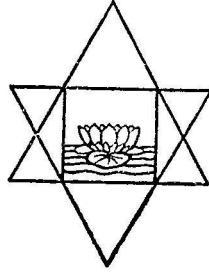


MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1953

Price: Rs. 2—8as.



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"

CONTENTS

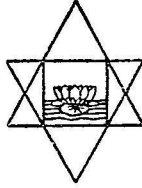
	<i>Page</i>
THE DIVINE PLAN <i>Sri Aurobindo</i> ...	2
THE DESCENT OF THE OVERMIND: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 24TH NOVEMBER, 1926 (UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO) ... <i>Nirodbaran</i> ...	5
THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND: SOME FACTS, INTERPRETATIONS AND SPECULATIONS <i>K. D. Sethna</i> ...	11
THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE: (a) THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE (b) THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE (c) THE SYNTHESIS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF KNOWLEDGE <i>Sri Aurobindo</i> ...	37
NOTES FROM MOTHER'S TALKS: (I) THIS MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE (II) EQUALITY OF THE BODY: EQUALITY OF THE SOUL (III) PERSONAL EFFORT AND WILL ... <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> ...	58
THE SECRET OF THE VEDAS: (a) THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION ... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i> ... (b) A RETROSPECT OF VEDIC THEORY	61
GOD AND MAN <i>S. R. Albles</i> ...	73
IS THERE A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN ENGLAND? ... <i>S. R. Albles</i> ...	79
SRI AUROBINDO ON HUMAN GREATNESS: LETTERS TO A YOUNG DISCIPLE ... <i>Nagin Doshi</i> ...	83

CONTENTS (Cont.)

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND MAN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH ... ..	...	...	...	<i>A. B. Purani</i>	...	89
THE TALE OF NALA (A FRAGMENT)	...	...	...	<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	..	96
SRI AUROBINDO AND AESTHETICS	...	...	...	<i>V. K. Gokak</i>	...	100
THE SUN-SKELETON (POEM)	...	...	...	<i>Romen</i>	...	108
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO: <i>Chapter XV: Love—Its Place and Power: Part II</i> ... ..	...	...	...	<i>Rishabhchand</i>	...	109
THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT: THE VEDANTIC RESURGENCE	...	...	...	<i>Sisirkumar Mitra</i>	...	114
NEW ROADS (POEM)	...	...	...	<i>Norman Dowsett</i>	...	119

Students' Section

SRI AUROBINDO'S HELP TO DISCIPLES IN LITERARY WORK	...	...	...	<i>Nirodbaran</i>	...	165
MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO	...	...	...	<i>Nagin Doshi</i>	...	167
POEMS:						
THE FIRE-TOUCH	...	...	...	<i>Ranajit</i>	...	173
THE TRAVELLER	...	...	...	<i>Aniruddha</i>	...	174
BLISS-BUD	...	...	...	<i>Prithwindra</i>	...	174
REVELATION	...	...	...	<i>Chinmoy</i>	...	175
THE KING OF RAINBOWLAND	..	..	..	<i>Aniruddha</i>	...	176
—						
A "CALL" FROM PONDICHERRY	...	...	...	<i>Dr. Prabhat Sanyal</i>	...	180



WHAT then would be the consequence for humanity of the descent of Supermind into our earthly existence...? One cannot but conclude that the influence, the change made would be far reaching, even enormous: it would not only establish the Supermind and a supramental race of beings upon the earth, it could bring about an uplifting and transforming change in mind itself and as an inevitable consequence in the consciousness of man, the mental being, and would equally bring about a radical and transforming change in the principles and forms of his living, his ways of action and the whole build and tenor of his life.

*

My sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.,—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done.

SRI AUROBINDO

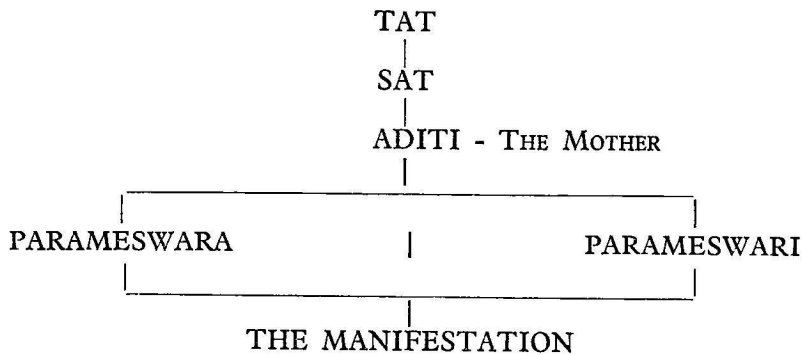
THE DIVINE PLAN*

SRI AUROBINDO

(A)

THE SUPREME SELF-CONTAINED ABSOLUTE

- FIRST ABSOLUTE — *TAT*. The Absolute Transcendent, the Supreme, *Paratapara* (containing all, limited by nothing).
- SECOND ABSOLUTE — *SAT*. The supreme self-contained absolute Existence, Sachchidananda, (Ananda uniting Sat and Chit), holding in its absolute unity the dual Principle (He and She, *Sah* and *Sa*) and the four-fold Principle, OM with its four status as one.
- THIRD ABSOLUTE — *ADITI*. Aditi is the indivisible conscious-force and Ananda of the Supreme; the Mother, its living dynamis, the supreme Love, Wisdom, Power. *Adya-Shakti=Parabrahman* of the Tantra.
- FOURTH — *PARAMESWARA* = Parameswari of the Tantra
ABSOLUTE *of the Gita*



* From early writings

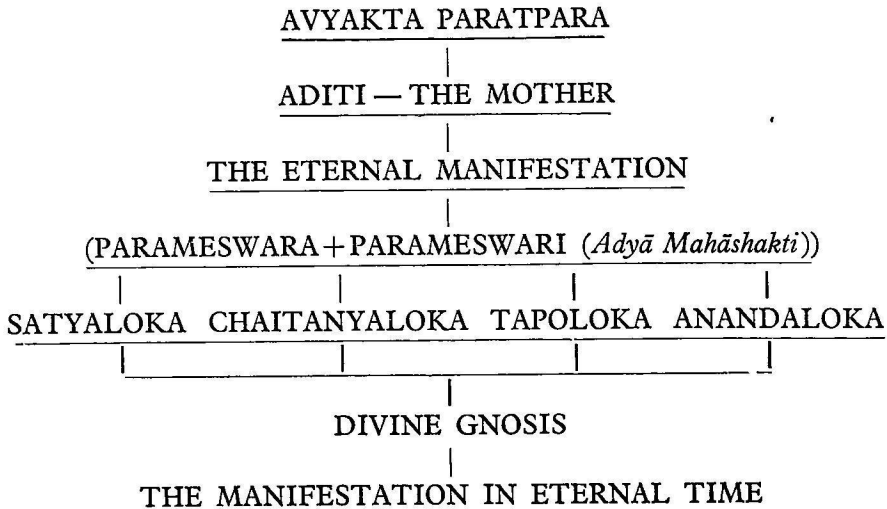
THE DIVINE PLAN

(B)

THE MANIFESTATION

I

FIRST ABSOLUTE	The concealed — <i>Avyakta</i> — Supreme, self-involved Sachchidananda, Parabrahman (Parameswariswari).
SECOND ABSOLUTE	Aditi. The Mother, containing in herself the Supreme. The Divine Consciousness, Force, Ananda upholding all the universes. Para Shakti, Para Prakriti, Mahamaya (<i>yayedam dhāryate jagat</i>).
THIRD ABSOLUTE	The Eternal Manifestation (The supreme Satyaloka, Chaitanyaloka, Tapoloka, Anandaloka—not those of the mental series).



MOTHER INDIA

II

THE MANIFESTATION IN ETERNAL TIME

DIVINE GNOSIS

Satyam-Ritam-Brithat

—
AVYAKTA PARATPARA

|
ADITI — THE MOTHER

|
(Vijnaneswara — Vijnaneswari)

|
SADGHANALOKA CHIDGHANA-TAPOGHANALOKA ANANDAGHANALOKA

|
The Thrice seven Planes of the Mother

|
VIJNANALOKA

|
TRUTH-MIND

|
TRUTH-LIFE

|
TRUTH-FORM IN PERPETUAL
SUBSTANCE

THE TEMPORAL MANIFESTATION

THE DESCENT OF THE OVERMIND

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 24TH NOVEMBER, 1926.

FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH NIRODBARAN¹

(Continued from the September issue)

29-8-1935

MYSELF: What is exactly the significance of the day of your siddhi? Different people have different ideas about it. Some say that the Avatar of the Supermind descended in you!

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish! Whose imagination was that?

MYSELF: Others say that you were through and through overmentalised.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is not quite the truth but nearer to the mark.

MYSELF: I myself understood that on that day you achieved the Supermind.

SRI AUROBINDO: There was never any mention of that from our side.

