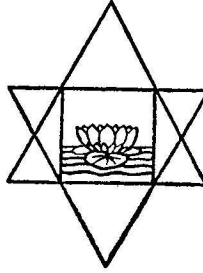


MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER 1953

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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

TRANSLATED FROM THE MOTHER'S
"Prayers and Meditations."

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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Notice

THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL JOINT ISSUE OF
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER. IT WILL BE OUT ON
DECEMBER 5.

THREE EARLY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF SRI AUROBINDO

It is well-known that the sonnet 'Nirvana' published many years ago in 'Six Poems' records the experience which Sri Aurobindo had in 1908. Prior to this there were several experiences about which we find hints in his letters. At that time he had not started the practice of Yoga and the experiences came of themselves with a sudden unexpectedness. One came the very moment he stepped on the Indian soil at Apollo Bunder: a vast calm descended upon him and surrounded him and remained for months. About three others K. R. Srinivas Iyengar writes in his biography of Sri Aurobindo: "While walking on the ridge of the Takht-i-Suleman in Kashmir, the realisation of the vacant Infinite came upon him, unbidden as it were; the living presence of Kali in the shrine on the banks of the Narmada came upon him unawares and filled him with its stupendous majesty; and he had, on another occasion, when he was in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay there, a vision of the Godhead surging up from within him and mastering and controlling with its gaze all events and surroundings." It is interesting to identify these early experiences in three powerful sonnets in Sri Aurobindo's 'Last Poems'.

ADWAITA

I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
Where Shankaracharya's tiny temple stands
Facing Infinity from Time's edge, alone
On the bare ridge ending earth's vain romance.

Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnamable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being's only word,
The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
On the dumb crest of Nature's mysteries.

THE STONE GODDESS

In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,—
A living Presence deathless and divine,
A Form that harboured all infinity.

The great World-Mother and her mighty will
Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

Now veiled with mind she dwells and speaks no word,
Voiceless, inscrutable, omniscient,
Hiding until our soul has seen, has heard
The secret of her strange embodiment,

One in the worshipper and the immobile shape,
A beauty and mystery flesh or stone can drape.

THE GODHEAD

I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
In me, enveloping me the body of Him.

Above my head a mighty head was seen,
A face with the calm of immortality
And an omnipotent gaze that held the scene
In the vast circle of its sovereignty.

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;
The world was in His heart and He was I:
I housed in me the Everlasting's peace,
The strength of One whose substance cannot die

The moment passed and all was as before;
Only that deathless memory I bore

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO AND AESTHETICS

Author's Note

In an exposition of this kind of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics, it would have been presumptuous to state in my own language the findings which come so naturally in the large utterance of Sri Aurobindo. I have, therefore, endeavoured to state Sri Aurobindo's thought in his own words, especially in sections which are concerned with his distinctive contribution to aesthetics. Quotation marks would be superfluous in sections which are all quotation. I have, therefore, reserved quotation marks only for statements which, because of their importance, are reproduced in their precise form. My own additions are mainly expository and interpretative. They are to be found mainly in the first, fourth and twelfth sections. The fourth section deals with axioms derived from the Master's luminous perceptions of the essence of poetry and illustrates the power of multiple suggestion so characteristic of his intuitions. Expository remarks made by me in other sections will, I believe, be clear in their own context. I have hewn rich blocks of marble from far and wide in Sri Aurobindo's domain and placed them together like a little child building a shrine in honour of its master. A few suggestions by my friend D. R. Bendre have been made use of in the section on "Aesthesis and the Overhead Consciousness". Throughout the essay, the abbreviation 'F. P.' stands for 'The Future Poetry', 'A' for the 'Arya' Journal and 'L. 3' for 'Letters, Third Series'. As 'The Future Poetry' was not published in book form at the time this essay was written, quotations from it had to be given page-numbers not of the book but of the 'Arya'.

(I) THE HARMONIOUS AND LUMINOUS TOTALITY

THE catholicity of Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry and art surprises the casual reader. He is prepared for an exclusive worship of 'mysticism' and finds instead that all the domains of the mind and life of Man and Nature have been included in it. "A great poet", says Sri Aurobindo, "will do more with a lower level of the origin of inspiration than a smaller poet can do even when helped from the highest sources." (p. 132. L. 3). We are, therefore, in contact here with a master mind perfectly aware of the supreme value of proportion and balance. It is an inclusive, a synthetic account of beauty that rewards our study of his essays and letters. He never forgets that there are many kinds of poetry just as there are many kinds of imagination,—“the objective imagina-

tion which visualises strongly the outward aspects of life and things; the subjective imagination which visualises strongly the mental and emotional impressions they have the power to start in the mind; the imagination which deals in the play of mental fictions and to which we give the name of poetic fancy; the aesthetic imagination which delights in the beauty of words and images for their own sake and sees no farther." 'F. P.' p. 509. 'A.' March, 1918). There is the strong vital poetry which powerfully appeals to our sensations and our sense of life, a strong emotional poetry which stirs our feelings and gives us the sense and active image of the passions; a strong intellectual poetry which satisfies our curiosity about life and its mechanism. "All this has its pleasures for the mind and the surface soul in us and it is certainly quite legitimate to enjoy them and to enjoy them strongly and vividly on our way upward." (p. 509. 'A.' March, 1918).

"But if we rest content with these only, we shall never get very high up the hill of the Muses." (p. 509-10 *ibid*). Here comes in Sri Aurobindo's characteristic contribution,—his insistence on what he regards as the enduring essence of art. Sri Aurobindo has written illuminatingly on the arts, their relative beauty and significance. "Who shall decide between such claims," he exclaims, "or be a judge between these godheads?" (L. 3. p. 276). But the illustrations and the expository statements in this essay will be taken mainly from his writings on poetry and the poets. The discerning reader will, no doubt, apply these conclusions with corresponding variations to the other arts.

The outstanding fact about Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic speculations is his ceaseless endeavour to view life in its totality. As he himself says,—"The new vision will not be as in the old times something hieratically remote, mystic, inward, shielded from the profane, but rather a sight which will endeavour to draw these godheads again to close and familiar intimacy with our earth and embody them not only in the heart of religion and philosophy, nor only in the higher flights of thought and art, but also, as far as may be, in the common life and action of man." (p. 301 'A.' December, 1919). "The 'five lamps' of poetry will not be any longer 'lamps in some limited temple of beauty, but suns in the heavens of our highest mind and illuminative of our widest as well as our inmost life." (p. 308 'A.' December, 1919). The art of the future will take all the planes of existence for its empire. It will present the largest vision of Man and Nature and God and of its possible realisation in a nobler and more divine manhood. It will be the art of the intuitive reason, the intuitive senses and the

intuitive delight-soul in us, getting from this enhanced source of inspiration a more sovereign enthusiasm and ecstasy.

(2) POETRY AS THE MANTRA OF THE REAL

To the innumerable definitions and descriptions of poetry Sri Aurobindo adds yet another,—a luminous and characteristically Indian addition. Poetry he describes as the *Mantra* of the Real. It is the incarnation or living infusion of a great spiritual truth or vision in the living word which holds the highest intensities of rhythm and style and thought. Art is therefore the incarnation of the Real, raising and refining its medium to the highest possible intensity and subtlety. Neither the intelligence nor the imagination nor the ear are the true recipients or creators of poetic delight. They are only its channels and instruments. The true creator as well as hearer is the soul. Poetic delight is not merely ‘a Godlike pastime; it is a great formative and illuminative power’. (p. 379. ‘A.’ January, 1918). The soul-idea is the source of intensity in poetry. The rhythm and the significance of the words are there to reveal the stress of the soul-vision. The imagination of the artist is creative, “not of either the actual or the fictitious, but of the more and the most real; it sees the spiritual truth of things.” (p. 509. ‘A.’ March, 1918).

The poet is, of course, distinct from the philosopher and the scientist. “Vision is the characteristic power of the poet, as is discriminative thought the essential gift of the philosopher and analytic observation the natural genius of the scientist” (p. 566. *Arya*, April, 1918). Thought-power, lavish imagery and the penetrating force of passion and emotion are mainly aids to poetic expression; *sight* is the essential poetic gift. The essential power of the poetic word is to make us *see*. The modern mind is wrongly inclined to lay a predominant value on the thought in poetry. There could be no more perilous definition of poetry than Arnold’s poetic ‘criticism of life’, in spite of the saving epithet. The *mantra* is not the poetic enunciation of a philosophic truth. It is the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul’s sight of God and Nature. It is “the voice of the inmost truth and is couched in the highest power of the very rhythm and speech of that truth.” (p. 299. ‘A.’ December 1919). In order to arrive at it, the poet may “start from the colour of a rose or the power or beauty of a character, or the splendour of an action, or go away from all these into his own secret soul and its most hidden movements”. (p. 574. (A.) April, 1918). The one thing needful is that he should be able to go beyond the form of the thing he sees and not be limited by it. He should get into the light of that which the thing has the power to reveal and flood it with

the light until it overflows with the suggestions of that which is revealed or even loses itself and disappears into the revelation. At the highest, the poet himself "disappears into sight; the personality of the seer is lost in the eternity of vision, and the spirit of all seems alone to be there speaking out sovereignly its own secrets." (p. 575. 'A.' April, 1918). This disappearance of the seer in his vision is more significant than the negative capability, the annihilation of the poet's identity which Keats describes in one of his letters or the 'depersonalisation' that T.S. Eliot speaks of. The Spirit of which Sri Aurobindo writes is a shining reality, not merely a figure of speech like Nature who, says Arnold, takes the pen from Wordsworth's hand in his most moving passages and seems to write herself. The age of the intuitive mind which is dawning on man's horizon will impel him to see his "inmost in the inmost way". What it will aim at is neither "materialism nor an intuitive vitalism nor a remote detached spirituality, but a harmonious and luminous totality of man's being." (p. 246. 'A.' November, 1919).

(3) THE FIVE SUNS OF POETRY AND ART

The essence of poetry, says Sri Aurobindo, is eternally the same. This view is the antipode of the Marxist's, who, taking his stand on Matter and Change, sees no 'status' that supports his 'dynamis'. The essential power of poetry will also remain the same, whatever the frame of the sight. "Whether it be the inspired imagination fixed on earth (Homer) or the soul of life (Shakespeare) or the inspired reason (Dante) or the high intuitive spiritual vision (the mystic Viswamitra voicing the glories of the Truth) which gives the form, the genius of the great poet will seize on some truth of being, some breath of life, some power of the spirit and bring it out with a certain supreme force for his and our delight and joy in its beauty. (p. 307-308. 'A.' December, 1919). Poetry will most find itself and enter most completely into its heritage when it arrives at the richest harmony of five eternal powers,—Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit. The limited truth of yesterday can no longer satisfy us. We are now moving back from the physical obsession and beginning to realise that only in some great awakening of the self and spiritual being of man is that yet un-lived truth to be found. Nor need there be any antinomy between Spirit and Life. As Sri Aurobindo says: "A spirit which is all life because it is greater than life, is rather the truth in which we shall most powerfully live. . . A greater power of the spirit brings a greater power of life. Poetry and art most of all our powers can help to bring this truth home to the mind of man . . . for while philosophy may lose itself in abstractions and religion turn to an intolerant otherworldliness and asceticism, poetry and art are born

mediators between the immaterial and the concrete, the spirit and life.” (p. 305-306. ‘A.’ December 1919).

Sri Aurobindo calls Beauty and Delight the colour suns of the Ideal. They bring out ‘the very heart of sweetness and colour and flame’ of the other three powers. The spirit has no ‘full revelation’ without these presences. “But beauty and delight are also the very soul and origin of art and poetry. It is the significance and spiritual function of art and poetry to liberate man into pure delight and to bring beauty into his life. Only there are grades and heights here as in everything else and the highest kinds of delight and beauty are those which are one with the highest truth, the perfection of life and the purest and fullest joy of the self-revealing spirit.” (p. 306. ‘A.’ December 1919).

In his masterly analysis of the poetic genius of different nations, in *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has dwelt lovingly on the course of English poetry for it has observed faithfully the curve of poetry, its evolution from the objective to the subjective approach and from the subjective to the spiritual. In the mighty evolution of Matter towards Spirit, which Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy envisages, poetry and art have also their part to play. English poetry has “covered the field that lies before the genius of poetry by successive steps which follow the natural ascending order of our developing perceptions. It began by a quite external, a clear and superficial substance and utterance. (Chaucer. Sri Aurobindo deals only with modern English poetry, the poetry that began to be written after the fusion of the various races had taken place on English soil and an Anglo-Celtic national temperament had been definitely evolved). It proceeded to a deeper vital poetry, a poetry of the power and beauty and wonder and spontaneous thought, the joy and passion and pain, the colour and music of life, in which the external presentation of life and things was taken up, but exceeded and given its full dynamic and imaginative content. (Elizabethan poetry and drama). From that it turned to an attempt at mastering the secret of the Latins, the secret of a clear, measured and intellectual dealing with life, things and ideas (Dryden and Pope). Then came an attempt, a brilliant and beautiful attempt to get through Nature and thought and the mentality in life and Nature and their profounder aesthetic suggestion to certain spiritual truths behind them. (Wordsworth and others). This attempt could not come to perfect fruition, partly because there had not been the right intellectual preparation or a sufficient basis of spiritual knowledge and experience... So we get a deviation into another age of intellectual artistic or reflective poetry with a much wider range, but less profound in its roots, less high in its growth (Victorian poetry); and partly

out of this, partly by a recoil from it has come the turn of recent and contemporary poetry which seems at last to be approaching the secret of the utterance of profounder truth with its right magic of speech and rhythm." (p. 57-58 A. August 1918). This is the age of the intuitive mind, breaking into dawn in the poetry of Meredith, and Yeats, A.E. and Tagore, Whitman and Carpenter.

