of the Truth, which the hymns so gloriously proclaim. Bharadwaja is one who holds in him 'the substance, the essence of the Truth'. 'He who has the flaming body' is called Bhṛigu. Vamadeva is 'the god of delight'. The name of almost every Rishi of the Veda indicates in this way the spiritual content of its owner; and may be taken to point to what that particular Rishi stands for in the world of Vedic mysticism, what he conquered and achieved to become the Illuminate, the Master of the Truth. The etymology is therefore a clue to their appropriate designations.

These Seers of the Light, Seers as well of its dawn on human consci-

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ousness, did each represent in their spiritual life a particular ray, knowledge or vision of the Light, which he made his own and by which he was liberated into the world of the Truth where he had the full vision of the Truth in all its supernal glory. But these new Dawns are imagined in the Veda as those that repeat the old and lean forward to join the Dawns of the future. The phenomenon of this unwavering solemnity of the Dawn is sustained by the movement of the gods towards a greater manifestation in the future. And in this movement the Rishis also offer their contribution, the Rishis who live liberated in the immortal light of the supramental Sun. In the high heaven of the Supermind they are always ready with the power of their illumination to help the seekers of the earth in their effort to know the Truth, to overcome the forces that oppose his seeking. The great Rishis of the Veda do in this way further the cause of man's spiritual progress. The seven sages, the Angirasas, whose ascension to the heaven of the Truth is gloriously hymned in the Veda, 'are waiting there still and always, ready to chant the word, to rend the cavern, to find the lost herds, to recover the hidden sun.' And this they do not only to help forward the march of man towards the goal of his terrestrial journey, but also to preserve for the future of the race all their unique masteries, all their wonderful truth-visions. An idea of the Vedic Rishis in heaven is symbolically suggested by the traditional belief of the Hindus that the seven stars comprising the constellation called the Great Bear represent the seven greatest Rishis of the Rigveda.

Mention may be made here of the fact that the Vedic Rishis included quite a number of women called *Rishikas* and *Brahmavadinis*—knowers of Brahman—of whom nineteen are mentioned in the Rigveda by their names, and four in the Samaveda—an evidence of the summit of culture reached by the women of the age.

There was then the other way—kept alive by tradition—in which the ancient visions were sought to be preserved. In Vedic times as in all early societies the family was the basic unit of collective life. And it was always an expansive factor in the growth of the group mainly through blood relationship. The families of the Vedic age of which the Rishis were the heads expanded in lineage each from a common father who in this case would be an illumined Rishi.

The institution of *gotra* owes its origin to this concept in which the name of the Rishi, the original ancestor, is held to be the *gotra* of all those who from generation to generation would be the descendants of this Rishi, the idea being that these descendants would follow the line of spiritual development initiated by the Rishi, would adhere to that particular Rishi's vision of the Light, follow his way to its realisation, and thereby preserve the vision for those who would follow in the future. Scholars have sug-

gested various meanings for the term *gotra*, one of which, more popular than others, traces its origin to the common cowshed used in Vedic times by several families, probably related to one another by blood. But the logic of facts cannot admit an interpretation of this type of a term intimately associated with the inspired Mystics of the Veda. It might be the exoteric meaning, but the esoteric symbolises the protecting or guarding of the Light, taking the word *go* for 'light' as has been done all through the exegesis followed here; the root of the Sanskrit verb *tra* signifies 'to protect'. It is interesting to find the word *gotra* in Druidic hymns used in the sense of 'womb of light', pointing to the common Aryan origin of the Druidic and Vedic cults, as shown in the previous chapter.

Thus the Hindus today can trace their geneology to one or other of the Vedic Rishis meaning thereby that they are each to be the preserver of the vision of the Rishi who is his early ancestor. This is how there has developed in India one of the oldest of her traditions which exists even to this day and which, though its deeper significance is lost or obscured, enshrines nonetheless the benediction of the ancient Sages for the moral and spiritual welfare of the race. One of its aims might be to help the race keep up the sacred remembrance of its early Fathers so that some day in its memory might be rekindled the fire of their liberating force, from which would burst a new Dawn for its redemption.