MYSELF: Some people, I think, declared at that time that you had conquered sleep, food, disease and death. Was there any truth in that statement?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware of this gorgeous proclamation. What was said was that the Divine (Krishna or the Divine Presence or whatever you like) had come down into the material. It was also proclaimed that I was retiring—obviously to work things out. If all that was achieved on November 24, 1926, what on earth remained to work out, and if the Supramental was there, for what blazing purpose did I need to retire? Besides, are these things achieved in a single day?

¹ These are not questions and answers, but Sri Aurobindo's marginal comments on my letters. These comments are printed here in the exact order in which they were made, with the relevant parts of my letters put before them—Nirodbaran.

MOTHER INDIA

MYSELF: If you did not achieve the Supermind at that time, how was it possible for you to talk about it or know anything about it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I am hanged. You can't know anything about anything before you have achieved it? Because I have seen it and am in contact with it, O logical baby that you are! But achieving it is another business.

Good Lord! And what do these people think I meant when I was saying persistently that I was trying to get the Supermind down into the material? If I had achieved it on Nov. 24th, 1926, it would have been there already for the last nine years, isn't it?

But really what a logic! One must become thoroughly supramental first (achieve supermind) and then only one can begin to know something about supermind?

MYSELF: You say that it was something like the descent of Krishna in the material.—Some say that the descent took place in you. But you are not matter, are you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? Why can't I be matter? or represent it at least? At least you will admit that I have got some matter in me and you will hardly deny that the matter in me is connected or even continuous (in spite of the Quantum theory) with matter in general? Well, if Krishna or the Overmind or something equivalent descended into my matter with an inevitable extension into connected general Matter, what is the lack of clarity in the statement of a descent into the material? What does logic say?

MYSELF: By your "trying to bring down the Supermind", we understand that the ascent is done and now the descent has to be made. Something like one going up to you at Darshan and getting all the bliss, joy etc. and trying to bring it down and not lose it as soon as one steps out. And what is this again? You say you are in contact with it and then again that you are very near the tail of it, sounds queer! Contact and no contact?

SRI AUROBINDO: But, supposing I reached supermind in that way, then under such conditions would it be possible that I should come down again at the risk of losing it? Do you realise that I went upstairs and have not come down again? So it was better to be in contact with it until I had made the path clear between S and M. As for the tail, can't you approach the tail of an animal

THE DESCENT OF THE OVERMIND

without achieving the animal? I am in the physical, in matter—there is no doubt of it. If I threw a rope up from Matter, noose or lasso the Supermind and pull it down, the first part of Mr. S. that will come near me is his tail dangling down as he descends, and that I can seize first and pull down the rest of him by tail-twists. As for being in contact with it, well I can be in contact with you by correspondence without actually touching you or taking hold even of your tail, can't I? So there is nothing funny about it—perfectly rational, coherent and clear.

MYSELF: Have you written anywhere about the nature of the physical transformation? Will it be a change of pigment, of bald heads into luxuriant hair-growths, and the old and deceptit into eternal gods of youth etc., etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO: I haven't, I carefully avoided that ticklish subject. Why not seven tails with an eighth on the head?—everybody different colours, blue, indigo, green, scarlet, magenta, etc.; hair luxuriant but vermilion and flying erect skywards; other details to match. Amen.

THE SUPRAMENTAL DESCENT AND THE REVOLT OF THE SUBCONSCIENT

27-5-1935.

MYSELF: We hear you are tremendously busy; hot speculations are in the air about near descents. In the upshot many shipwrecks and crashes are anticipated.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them—the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of the subconscious mud. What an appetite for crashes!

MYSELF: Please tell us something, if it is permissible, so that we may prepare ourselves in time to bear the pressure.

SRI AUROBINDO: No pressure! I am simply busy trying to get out of the mud—in other words to see if the damned subconscious can be persuaded to subside into something less dangerous, less complexful and more manageable.

Of course the subconscious is universal as well as individual like all the other main parts of the Nature. But there are different parts or planes of the

MOTHER INDIA

subconscient. All upon earth is based on the Inconscient as it is called, though it is not really inconscient at all, but rather a complete subconsciousness in which there is everything but nothing formulated or expressed. The subconscient of which I speak lies between the Inconscient and conscious mind, life and body. It contains all the reactions to life which struggle out as a slowly evolving and self-formulating consciousness, but it contains them not as ideas, perceptions or conscious reactions but as the fluid substance of these things. Also all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscient not as experience but as obscure but obstinate impressions of experience and can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought, feeling, action etc., as "complexes" exploding into action and event etc. etc. The subconscient is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearances. It is the cause why people say, character cannot be changed, also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of. All seeds are there and all the sanskaras of the mind, vital and body,—it is the main support of death and disease and the last fortress (seemingly impregnable) of the Ignorance. All that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains in seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment.

MYSELF: It seems another victory has been won by you. Some people saw red crimson lights around the Mother some days back.

SRI AUROBINDO: ??? Great heavens? which? who? But there is nothing new in that.

It was coming down before November, 1934. But afterwards all the damned mud arose and it stopped. But there are red-crimson lights. One is supramental Divine Love. The other is supramental physical Force.

MYSELF: Would uprush of mud mean the descent of greater and greater light?

SRI AUROBINDO: In a certain sense it is true but it is not inevitable—it could have been done quietly. As it is, there is the Revolt of the Subconscient.

* * *

3-6-1935

MYSELF: From your remarks about the subconscient it seems that its conquest would considerably lessen our troubles.

THE DESCENT OF THE OVERMIND

Are there not periods or moments when we consciously bring back to memory certain things of the past, or are these impressions only due to the waves from the subconscious reaching up?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the conscious action of the mind.

MYSELF: I mean are our conscious or unconscious movements entirely influenced by the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, certainly not—the subconscious is the evolutionary basis in us, it is not the whole nature. But things can rise from the subconscious and take shape in the conscious parts.

MYSELF: I also understand that this subconscious is more directly concerned with what we may call the more obscure and darker movements of our being. What is then the origin of the higher movements?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are three sources of our action—the superconscious, the subliminal, the subconscious of which we are not aware. What we are aware of is the surface being which is only an instrumental arrangement. The source of all is the general Nature, but the general Nature deposits certain habits of movement, personality, character, faculties, dispositions, tendencies in us. That is what we usually call ourselves. Part of this is in habitual movement and use in our conscious part, part is concealed in the other three.

But what we are on the surface is being constantly set in motion, changed, developed or repeated by the laws of the general Nature coming in on us either directly or else indirectly, through others, through circumstances etc. Some of this comes straight into the conscious part and acts there, our mind appropriating it as our own; part comes into the subconscious or sinks into it and waits for an opportunity of rising up into the conscious, part goes into the subliminal and may at any time turn up or may not. Part passes through and is rejected. It is a constant activity of forces supplied to us out of which (or rather out of a small amount of it) we make what we will or can. But in reality it is all a play of forces, a flux, nothing fixed or stable; the appearance of stability is given by constant repetition and recurrence of the same vibrations and formations. That is why our nature can be changed in spite of Vivekananda and Horace and the subconscious, but it is a difficult job because the master mode of Nature is this obstinate repetition and recurrence.

MOTHER INDIA

As for the things thrown away from us that come back, it depends on where you throw them. Very often there is a sort of procedure about it. The mind rejects its mentalities, the vital its vitalities, the physical its physicalities—these usually go into the corresponding domain of general Nature. It all stays in the environmental consciousness which we carry about with us, by which we communicate with the outside Nature, and persistently rushes back from there—until it is so absolutely rejected that it can't return. But when what the mind rejects is strongly supported by the vital, it sinks down into the vital, rages there and tries to rush up again and reoccupy the mind. When the vital rejects it, it sinks from the higher to the lower vital. When the lower vital too rejects it, it sinks into the physical consciousness and tries to stick by inertia or mechanical repetition. Rejected from there it goes into the sub-conscious and comes up in dreams, in passivity, in extreme tamas. The Inconscient is the last resort of the Ignorance.

As for the general Nature it is of course the natural tendency of its inferior forces to try and perpetuate their action in the individual, so they return on him when they find their influence rejected. But they cannot last long once the environmental consciousness is cleared,—unless the Hostiles take a hand. Even then these can attack, but if the sadhak has established his position in the inner self, they can only attack and retire.

It is true that we bring most of ourselves from past lives. Heredity only affects the external being and all the effects of heredity are not accepted, only those that are in consonance with what we are to be or not preventive of it at least. I may be the son of my father or mother in certain respects, but most of me is as foreign to them, as if I had been born in New York or Paraguay.