Poetry and art are, therefore, a progress and a pilgrimage of the soul of humanity to capture in its entirety the light of the five effulgent suns. These godheads need different names. Sri Aurobindo later refers to the *sun* of poetic truth, the *moon* of beauty and delight, the *Vayu* or breath of Life and the power or *Shakti* of the spirit. Their supreme harmony gives us the sovereign poetic utterance, the artistic consummation.

(4) THE SATELLITES OF THE SUNS

This luminous quincunx that Sri Aurobindo has seized and placed in the forefront of his theory of art is, to my mind, a great and liberating truth. The five rivers that flow from this empyrean height fertilise the entire valley of art and life. The axioms deduced from this intuitive perception may be developed here since they indicate the synthetic range of that perception.

It is in the light of the five powers existing on the ideal plane that artistic creation begins. There can be no artistic activity that has not felt, however imperfectly, the impulsion of these godheads. The seer, the object, the aesthetic process, the work of art and its transmutation into spiritual values in the consciousness of the recipient,—all these reveal the five powers at work conditioned by the field of their activity.

The object in its *Chit* aspect is really a finite expression of the Infinite. It is an expression of the Spirit in terms of matter, life or consciousness or all together. In its *Kāranamaya* or archetypal aspect, it is experienced as an imperishable portion of Reality, having its own individuality. It is perceived as an embodiment of Truth. In its *Sukshma* or subtle aspect, it has a life-soul of its own or is inextricably bound up with the vital memories and vibrations of the artist. It has the vitality of life either directly or through the artist. It also presents itself as a portion of Loveliness which it makes more lovely in the moment of contemplation. It has, within it, the capacity to give delight, to arouse emotion, for a thing of beauty is a joy for ever. In its *Sthula* or gross aspect, it makes a two-fold appeal. There is the actuality of existence, its

defined position in the universe, life as existence perceived by our sense of fact. The object has also its properties and peculiarities which are intellectually apprehended and yield Truth in its lower aspects.

An awareness of the object in its *Sthula* aspect—the instinctive and the intellectual apprehension—is the average human response. Average also is the quickening of the life-soul of the artist to the emotion of joy or pain, of love or hate. But the sensibility of the artist has its higher range. The higher vital in him can glimpse the essential beauty of the object and is moved to ecstasy by it. His *jnana budhi* or what Wordsworth calls “Reason in her most exalted mood” enables him to apprehend the essence of the object,—the archetype in and behind it. His superconscient vision lays open to his gaze the Spirit burning through the veil. He holds Infinity in the palm of his hand and Eternity in an hour. The artist’s experience is thus a complex and a coordinated activity. Its contexture reveals these very five powers at work.

On the dynamic side, the artist’s activity reveals five distinct parts,—inspiration, imitation, expression, communication and persuasion. The experience of the artist, passing through this process, is transformed into art. Art is born as Inspiration in a lightning flash of intuitive perception, in a state of identity with the object. It develops as Imitation when the Seed-Idea has gained in pulp and broken the turf as a sapling, fed by the artist’s perception of the essence of the object. It puts forth its foliage and flowers as Expression,—the artist revels in the beauty of the emotions released by the coalescence with the object and in the repose of his own ecstatic contemplation. What follows is related to the artist considered as craftsman. A born worshipper of beauty with an instinctive desire to communicate his vision, he turns his medium into a thing of beauty,—a fit receptacle for his vision. His imagination and memory are the inner tools which he employs for the purpose. Imagination detects the similarity in dissimilar things and memory brings to him the throng of impressions and images in which to detect it. His sensibility gives colour and intensity to the design. His sense of fact helps him to develop Imitation in its secondary aspect whenever necessary, as when some of the actual details of the object are also ‘imitated’ in a novel, drama or picture. Art is fully itself when it has reached the stage of Persuasion, when the artist, using his discrimination or good sense, has given his vision a fitting intellectual body—Truth in its lower aspect again—and endowed his work with balance and proportion, with propriety. Passing through this last phase, art sheds its angularities and excrescences and stands forth,—a fitting and radiant embodiment of the Seed-Idea. It bears fruit and is ready to take its place in the Mart of Time.

The work of art, the finished product, viewed externally, reveals within itself the resultants of these very five powers. *Dhwani*, *Rasa*, *Bhava*, *Alankara*, *Auchitya*,—these are the five constituents of a work of art. *Dhwani* has been described as the soul of poetry or art. But of *Dhwani* or suggestion itself, the Spirit is the soul. *Rasa*, the aesthetic flavour or essence of a work of art is the expression of an abiding *attitude* of human personality grounded in a system of sentiments. It embodies the idealisation or universalisation of a fleeting or particular object—i.e. its apprehension in its archetypal aspect. The representation or 'imitation' of life in the lower sense is only a secondary function of *Rasa*, proceeding from the artist's sense of fact. *Bhava* is a progressively full and complete expression of the emotions aroused in the artist as consequents of his attitude. *Alankara* is form, whether it be viewed as *ukti* or utterance, *Riti* or manner, *guna* or artistic peculiarity, and *alankaras* or figures of thought and of speech. The artist's imagination, reason and memory fashion it. *Auchitya* or propriety proceeds, as explained before, from the artist's Good Sense or Discrimination. It is Persuasion in the highest sense.

Viewed from another point of view, a work of art is seen as a dream of Reality gradually assuming a subtler form until the form of the dream vanishes altogether and we are left face to face with the Spirit or the ultimate Reality. A work of art *satisfies* us by the sweet reasonableness of its form and substance. It *persuades* us to accept the vision of the artist by presenting it convincingly and with propriety. But propriety mainly serves to throw into strong relief the *gunas* or characteristic excellences of the work. The work *pleases* us by its beauty of expression and perfection of form revealed in the *gunas*, *ukti* and *riti*. It also pleases as by its close 'imitation' or reproduction of the particulars of life in its common or uncommon aspects. But the *gunas* are there in the work mainly as an echo of the *bhavas*,—they are, in fact, a progressive embodiment of emotions in words. A work of art, therefore, *relieves* us from our obsessions by telling us the most heart-easing things, expressing human moods and emotions in all their amplitude and exploring Delight in all its manifestations, its imperfect versions like happiness and joy and perversions like grief and pain. But the *bhavas* are there, after all, to point to and echo the *Rasa*,—the life-attitude from which they proceed. Consequently, a work of art *purifies* and *tranquilises* the consciousness by resolving fugitive emotions into their basic human attitude, disengaging the consciousness from the particulars and accidentals of life and lifting it into the calm of generalised emotion and idealised or universalised experience. This is the purgation that Aristotle spoke of. But the *Rasa* itself is an echo,—it echoes the original inspiration, the knowledge by identity that was the artist's in a flash of intuitive vision. Hence a work of art *illuminates* us and

moves us to ecstasy, to supreme Ananda. Plato accused art of being thrice removed from reality. We may say with far greater justice and truth that it is five times removed from reality but that, every time, it confronts us only as the echo of the voice of reality. A work of art is the echo of an echo of an echo of an echo,—the reverberation of a reverberation. Poetry at its most tangible is the pulp of the pages on which it is printed. In its subtlest form it is the voice of Reality, the vision in the eternity of which the seer himself disappears. There are the intermediary zones,—a body of words, a body of words held together by propriety, revealing characteristic excellences of form, expressing certain intimate moods and emotions, suggestively formulating certain attitudes of human personality, hinting at an utter revelation or an intuitive perception of Reality.

The manner in which poetry or art fulfils itself in the consciousness of the reader would be clear now. Poetry brings to the reader a feeling of satisfaction by its propriety and its representation of life. It pleases him by its beauty and perfection of form. It brings him his heart's ease, expressing superbly as it does his own moods and emotions. It purifies and tranquilises his consciousness by its generalising power. Finally, it moves him to ecstasy, to Ananda, by vouchsafing him a gleam of the Spirit that shines through the heart of things.

It may be objected that the postulation of the five eternal powers is itself arbitrary. The materialist will frankly disown them and the Marxist will regard them as a neurotic's dream. Even the humanist will part company at a certain stage, rejecting the transcendental view of the universe. It is the contention of the transcendentalist that these objections proceed from limited perception or from a desire to reject altogether the Spirit and all supra-rational experience. No one who is familiar with the works of Sri Aurobindo will fail to appreciate his astonishing reasoning power. Sri Aurobindo bases his philosophy on ancient Indian thought and experience revived, regenerated and reshaped in his own being. It is certain that, sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, the comprehensiveness of his statements on life and art will come to be regarded as one of the most precious of human possessions.

V. K. GOKAK

To be continued

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN

A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

(Continued from the previous issue)

II

YES, the famous argument of the interactionists remains just as fatal to the brain-dependence school as before Mrs. Knight took up cudgels against it. It can be avoided only by not coming to grips with it and getting lost in side-tracks. But there is also an error in the suggestion at the very outset in Mrs. Knight's article that, apart from this argument, the case is all on the side of the brain-dependence school.

We, of course, do not and cannot deny that there is a mass of mental phenomena which seems merely a result of what goes on in the brain. This is not to say that we know what exactly goes on in the brain to bring it about. At crucial points we are very much in the dark: even tentative hypotheses are not quite with regard to the most important of these phenomena but with regard to those of secondary moment. Still, we may grant that the brain-dependence school is not indulging in sheer fantasy. The dispute is about the claim of this school that the mind is nothing save an effect of brain processes and is itself utterly unproductive of any effect on the body.

The claim is not anything very new. It is the theory of what Thomas Huxley in the last century called epiphenomenalism which made the mind a useless by-product of cerebral activity. But we must note that epiphenomenalism, though materialistic for all practical purposes, is not stark materialism. The stark materialists equate mental processes with brain processes. Not that they consider the former something like what we already know of physical phenomena. If mind is a physical activity it is yet an unknown sort. Thus Joseph McCabe, in his *Rationalist's Encyclopaedia* which is the standard compendium of stark materialism, writes with commendable candour: "Consciousness is an ultimate fact of experience which it is accordingly impossible to define in terms of other facts and in the present condition of science impossible to explain. Attempts to explain it on the lines of modern scientific psychology are

premature and hardly worth considering. They are not more realistic than the Spencerian 'friction in the ganglia.' McCabe, however, follows up this admission with the warning that since cerebral physiology had a late start and the cortex is the most complex phenomenon in nature to unravel, the reasonable attitude is to reflect that we are steadily advancing and that, as past experience has proved with several biological difficulties, it is neither explanatory nor logical to declare an energy "spiritual" because of our present incapacity to explain it. In his *Riddle of the Universe Today* he expresses the hope that in a couple of centuries when cerebral physiology has sufficiently advanced we may be able to devise a physico-chemical description of perception and thought and all other mental processes.

Mrs. Knight is far from subscribing to the McCabian viewpoint that physico-chemical events of an unknown type are all that mental events ultimately are. In her article, *Theoretical Implications of Telepathy*, in *Science News* 18 she takes an occasion to say: "Even the strictest adherent of epiphenomenalism admits that there is a complete gap at one point. We now know a great deal about the mechanics of sense-perception. We know, for example, that when we hear a noise, a sound-wave has affected our ear-drum, and set up a chain of activities in the middle and inner ear, in the auditory nerve, and finally in the cerebral cortex. But how electro-chemical activity in the cortex can give rise to the conscious experience of hearing a bell, is still completely obscure. As James wrote in 1892, 'Something definite happens when to a certain brain-state a certain *sciousness* corresponds. A genuine glimpse into what it is would be *the* scientific achievement, before which all past achievements would pale'. We are scarcely nearer this achievement today than when these lines were written."