However seemingly unimportant at the present day, the *gotra* tradition does suggest something of what the early Fathers really wanted, and therefore what they really were,—the greatest benefactors of the race. A descendant, deriving his *gotra*-name from a Vedic Rishi, seeking the Light in the right way, may not take long to contact the Rishi in the high heaven of the Truth and receive from him whatever help he needs in his spiritual endeavour. But the *gotra*-idea need not be taken in any rigid sense. From a larger standpoint, it may mean the early guardians of the Light forming the confraternity of the Vedic Rishis whose one aim was to bring about the inner regeneration of the human race, perpetuating the spirit and force of that regeneration in their successors. This is evident from the fact that though eight of the greater Rigvedic Rishis are regarded as the earliest ancestors of all the brahmanas in India, some of them are also held to be the common spiritual ancestors of the people of other castes who have gained that right through their discipleship to the brahmanas,—another proof of how the ancients wanted all the units and elements of society to imbibe and follow the Vedic ideals and grow under its exalting influence.

The *gotra* rules suggest yet another purpose, that of strengthening the society towards a larger development. These rules, generally of endogamy and exogamy, regulate even today all marriage connections among

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the Hindus. By forbidding marriage between persons belonging to the same *gotra*, they have extended from the beginning the pale of the Hindu society to various tribal and clannish communities. It is said that this prohibition was also based on eugenic and psychological grounds. From the *gotra*-rules again have derived a number of social customs one of which was the marriage that was permitted in ancient times between a brahmana or kshatriya with a woman of other castes who might not always be an Arya. These marriages might have caused some diminution in the so-called purity of blood of the Hindus, though this claim of purity is today exploded as a myth. But there is no doubt that they enriched the social and cultural life of the people beyond perhaps what their originators could then imagine. And all these may be traced directly or indirectly to the institution of *gotra* that took its birth in Vedic times.

The growth of the *gotra*-tradition has yet to be studied in its proper perspective and results. While many of the Vedic Rishis continue to this day as the original source of many *gotra*-names, there are others who do not. These breaks may be due to the extinction of the line or to new names adopted in place of the old when perhaps the ancient vision was re-affirmed by some later descendant in a newer meaning suitable to his age. There have also been occasions, as already pointed out, when the names of the Vedic Mystics were adopted by their descendants; and not infrequently did this happen in ancient India creating so much confusion of names in her history that its chronology becomes difficult of reconstruction. In the social, cultural and spiritual life of India the *gotra* idea does play an important part. It will have sufficiently justified itself if it only reminds the race of its early Fathers, the founders of its culture and civilisation. They are indeed immortal links between the present and the past speaking across the centuries the creative Word of Light which sustains the present and waits its hour of future glory in the race.

In the quiet seclusion of their hermitages in forests or on the banks of rivers, maybe in cities as well, these Mystics were immersed in inward contemplation, opening themselves to the world of the gods, the Home of the Vast Truth. One of their great discoveries was that that world is a perfect counterpart and prototype of this imperfect earth for whose perfection the Rishis laboured in all the depth and intensity of their soul. Indeed it is to this silent travail that these builders of the race dedicated themselves, making it their occupation and preoccupation every moment of their life. First the vision, then its realisation, and last but never the least, an ardent and concentrated longing for its fulfilment in the life of the race. This was their one absorbing concern.

The Rishis had their disciples who lived with them, and these would often include their own sons and daughters. They would instruct these

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seekers in the methods of Vedic discipline, giving them the necessary training without which the Veda could not be understood. To the Rishis, as already said, life was the field for the growth of man into a greater life, a diviner perfection. They therefore participated in all its activities, trying all the time to expose these activities to the Light for the infiltration of its rays into every one of them that they might be exalted to their purer forms. This is how India received her first baptism in spirituality which has ever since been the inherent tendency of the race. And this spirituality, we may repeat, was never a negative or exclusive one. It embraced all life.

Many of the Rishis were married and led a family life and often their wives were as spiritually great. As the Veda and later literatures give only *gotra* names, the women-seers cannot be distinguished in their relationships. Of the few known mention may be made of Arundhati, wife of Vasistha, one of the greatest Rishis, and Lopamudra, wife of Rishi Agastya. What is striking in the latter instance is that both husband and wife were engaged in a common spiritual pursuit the problems of which they discussed in a colloquy given in the Rigveda. And this cannot be a stray instance of the kind. There were families many of whose members were equally advanced in the ways of the Spirit. A sister—herself a seer—of the great Rishi Agastya, composed hymns in collaboration with her two sons who also were seers. There can be no more positive proof of the intense spiritual activity of India of the period, whose centres were the homes of the Rishis—homes 'redolent of the perfume of paradise'.

To be continued