NIRODBARAN

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

SOME FACTS, INTERPRETATIONS AND SPECULATIONS

WHOEVER has studied the full circumstances, both inner and outer, of the momentous event that was the passing of Sri Aurobindo from the material scene knows this event to have been, for all its so-called "clinical picture", no inevitable hour of mortality. It reveals itself as an extreme measure freely adopted, for reasons of his own, in significant yet never dominant mortal detail by one who, after having ascended in consciousness to a new and hitherto unmanifested power of the Divine Reality, sought to effect a descent of it for earth's complete perfection, including a transformation of the very body of man. The spiritual perfectionist found at a critical turn of his battle with entrenched powers of darkness in earth's being that to take his own semi-transformed body through the process of a death at once normal and supernormal was a paradoxical short-cut towards the revolutionary evolution of humanity into divinity that was his aim. Whoever has studied the full circumstances knows too that as a result of this grand and dreadful strategic sacrifice the new power which Sri Aurobindo had variously termed Supermind, Gnosis, Truth-Consciousness came down at last into earth's being and established there a first centre of action. This wonderful descent charged most conspicuously for a while the Master's own body, rendering it strangely luminous to the eyes of many as well as keeping it absolutely incorrupt for over a hundred hours in even tropical climate. Also, the descended marvel settled permanently in his spiritual co-worker, the Mother, for transformative earth-use and was responsible for the phenomenon that the Aurobindonian work, instead of dwindling after the Master's self-withdrawal, leaped gloriously forward under her leadership.

But what exactly was the centre of action established, by which the Supermind has been ever since in operation no longer from merely high above or deep within but even from the level of the embodied nature, in a gradually increasing degree marking manifestation after greater manifestation of the Divine in the stuff of the human? To put the query in other words: what exactly got realised and was set working when the Supermind descended into the body? The answer—at once a definition of the result achieved and a dis-

closure of the logic of the event—is to be found in a succinct pronouncement made by the Mother to the present writer. She said:

“As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he had called the Mind of Light got realised here.

“The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—in the mind and even in the vital: it was working in the physical also but indirectly through those intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light: the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. This physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light.”

Face to face with such a clear-cut statement our sole task is to use as exegesis on its conjunction of physical mind, Supermind and Mind of Light Sri Aurobindo's own treatment of the latter. His phrase, “Mind of Light”, except for an occurrence in Book IV, Canto I, of *Savitri* in connection with Savitri's early development—

*A mind of light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god—*

is used with a specific connotation for the first time in the concluding essays in the series originally published in the Mother's *Bulletin of Physical Education* and later collected in book-form under the title, *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*. The connotation is indeed specific but packed with subtleties, all of which are not expounded in full in the essays before us, and it displays a sort of spectrum-band of more than one shade. Sri Aurobindo intended to write further on the theme and in the existing essays he discusses the Mind of Light with reference less to the initiation of this novel state in the course of his Integral Yoga than to the general life afterwards of a humanity to which such a state might spread and even become, instead of our present mentality, native. So we must examine the phrase carefully with an eye to both the implicit and the explicit and combine with the clues derived from these last writings those available from his major philosophical work, *The Life Divine*, to which *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, is, in many senses, a sequel. Then we shall be best able to correlate his declarations with the Mother's

pronouncement and by their help fill out the significance it reveals of the supramental descent into the body, which started on December 5, 1950.

I

Preliminary to our exposition of the Mind of Light as treated by Sri Aurobindo we must seize the meaning of the words, "physical mind", employed by the Mother. Elucidation of them will also elucidate those two other terms of hers: "the mind" and "the vital". Evidently these terms denote parts of our nature that are to be distinguished from the physical mind and the physical vital. After the physical mind, the physical vital is what has to receive the supramental light and be its second centre of operation if the most material, the physical proper, is to be supramentalised and a complete divinisation of earth-nature accomplished. It should be obvious that, strictly speaking, the physical vital is the vitality, the life-force, that has assumed the aspect of nervous energy in us, sustaining and activating the material form into which it is intimately infused, and carrying on not only organic process but the complex play of bodily desire. Similarly, the physical mind, strictly speaking, is mind assuming the aspect of brain-activity in us by which we get the experience of physical things, are engrossed in that experience and respond in various ways of thought, feeling, volition to sense-contacts. But this matter-obsessed brain-mind does not exhaust our mentality, for the latter is not concerned only with physical things. Even science which is ostensibly thus concerned goes beyond them, for it has its abstract theorist of unvisualisable concepts. Also, there are the pure mathematician, the idealistic dreamer and planner, the artist, the philosopher, the ethico-religious disciplinarian and the spiritual aspirant. And behind the multifold mentality that is man's in his normally conscious state are reaches and recesses which he is not ordinarily aware of and among which the most immediately potent and productive are the subliminal. All those parts that are not preoccupied with or mainly governed by physical things are linked with the subliminal and in many respects are, as it were, its projections. Yet, inasmuch as they function within man's conscious state, they form one team with the part which is matter-obsessed. And, like that part, they work in close connection with the brain and are not ordinarily known to be independent of it. A pragmatic continuity they have with the brain-mind, are often hampered by it and in a general manner conditioned by its matter-obsession. In this respect also they stand with the brain-mind over against the subliminal. If we call the subliminal the inner mind and take it to pass beyond the physical formula, the rest is the outer or surface mind and the

MOTHER INDIA

physical formula covers the whole of it in one way or another. Broadly speaking, what is not subliminal is the physical mind.

Likewise the physical vital, broadly speaking, is all that functioning of the life-force which is not subliminal vitality: the outward-thrown energy of the mighty creators, destroyers, achievers no less than the body-confined organic process and desire-play is then the physical vital. The physical vital and the physical mind are not only life-force and mind which have arisen in the physical proper and, while giving it a rudimentary mechanical sensitiveness and perceptiveness, have themselves taken up the role as of physical functions in the shape of nervous energy and brain-activity: they are also the entire mass of established human workings of vitality and mentality, whatever is not usually independent of the nervous and the cerebral but is pragmatically continuous with them in even its keenest and finest manifestations.

This description equates the mind and the vital mentioned by the Mother with the subliminal or inner mentality and vitality, mind and life-force in their own rights apart from matter though thrusting their powers into matter, joining up with and developing the mental and the vital evolving from the "inconscience" of matter in which they lie "involved". The involved vital and mental that have evolved are mind and life-force physical in the strict sense, while in the broad sense the vital and mental evolutes of earth, in addition to being these, are constituted by their development under the pressure of mind and life-force from above matter and by their juncture with the powers thrust from the subliminal into terrestrial evolution.

Physical mind, in the broad sense, is just what Sri Aurobindo means whenever he speaks of the Mind in us that has to change under the influence of Supermind. Although he often brings out the narrow sense when demarcating the many layers of folds of our mentality, the broad sense is obvious as soon as he talks of the subliminal in contrast to the Mind of our ordinary possession. The latter he generally names the waking or surface consciousness, but he sometimes names it the "corporeal mentality" and even the designation, "physical mind", is not always absent. Thus, while discussing Mind and Supermind in Chapter XVIII of *The Life Divine*, he writes: "To us mind seems to be determined by the body, because it is preoccupied with that and devoted to the physical workings which it uses for its conscious superficial action in this gross material world. Employing constantly that operation of the brain and nerves which it has developed in the course of its own development in the

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

body, it is too absorbed in observing what this physical machinery gives to it to get back from it to its own pure workings; those are to it mostly subconscious... This corporeal mentality is merely our surface of mind, merely the front which it presents to physical experience..” Here, “subconscious” which Sri Aurobindo usually demarcates from “subliminal” is used loosely as a synonym for the latter: in fact, in the same context occurs the phrase, “subconscious or subliminal to us”. Clearly, the corporeal mentality is all that we normally know as Mind in ourselves, including “most of the larger, deeper and more forceful dynamic action of our surface mind” as well as “the pure thinker in us”, the immediate origin of both of which Sri Aurobindo in this context traces to the subliminal. In Chapter XI of Part II of *The Life Divine* he says: “The subliminal self...has the same capacities as our waking being, a subtle sense and perception, a comprehensive extended memory and an intensive selecting intelligence, will, self-consciousness; but even though same in kind, they are wider, more developed, more sovereign. And it has other capacities which exceed those of our mortal mind because of a power of direct awareness of the being, whether acting in itself or turned upon its object, which arrives more swiftly at knowledge, more swiftly at effectivity of will, more deeply at understanding and satisfaction of impulse. Our surface mind is hardly a true mentality, so involved, so bound, hampered, conditioned is it by the body and bodily life and the limitations of the nervous system and the physical organs. But the subliminal self has a true mentality superior to these limitations; it exceeds the physical mind and physical organs although it is aware of them and their works and is, indeed, in a large degree their cause or creator.” The waking human mental in its totality, the whole of embodied Mind whether in its strictly physical or in its subtler and higher yet generally brain-dependent or at least brain-influenced workings is here what Sri Aurobindo terms surface mind or physical mind.