Perhaps the most downright statement of the impossibility of equating mental processes with material ones comes from Sir Charles Sherrington whom McCabe calls "that master-physiologist" because of his having done so much to find physico-chemical equivalents for organic processes. And this statement throws light on a subtle begging of the question committed by McCabe. McCabe asks whether it is either explanatory or logical to declare an energy "spiritual" because of our present inability to explain it. He slurs over the point whether consciousness or mind can be called energy at all in any valid scientific sense. To assume that it can be called is to assume that it is something material and that what remains is just to find the exact material terms which would elucidate it. The whole difficulty really lies in the non-equivalence of mind to energy. In the article, *Central Cerebral Processes*, in *Science News* 23, George M. Wyburne, after summing up our present knowledge, some plausible recent speculation and

the amount of still-continuing ignorance about the subject of his paper, remarks: "No theory, of course, can explain the subjective extrapolation of neural activity; how, for instance, structural activity—in the final analysis an energy shift in a circumscribed region of the brain—can reconstruct for the individual a panorama of past events and experiences." That "of course" is highly significant—an admission of inherent self-evident impossibility. Sherrington best drives it home. He writes in his *Man On His Nature*:

"It was easy for the old classical *a priori* materialism to ride rough-shod over mind. It used the term matter without any scientific delimitation of the concept. It was a doctrine which knew far less and spread itself far more than does the scientific study of matter, or energy, today. What is the reply when to a student of energy, in other words to the follower of Natural Science, there comes today someone who asks, 'Mind presents itself as thoughts, feelings, and so on. Matter and energy can only be matter and energy. Therefore thoughts, feelings and so on are matter and energy. Therefore mind is matter and energy?' I trust I do no violence to the argument; I have no wish to do so. The reply by the follower of Natural Science of today...will not be, even in trend, at all like that which Lucretius gave in a famous and vehement passage, about specially small and well-rounded atoms. Such materialism was merely a frame of mind. The materialist standpoint today is a scientific position. Its answer today is of a different order. As I surmise it, it would say: Thoughts, feelings, and so on are not amenable to the energy (matter) concept. They lie outside it. Therefore they lie outside Natural Science. If, as you say, thoughts are an outcome of the brain we as students using the energy concept know nothing of it; as followers of natural science we know nothing of any relation between thoughts and brain, except as a gross correlation in time and space."

Yes, natural science knows nothing of any relation between mind and brain. But this does not mean that natural science believes there is no relation. Mind and brain are too closely associated to be just a pair of unrelated dispartes somehow running together. Sherrington himself is designated by Mrs. Knight in her article as a near-interactionist: all that Sherrington negatively insists on is that the relation which definitely is there is a complete mystery. Whether we accept or reject epiphenomenalism, the mystery remains and we are faced with a limit to natural science which is not, as McCabe imagines, a matter of mere ignorance but one of sheer transcendence of scientific knowledge. And our acceptance or rejection of epiphenomenalism pivots round our interpretation of this transcendence.

Mrs. Knight seems to feel that the way to epiphenomenalism is smoothed by a certain view of mind mentioned by her in *Science News* 18. "Many philosophers and psychologists", she writes, "now accept the view that 'mind' is a function and not an entity—a view that has been most recently and effectively put forward by Ryle in *The Concept of the Mind*. 'The mind', in short, is a term which belongs to the same logical category as 'the digestion'. If I say 'my digestion is out of order', I do not suppose that there is some entity called 'my digestion', to which I am referring; 'my digestion' is simply a convenient shorthand phrase for 'my digestive processes'. Similarly, there are no actual entities denoted by such terms as 'the imagination' or 'the memory'; there are only processes of imagining and remembering. Similarly again, there is no actual entity called 'the mind'; there are only mental processes. This does not mean that 'the mind' is a meaningless term; but it is not the name of a substantive entity distinct from, and underlying, our mental processes; it is merely a convenient elliptical phrase for denoting these processes."

Reverting to the same Rylean view in her article *Consciousness and the Brain* in *Science News* 25, Mrs. Knight gives a footnote to the phrase, "The mind depends on the brain". The footnote begins: "This could be more accurately expressed as 'mental processes depend on processes in the brain'." Here the word "brain" calls up the query. "Is it meant that there is a brain which has physical processes while there is no mind having mental processes?" If not, why are mental processes thought to be dependent on physical ones? Surely, when we deny a substantive entity distinct from, and underlying, our mental processes, we have as much reason to deny a substantive entity distinct from, and underlying, our material processes. Then a brain is not matter having physical processes but merely a convenient elliptical phrase for denoting a certain sort of processes that are physical. The argument cuts both ways. Mind cannot logically be put on a lower existential status than matter and we have no justification in merely the processive-ness of mind to make it an effect of the processive-ness of matter. The two processive-nesses as such are on a par.

Further, to call mind mental processes does not make those processes any the less mental. The whole problem is: how can the mental be conceived to arise from the material? The Rylean view does nothing to diminish the mentalness of mind by speaking of mind's processive-ness. And it is this mentalness that puts the mind beyond natural science and makes the body-mind relationship a mystery transcending scientific knowledge. It makes no odds to the mystery whether mind is nothing save mental processes or a substantive entity or anything else. So long as it is mental it is of a different order of reality than

matter, and if it is recognised to be not material in any sense understood by science then to consider its very existence an effect of matter is absolute dogmatism and utter nonsense. Furthermore, as soon as we see this, we see also that if mind is nothing save a process, then to say that the mental-ness is never an effect of matter is the same thing as to say that the processive-ness is no such effect. What matter can do is only to cause mental processes to take a particular turn: the processive-ness itself is not dependent on matter. This logically implies that mental processes have turns which cannot be said to be caused by matter and which have also every likelihood of causing material processes.

Of course, if we accept the alternative that mind is more than mental processes, we automatically grant that it is only affected by matter and becomes one process or another. In that case we cannot say that all the processes of mind are due to material processes. Given that mind is not merely mental processes the utmost likelihood is there of its becoming or having processes of its own, which are other than those dependent on material ones and actually affect matter in return. But even the Rylean alternative leaves the argument against epiphenomenalism formidable and final. The mental, whether entity or process, stands out existentially as no effect or result of the cerebral. This is the correct inevitable interpretation of the fact formulated by Sherrington. And, as between two existents in their own rights, there is no ground for denying interaction.

Even apart from this, epiphenomenalism is full of flaws, some of which have often been pointed out. First, it is arbitrary to say that mind has no influence at all, not the least effect, on the body. When all other processes in the living organism have some influence or effect after they have been produced, there seems no reason to make an exception of mental processes. Second, if mind is a useless product, how do both biological history and human history show it as increasing in complexity and subtlety? Have we not here a contradiction of evolutionary procedure? Even something which once had use but is now useless atrophies and becomes a vestigial curiosity: e.g. the vermiform appendix in humans. All the more should diminution set in when a product has been utterly useless from the start. What, on evolutionary principles, should persist is a developing nervous system and an increasingly complicated brain-structure: all psychosis accompanying neurosis should have reached the vanishing-point by today. What we see is not only an absence of vanishing-point but a going from strength to strength. The epiphenomenalist can only reply: "The useless existence of mind of such and such an order is somehow an inevitable consequence of the existence of a brain and nervous system of such and such a degree of complexity, a consequence which is use-

less to the nervous system and brain but without which they do not pass from one state to another. It is perfectly conceivable that such a consequence should be there. Logic does not rule it out as impossible and we must accept it as a fact of nature." Surely the reply is the apex of arbitrariness—an assumption is made just to support one when one has really no leg to stand on. All biological fact is denied in favour of a mere thin logical possibility. The odds of evolutionary evidence and even of purely logical probability are all against the theory that mind has no influence on the body.

The third flaw is in connection with the principle of conservation of energy, which tells us that the total amount of physical energy in the universe remains constant. Whether this principle is correct or no is not our concern here but it is part and parcel of physics and it must be reckoned with when a theory is put forth by those on whose lips the word "science" sits all the time. If mind is an effect of the brain yet has no part in what the body does after it has been caused, it must leave the physical system constituted by the body poorer in total energy to the amount of work done by the brain in causing mental processes: if we compared the energy put out by the body to the energy taken in by way of food and oxygen, we should discover a difference. In short the conservation-principle would be violated. Thus, if epiphenomenalism is true it is unscientific and self-condemned. If it is not true, the conservation-principle would be found unviolated. This is scientifically the exact case, for physicists inform us: "Experiments on the human body have shown that to a high degree of approximation the energy exhibited by it is accounted for by the energy given to it. The lack of exactitude in the form of either a minute defect or a minute excess is due to experimental errors as is to be expected with such a complicated system." In face of this clear pronouncement, mind cannot scientifically be regarded as something with no effect on the body: to be precise, it must cause as much brain activity as the brain causes mental activity—otherwise the scientific account will be unaccountable!

If we say that in causing mental processes the brain does no amount of work in the least and that therefore the conservation-principle is not violated, we at once imply violation of the principle of causation. For, the cause always passes over in some degree into the effect: here the cause—a molecular movement in the grey cells—is taken to be not spending itself in any degree when the effect—a sensation or thought—is produced. The principle of conservation can be saved only at the expense of the causation-principle. Epiphenomenalism has to take its choice between alternatives either of which denies a fundamental of science.

The fourth flaw is a sort of inherent absurdity. Whatever mind may

be, there is no gainsaying that we are mental and the most precious part of us is conscious experience. It is by conscious experience that we are scientific thinker as also philosopher, poet, artist, idealist. To reduce our most precious part to the status of uselessness and futility is to be intolerably absurd. Epiphenomenalism equates mind to being a kind of mental shadow to the body, something which depends upon the body and has no determining effect upon it. Of course, the analogy is faulty in itself, since the production of even a shadow by an object is not indifferent to the object and leaves it, however imperceptibly, other than what it would have been if the shadow had not been produced. But, even if we waive this, surely the body is the vital partner in its combination with its own physical shadow; if it was the shadow which was the more vital associate and carried on all research and speculation and sat in judgment on whether itself or the body were the main factor we should be foolish to consider it all-dependent on the body and perfectly inutile on its own. Epiphenomenalism has a topsyturviness, a hysteron-proteron, about it that renders it self-condemned.

And, let us repeat, its acceptance in preference to interactionism does not bear us outside the realm of mystery into the realm of matter-of-fact clarity. If we can be considered as facing a difficulty insuperable to science in the idea of dispartes like matter and mind interacting, the same difficulty in essence confronts us in the idea of brain-dependence. For, if the epiphenomenalist grants, as he has to, Sherrington's division of mind from matter as a different order of reality which is not amenable to the energy-concept, he imports into science an ultimate problem: how does material activity cause anything mental? The passage he affirms from the material to the mental is one whose "how" science can never explain and can only treat as a miracle.

So, essentially just as much as the interactionist, he disregards McCabe's warning: "It is neither explanatory nor logical to declare an energy 'spiritual' because of our present incapacity to explain it." In this warning we are up against a certain attitude towards "explanation". It is held that nothing is explained unless the explanation is in terms of material processes and that material processes are capable of explaining everything. But when we allow into our scheme something that cannot in any scientific sense be termed material we have reached the end of the explanatory as McCabe understands it and, though brain-study must go on for whatever physical correlates there may be of mental activity, the McCabian ideal should be regarded as no longer a philosophical principle in science. Science has to live and sup with the inexplicable, the miraculous, twenty-four hours of the day in its dealings with the mental. Epiphenomenalism does not disencumber science of this unpleasant obligation: it merely adds to the supra-rational a mass of irrationalities.

What it is intended to do is to logicise the corpus of facts in which mental events show practically complete concomitance and variation with physical events. Nobody denies that there is such a corpus: what can legitimately be denied is, first, that this corpus covers all available facts and, second, that epiphenomenalism does truly logicise it. Here we have to note that even if all available facts were covered by this corpus the latter is not truly logicised by epiphenomenalism. The epiphenomenalist hypothesis is full of holes which nothing can plug. This should itself create the presumption that the mentioned corpus with its superficial suggestion of the epiphenomenalist hypothesis is not all-covering. For, were it all-covering, there is no reason why epiphenomenalism should not truly logicise it.

Contrary to Mrs. Knight's implication at the very outset of her article in *Science News* 25, the case is all on the side of interaction. And by interaction we mean "full-blooded" interaction and not the "anaemic" type advocated by James in his *Principles of Psychology*. James was anxious to make consciousness "no mere impotent and paralytic spectator of life's game"; so he modified Huxley's theory and opined that, though the antecedent condition of every conscious process is an activity of some sort in the brain, the conscious processes once in existence can react in such a way as "to further or dampen the brain-processes to which they are due". This obviated flaw number one we have pointed out in the epiphenomenalist conception. But to grant consciousness no more than bare reactive pressure on the nerve-centres in the direction of its own ends is still to invite all the unanswerable criticisms that must fall on any theory which refuses the status of a distinct irreducible to mind. And once we grant that status, it is gratuitous to confine consciousness to bare reactive pressure on the brain. A full-blooded two-way traffic of causal relation is called for.

In fairness to James we should mention that in his Ingersoll Lecture, *Human Immortality*, delivered many years after his *Principles of Psychology*, he went considerably beyond the qualified epiphenomenalism or, as we have labelled it, anaemic interactionism advocated in the earlier book. This is made clear by Mrs. Knight herself in her compilation, in the "Pelican" series, from James's writings. Considering the variety of religious experiences and making use of the study of what Myers had termed the subliminal self, James argued that "though there is overwhelming evidence for the functional dependence of mind on brain, such dependence does not necessarily imply that the brain *generates* consciousness: it may merely *transmit* it. Behind the material world there may be a 'continuum of cosmic consciousness', which is transmitted through material brains in a sense analogous to that in which light is trans-

mitted through coloured glass. Differences in personality, intelligence, etc., between different individuals, will thus depend on differences in the transmitting media. Elsewhere, James suggested that there may be, not a single cosmic consciousness, but many.”