The embodied human mental, to which the epithet “physical” is broadly appropriate, is, in *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, the Mind spoken of as being converted into the Mind of Light and utilised for supramentalisation of bodily vitality and bodily matter. Take the following passage: “In place of the human mind as it now is, a mind limited, imperfect, open at every moment to all kinds of deviation from the truth or missing of the truth, all kinds of error and openness even to the persuasions of a complete falsehood and perversion of the nature, a mind blinded and pulled down towards inconscience and ignorance, hardly arriving at knowledge, an intellect prone to interpret the higher knowledge in abstractions and indirect figures seizing and holding even the messages of the higher intuition with an uncertain and dis-

MOTHER INDIA

puted grasp, there could emerge a true mind¹ liberated and capable of the free and utmost perfection of itself and its instruments, a life governed by the free and illumined mind, a body responsive to the light and able to carry out all that the free mind and will could demand of it." Again, what else than the physical mind in the broad sense is described when Sri Aurobindo, apropos the Supermind whose "consciousness lives always in an immediacy of knowledge and acts by a direct immediacy of knowledge", writes: "In Mind as we see it here the action is very different; it starts from an apparent absence of knowledge, a seeming ignorance or nescience, even, in material Nature, from an inconscience in which any kind of knowing does not seem at all to exist. It reaches knowledge or the action of knowledge by steps which are not at all immediate but rather knowledge at first seems utterly impossible and foreign to the very substance of this Matter." Finally, the totality of the human mental, with its higher no less than its lower powers gripped within the evolutionary bodily formula and physicalised into gross ignorance and incompetence, is strikingly summed up thus: "It is a power for creation, but either tentative and uncertain and succeeding by good chance or the favour of circumstance or else, if assured by some force of practical ability or genius, subject to flaw or pent within unescapable limits. Its highest knowledge is often abstract, lacking in a concrete grasp; it has to use expedients and unsure means of arrival, to rely upon reasoning, argumentation and debate, inferences, divinations, set methods of inductive or deductive logic, succeeding only if it is given correct and complete data and even then liable to reach on the same data different results and varying consequences; it has to use means and accept results of a method which is hazardous even when making a claim to certitude and of which there would be no need if it had a direct or a supra-intellectual knowledge. It is not necessary to push the description further; all this is the very nature of our terrestrial ignorance and its shadow hangs on even to the thought and vision of the sage and the seer and can be escaped only if the principle of a truth-conscious supramental knowledge descends and takes up the governance of the earth-nature."

II

Having fixed the province of the physical mind which the supramental re-creates into the Mind of Light, we should do well as the next step to mark

¹ "True mind" mentioned in this passage must not be confused with "true mentality" of the passage in the previous paragraph. One is mind embodied yet no longer ignorant; the other is mind ignorant yet not grossly so like our embodied mentality, it is ignorant mind in its true and not body-falsified extra-impeded form. (K.D S)

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

systematically though briefly the main contrast between it and Supermind, basing ourselves on the citations we have already made from Sri Aurobindo as well as on others in *The Life Divine*. This will pointedly serve to suggest what the re-creation would be like.

Mind in its established human workings is a profound ignorance trying to acquire knowledge and the very knowledge it acquires is of appearances, of nature's surface activity, objective or subjective, rather than of nature's depth and of the underlying ultimate reality. Further, both in its practical knowledge and in the theoretical constructs it makes to correlate observations it grasps grasps not the substance of things but only an image or *eidolon* of them: it stands outside what it seeks to know and knows nothing from the inside by a sense of oneness with it. Again, its mode of operation is analysis and synthesis. It divides, distinguishes, differentiates—it breaks up everything into parts and strains at a whole by merely aggregating them on a basis of similarity or affinity. It never arrives at a final totality or unity or infinity or essentiality, except as an abstract conception to which nothing in its contact with things concretely answers: whatever concrete sense it has through image or *eidolon* is of sections, fragments, finites, particulars. On its dynamic side also it is circumscribed and indirect: it can will within just a narrow range and to carry out its volition it has to employ instruments, external or internal, instead of being effective by its own strength. Even between its thought and its volition, however close they may seem, there is always a state of strain, as if the thought were not intrinsically effective and the volition not intrinsically conceptive. Though capable of striking originality in some respects, it falls lamentably short of consummately organising the world or fulfilling the self according to even its own restricted sense of the good, the beautiful, the true.

Unavoidably, when our highest power is like this, impulse and emotion tend ever to tear individual as well as collective life with discords and imbalances, and whatever little harmony and happiness is the human lot proves precarious and superficial. If bodily mind and bodily life-force are so imperfect, bodily matter is bound to be still more limited, gross and insecure despite the show of strength, beauty and stability put up by it at times. There is no doubt that unless mind not only in its inner or subliminal recesses where, though ignorant, it is a freer and less dense agent, but also in the physical formula of it which is the principal power in us can be radically converted, earth-existence is doomed to imperfection; for this power alone can be the first decisive fulcrum to move the rest of our members.

MOTHER INDIA

Can the human mental shed its ignorance radically or is ignorance in one degree or another the very grain of its composition? According to Sri Aurobindo, our mind is what it is, not because it is intrinsically a mode of ignorance but because it is cut off from Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness, the divine Gnosis, of which it is an obscured derivate and whose covered-up parenthood is still hinted in our insatiable dreams and aspirations, our pursuit of ideals and values, our ventures after Soul and Spirit. The Supermind is eternally aware of essentiality, infinity, unity, totality, and its knowledge of particulars, finites, fragments, sections proceeds on the basis of that awareness and is indeed a diverse freely demarcated play of it. We may guess that such awareness implies an inside knowledge of everything, a knowledge by oneness with the known. Yes, the Supermind does not know by mere image or eidolon: it knows by identity and all that it knows is truth and every truth known by it is a truth of itself formulated and held within its own substance and consciousness. Idea and reality are not separate for it: they are a single consciousness and a single substance: knowledge here consists of "Real-Idea". And, we should add, the Supermind's will, unlike the Mind's, is automatically self-effectuating: what is seen by the Supermind as a truth to be actualised is instantly made actual because the vision of the thing to be done and the will to do it are not rent asunder and do not have to be brought into a sort of fallible *liaison* as is the case with Mind: they are a single movement of sovereign creativity and indeed it is on account of their being such that all supramental knowledge is not separated into idea and reality, the conceived and the existent. Further, the supramental will's automatic self-effectuation ensures perfect bliss: frustration and unfulfilment have no place. Nor is the will of one being ever against the will of another, for the Supermind's eternal awareness of essentiality, infinity, unity, totality implies that there is no discord or strife. A spontaneous universal happy harmony which nothing can mar and which we with our Mind as at present can never reproduce is the constant life on the plane of the Truth-Consciousness. Form, too, is flawless there, an artistry practised by eternal bliss with infinite consciousness in absolute substance.

If our mind were not cut off from Supermind, if it could connect with the supramental power, it would initiate in the most genuine sense a divine existence on earth and not be in its cognition the groper and stumbler or, at best, the totterer that it is. The Truth-Consciousness would be at work in its terms. It would be no movement of darkness or of twilight but of Light. Then, even within all limits and measures, withholdings and gradualities, it would be unmixed with falsehood. However restrained in intensity and immensity its Light, it would still proceed from truth to truth—from small to less small

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

truth instead of from large to less large error or, at most, to truth mingled with error and thus superficialised and devitalised.

III

Here it is necessary to conceive clearly what Sri Aurobindo means in his last writings by mind's being not cut off from Supermind and becoming by connection with it the Mind of Light. For, being not cut off can be one of two things: either to be actual part of the supramental or to be like the graded ladder of world-being which Sri Aurobindo declares to be intervening between Supermind and mind as it functions in us. The rungs of this ladder he has designated in *The Life Divine* as those of Spiritual Mind, employing the epithet "spiritual" in a particular sense in distinction from "supramental". Downwards from Supermind these gradations he labels Overmind, Intuition,¹ Illumined Mind,² Higher Mind—a series running from greater to less knowledge until it lapses into the laboriously learning ignorance distinguishing the mental grade on which human beings live at present. Most in Overmind but definitely in even Higher Mind the consciousness is linked with the supramental Gnosis, "devolved from it" and "dependent upon it". That linking secures on each rung of Spiritual Mind's ladder a play of Light.

To regard the Mind of Light as being created by a linking up of the human mental with the Supermind in the manner of Spiritual Mind's ladder is a misconception. But it may arise from certain passages in Sri Aurobindo if they are read in isolation instead of in continuity with all the rest on the subject. And associated with it there can be another misconception even more off the mark, which we should first dispose of. This misconception makes the mind of Light the last rung of spiritual mind's ladder, an already existent plane on its own, in which that ladder continues at the end where Higher Mind is stationed, instead of breaking at this end and leaving the human mental a level of ignorance. But the Mind of Light does seem a plane that is the lowest part of the luminous ladder above the human mental if we shut ourselves up in the following passage: "What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed

¹ This is to be distinguished from the intuitive mind constituted by the mere intelligence functioning intuitively. The intuition, coated over with intellectual elements, that is sometimes ours is different from the Intuition proper that belongs to a level of Spiritual Mind.

² This "Illumined Mind" does not stand for the same thing as "the free and illumined mind" mentioned on page 6 in connection with "true mind". The latter phrase is a synonym for "true mind" and does not connote a specific stage in the hierarchy of Spiritual Mind but is a general description of embodied mentality no longer obscured by Ignorance.

MOTHER INDIA

the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same... We have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance... We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the Supramental principle... In the order of the evolutionary descent we stand in the Mind of Light on that border and a step downward can carry us beyond it into the beginning of an ignorance which still bears on its face something of the luminosity that it is leaving behind. On the other hand, in the ascending order of the evolution we reach a transition in which we see the light, are turned towards it, reflected in our consciousness and one further step carries us into the domain of the Light. The Truth becomes visible and audible to us and we are in immediate communication with its messages and illuminations and can grow into it and be made one with its substance. Thus there is a succession of ranges of consciousness which we can speak of as Mind but which belongs practically to the higher hemisphere although in their ontological status they are within the domain of the lower hemisphere."

What is forgotten, *vis-à-vis* this passage, is that Sri Aurobindo writes, a little later, of the manifestation of life and mind in the earth's history and of the Mind of Light as another development "in this series of the order of existence and as the last word of the lower hemisphere of being, the first word of the higher hemisphere"—that is, something which is not exclusively in either hemisphere already but forms between the two in the course of time a link of transition by which the human passes towards and fuses with the superhuman, a state in which the lower itself finds a culmination in Light and becomes a plane of knowledge like those of the higher hemisphere, a plane which precludes the realisation of the whole higher hemisphere in the human. It is when we look at this link after it has been formed, this state after it has got realised, that it stands as "the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification". It does not stand already existent but takes shape as a result of the Supermind's action upon the human mental: it is a conversion of ignorance into Light, making, as Sri Aurobindo says, "human mentality an adjunct and a minor instrumentation of the supramental knowledge." Sri Aurobindo also speaks of "the pressure of the Supermind creating from above out of itself the Mind of Light" at a certain state of earth's development and, although he frequently refers to the replacing of the human mental ignorance by the Mind of Light, he nowhere alludes to the Mind of Light descending as he does to Spiritual Mind descending or Supermind descending—an omission impossible if the Mind of Light were a pre-existent plane above

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

the human mental instead of “the physical mind receiving the supramental light”. Besides, if this Mind were a plane belonging to Spiritual Mind’s ladder, Sri Aurobindo would have certainly mentioned it in *The Life Divine* where he gives a detailed description of the various rungs. Of course, there are many things not mentioned in that book, but what is not mentioned is what was too high or too complex to be touched upon at the time the book was published. But if Sri Aurobindo could mention high and complex things like Overmind and even Supermind, what sense could there be in refraining from mention of a plane which, according to the interpreters whom we are correcting, is below even Higher Mind?

However, we must admit that two definite suggestions could be received from the quoted passage. The first is: the Mind of Light, when it does take shape, is a creation of Supermind on the same principle as are the grades of Spiritual Mind, so that it seems to be not Supermind itself in the physical mentality but a newly arrived member of the family of Spiritual Mind. The second is: the Mind of Light gets its membership in this family pretty low in the scale, for it appears to be a state inferior to Higher Mind though still a state of knowledge and not of ignorance. At the moment we are concerned directly with the first and general suggestion. By tackling it correctly we shall also know how to catch hold of the second and particular by the right end. It may be said to get confirmed when Sri Aurobindo uses analogous language about the family in question and about the Mind of Light. About the family he writes: “We may say that there is a higher hemisphere of our being in which Mind luminous and aware of its workings still lives in the Light and can be seen as a subordinate power of the Supermind; it is still an agent of the Truth-Consciousness, a gnostic power that has not descended into the mental ignorance; it is capable of a mental gnosis that preserves its connection with the superior light and acts by its power. This is the character of Overmind in its own plane and of all the powers that are dependent on the Overmind: the Supermind works there but at one remove as if in something that it has put forth from itself but which is no longer entirely itself but is still a delegate of the Truth and invested with its authority.” The Mind of Light is similarly spoken of as “a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it....This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate.”

Hence, even if the Mind of Light is not a pre-existent plane but stands as a luminous kingdom by a conversion of the physical mentality, it still gives the impression of being “spiritual” and not “supramental”. The distinction is

highly significant, for it is as between two typical orders, each with its own principle of world-organisation and is not meant to point only to different degrees of the Light of Gnosis. The very top of Spiritual Mind's ladder, Overmind, directly neighbours Supermind and receives the latter's action immediately and not distantly as do Intuition, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind and yet it is not merely a self-chosen limitation or modification of Supermind in the sense of restrained deployment of the Truth-Consciousness: it is a limitation or modification in the sense that, though there is no lapsing of the Truth-Consciousness, there is a change of characteristic poise in the deployment of knowledge. That is what is implied in Sri Aurobindo's saying at the same time that it is invested with Supermind's authority and that Supermind works in it at one remove as if in something not entirely itself. We shall soon see what is the change of characteristic poise. Here it is enough to note that it is there. So, the question whether the Mind of Light stands with Spiritual Mind or with Supermind is important and to dispel the misconception that Sri Aurobindo anywhere intends it to be classed with the former is as necessary as to dispel the misconception that it is a pre-existent plane.

The clue to right understanding lies in remembering just this latter misconception and realising that even the fitting on, as it were, of the Mind of Light to the ladder of Spiritual Mind is by conversion of the stuff of ignorance: the Mind of Light is not a level of knowledge naturally existing as a diminution of Higher Mind; it is a manifestation from above in the human mentality, a manifestation in which, to quote Sri Aurobindo's words, "inconscience, ignorance and error can claim no place". Can a state of this kind where a radical conversion has occurred be one of Spiritual Mind? Of course, Spiritual Mind can be a state of knowledge from the beginning, but here is a case of ignorance radically ceasing for the first time—an entirely different case. And what we have to decide is whether Spiritual Mind at even its highest can bring about such a state. For, if it can, it can itself be a state in which a condition of ignorance has radically ceased by its action.

In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo has made it abundantly plain that the Overmind itself, the highest spiritual mental, cannot effect a radical ceasing of ignorance in the human mental. The reason for the Overmind's insufficiency is the peculiar posture of relation in it between the One and the Many. All the levels of world-being are a play of the Many and the One: the nature of each level is defined by the terms characteristic to it of this play. In the Supermind the One and the Many are balanced and integrated and, while the One does not annul or engulf the Many, the Many always cast back to the

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

One and there is no such stress on them as might bring about the possibility of their running away from it and causing a genuine fissure between it and them as well as among themselves—the fissure which is the ignorance, the lack of Light, on our human mental plane. On the other hand, in the Overmind, though there is no ignorance yet and Light prevails, the ominous stress occurs: the Many are allowed to run to the utmost distance, so to speak, from the One without breaking their connection: the connection never fails but it is subdued, thrown into the background, functions only as an overall and general instead of immediate and prominent principle. No discord and still an infinity of divergences and counter-actions: extreme opposites and yet a holding of them together as finally fitting complementaries. The Self of selves is not abrogated, but a dangerous game of innumerably multiplied mutual exclusion is carried on. It is this that, as the Light grows less intense and immense in the downward gradation of Spiritual Mind, culminates in the fall from Higher Mind into the sharp division felt between self and self, object and object, individual and universe, on the plane of our mentality. Given the Overmind, there is an inevitability of ignorance happening at some point in the series of worlds issuing from it below. The presence of this inevitability proves that the Overmind has not the sovereign Truth which can transform all human parts and activities completely into divine ones: the Overmind does not hold the impeccable and all harmonising Archetype of the evolutionary Mind, Life-force and Matter that are our cosmos. The Supermind is the supreme Creator, and everything, including our cosmos of ignorance, is actualised by it freely, through Overmind and other planes, for the purpose of gradual self-discovery by the Divine under conditions commencing with the very opposite of all that is deific—blind brute Matter in which neither Life-force nor Mind seems to exist, much less what is beyond Mind, but which yet holds them involved for evolutionary emergence by their own *nisus* from below and by pressure from above of planes where their principles stand in typical manifestation, uninvolved. Yes, Supermind is the supreme Creator, and in its own plane it keeps the divine original of everything: ignorance does not come out of it anywhere in the world-series as an inevitability but as a mode of its infinite freedom founded in the perfection its plane manifests through the balance and integration of the One and the Many: its plane alone is free enough and perfect enough to fulfil evolutionary mind, life-force and matter by converting the progressive Lightward straining of darkness and dusk into a process of ever-unfolding Light.

Hence only the Supermind can create the radical change marked by the Mind of Light in the stuff of ignorance resulting from a breaking of the lu-

minous ladder. No grade of Spiritual Mind can repair that break. So, the Mind of Light, however restrained its movement from truth to truth, no matter if seeming to be connected at many removes with Supermind, is really an expression of the supramental power operating in *persona propria* and not, as in Spiritual Mind, with a change of characteristic poise in the deployment of knowledge. It is itself Supermind creative in the field of terrestrial evolution and operating in human mind-terms.