In fairness also to Mrs. Knight we should add some more sentences from her summary of James’s later speculations. These sentences provide too a hint of the scientifically tested facts that have piled up since James’s time and that spectacularly bear out our statement that the corpus of facts about mind’s dependence on brain does not cover all observations and experiences. They spectacularly prove also that the evidence for the functional dependence of mind on brain is what James called “overwhelming” in only one field of observation. Mrs. Knight writes apropos James’s “cosmic consciousness” and “brain-transmission”: “The theory was never fully worked out, and does not seem to have aroused much interest in James’s lifetime. But it may now be necessary to take it more seriously, in view of the accumulating evidence for extra-sensory perception and other forms of paranormal cognition. These phenomena may not be incompatible with epiphenomenalism, but they can certainly be more easily reconciled with a transmission hypothesis.”

We can now appreciate why Mrs. Knight declared, when expressing her adherence to the brain-dependence school, that she was adhering to it “without dogmatic fervour”. Her attitude seems to be: hypotheses other than epiphenomenalism do not yet completely explain or elucidate extra-sensory perception and other forms of paranormal cognition and until they do so we should not abandon it. But, even if other hypotheses are considered not quite satisfying, this attitude is entirely mistaken, resting as it does on the idea that the case is normally all against interaction. Without drawing anything paranormal into the field we have shown that the epiphenomenalist hypothesis is most irrational and that all rationality obliges us to return an affirmative answer to the four questions our day-to-day normal life prompts:

(1) Have we not the experience as of mind being an irreducible in us, which is different from the body though somehow locked together with it?

(2) Have we not the experience as of matter affecting mind whenever a physical stimulus is received by our nerve-terminals and a message goes to the brain and we have a sensation?

(3) Have we not the experience as of mind affecting matter whenever our limbs move to carry out a conscious act of will, a volition?

(4) Have we not the experience as of being, despite our accessibility to bodily influence, capable of a considerable measure of independent thought, feeling and dynamic orientation to things, including the body itself?

These four facts stare us in the face and demand acceptance. But they are not all that is with us from day to day. They are only the most obvious facts. What is not obvious yet part of our common experience emerges from the point we raised when first we dealt with Mrs. Knight's account of the perceptual process.¹ That account considered merely the contact of the sense-organ with an external stimulus, the electro-chemical impulse from the nerve-terminals towards the cortex, the activity in certain areas of the brain, and spoke of perception as the end-product of these material processes and as being entirely determined by them. We suggested that the crucial difference between, on the one hand, physical facts which are just facts standing for their own selves and, on the other, perception which has an intrinsic reference to some external phenomenon corresponding with it—we suggested that this crucial difference renders it more rational to look for a description which, without omitting the bodily events, goes beyond them and regards them more as normally indispensable occasions or provocations than as causes. Now we may elaborate the point a little.

The need for the kind of description suggested should be patent from the very nature of the physical intermediaries mentioned by Mrs. Knight. A nerve-current has no resemblance to the "two cats on the hearth" to which she drew our attention. Nor do the events in the cortical cells at the back of the brain where the visual areas have been located resemble any members of the feline species. Nor, for that matter, do the vibrations of light coming from the two cats and touching the eyes bear the least likeness to those animals. How, then, by intermediaries so different from what they carry information about, are we informed of anything? Our mode of perceiving provides no guarantee that the image would correspond with the object: on the contrary, the odds are that the image has a correspondence with the object in the same sort of way in which a catalogue has a correspondence with the thing catalogued. We receive purely a code-message, as it were, and this message, without our apparently knowing the code, we are supposed to interpret correctly and reach "truth"! Some factor is clearly missing, minus which our perception cannot be correctly determined.

Of course, we are here assuming the correspondence-view of truth—the view which is vital to science as well as to the movements of our diurnal

¹ *Mother India*, September.

life and to all philosophical thinking which is not basically sceptical. We are not committed to denying incomplete or varying correspondence or even error and illusion, but our very election to speak of approximate or changing or falsificatory perception involves our knowing what it is to be correct. The correspondence-view cannot be put aside, though it may not cover the whole "truth" of our knowledge of the external world. Something answering to our perceptions must be taken to exist. But the difficulty is: how do our perceptions get to correspond with that something through the physical activities science proves to be preceding them?

The path to the solution of the difficulty lies in realising a philosophical implication basic to the theory of correspondence. To be able to say that perception gives us truth, there must be some knowledge other than perception, by which we are aware that an external object answers to the perceptual representation of it. It is only by comparison between such awareness and our perception that we can say of the latter that it corresponds with the object, just as we can judge a photograph to be a true likeness only if we know in advance what the original looks like. Paradoxically, the unperceived must be already known to us! And here the knowledge other than perception through sense cannot itself be of the same kind: else there will be an infinite regress and nothing will be confirmed. It must partake of the nature of "intuition" and be not dependent on "purely material antecedents".

Yes, without "intuition" no correspondence can carry across the physical intermediaries described by Mrs. Knight. It is as though our consciousness had a direct touch on the world, bringing a knowledge of what is outside our consciousness by a going forth and getting intimate with it and then interpreting the code-message in the light of that intimacy. An occult supernormal knowledge, a secret extra-sensory perception is at work behind the conditions imposed by an arrangement of external stimulus and sense-response. And that is why in perception we feel not that there are the percept and the perceived but that the two are one and the same.

Thus, consciousness is proved to be not clamped to the brain, inseparably associated with the grey cells: it is something independent, no matter how limited and covered-up its usual functioning. The evidence recently accumulated of "extra-sensory perception and other forms of paranormal cognition" is thus proved to be nothing utterly out of the ordinary. A prototype of the phenomena studied is already present with us and what we have called the spectacular demolition of epiphenomenalism is only a grand-scale and many-featured version of an argument which is ever to hand.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN: A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

Now, to the four queries to which we found ourselves entitled from our common life to return an affirmative answer, we may add a fifth which can have no "Nay" to it:

Have we not in the act of perception the experience as of direct unmediated apprehension, essentially free from brain-dependence, of an object in spite of physical processes intervening between the object and its representation in our mind?

K. D. SETHNA

To be continued

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE method of the Gita is its own; it is never dogmatic. Krishna leads his beloved disciple from point to point, opening out the lotus of Truth, petal by petal, slowly. He appeals to Arjuna's Kshatriya traditions and says, "The assembled warriors will think that you are turning your back on the battle through fear;...you would lower yourself in their eyes; it would be painful for us to hear them talk ill of you." Victory or death, what does it matter? "If you die in battle, you go to heaven; if you win, you rule the world." Speaking of Karma, the Teacher says, "Your right is to the action only, never to the fruit thereof." But this statement is valid only as long as the disciple thinks that he is the doer of his works. The moment he knows that he does nothing, it is Prakriti who is the doer of all action, the teaching of unattached Karma falls to the ground. For the Gita says, "It is only the man deluded by egoism who thinks that he is the doer." Thus, on and on, the standpoint changes as Krishna leads Arjuna forward. Work without attachment, equality of will, these are but the means of entering into the consciousness of the Divine. The Gita says expressly that they are to be employed as such means as long as the sadhaka is unable to attain to this higher state, the consciousness of the Purushottama, whose executive force is Prakriti, who is beyond the self that acts not, beyond the Prakriti that acts. The surrender of all Karma, then, has to be made by the Karmayogi not to the doer of the Karma but to the Supreme beyond her, by whose sanction and authority, for whose enjoyment, she acts. This is the solution the great Teacher offers to his puzzled disciple.

The pith of the Divine Teacher's exhortation to his pupil throughout is, "Therefore, O Arjuna, engage in the fight." Fight, but without any desire, without any feeling of enmity or hatred. Fight, impersonally, for *lokasangraha*—"for the keeping and leading of the peoples on the path to the divine goal." It is a rub that arises out of the sense of oneness of the human soul with the Divine and with all other souls—even those that appear before us as enemies. The divine goal is the secret aim of all, friends as well as foes. Resistance and defeat are the best outward service that can be done to the Divine's opponents. Two extracts from the Gita, one from the eleventh chapter and the other from the eighteenth, should be considered in this connection. The first is: "I am Time,

the Destroyer of creatures, here I am engaged in that work of destruction. None of these sons of Dhritarashtra who are standing against you on the field will survive, even if you abstain from fighting; even before this they have been killed by me, be only the instrument, O Savyasachi (ambidextrous fighter).” The second is: “I have explained to you the great secret; consider it well and then do as you wish.” It is thus clear that the battle of Kurukshetra, the progress and the result thereof were all part of a predestined whole, of a universal action. A remark of the Teacher towards the end of the book is also of very great importance as indicating the relationship between Nature and man’s ego—he says in effect, “The egoism which has led you to resolve ‘I shall not fight’ is meaningless. Fighting is your natural occupation; Nature will make you fight; what you refuse to do because of a delusion you will do under compulsion.” Whatever the pacifist may say, we have to realise that the way to immortality lies through death. Before death, before the blood-smeared Kali we must learn to say, “This, too, is the Mother; this also know to be God; if thou hast the strength, adore.”

Sri Aurobindo’s position is clear. There is no reason to explain away the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the constant exhortation of the divine Charioteer, “Shake off thy weakness, overcome thy self-pity, arise, slay thy enemies, O Partha!” In fact, in order to understand the complete meaning of the Gita’s philosophy we must give full value to the dramatic setting. The first chapter with its vivid pen-picture provides the preamble. Into the battlefield, the field of Dharma enters majestically the beautiful chariot of the Pandava general drawn by four white horses. On this *ratha* stand Krishna and Arjuna blowing their world-famed conch-shells in defiance of the enemy. All the warriors on their side follow their example. The trumpet call resounds all around and up in the firmament, striking terror into the hearts of Dhritarashtra’s sons. Arjuna asks Krishna to let the car stand for a while between the two opposing armies, saying, “Let me have a good look at my antagonists—those who, as the friends of my cousins, have come to give battle to me.” Krishna places the chariot between the two hosts and says, “Look at the assembled Kurus.” Arjuna looks and, overcome by a sudden weakness and depression unworthy of an Arya fighter, throws down his bow and arrows, crying with tearful eyes, “I shall not fight.” Krishna turns round on his friend promptly and reprimands him, “Whence has come to thee this dejection, this stain of darkness of the soul, in the hour of difficulty and peril?” and proceeds to discuss the question before his beloved pupil from all points of view.

One is apt to ask, “Will the gospel of universal peace and goodwill among

men never prevail?" Sri Aurobindo replies to this question, taking a broad comprehensive view: "A day may come, must surely come, we will say, when humanity will be ready spiritually, morally, socially for the reign of universal peace; meanwhile the aspect of battle and the nature and function of man as a fighter have to be accepted and accounted for by some practical philosophy and religion. The Gita taking life as it is, and not only as it may be in some distant future, puts the question how this aspect and function of life, which is really an aspect and function of human activity in general, can be harmonised with spiritual existence." For, "not a physical asceticism, but an inner askesis is the teaching of the Gita."

The unification of the human soul with the supreme Ishwara, Purushottama, by a Yoga of the whole being is, says Sri Aurobindo, its complete teaching. But one has to attain to it through a firm realisation of the Immutable, Akshara Purusha. This realisation is a prior necessity and the Gita insists on it. The insistence has led to a certain amount of misunderstanding. Some partisan commentators have interpreted Krishna's teaching to be an exhortation to seek inaction, *Brahman Sthiti*. But what this sthiti means is clear from the verse—"The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves me in all beings, however and in whatever ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me." The book brings in bhakti as the climax of its Yoga, when it says, "Whoever loves God in all and his soul is founded upon the divine oneness, however he lives and acts, lives and acts in God." The first six chapters form a sort of preliminary block of the whole teaching; the closing words are—"Of all Yogins he who, with all his inner self given up to Me, for Me has love and faith, him I hold to be the most united with Me in Yoga." Obviously what has been said up to this is not enough. If Krishna had merely said, "Work this at first, live out what I have told you; if difficulties arise, they will solve themselves or I shall help", Arjuna would have replied somewhat in this strain, "You have talked much of works and knowledge, but very little or nothing of bhakti; this bhakti which you have called the greatest thing, to whom is it to be offered?"— The first six chapters have provided us with a large preliminary basis of Works and Knowledge, Bhakti has been brought in but not elaborated. The remaining portion of the book elucidates what has been hinted at, works out unfinished figures. Sri Aurobindo sets forth briefly how the two portions stand with regard to each other: "The first six chapters of the Gita have been treated as a single block of teachings, its primary basis of practice and knowledge; the remaining twelve may be similarly treated as two closely connected blocks which develop the rest of the doctrine from this primary basis. The seventh to the twelfth chapters lay down a large metaphysical

statement of the nature of the Divine Being and on that foundation closely relate and synthetise Knowledge and Devotion, just as the first part of the Gita related and synthetised Works and Knowledge. The vision of the World-Purusha, intervening in the eleventh chapter, gives a dynamic turn to this stage of the synthesis and relates it vividly to works and life. Thus, again, all is brought powerfully back to the original question of Arjuna round which the whole exposition revolves and completes its cycle. Afterwards the Gita proceeds by the differentiation of the Purusha and Prakriti to work out its ideas of the action of the *gunas* and of the culmination of desireless works with knowledge, where that coalesces with Bhakti—knowledge, works and love made one—and it rises thence to its greatest finale, the supreme secret of self-surrender to the Master of Existence.”