All this we must keep in focus if we are to arrive at a proper comparison between the Mind of Light and the grades of Spiritual Mind, unembodied or in embodiment. Without it we shall stop short with regarding the Mind of Light as just an added last rung to the luminous ladder and as inferior to even Higher Mind. The paradox would persist: how can a creation by Supermind of itself in the embodied mentality be inferior to a plane which, for all its lack of ignorance, is still pretty far from Supermind? Now we are led to see that the Mind of Light, holding as it does a principle superior to all Spiritual Mind, may have—nay, must have—several forms in the field of terrestrial evolution where it manifests. If at any stage it looks inferior to Higher Mind, it is something that can develop beyond it. Within its very initial form it contains, hidden like a miniature sun, the whole Supermind which escapes all Spiritual Mind and which the vastness of Overmind itself cannot comprise. What appears inferior in Light to even Higher Mind is the first peep of an effulgence before which the Overmind lustres pale. By this fact it differs also from and in a certain sense surpasses all states of the human mental into which Spiritual Mind has descended. Evidently when the grades of Spiritual Mind descend into the human mental they introduce qualities which in themselves exceed the actual quality the Mind of Light manifests in its initial form. But while these grades in their undescended poise are free from ignorance they do not completely keep their freedom when under their own power they get embodied in the human mental. If they cannot create in the human mental a continuation downward of the luminous ladder, much less can they thoroughly assimilate it so as to acquire entire embodiment of their typical glories. It is because not even Overmind can affect radically the stuff of ignorance that no continuation can be brought about by it; and if Overmind is impotent in the matter of continuation how can it be potent in a much greater matter—namely, entire assimilation of this stuff? An entire assimilation would imply the absence of ignorance in the human mental as on the plane of Overmind, an absence far intenser and immenser than when the human mental might be rendered a diminished continuation of Higher Mind! The inevitability of ignorance concretising at some point in the series of planes issuing downwards

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

from Overmind incapacitates the latter for not only repairing the break in the luminous ladder but also, *a fortiori*, totally assimilating the human mental and converting it into a mode of its own intensity and immensity. The change effected can be very extraordinary but it is never dynamically absolute: the stuff of ignorance hampers and dilutes to a larger or smaller degree the descended Light of even the top of Spiritual Mind. In contrast, the initial form of the Mind of Light, for all its apparent inferiority to Higher Mind, has still not an iota of ignorance. The Light is less intense and immense in actual outburst, but it is perfectly clear. The mass-ideation of Higher Mind, the far-ranging colourful vision-glow of Illumined Mind, the piercing intimate ubiquitous lightning-seizures of Intuition, the resplendent multitudinous catholicity and globality of Overmind may import into the human mental on their descent into it a certain richness as well as swiftness which the initially realised Mind of Light does not exhibit; yet, while the richness and swiftness will not always work in utter purity everywhere since they are still working on an unabolished though subdued ground of ignorance, the Mind of Light from the very start is utterly pure in whatever restrained quality of knowledge it exhibits.

But here the query which must have occurred to the reader at several points in our discussion arises inevitably: How is it that Supermind which is the acme of richness and swiftness of Light creates on its descent, a state which has in any respect a quality of knowledge more restrained than that of embodied spiritual Mind? We should expect this state to be not only devoid of ignorance in a radical way: we should expect it also to be superior in every respect to what Spiritual Mind could do by embodiment. Why, then, inferiority on any score at all? Inferiority on any score can come only if somehow, previous to the creation of the Mind of Light, Spiritual Mind has not descended into the human mental and got established there to the extent possible to it under its own power. But can such an "anomaly" ever happen? Unless Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind have been realised in descent and have functioned on the level of the physical mentality, can the Mind of Light which is a result of Supermind's descent be created in the body?

The answer is at once Yes and No. For, we have to draw a line between the Mind of Light forming at a highly advanced stage in the course of the Aurobindonian Yoga and the same essential power manifesting afterwards in humanity in general as an effect of this formation or in those who have not gone far in that Yoga. The one presupposes in the individual a whole history of spiritual realisations and climaxes a long series of descents and preludes the descent of the Supermind into bodily life-force and bodily matter. The other is a condition

of various sorts. Broadly, it is that produced in people not yet ready for embodying the supramental Gnosis but sufficiently responsive to change radically from mere mind under the sovereign pressure of a Supermind descended on a large scale through the Aurobindonian Yoga into the occult atmosphere, so to speak, of earth's being. In the long run it could be in mankind a condition even from birth as mere mind is today and that would be most in line with what is generally meant by evolutionary achievement. In many cases the condition will be of those who, though responsive to the supramental Gnosis, have not had any substantial commerce with Spiritual Mind's gradation and into whom therefore there cannot have been a previous descent of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition or Overmind. But this condition will be precisely what facilitates substantial commerce by rendering it natural. And, through that commerce, one who lives in this Mind of Light will be by right effort able to climb towards and into Supermind as well as call it down. But neither the substantial commerce with Spiritual Mind nor the dealings with the supramental Gnosis will everywhere be present. While in a number of human beings they will both be present, in others Spiritual Mind alone will be more or less freely contacted and in still others no free contact with even Spiritual Mind and so none with Supermind either will be there. From the first group recruits will be drawn for the expansion of the gnostic race whose nucleus we may expect to take shape out of those who are living in the Aurobindonian Yoga. The remaining two groups will be stages between this race and whatever of the human species with mind, as we ordinarily observe it, may persist for a shorter or longer time.

The Mind of Light realised through Sri Aurobindo's sacrifice and set operating for gradual formation of the nucleus of the gnostic race is the real subject of our essay. But mostly we have discussed what will manifest in the future in the world outside this nucleus or else in those who have not progressed much in the Aurobindonian Yoga—a wonderful gift to humanity from Sri Aurobindo by means of the realisation his sacrifice won for earth. And we must continue the discussion if we are to turn his writings to account in understanding that realisation.

We have already studied the initial form of the Mind of Light and the difference between it and the fullest creations possible of Spiritual Mind before Supermind has descended. The difference provides the clue to the forms the Mind of Light assumes in its farther development. We are here talking of forms developed by supramental descent. But we can also speak of the progression of the Mind of Light by ascent, what we have already mentioned as its climbing towards and into Supermind. Once shaped, the Mind of Light can first reflect accurately in its purified and exalted condition something of the overhead

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

planes and then rise to the plateaus and peaks of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind, Supermind. However, this rising will not be the same experience as that of the ordinary mentality making an ascent. For now they will be attained by something that is itself Supermind in mental terms and the experience of them will all be a progressive movement from the lowest to the highest note of Supermind's own gamut, as it were, rather than a conversion from the ordinary mental to the spiritual mental by a change of characteristic poise and again, by another such change, to the supramental. This new kind of ascent will be an accompaniment and a help to the greater descent, a descent not only into the physical mind but also into the physical vitality and the physical proper. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "there would be a new mental being", "a liberated mind...aware of its affiliation to Supermind, a natural agent of Supermind and capable of bringing down the supramental influence into the lower reaches of being,...aspiring to release the secret divinity into self-finding and self-fulfilment and self-poise, aspiring towards the ascension to the divine consciousness, able to receive and bear the descent of the divine light and power, fitting itself to be a vessel of the divine Life."

It is the descent with which we are concerned in this essay and the farther forms of the Mind of Light resulting from the descent have to be envisaged. Its initial form which seems a continuation, below Higher Mind, of the luminous ladder is the precursor of one in which the human mental acts as if it has been completely assimilated, step after step, by the Light of descended Spiritual Mind. The word "completely" is of capital importance. For, as we have noted, when Spiritual Mind descends under its own power assimilation does occur but is never complete. The presence of the Mind of Light indicates that the stuff of ignorance, in which no change can be dynamically absolute before Supermind has come on the scene, is not resistant any longer: the Supermind has come and ignorance has radically ceased. But now not only has a continuation of the luminous ladder been brought about; a possibility has also been introduced of the total assimilation by Spiritual Mind of the human mental. The thorough descent and embodiment, therefore, of all the grades of Spiritual Mind can happen now after Supermind has started taking a direct hand instead of playing on the human mental indirectly through those grades. Once the Mind of Light begins its reign Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind can find themselves securely and authentically on its supramental basis and reach their own perfection as embodied powers. When they do this, the Mind of Light assumes its second form. Repeating the name he gives to Spiritual Mind in its own undescended hierarchy, Sri Aurobindo calls the

Mind of Light in its second form mental Gnosis as distinguished from the Gnosis proper which is Supermind.

Beyond mental Gnosis the Mind of Light manifests, in complete assimilation of the human mental, the Gnosis proper and assumes its third and sovereign form. But what the two kinds of Gnosis are in the hierarchy above the human mental is not what they are here. There they are separate though connected levels, each a cosmos with its own type and function: here the one is merely the other partially unfolded. For, the Mind of Light is not anywhere anything else than the Supermind in progressive manifestation in embodied nature. As we have observed, its very inception signalises that the Supermind is acting directly and is in immediate presence on the level of the physical mentality. But in its initial and middle forms the directness and the immediacy are, in different measures, restrained: the third form employs them freely. The supreme divinity which releases a little of its magnificence under the form of an apparent continuation at the lower end of Spiritual Mind's gradation and then "an ampler ether, a diviner air" in the form of wholly descended mental Gnosis, is utterly laid open—a towering apocalypse in the terms of the human mental by the third form the Mind of Light takes.

"In the terms of the human mental"—the phrase is important for grasping what, in Sri Aurobindo's eyes, the Mind of Light ultimately manifests. The Mind of Light is not only Supermind descended into and divinising the physical mentality: it is also the manifestation of that which is the counterpart in Supermind of this mentality's terms. The counterpart, whose apocalypse is the third form of the Mind of Light, must be a power which is not all "supra" but is in some sense "mental": otherwise no mind, whether of Light or of twilight, can result and Spiritual Mind also will lack foundation in the Supreme. We shall understand what that power is if we remember that, according to the *Life Divine*, the Supermind has a triple status or a three-stranded unity. The first strand is closest to the unitarian Consciousness in which the One contains the Many indiscernibly in an unmanifest potentiality beyond space and time. The Supermind brings the Many forth into manifestation, sets them in an archetypal space and time which are extensions of Consciousness. But in its first strand it is a multitudinous yet equable self-distribution, a vast Identity infinitely repeated. Though the multiple is indeed present the single stands out: here All are not lost in the One, but All are indefeasibly the One. This is a Consciousness constituting, pervading and comprehending everything. The second strand is a Consciousness that apprehends no less than comprehends. In its own vast unity of multiplicity it creates distinguishable centres and from these centres views

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

everything else, yet everything is known by each centre to be essentially itself: the multiple stands out as an infinite repetition of Identity. All are not indefeasibly the One, they are distinct, but still they are in the One. The third strand is a farther development of the apprehending Consciousness. Each centre knows itself as other than the rest, and on the basis of an innumerable otherness the Many weave themselves into the One: difference has been added to distinction, and the multiple stands out not as an infinite repetition but as an infinite variation or diversity of the One. All are not in the One so much as the One is in All, concentrating itself in each and following the movement of that particular in pragmatic separation from, and independence of, the remaining particulars and from the totality containing that particular and these. However, the knowledge is never overclouded that what is concentrated in each separately and independently for pragmatic purposes is the Identical and through that knowledge there is an act of union simultaneously with the fact of division and difference.

Clearly, in the apprehending Consciousness of the Supermind we have, remotely, the beginning of a movement like that of the human mental. And in the farther development of it that is the third strand this movement is in full form and could be the high-uplifted parent of our fallen mentality with a recognisable family-likeness, except for the saving grace of a simultaneous reverse side to it which balances the characteristic mind-turn of standing back in divided different centres and apprehending from them. The farther development kins the apprehending movement more closely to Spiritual Mind where there is also a species of reverse side. On all the planes of Spiritual Mind the One is not lost in the Many and there is thus no play of darkness as in the human mental: in that respect no less than in respect of increase in the projecting and confronting Consciousness, the dissimilarity between Supermind and Spiritual Mind is of no more than degree. Overmind exhibits this dissimilarity attenuated to the utmost and is thereby entitled to be regarded in general as a delegated Supermind and in particular as the delegate of the Supermind's third strand.

But we have already seen how the Overmind's stress on the Many renders ignorance ultimately inevitable and the radical conversion of ignorance to Light a feat beyond this delegated Supermind. In view of that stress we have to consider the dissimilarity between the supramental and its delegate as of kind in a certain undeniable sense, and not just of degree. It obliges us to pass beyond merely terming the Supermind's third strand a sort of Spiritual Mind which overtops the hitherto-mentioned top of the luminous ladder. The right name for it, as much "supra" as "mental", and hitting off precisely the nature of what in

the Supermind creates the Mind of Light and is fully active in this Mind's third form, is found in *The Life Divine*. There Sri Aurobindo writes that the last of the three strands of Supermind may be called "Divine Mind". For, this Mind carries in itself a perfect corrective to the extreme developed in it of the apprehending Consciousness and is by virtue of that corrective saved from becoming not only like the human mental but also like the spiritual mental whose gradation prepares in luminousness our obscurity. Here are absent both the twilight of our mind of ignorance fumbling towards knowledge and the Light of Spiritual Mind lessening gradually towards ignorance. Here is Mind with a secure and undiminishable radiance, Mind not simply unsundered from the supramental or a subordinate action of it but itself an inherent mode of it by which measuring and delimiting are freely done and relations freely fixed—operations necessary for creating any cosmos—without the least ignorant obscuration or even the smallest possibility of being the parent of ignorance. Here is the original face of the Truth reproduced on earth by the Mind of Light at its highest and in its full orb.

Thus the designation coined by Sri Aurobindo is seen to cover several phases of one and the same supramental reality in process of embodiment. We may sum up in words culled from his own last writings. When "untransformed mind or human mind burdened with its hampering disabilities" recovers, as a result of Supermind's "descent into the human world", its true character which is that of "a principle of Light and a power of Light or a force for Knowledge specialised in its action for a subordinate purpose", namely, "the work of differentiation...in the Supermind itself" and "in all its creation"—when mind is made to outgrow its defects and discover that some of the "characteristics which we conceive to be the very signs of its nature...belong to Supermind also and the difference is in the way and scope of their action, not in the stuff or in their principle", then it will manifest, roughly, a threefold progression. "At its highest it might pass out of its limitations into the supramental truth and become part and function of the supramental knowledge or at the least serve for a minor work of differentiation in the consensus of that knowledge: in the lower degree below Supermind it might be a mental gnosis, a spiritual or spiritualised perception, feeling, activity, sense which could do the works of knowledge and not of ignorance. Even at a still lower level it could be an increasingly luminous passage leading from light to light, from truth to truth and no longer a circling in the mazes of half-truth and half-nescience."

We may figure in greater detail the phases of the Mind of Light in terms

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

of moon-phases. But these terms must be differentiated from those that would characterise a vision by us of the partial levels of Spiritual Mind rising into the roundness of the Divine Mind. In such a vision we might say there would be growth of Light from silver to more ample silver until we passed the Overmind, an argent disc almost whole and striking one as actually whole unless one has a sharp sense of the plenary. The full moon itself would be Divine Mind, but it would be a mass of perfection white at only the first sight when the dissimilarity of merely degree and not of kind between the spiritual mental and the supramental is glimpsed. As soon as the latter is discerned, the silver is felt to become gold, the full moon shows itself as a sun white-seeming in its immediate front before the aureate depths are found shining out.

The phases of the Mind of Light would be of a moon golden from the very start or, rather, of a sun behaving like a moon because Divine Mind is viewed not in its original inherence in Supermind as the third strand of the latter's triple status but in its manifestation in an evolving scheme on earth, in which there is a stage-by-stage expression of the supramental epiphany. The phases of this sun-moon stand for successive states of Supermind's embodiment. Nowhere is any dissimilarity of kind, everywhere is dissimilarity of nothing more than degree. Even when the grades of Spiritual Mind are symbolised, it is neither in their own statuses above mind nor in their descents into mind under their own power which never radically alters the ignorance of the human mental. They are symbolised in their descended condition as brought about by a direct action of Supermind. And when the Supermind acts directly, the preliminary to their descended condition as brought about by it is the Mind of Light in its initial form. Thus, in terms of phases of a sun-moon, the human-mind re-created as a somewhat diminished continuation of Higher Mind will be the crescent, a thin bright curve with upward-pointing arms within which the rest of the sun-moon's rondure is faintly visible, a rim of Light which is not really severed from the solar-lunar globe but only put forth for a certain purpose and play as the apparent edge of a secret splendour. Higher Mind—as the entire establishment, on the physical mentality's level, of farther reaches of this splendour—will be a brighter disclosure *en route* to a semi-circular revelation, the half sun-moon which will be Illumined Mind in a state in which the human mental has been utterly assimilated by it. Beyond this, where the gibbous or three-quarter stage is reached, will be the phase of Intuition wholly established in incarnate mind. Much past the gibbous and close to the complete circle, leaving just a crescent-thread uncompassed by its glow, will be Overmind similarly established. The sun-moon in its rounded plenitude will be Divine Mind descended in full into the physical mentality.