There is a difference in the manner of expression between the two parts. In the second portion we find a more concise way of stating things; more concise, but more liable to be misunderstood, for we have to deal with an intellectual presentation of supra-intellectual truths—a statement that seeks to define to the mind what is really infinite. These spiritual truths could have been expressed more effectively, and without ambiguity, in the Upanishadic language. But the Gita has not adopted that style because it seeks to satisfy an intellectual difficulty, to lead reason to truths beyond itself by its own method.

The very first question that the book proceeds to solve is: Is there a Nature higher than the Nature of the three modes? Is there a power of action higher than that of desire and ego? We have seen in the first part repeated exhortations to Arjuna to rise above the three *gunas* and be desireless and equal to all things. Here, in the seventh chapter, it is pointed out that this can be done by attaining to “essential Knowledge, attended with all the comprehensive Knowledge, by knowing which there shall be no other thing here left to be known.” This knowledge is that the Divine Being is all—*Vasudevah sarvam iti*. It is a difficult thing to acquire—“among thousands of men one here and there strives, and of those who strive one here and there knows me truly and integrally.” This integral knowledge is founded on the distinction made between the two Natures, phenomenal and spiritual—*Apara Prakriti* and *Para Prakriti*. This distinction drawn between the two Prakritis by the Gita is, Sri Aurobindo says, the practical basis of all its Yoga. The eightfold *Apara Prakriti* is made up of the five elements and mind, reason and ego. This inferior Nature of the Gita is the Prakriti of the Sankhya school. Sankhya stops at this conception of Nature. But the Gita enunciates a higher principle, a spiritual Nature. Krishna says of it, “Know it to be my supreme

Prakriti." Here, in their highest forms, Prakriti and Purusha are one. When Krishna speaks of himself, it is as Purushottama—"I am the birth of the whole world and so too its dissolution; there is nothing else supreme beyond me." Sri Aurobindo says of these two higher principles, "Here then the supreme Soul, Purushottama, and the supreme Nature, Para Prakriti, are identified; they are put as two ways of looking at one and the same reality." The Supreme Nature is described in the text as Jivabhuta—i.e. in the universe this Nature formulates itself as the Jiva. To put it otherwise, says Sri Aurobindo, the eternal multiple soul of the Purushottama appears as individual spiritual existence in all the forms of the cosmos. The supreme Nature is not in its essence the Jiva, it has become the Jiva. Later on, we find the Gita saying that the Jiva is the Lord, but in his partial manifestation, "Brahman the sole undivided Being dwells in the manifest forms as if divided." The Gita's outlook on creation is clear—unity is a greater truth than multiplicity, but both are true, neither is an illusion. The created world is sustained by the unity of the higher Nature. Therefore it is that the Gita describes this Nature as the principle "by which this world is held up"—*Yayedam dhāryate jagat*. Krishna uses the metaphor of a pearl necklace and says that all this is strung like pearls on a string—*sūtre mamganāh iva*.

"The one supreme power manifests itself not only in all as the one but in each as the individual spiritual presence, Jiva; it manifests also as the essence of all quality of Nature." The three gunas are the transient surface manifestations of the mind, life and body. Thus is all becoming determined by the lower Nature. Her debased powers and values derive from the absolute value of the supreme Shakti, and must, in order to find their individual truth and law of action, go back to that Shakti. So, too, must the individual turn back to the higher law of its being, if it seeks to free itself from the shackled play of phenomenal nature. Krishna says, "I am taste in the waters, sound in ether, scent in earth, energy of light in fire." For completeness Sri Aurobindo adds, "I am touch or contact in air" and explains, "That is to say, the Divine himself in his Para Prakriti is the energy at the basis of the various sensory relations of which, according to the ancient Sankhya system, the ethereal, the radiant, electric and gaseous, the liquid and the other elemental conditions of matter are the physical medium." The point becomes clearer still when we look at the other verses of the series in the text—"I am the light of sun and moon, the manhood in man, the intelligence of the intelligent, the energy of the energetic, the strength of the strong, the ascetic force of those who do *tapasya*, askesis. I am life in all existences." Sri Aurobindo interprets it as meaning that each of these forms depends on the one essential Energy

for its formulation. Krishna tells Arjuna, "Know me to be the eternal seed of all existences." Sri Aurobindo points out how the distinction between the original power of the spiritual Nature and the phenomenal derivations of the lower Nature is brought out very clearly in the closing lines of the series: "I am the strength of the strong devoid of desire and liking"—"I am in beings the desire which is not contrary to the Dharma". The whole idea is summed up beautifully in the verse, "I am the essential light, strength, desire, power, intelligence, but these derivations from them I am not in my essence, nor am I in them, yet are they all of them from Me, and they are all in my being." Sri Aurobindo shows that there is nothing contradictory or inconsistent in all this, if we remember that the gunas are "not themselves the pure action of the spiritual Nature, but derivatives from it". Says the Lord, "They are verily from Me, but I am not in them, it is they that are in Me." Why then the bewilderment of false values that we suffer from? It is the illusive Maya which hides from us our divine nature. The Gita's own words are, "This is my Daivi Maya of the three modes." Daivi means divine in the nature of the gods, or even of the one God in his divided and lower cosmic aspects. This veil has to be rent asunder. Maya is called by Krishna *durataya*, difficult to overcome, but Arjuna is assured, "To me who turn and come, they all cross over beyond the Maya."

The seventh chapter after enunciating this truth proceeds to apply it practically to life and makes the reconciliation of knowledge with devotion the starting point. We have here before us the three aspects of Jiva, the Self and the Purushottama. It is into the truth of this last aspect, which Krishna has consistently described as "I", that we have to grow. The Para or higher Prakriti is the nature of the highest Purusha; he says, "I am not manifest to all because I am enveloped in my Maya." In the Self the supernal Prakriti is in a state of inactivity, *Nivritti*. In the Jiva she is in a state of activity—*Pravritti*. In order to rise to the higher or divine Nature it is necessary to slay desire and its children the evil propensities arising from the rajas guna—"Know them to be enemies, destroyers of Knowledge, slay them, O Arjuna!" One must bring under control one's passions right at the start. According to Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the rajasic has to be transcended in the first instance; we cannot pass beyond the three gunas if we do not first develop within ourselves the rule of the highest guna, Sattwa. Krishna says in the Gita, "The evil-doers attain not to Me, souls bewildered, low in the human scale." Such a being sees only his lower nature, the God immanent in him and in the world is hidden from his eyes. But even the sattwic development is not enough, a mere virtuous life is not sufficient. "By virtue alone", says Sri Aurobindo, "man cannot attain to the highest, but by virtue he can deve-

lop a first capacity for attaining to it." The crude rajas and the inert tamas are difficult to shake off, the sattwa is less difficult, it can enlighten and transcend itself. By the constant upward aspiration in his ethical aim man ultimately gets rid of the obscuration of rajasic desire and passion and make a start towards the transcendence of the three Gunas. Says Sri Aurobindo, "Man, therefore, has first of all to become ethical, *sukritim*, and then to rise to heights beyond...to the light, largeness and power of the spiritual nature, where he gets beyond the grasp of the dualities and their delusion, *dvandava-moha*."

The unification of the human soul with the Supreme Lord by a Yoga of the whole being is, says Sri Aurobindo, the complete teaching of the Gita. But one has to pass to it through a firm realisation of the Immutable, Akshara Purusha. This realisation is a prime necessity, and the Gita insists on it as such. Such insistence has led to a certain amount of misunderstanding. Some commentators have interpreted the teaching of the book to mean an exhortation to seek an inactive poise in the Brahman—a state of Brahma-nirvana. But a poise in the inactive Purusha can never be the Gita's teaching. Krishna's meaning is clear from the verse, "He who sees me in all becomings and being one with all adores me, that yogi, wherever he may be, abides in Me." The scripture brings in bhakti as the climax of the Yoga when it says, "Of all Yogis, he, who with his heart fixed on me adores Me with veneration, is the most completely united with Me, in my opinion."

When by spiritual development bhakti becomes one with knowledge, and the Jiva comes to delight in the one Godhead, he is constantly in communion with Him—*nityayukta*. His entire life becomes an eternal Yoga with the Supreme, than whom nothing greater exists. He is then the Jnanī-bhakta, the God-lover who has the Knowledge. Sri Aurobindo describes his relation to God thus, "On him is concentrated all his bhakti, *ekabhaktih*, not on any partial godhead, rule or cult. This single devotion is his whole law of living and he has gone beyond all creeds of religious belief, rules of conduct, personal aims of life. He has no griefs to be healed, for he is in possession of the All-blissful. He has no desires to hunger after, for he possesses the highest and the All and is close to the All-Power that brings all fulfilment. He has no doubts or baffled seekings left, for all knowledge streams upon him from the Light in which he lives. He loves perfectly the Divine and is his beloved; for as he takes joy in the Divine, so too the Divine takes joy in him....In him the Jiva's cosmic existence is justified because it has exceeded itself and so found its own whole and highest truth of being."

C. C. DUTT

To be continued

THE IVORY DOORS OF HUSH

A sleep of opal depth has become my soul—
A drowse that meets all things with trance-bright eyes;
His towering noon-calm guards my moodless skies.
I have opened the ivory doors of hush to His Whole,
And His golden peace pours in my moon-wide bowl.
Lost is the myriad drum-note of earthly surprise,
Lost is the tear-sense, the clay-memory that dies—
Alone He lives within, beyond time-toll,

Until my gleaming tranquility is turned
To a naked presence of His diamond Face.
My sleep becomes a sea of His thunder-truth;
My ancient earthhood is lost; a burning youth
Of His solar immortality leans. Ablaze,
My ivory limbs become eternal-sunned.

ROMEN

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XV

LOVE—ITS PLACE AND POWER

(Continued from the September issue)

PART I

THE general conception about Bhaktiyoga or the yoga of love and devotion is that it is an exclusive turning of the emotions of the human heart towards God or a particular aspect or form of His. It is a culture of spiritual emotions. Love is its motive force—love of the Divine, not as an impersonal existence or an incommunicable Absolute, but as the supreme Being who is the author and friend and guide of all creatures. This love may take one of the five principal forms: shanta, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya and madhura. The bhakta or devotee of the shanta type may have a deep and intense love for the Divine, but the intensity is always firmly based on a wide and clear calm. Dasya is the love of the servant for the Master, of which Hanuman is the legendary type. Sakhya is the love between two friends, the Divine and the human soul, of which Arjuna, Uddhava, Sudama are the recognised models. Vatsalya is the love of the mother for her child. In this form of bhakti God is loved as one's own child, who is dearer than life itself. Yashoda, the mother of Sri Krishna, is regarded as the supreme example of this kind of love. But the crowning perfection of love is the Madhura-bhava, the "self-naughting" love of the lover for his Beloved. The human soul as the lover, the bride, longs for a complete union with the divine Beloved, the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful. This is the highest, deepest and sweetest of all forms. It is, to quote ancient authority, *anurvachaniyam premasvarupam*, ineffable and indefinable—ineffable like the gratification of the sense of taste felt by the dumb, *mūkāsvādanavat*. Radha is considered the very embodiment of this Madhurbhava. A glad and unreserved self-giving is the natural movement of this love leading to a complete union and identification of the human soul with the Divine. Though the aspect of beauty and bliss of the Divine is the one upon which all kinds of love and devotion concentrate, yet it receives the utmost prominence in Madhurabhava, submerging and surpassing all other aspects, and rendering the life of the bhakta a ceaseless pulse and poem of delight. Even the pain of separation, excruciating as it is, yields a distilled

essence of delight. The ideal bhakta desires nothing for himself, neither knowledge, nor power nor fame and distinction; the sole, consuming passion of his being is the pleasure of his Beloved, the joy of his presence and the ecstasy of his embrace.

But the orthodox bhakta fights shy of a complete union with God. He does not want to abolish all his individuality in the absorbed rapture of the union, for that would not really be union but a dissolution of his being and an eternal end to all his enjoyment of the beauty and bliss of his Beloved. Even in the highest intensity of his Godward passion, he keeps up a certain difference,¹ very minute and subtle, which almost reaches its vanishing point in the mahabhava; but he never courts sayujya, the self-annihilating merger in the undifferentiated One. This inexpressible difference in non-difference (*achintya bhedabhedā*) is the summit experience of Bhakti-yoga, in which the bhakta lives, when he has emancipated himself from all lower bondage and turned all his consciousness to the Lord of Love and Bliss—*Sachchidānandarasē bhaktiyogē tishthati*.

It is not that this love and devotion is one-sided and remains unrequited. All love implies the certitude of a return in kind. As the soul of man, when it is awakened to the truth of its existence, turns passionately, impetuously to the Divine, and gives all itself and all it has to Him, so does the Divine yearn after a union with the human soul and give all Himself to it. As Radha loves and longs for Sri Krishna, so does Sri Krishna love and long for Radha.² The love of the heart of Radha mounts up like a steady flame towards the Lord of her life, and the Love of the Lord leans down to meet it in an engulfing blaze of beauty and bliss,³ and the embrace of the two is the highest rapture imaginable in creation and the seal of the soul's liberation and fulfilment.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo accepts and incorporates into itself all that is essential in the orthodox principles and practice of Bhaktiyoga, but, because it has to widen the very bases of Yoga and bring into life all its higher

¹ "His being remains but in another form, in another glory, and in another power"—Suso, the mystic.

"When the soul is plunged in the fire of divine love, like iron, it first loses its blackness, and then growing to white heat, it becomes like unto the fire itself. And lastly, it grows liquid, and losing its nature is transmuted into an utterly different quality of being."—Richard of St Victor.

² "O soul, before the world was I longed for thee: and I shall still long for thee, and thou for Me. Therefore, when our two desires unite, Love shall be fulfilled."—The Divine to Mechthild of Magdeburg.

³ Cf. Mirabai's first experience of the overwhelming invasion of Love.

gains in order to fertilise it and fulfil its deepest aspirations, its approach to love is much more comprehensive, as we shall presently see, and it traces love to its divine origin and essence above in the creative joy of identity as well as to its evolution and ascent from below. In its view, Love is the greatest power of the Divine and the supreme Force behind the stupendous movement of evolutionary Nature. It is the soul of all our upward aspiration and our deliverer from all egoistic littlenesses and limitations. It is, therefore, indispensable that this supreme Force of divine Love be discovered, realised, brought down and harnessed to the transformation and perfection of human life. Without a regular, canalised flow of the divine Love, the “fire-passion of Grace”, life cannot become a perennial torrent of Light and man a manifesting medium of the unveiled Eternal.

“Love is, in its essence, the joy of identity: it finds its supreme expression in the bliss of union. Between the two there are all the phases of its universal manifestation.

“At the beginning of this manifestation, Love is, in the purity of its origin, composed of two movements, two complementary poles of the impulsion towards complete fusion. On one side, it is the supreme power of attraction and on the other the irresistible need of absolute self-giving. No other movement can do better in throwing a bridge over the abyss that was dug in the individual being when its consciousness separated from its origin and became inconscience.

“What was projected into space had to be brought back to itself without however destroying the universe so created. Therefore Love burst forth, the sole irresistible power of union.”¹

The first movement, the crucial signal that initiates evolution out of the involved state of inconscience, is the descent of Love into the abyss of Matter. It is a holocaust of Love,² its magnificent self-sacrifice, to come down into the death and darkness of the material world, so that Life and Light may emerge here and a love seeking union with that from which it has been estranged. Love attracting from above and love awaking and responding from below, and advancing towards union by a progressive self-giving—this is the hidden mystery, the quintessential truth of creation and evolution. All beings, all creatures, even all things which appear as inanimate, are impelled by this emergent love, consciously or subconsciously, towards this union and identity. In all our desires and lusts and longings we really seek, not the fleeting, finite

¹ The Mother in “The Bulletin of physical Education”—August 1953

² According to Plotinus the Divine is never more itself than when it “empties itself” in self-sacrificing love.

forms we blindly pursue, but the infinite Beloved of our being, who has assumed all these forms. But the seeking is fickle and obscure so long as we have not evolved into a consciousness of the living unity of all existence. That is why no enjoyment of the objects of our desire gives us an abiding satisfaction—an insatiable hunger drives us on, an unquenchable discontent compels introspection and tends to throw down the barriers of our egoistic consciousness. By continuous self-giving we grow and expand; by dying to our mortal self, we are able to live in our immortal Spirit.

Contemplated in this perspective, life appears as a play of love between the suckling souls and the Mother-Soul brooding in infinite tenderness over them; or a game, a *lila*, between the evolving Nature and the eternal Lord of Nature, Radha and Krishna. The movement of love is, therefore, the most natural movement of the human soul in its upsurging towards the Infinite. That which has released the soul from the inconscience of Matter and guided it from behind the veil in its obscure wandering from life to life, can alone lead it to the highest fulfilment of its terrestrial birth. What emerged as desire shall end in delight.

The very beginning of the Integral Yoga is a movement of love; for, what is called aspiration is also love looking up in an expanding vision towards some high and distant fulfilment. It is true that in its incipient state it is somewhat vague and indefinite, compounded of the mind's ignorant thoughts and the heart's selfish emotions; but as it grows, it develops into selfless love with a steady will flaming in its centre. It turns to the supreme Mother, the divine Mahashakti, who sums up for the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga all the aspects of the Divine to which the aspiring human consciousness may feel a natural attraction. "From the beginning even it is possible to have this closer relation of the lover and the beloved, but it will not be as exclusive for the integral yogin as for certain purely ecstatic ways of Bhakti. It will from the beginning take into itself something of the hues of the other relations, since he follows too knowledge and works and has need of the Divine as teacher, friend and master. The growing of the love of God must carry with it in him an expansion of the knowledge of God and of the action of the divine Will in his nature and being."¹ All these and other complex needs of the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga are fully met by the Divine Mother. In Her we embrace our eternal Father, our Friend and Lover, our Teacher and Master and our sole Deliverer and Refuge. And beyond all these relations, deep and sweet

¹ "The Synthesis of yoga"—Sri Aurobindo.

as they are, we find something in Her which is unutterably comforting and reassuring, something infallibly sustaining, succouring and healing, something which only a child feels when it looks up into the eyes of its mother. There is no other relation that can be so profound and so serenely, so confidently secure and self-sufficient; no other tenderness that can brood with such infinite solicitude, such benign, inexhaustible patience over the slow, stumbling progress of our evolving souls. Benighted and blundering, we approach Her for knowledge and guidance; and, as Maheshwari, She dispels the gloom and leads us, step by step, towards the Light supernal. Feeble and forlorn, limp and timid, we approach Her for strength and courage, and, as Mahakali, She fills us with Her Force and energy and the fiery intensity of Her Will, and chases away from us all fear and sense of frustration. Her lightning glances steel our nerves and strike terror into the forces of darkness that assail us. Jarred by the discords of life, repelled and afflicted by its poverty, squalor and ugliness, when we approach Her, as Mahalakshmi, She pours into our hearts and our lives the wealth and harmony, the sweetness and beauty of Her divine existence. Her radiant smile enfolds us in its heavenly charm and her tenderness heals us of all grief and sorrow. And, as Mahasaraswati, She teaches us the arts and crafts of life, the techniques of action and execution, and turns our human incompetence and inaptitude into divine skill and efficiency. She cures us of all sloth and negligence and awkwardness, and imparts to us the deftness and delicacy of touch that characterise the products of inspiration and make for perfection.

The four aspects of the Divine Mother comprise all that our integral being may yearn for and love. Maheshwari illumines our intelligence and gives it all the wisdom and knowledge it may seek; Mahakali bestows upon us all the force and courage, all the ardour and intensity of will, all the lofty feelings of dignity, nobility and magnanimity and self-sacrifice that our enlightened temperament and the dynamic parts of our nature may aspire for. Mahalakshmi floods our heart and our higher vital being with love and sweetness, with harmony and happiness and a serene peace and repose even in the midst of a thousand calls of our creative energies. Mahasaraswati fulfils all the high aspirations of our physical and active being. No single aspect of the Divine, even that of the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful, can be so embracing and integrally satisfying and uplifting as that of the Divine Mother; for, She is the Consciousness-Force of the Divine Himself. The All-Blissful aspect alone does not meet our being's demand for strength and power and a flaming will of effectuation indispensable for the transformation and perfection of life we aim at in the Integral Yoga. The silent, immutable Impersonal of the ortho-

dox Vedantin gives us no foothold on our upward march, nor reciprocates our feelings of love and devotion. The dreadful Rudra does not satisfy our heart's hankering for sweetness and tenderness and our physical being's thirst for perfection in its life-expression. All these aspects have to be harmonised in a global sovereignty of the Godhead to which our whole being can be polarised and in which it can seek and find a manifold fulfilment.

In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo it is, indeed, the integral Divine who is the object of the sadhaka's love and devotion. His transcendence is sought to be embraced in "the ecstasy of an absolute union", his universality in "infinite quality and every aspect and in all beings with a universal delight and love", and his individuality in "all human relations with Him that love creates between person and person". But when the sadhaka turns to this integral Divine, this Purushottama or Parameshwara, he meets in Him at first the Parameshwari, the Adya-Shakti, as constituting His Consciousness-Force and representing at once His unthinkable transcendence and His infinite creative dynamism. The Divine appears to him as the Divine Mother, the supreme Purusha as the supreme or Para Prakriti. He understands more and more as he advances on the path why Sri Ramakrishna remained from the very beginning of his spiritual life to the end of his earthly days such a docile and devoted child of the Divine Mother, even though he realised the ultimate truths of the Vedanta, Vaishnavism, Christianity, Islam etc. He realises, as Totapuri, the stalwart Vedantin, was made to realise, that the Brahman and His Shakti are one, and that it is the Brahmashakti or Mahamaya that is the sovereign power, the supreme Creatrix and the sole redeemer of creatures in the world. The Divine as the Divine Shakti, Mahashakti, becomes, then, for the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga, the solitary object of his love and devotion from the very beginning of his yogic life. It is not that the Mahashakti engulfs or eclipses the Divine, as we see in some forms of Tantra. It is rather the Divine that fronts the sadhaka as Mahashakti, the all-loving, all-redeeming, all-transforming and all-fulfilling Mother of all beings. Overflowing His fatherly solicitude, it is His motherly love and tenderness that rains down upon His struggling children.

This is the divine Love towards which our human love naturally gravitates, once we open to its beatific Force. This is the mellifluous bosom upon which we learn to rest, and revive our spiritual possibilities. This is the golden Fount at which we drink the immortalising draughts of delight. This is the sempiternal Fire of which our souls are inextinguishable sparks, shot here to illumine the darkness of the material world

The integral Yoga fully accepts the synthesis of the Gita of which love is the central note and the recurring refrain; but it introduces into it the Vedic and Tantric element of the Mother-worship and thereby makes it more powerfully dynamic for life-effectuation. In it, love for the Mother is the first and most important prerequisite; for, without that love and self-offering, even the initial sadhana would be impossible, let alone the later stages of supramental transformation and perfection. The place of love in this Yoga is, therefore, supreme and absolute. Knowledge is the light of Love, and works the outflow of its creative Force; for, Love in its eternal essence is, as the Mother says, "the joy of identity", in which there is neither any play of Knowledge, nor of Force, but only the unimaginable bliss of timeless union. All knowledge and activity stream out of this Love and lead back into it. If our soul is made of love and delight, as Sri Aurobindo says, then all its movement towards the Divine cannot but be instinct with love and delight. An ecstatic bhakti is the very breath of its life and the secret of all its realisation and fulfilment. Sri Ramakrishna brings out the essential truth of bhakti when he says in his inimitable, homely imagery, "Knowledge is like a man and bhakti like a woman. Knowledge has entry only up to the drawing room of God, but love can enter His inner apartments." Sri Krishna winds up his luminous gospel with the supreme word, *paramam vachah*, which he calls the most secret truth of all, *sarva-guhyatamam*, "Become my-minded, my lover and adorer, a sacrificer to me, bow thyself to me, to me thou shalt come, this is my pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to me. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve." Indeed, the Gita makes bhakti the crown of its synthesis and the most powerful lever of the soul's ascent to the Divine. "To make the mind one with the divine consciousness, to make the whole of our emotional nature one love of God everywhere, to make all our works one sacrifice to the Lord of the worlds and all our worship and aspiration one adoration of Him and self-surrender, to direct the whole self Godwards in an entire union is the way to rise out of a mundane into a divine existence."¹ The Integral Yoga starts with this wide synthesis of the Gita, leavened and lit up by bhakti, but takes particular care from the very start to put it into the hands of the Mother and gear it to Her supramental Force, so that it may steadily progress towards the splendours of a divine Perfection. The supreme Mother will reveal to our vision and transformed consciousness the Face and Body of the supreme Divine, *tanum swam*.

(To be continued)

RISHABHCHAND

¹ The Gita.

THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

THE VEDANTIC RESURGENCE

(Continued from the September issue)

THE Upanishads speak of *jyoti* , the light. It is the light of the Sun of Truth. It may also be the light of the Atman, the Self of the Transcendent Truth. The Brihadaranyaka uses a system of imagery to point out how man grows towards that Light, how the mere physical being becomes the illumined soul. The Sun is the primary light by which man lives and moves, the Sun who presides over our waking consciousness and has his seat in the eye symbolising sense-perception with which man begins his earthly journey. But this Sun sets leaving him to develop into the next stage when the Moon rises bringing to him the light of intelligence. Then the Moon vanishes giving place to the Fire that kindles the light of ardent aspiration in the heart, through which man contacts the source of knowledge and inspiration. There is then the yet higher stage which is attained when the Fire, as the Upanishad says, is quieted and silenced, and man is then 'within the immediate vicinity of the Truth' and hears the Word that leads and guides. This also is not the end. Covered by a luminous clothing, the Word of revelation is not the ultimate Light. The last veil disappears when the consciousness rises into that utter silence and absolute calm where no other lights distract. Then is seen the Atman in its own body; 'we stand face to face with the source of all light, the self of the Light, the light of the Self. We are that Light, and we become that Light.'

The Upanishads reveal several *vidyas* , esoteric sciences, which show the integral character of Vedantic teachings. By pursuing these the seeker grows in knowledge. One of these—the science of the Mystic Honey—we have already alluded to. Another—a most significant one—is *Prana Vidya* . But Prana is not mere life-force but a Conscious Power. Says the Upanishad: 'What is Consciousness is life, and what is Life is Consciousness.' Prana is defined in many ways, one of which identifies it with Brahman. Prana vidya is also called Brahma vidya, since Prana is the living Breath of the Purusha, the mighty pulsation of the Creative Consciousness. This science aims at not the Beyond but at the growth of the individual into the universal life. True existence is that Life which proceeds from the Self-existent who is luminously aware of Himself and is full of His own delight. When we attain

to that Life we become immortal. Our present life is only 'hunger that is death.'

The Upanishads point to the heart as the Path to this immortal life. It is from the heart that the quest starts and grows and advances to find its fulfilment, because it is in its occult depths that the Divine dwells. It is this secret heart behind the external heart, the seat of emotions, that opens into the 'deepest delights', into the 'brightest luminosities'. The Yoga therefore begins with concentration which, as it deepens, brings to the seeker many good results but these cannot take him to the summit of his quest. Personal effort and self-discipline are needed to prepare him but there must also be something in the inner being, some inscrutable call and receptivity, without which the highest realisation is not possible. Says the Katha:

'The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning...

Not with the mind has man the power to get God, nor through speech, nor by the eye.'

The Mundaka adds:

'Nor can self-discipline reach Him, nor the most strenuous deeds'.

There is an 'inner intuition' which the seeker must develop within him in order to be 'chosen by the Being'; and to be chosen by Him is to 'win Him', because then, as the Katha says, 'to him this Self bares His body.' To put it in the language of the Gita:

'They see the Self in the Self by the Self.'

This occult phenomenon is explained as the descent of the Divine Grace on the aspiring soul. There is no language in which to express this inner preparedness. Of course, initiation by an illumined teacher is in itself a most powerful influence that can work miracles; but the disciple must be worthy of it that it may act on him fully and effectively. This inner preparedness may be the intensity of an inner awakening or of the soul's aspiration and its readiness to receive the Light and assimilate it for its growth and evolution. But it is of a nature peculiar only to advanced seekers. Whatever may be the state of consciousness under which alone the Light dawns, the fact is there that all cannot have it. Yet the Upanishads repeatedly assert that perfectibility is the ultimate destiny of all.

The Upanishads give accounts of souls who for these occult reasons were vouchsafed the Knowledge by which they rose to a higher consciousness.

The two most striking are furnished by Nachiketas and Satyakama. When in response to Yama's offering of all the treasures of the earth, Nachiketas said:

'I know of treasure that is not for ever; for not by things unstable shall one attain That One which is stable.'

Yama found that nothing short of the knowledge of Brahman would satisfy this determined seeker. He therefore revealed to Nachiketas the knowledge of Brahman and declared:

'Thou shalt know Him for the Bright Immortal, yea, for the Bright Immortal.'

'Thus did Nachiketas', says the Upanishad, 'with Death for his teacher win God-knowledge.'

Nachiketas represents the decisive attitude of a true spiritual aspirant,—a shining example of the intense spiritual seeking of the age. Another is Satyakama Jabala who having received initiation from his Guru went out to tend the Guru's four hundred cows saying to himself that he would not return until he could bring back a thousand. While he was wandering with the cows in the forest, the initiation to which he was true, opened to Satyakama an occult vision in which he saw and felt the omnipresence of God; everything appeared to him bathed in celestial light, and he perceived everywhere the Glory that is Brahman. Indeed, all nature bared its secret self to the high-aspiring soul of Satyakama, who by the Atman in him knew and saw the Atman in all. When this experience ripened into realisation, the cows had already become a thousand. He therefore returned to his teacher who greeted him: 'Friend, you shine like one who knows Brahman.' Thus it was his initiation from the Guru, grown by his receptivity and not any external learning, that gave Satyakama the supreme realisation,—an instance of how seekers were taught in that age.

The Brihadaranyaka and the Chandogya contain a large number of names associated with spiritual activities of a unique kind that characterise the age, one of the most important in India's, nay, in the world's history. There were kings and nobles, saints and sages, God-seeking souls including those of low and unknown parentage, who, stirred into a passionate search for the highest word of revealing experience, enthusiastically participated in these activities, records of which are found in those bigger and older Upanishads— invaluable documents of India's spiritual history. We read in these pages glowing and inspiring accounts of how Satyakama who knew not his father's name visioned Brahman everywhere and taught this knowledge to brahmanas and kings; how the cart-driver Raikva sitting under his cart instructed a king in the science

of the Spirit; how the simple and poor Usasti while visiting a sacrificial ceremony revealed the secret of sacrifice to the performer; how the great Sage Yajnavalkya, militant for truth, took to himself with both hands, without attachment, worldly possessions and spiritual riches, and how at last he left all his wealth behind to wander forth as a homeless ascetic; how Krishna son of Devaki heard a single word of Rishi Ghora and knew at once the Eternal; how ideal kings ruled over vast kingdoms and yet were masters of the highest spiritual knowledge and how they revealed to brahmana seekers those esoteric sciences of which they were then exclusive possessors; how seekers would wander about the country from end to end in search of knowledge from any one who might carry in himself the thought of light and the word of revelation, how among them there would be often men of advanced knowledge who would take part in learned gatherings on their itinerary and give them the benefit of their experience, learning and wisdom.

In this picture of India seeking through her higher mind to reach the summit of her spiritual quest, Yajnavalkya and Janaka come so often and almost always together, the one as the foremost Seer of the time and the other as the foremost of its Sage-Kings. Their coming together is a sign of the prevailing tendency of the age when kings and commoners were engaged in the same pursuit of the Truth. But it also means something else. In recognition of Yajnavalkya's unexampled mastery of spiritual knowledge Janaka made to him a gift of 1,000 cows each of whose horns was hung with five pieces of gold. This rich gift was not at all embarrassing to the Rishi who promptly asked his pupils to take them home to his hermitage which was large enough to accommodate this huge cattle population,—a proof of the earthly prosperity of the hermitages of the time, a proof also of the general prosperity of the community life. On another occasion Janaka after receiving instruction from Yajnavalkya took leave of him with these words: 'I make an offering to you of myself and the whole of my kingdom for your service' as a grateful recompense for the enlightenment he received from his Guru. The Rishi, then at the height of his greatness and fame, declined the offer with an easy abandon. Permeated by powerful consciousness of the Infinite Bliss of the Divine, giver and receiver knew no difference between 'haves' and 'have-nots', the infinite containing and surpassing all finite. And this was the Ideal for which the age stood.

There were women too among the seekers of the age. On the eve of his taking to the life of a wandering ascetic, Yajnavalkya wanted to divide his property between his two wives one of whom, Maitreyi, in reply to her husband's proposal, made the famous pronouncement: 'What shall I do with that which will not bring me immortality?' Pleased with the reply, the great Sage

initiated her into the ways of the Spirit and Maitreyi had her realisation of Brahman and became a spiritual teacher. Another famous woman seeker was Gargi whose persistent questionings evoked from Yajnavalkya the finest definition of the nature of Brahman, whereupon Gargi declared: 'None of us can win the debate against the great Sage. He is the master of spiritual knowledge.' And this was in an assembly at the court of King Janaka, which was, as such gatherings usually were, attended by women seekers also.

An idea of the regions hallowed by these activities may be had from their names found in the two earlier Upanishads. The Chhandogya seems to be more western in its origin, while the Brihadaranyaka more eastern. But as both of them mention many names of the same sages and seekers, it may be assumed that these regions were open to free intercourse between them so far as consultation on spiritual matters was concerned. King Janaka of Videha in the east often invited brahmana scholars of the western Kuru-Panchalas, 'then known for its abundance of learned men'. The north and the middle countries, particularly the land of the Kuru-Panchalas, were also associated with such activities in which figured with equal prominence the greatest forest university of India of the time, Naimisharanya, famous for its sacrificial celebrations.

It is interesting that Vedic sacrifices afforded in most cases occasions for philosophical discussions that characterise the period. An Indian scholar holds that Vedantic influence extended eastward even beyond Videha. Some of the esoteric doctrines of the Chhandogya Upanishad, known only to the kings, had their origin in Videha but had fuller development in Anga (modern districts of Bhagalpur and Monghyr in Bihar) and Vanga (most parts of north and east Bengal). Thus there prevailed almost all over northern India an atmosphere of intense inner activity, ardent seeking, vigorous movements of souls, all bent on one pursuit—the knowledge of the Self. Mention of the east as a prominent centre of these activities signifies the eastward expansion of Aryan culture.

Ashramas of sages, homes of illumined teachers, cottages of humble God-knowers, courts of kings and sacrificial assemblies, pulsated with upheavings of the soul, the stir of spiritual enquiry, the ardour of passionate aspiration for the highest knowledge. The Upanishads are, as it were, the self-recordings or reflexes of these movements. Kings like Janaka would often invite to his court eminent sages in order to hear them compare notes, speak of new knowledge revealed by their intuitions. And such assemblies would often be associated with sacrifices arranged by him and other kings of the time to celebrate special occasions when the attending sages and scholars were lavishly honoured with

rich gifts. A remarkable fact about these assemblies was that kings would never fail to take an active part in their deliberations, and many of the attending seekers came only to hear what solutions the seer-kings offered to particular problems of spiritual life.

Many of these kings—kshatriya teachers of spiritual wisdom—had brahmanas as their disciples. Yajnavalkya, when a seeker in his early days, sat at the feet of King Janaka who gave him new knowledge. So did Ajatashatru, king of Kashi, to brahmana Balaki, Pravahana Jaivali, king of the Panchalas, to Svetaketu and his father, King Asvapati Kaikeya to the five brahmanas who became his disciples. For their unexampled mastery of esoteric knowledge, some of these kings became brahmanas. King Janaka was called *brahmistha*, settled in divine knowledge. These are not stray cases. They point to the spiritual character of India's life and thought that prevailed in the splendid age of the Spirit, a picture of which is the Chhandogya Upanishad called by Sri Aurobindo 'the summary history of one of the greatest and most interesting ages of human thought.' This Upanishad starts with the Vedic syllable OM and narrates the endeavours made by the seekers to discover and realise its significance. Endeavours, yes, but of what a resolute nature, on what a vast scale, crowned by what colossal achievements!

Much interest attaches to the fact that many of these kings possessed the knowledge of such esoteric sciences as the secret meaning of Gayatri and Ud-githa (two most important of the Vedic doctrines), the science of the Five Fires, of the Universal Self, of the oneness of Brahman and Self, etc; which were not known even to the great brahmana teachers of the age. This is one of the reasons why these teachers as well as seeking souls from far and near used to assemble at kings' courts which were open to all who were in quest of the truth.

But why was it that kings only should be in exclusive possession of those spiritual sciences? The Upanishads say that the body of secret knowledge called the Veda was revealed by God first to Brahma the Creator who gave it to Prajapati the Lord of Creation. From Prajapati it came to the gods and seers whom it made immortal. Shankaracharya quotes an age-old tradition which says that this ancient knowledge was lost with the dissolution of the last cycle of creation. Commanded by Brahma the seers did tapasya and recovered it. The Chhandogya adds that Prajapati gave this knowledge to Manu, the first traditional king of India, from whom it came to be the common possession of all. But how? Here the Gita completes the answer by declaring that Manu passed this Yoga on to his son, King Ikshvaku, who again transmitted

it to the king who came after, and in this way from generation to generation the kings of India came to possess this Yoga (Knowledge) that they might preserve and disseminate it among those who were fit for it. That is why it is called *Raja vidya* or *Raja Yoga*, the knowledge or Yoga of the kings.

These facts may throw some light on the origin of the mystic doctrines in earlier civilisations and on the long travail of man to peer into and possess them. The exact period of the beginning of the Age of the Mysteries has been suggested to be contemporaneous with those earlier cultures which are now lost. The Knowledge the kings of the Upanishads speak of has its roots in the Veda which belongs to the Age of the Mysteries in India. This Knowledge had also its dawns in other parts of the world where by its light secret truths were mastered by seekers. While in other countries the true significance of these inner teachings passed into obscurity and oblivion, in India it was saved from this fate by the immense effort of the age of the Upanishads which presented the Vedic truths as simplest expressions of intuition and experience, but yet in a form intellectually and philosophically justifiable. 'The result was a great upbuilding of an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and social culture guided, uplifted and more and more penetrated and suffused by the saving power of spirituality.'

Thus did the Upanishads reinforce the spiritual tendency of the race by a fresh and vigorous search for the higher values, which flowered into those marvellous creations of the Indian mind, a free and natural interweaving of which stands as the many-hued texture of India's civilisation. In the West the early thinkers of Greece tried to keep alight the lamp of the mystic lore but their approach being more through the mind, the forms of culture that sprang from it became intellectual, rational, secular and even materialistic—creations of intellectualised ethics, aesthesis and reason. In the East, particularly in India culture took on its spiritual character because of her peculiar outlook on life from which it derived all its strength and vitality. India grew in the ways of the Spirit and yet lived her life fully. Her seers discovered the harmony between life and God, earth and heaven, and on the basis of that discovery formulated a scheme of life that was to prepare man for the ultimate goal of his existence.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

(To be continued)

Students' Section

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

INTRODUCTION ON WORK

IN this instalment I publish almost all my correspondence of the year 1933 on work. Work has played a big part in my sadhana. In my early life in the Ashram, before becoming conscious of what Yoga or Yoga of Works was, I had taken up work and I worked as simply and innocently as a child plays and studies, without in the least knowing that by this one's body and mind are automatically developed. The Divine acts best in us when we least intercept Him with our minds. The work proved a good field for the Mother to prepare and lift up my inner being. A little later when I did become aware of the sadhana it was a surprise to find myself suddenly touching depths and heights.

The Mother's Force acts, of course, in all states and not in the work only. The question is: to what extent can we offer it a more or less total receptivity? In solitary meditation the outer being becomes vague to one and is either dormant or quiescent while the inner reigns supreme. In the work, although the exterior self is predominant, the inner is there just behind it, if not with it, supporting it with the Mother's Force, Light and Peace. Thus the whole being is dynamised in the work, and whatever change comes is made permanent. On the other hand, all that is achieved in the meditation has to be projected into the outer and fixed there before it becomes part of ourselves.

What then is this thing called Work in the Ashram? There is no fixed activity that is stamped as work, the rest condemned as non-work. Anything—big or small—given us by the Mother is the work for the Divine here. For the students study, the playground-movements and all recreative activities can be made part of the work.

STUDENTS' SECTION

MYSELF: While doing the work I was puzzled as to the motive of it. Kindly enlighten me about the attitude I should have during the work.

SRI AUROBINDO: The work is for the Mother and should be offered to the Mother. What is the difficulty?

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MYSELF: In my painting work, while polishing a table the vital experienced much fatigue. As I was already assured by the Mother, I continued the work. In the evening there was no exhaustion, but the next morning I found both my hands felt quite tired.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is probably some desire or vital preference—likes and dislikes in the vital. All work given you must be felt as the Mother's and done with joy, opening yourself for the Mother's force to work through you.

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MYSELF: During the work I am so much entangled by unnecessary thoughts that I don't know how to escape from them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Reject the thoughts and remember the Mother and ask for consciousness of her force doing the work.

MYSELF: While working I become too weak to stop the physical mind thinking all sorts of useless things.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is very usual. The really active part of the mind is engaged in the work. It is the mechanical mind that is left to itself to think and its way of thinking is just that.

MYSELF: What are the parts of my being engaged in the work when the mechanical mind wanders here and there?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the physical mind usually that attends to the work; sometimes the thinking mind and the vital also—but in the latter case there is no wandering of the mechanical mind.

MYSELF: How does the vital mind or thinking mind attend to the work when it is impossible for either to act directly (without the physical mind) on the material plane?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't understand what you mean. The thinking mind and vital mind are not in another planet—they are here in the body and dealing with the things of the earth.

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MYSELF: Before becoming conscious of the Mother in all the being, cannot one offer mentally to Her one's personal actions like eating, sleeping etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO: One can always offer with the mind, but that is only a beginning. It is a step towards a fully conscious surrender, but it will not do to stop there and say, "Now all my actions are hers, she is doing everything; so nothing else matters." There is a transformation to be made and it can be made only by becoming conscious.

MYSELF: You say, "There is a transformation to be made". In the actual work, how are our actions to be transformed? Let us take eating as an example. If it is to be transformed how should one do it? Are not the external modes of eating to be the same?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is first by having the true consciousness in it— the true consciousness would give the action the right form. You are always asking how, as if everything could be done by a device or mental or other method. It is only by a change of consciousness that all these things can be done.

MYSELF: You said that the transformation could only be made by becoming conscious. I would like to know, "conscious" of what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Conscious with the inner and higher consciousness.

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MYSELF: It is true that everything one does should be offered to the Mother. But how is one to consecrate to her one's personal actions? Of what one does for oneself (eating, sleeping, etc.) it cannot obviously be said, "It is for the Mother that I do it".

SRI AUROBINDO: If you remove ego and desire, it is as easy to do the personal work for the Mother as to do any other.

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STUDENTS' SECTION

MYSELF: Varnishing Amiya's chest of drawers I felt, "How nicely I have applied the varnish! how pretty it looks!" Evidently such feelings are not acceptable. But what then am I to think in such a case, when the work is actually well performed?

SRI AUROBINDO: To observe whether it is really well done or not and feel the Ananda of work done for the Mother. Get rid of the "I". If it is well done, it is the Force that did it and your only part was to be a good or a bad instrument.

MYSELF: During the work, is it preferable to think that it is the Mother who acts through us?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is *work*, you can always do that, provided you realise that it depends on the instrument whether the Mother's force works freely or not.

MYSELF: But in that case, will not a wrong movement lurk disguised in the Mother's work?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you think that all your actions come from the Mother, then of course it will have that effect—the actions come from Prakriti. Work is a different matter, for it is the Mother's work you are doing.

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MYSELF: Someone says, "In the beginning one cannot remember to offer one's work throughout to the Mother. It is very difficult to do it; the inner being may not be ready." How far is this true? Is the remembering really impossible?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is perfectly possible. There are people who do it. Difficult it is, but that is because of the outer, not because of the inner being.

NAGIN DOSHI

POEMS

FLOWER-BIRD-FLAME

O Flower! O Bird! O Flame of sacrifice!
Bring me the message of the far Unknown,
Bring me the beauty and joy of Paradise
And rouse God in the sleeping idols of stone.

Flood my bosom with sun-white Purity,
Paint my soul with your flaming diamond Love,
Bring me red wine from streams of ecstasy,
Bring me fire-sparks from sleepless stars above.

O Flower, wrap me in thy petals of joy,
Dye my body and heart with pollens of gold,
The ugly veil of clouds from mind destroy,
And the world of beauty before my eyes unfold.

O Bird! take me on thy wings of eagle-might,
Soar far above the mortal sky of pain,
Above the vales of sleep, the peaks of night
Take me into Heaven's vast blazing fane.

Burn me; mould me into a newer shape,
O Flame of sacrifice! O mystic Fire!
Let not a single darkling thought escape,
From the truth-clutch of thy immense desire.

O Flower! O Bird! O Flame of sacrifice!
Bring me high Heaven's sempiternal surprise.

RANAJIT

STUDENTS' SECTION

UPWARDS...

WHEN my life's all give-and-take came to an end
Away was I led by an omnipotent Hand,
And now before Infinity I stand,
Unguided, alone, the unknown heights to ascend.

The fire-fly stars arise one after one;
Like diamond-sparks they gleam on the peak's blue breast,
And dimming their dew-drop lights, on the topmost crest,
In its red-gold splendour reigns a half-risen sun.

A godly mystery pervades all ether and air.
The distant planets chant their silent psalm.
And Nature, thrilled by this significant calm,
Breaks forth in voiceless rapture her soul's prayer...

Like incense smoke, paved with desires divine,
Upwards, e'er upwards, winds my path serpentine.

ANIRUDDHA

THE GOLDEN FLUTE

A SEA of peace and joy and light
Beyond my reach I know.
In me the storm-tossed weeping night
Finds room to rage and flow.

I cry aloud, but all in vain—
I helpless, the earth unkind!
What soul of might can share my pain?
Death-dart alone I find.

A raft am I on the sea of Time,
My oars are washed away.
How can I hope to reach the Clime
Of God's eternal Day?

But hark! I hear thy golden flute,
Its notes bring the Summit down.
Now safe am I, O Absolute!
Gone death!—gone night's stark gloom!

CHINMOY

GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG ASPIRANT

(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters)

THE MIND

THE MIND AND THE HIGHER ACTION

Q. As I have already mentioned, when the higher action is very strong it is difficult for me to read or write. It pulls the consciousness away from the mental activity.

A. That is quite natural. The higher action is not mental, so it brings something else than the mental. When the mind is transformed, then it will be different.

5-4-1936.

REMOVING MENTAL DEFECTS

Q. After reading your answers I am beginning to understand the limitations and defects of my mind. Are these likely to go, at least to a certain extent, through reading and studying?

A. They may, but they are more likely to go by an increasing capacity coming from above.

27-12-1936

DETACHMENT AND REJECTION

Q. I have been trying to bring about a change in the movements of my vital, but there does not seem to be much improvement. Why is this so?

A. Probably because you have not yet caught the power of entire detachment and self-dissociation from these things—or perhaps because your rejection is too mental still and not psychic and vital also. The mental rejection is needed,

STUDENTS' SECTION

but it is not always enough unless the mental will is very steady, powerful, searching, exact, and irresistible.¹

10-5-1936

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THE INTELLECT—A FALLIBLE INSTRUMENT

Q. Since a few days my mind has been showing a certain weakness in thinking correctly. Has this any particular cause?

A. What weakness? Personal or the weakness of intellect generally as an instrument? Generally intellect in itself is a half-lighted and fallible instrument.

10-3-1934

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I do not see any evidence that your thinking is not just as before. If it is a fact, it might be due to the physical mind coming up—for that is always stupid—or it may be the mind is tired of the old kind of thinking and wants something better.

12-3-1934

THE NECESSITY OF GOING BEYOND MENTAL INFORMATION

Q. When I have experiences, descents, etc., I do not know what they signify. They just come and go, and I cannot give them their right value. Can you tell me something about this?

A. You have to learn by experience. Mental information (badly understood, as it always is without experience) might rather hamper than help. In fact there is no fixed mental knowledge for these things which vary infinitely. You must learn to go beyond the hankering for mental information and open to the true way of knowledge.

13-7-1934

¹ The reading of this last word is not certain (Compiler)

MOTHER INDIA

THE WITNESS CONSCIOUSNESS

Q. Everything seems to go on well with my outer being as long as it does not have mental or physical work to do. When there is mental activity it hardly remembers the Mother once. I would like to be conscious whilst doing intellectual work. How should I proceed?

A. It can be done when you become the witness detached from the mental actions and not involved in them, not absorbed in them as the mental doer or thinker.

20-3-1934

*

THE MIND AND FINE EXPRESSIONS

Q. During essay writing I try to bring down fine expressions, but they don't come. Where is the defect?

A. It may be in an insufficient command of words in the instrument or else in an awkwardness of the transcribing mind.

19-1-1936

THE MIND AND THE OUTER BEING

Q. If we want to perfect our thoughts, feelings, and actions, mustn't we try to teach the outer being first by the mind—at least, as much as we can? We can't remain idle till the psychic or the higher consciousness becomes directly active.

A. Obviously the mind has to teach the outer being so long as the psychic or the higher consciousness are not ready to take up the work.

14-2-1936

THE MENTAL PUSH

Q. You wrote to me: "Perhaps your aspiration was associated with some mental push". Was this so from the beginning?

STUDENTS' SECTION

A. There generally is a mental push from the beginning of the sadhana.

6-10-1935

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...There can be a still aspiration within the mental push.

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Q. Is this mental push in everyone?

A. Yes. So long as there is not a constant action of the Force from above or else of a deeper Will from within, the mental will is necessary.

THE MIND AND THE VITAL

Q. Is not the support of the higher vital necessary for the mind to be properly vigilant, and to control the movements of the being?

A. It is the mind's business to be on guard, not the vital's. If you mean that the vital is interested in other things and the mind follows, that may be so. But the business of the mind is to recall the vital, not to follow it.

28-6-1934

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Q. There is no doubt a will and knowledge in the mind to do the sadhana properly, but the usual movements go on without there being any improvement.

A. It is then because the mental is not strong enough to control or persuade the vital.

COMPILED BY S. A.

26-9-1934