MOTHER INDIA

Looking at these phases we have now to ask: What phase was realised when Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body? It cannot be any except the last. The first phase of the sun-moon development we have figured can apply only to a case in which none of the grades of Spiritual Mind have come down and yet an initial supramental state has been created in consequence sooner or later of Sri Aurobindo's holocaust to kindle heaven upon earth. All the other phases, short of the last, apply to various cases in which one or more of the grades have already come down and the grace of the holocaust catches them to convert what was a considerable enlightenment of ignorance into limited disclosures of Supermind in which, though ignorance could never be, knowledge does not integrally outflower. But when all the grades have already come down and, though in the absence of Supermind's descent no Mind of Light as such has been created, the human mental has been packed with more and more Light until the utmost that Overmind descended under its own power can do has been effulgently consummated, then the next step which is the coming down of Supermind can only be the precipitation of the integral knowledge in the shape of Supermind's third strand into that utmost: in other words, Divine Mind makes its appearance, secures embodiment, perfects the descent of Overmind, acts for a time partly through an Overmind which is no longer its delegate at a remove but rather its own direct though apparently modified projection and partly through an open dynamis of itself, and then the whole action becomes openly supramental. Logically, too, nothing less than Supermind's third strand would manifest when Supermind for the first time got embodied and established a centre in the human mental; for, nothing supramental can come down for the first time unless Overmind has effected a descent and after Overmind's descent what else save Divine Mind can manifest? Anything lower in supramental quality would lack the element of richness and swiftness that Overmind's descent, no matter if incomplete, imports on a huge scale into the human mental: something richer and swifter could be the sole sequel to that importation.

Yes, the Mind of Light at its supreme and in its absolute orb is what was realised in descent into earth's being in December, 1950. This does not mean that merely the third strand of the Supermind descended into the physical mentality. Supermind is one whole, taking three simultaneous poises, and the descent which gave birth to the Mind of Light in its full orb brought the progressively unfolding action of the whole. What that Mind did was just to throw into frontal relief the third strand while not excluding either the second of which the third is an extreme extension or the first whose modification is the second. This frontal relief is natural in all supramental embodiment—

not only bodily mind but also bodily life and bodily matter must show it, the latter pair even more since they represent further stages of the differentiation, the fragmentation beginning with mind. Supermind's third strand we have called the divine counterpart or archetype of our mentality, but really it archetypes vitality and matter as well. We give prominence to the mind-aspect because the work of conscious demarcation and differentiation to which we refer is most like the activity in us of mind. Actually, the process of delimitation within the gnostic Vast is, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "a process by which the ever dividing and reuniting consciousness of Mind, the ever divergent and convergent action of Life and the infinitely divided and self-aggregating substance of Matter come, all by one principle and original act, into phenomenal being". According to him, when Supermind cosmicises its own Truth and fixes many centres or standpoints by deploying the measuring and defining power that archetypes mind, then archetypal life and matter immediately follow; for life is simply the determination of force and action, of relation and interaction of energy from many fixed centres of consciousness, while matter is nothing else than the substance that provides for the determination of form at each centre, form without which the cosmic interaction would not be possible.

Yes, the third strand would be in frontal relief everywhere—yet, as we have said, with the two others precluded in no way. In fact, we may surmise that their dynamism would be more and more drawn upon as the descent passes from bodily mind to bodily vitality and bodily matter, for it will meet with increasing atomisation and separative concentration. The third strand, in which the One is in All, may be considered sufficient in general to transform mind which is the least obscure of the lower trinity and therefore needs the least divine puissance for its fulfilment. Life-force, with its larger obscurity, requires a more effective Truth-energy to divinise it: the second strand of the Supermind, in which All are in the One, is perhaps its principal transformer. Where obscurity has touched the nadir, the zenith must be called for: against the infinitesimally fragmented and unconscious nature of matter the third strand, in which All are the One and a vast Identity equally constitutes and pervades and comprehends everything and no multiplicity stands out at all, is likely to be the main Godhead that delivers.

On the other hand, since mind is the least obscure member of the lower trinity and has a quicker and larger turn towards essentiality, infinity, unity, totality than its associates, the second and first strands of the Supermind will always be more easily and perceptibly expressed in it. Though the third strand

MOTHER INDIA

will be in frontal relief, the second and the first will constantly keep projecting their colour, so to speak, and we shall have the most vivid evidence possible of the fact that Supermind is one whole and, whatever the manner in which it acts, it acts with all of itself.

Thus the realisation in December, 1950, was an invasion of a part of the physical being by Supermind in its entirety—and, through that part's organic relation with the rest, the spearhead of an invasion of the entire physical being. It started the bodily nucleus of the supramental race and also laid the foundation of all that future play of the Mind of Light in a race not yet supramental, whose broad picture Sri Aurobindo's last writings provide. The marvellous kingdom on earth of the Gnosis proper has begun. The integral epiphany prophesied in *Savitri* is on way to fulfilment:

*The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.*

VI

With the direct action initiated in our midst of embodied Supermind, we may well inquire by what extraordinary signs its operative presence is accompanied. Among those that can be objectively gauged we may mention at least four. First, the most general, a many-sidedness of spiritual action: one single outflow of Yogic energy produces a far-flung network of vibrant victorious consequences. An inter-connectedness, subtle yet keenly living, is to a considerable extent rendered evident between persons or fields or events very much remote and detached even though within more or less the same province. Often it becomes necessary to lay a creative stress on just one spot, so to speak, in order to touch through it various other spots not only in the individual but also in the group and put them all in a unison of progress. Something of the essential integrality of the Supermind's manifold comprehensive-ness is seen in this achievement of maximum diverse result with a minimum expense of force, at times no more than a casual word, gesture or look. It is as though some intrinsic automatism or spontaneity of Truth-development in disparate centres were appreciably awakened.

A second supramental sign is an almost incredibly swift, a well-nigh irresistible influence on not only mental movements and vital turns but certain bodily processes. Many things accounted impossible by medical science get accomplished. And these "miracles" differ from the results of occult-spiritual

THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMIND

practice such as many Yogis are capable of. In that practice a force from beyond the physical plane is brought to bear upon bodily ailments like, to a considerable extent, a foreign agency subduing defects and lapses felt to be natural to the body. The occult-spiritual "miracles" are, in the last resort, superimposed. The astonishing effects of the supramental Will are at the same time from above the stuff of body and from entirely within it. The irreducible minimum of imperfection, which even the Overmind admits in matter, as to a less degree in also life-force and mind, because the Overmind is not the ultimate Creator and Archetype, is not there for this Will: hence the miraculous operation has no foreignness about it. Everything corporeal may not be miraculously reached by the Supermind radically converting the physical mentality, but the genuine Omnipotence is at last at work here from even the earth-level, however self-restrained in several ways this Omnipotence may be in order to conform to its own laws of a manifestation that blends the evolutionary with the revolutionary. And inasmuch as this Omnipotence, being of the ultimate archetypal creativity, is one substance with matter so that matter may be looked upon as itself omnipotent in its hidden nature and destined to reveal its consubstantiality with Supermind, the supramental Will's miracles in the body are as if with roots there and seem to grow out of matter itself on contact between the supramental and the material. There is no superimposition anywhere, no forcible subduing of the body's so-called natural defects and lapses: rather, whatever defects and lapses are common to the body are here like temporary provisional states in the history of an unfolding intrinsic perfection: a concealed perfection and not any irreducible minimum of the imperfect is active as the body's natural quality, and so a response is felt in the body like the secret co-operation, from one end, of the same Will that is openly exercising its omnipotence from the other. This kind of work in the body, from beyond and yet from completely inside, is exclusive to Supermind, for Supermind alone can solve radically the riddle of obscurity set by the Sphinx of matter.

A third sign of Supermind's working from a physical centre is a unifying sweep through which persons touched by or attracted towards spirituality and Yoga are rapidly and triumphantly caught up into them. Obstructions of long standing in the outer self, obstructions that were adamant as if they had been part and parcel of our embodied make-up, get broken at a stroke. Though some momentum from the past may keep a ghost of the old unregenerate nature going for a while, nothing appears to have the strength to stand against the invasion of the finite and the divided by the Infinite and the divinely One. The vast inalienable unity-in-multiplicity of the Truth-Consciousness

MOTHER INDIA

seems to send forth a fiat which is automatically self-fulfilling. And, not seldom, on the individual who is gathered into the divine harmony this fiat works as if some supreme decree or decision were flamingly fixed in a Spirit-space above the brain: a Will not his own though mysteriously reflected in his volition is almost palpably master of his destiny and gives him peace and illumination and happy certainty of spiritual realisation, even in spite of himself! The imperious Grace from "overhead" is typically the Supermind's largesse. The converse of this integrating of sincere yet in some respects hopelessly weak souls into the scheme of the new Truth-world in the making is, of course, the throwing out with a vehement definitiveness of those who, though carrying on some sort of Yoga, lack central sincerity. The hour of final choice strikes with a two-way effect, for the Truth-Consciousness entering earth's being and setting each one's human self into connection with the Truth-counterpart of it beyond does not as a rule tarry or compromise long in its dealings with practitioners of Yoga.

A fourth sign of the supramental descent into the physical mind is the repeated flow of mercy and power in extremities. People in their last gasp of inner struggle and on the black verge of total failure, people in a practically irredeemable situation of soul and about to sink into helpless despair, people overwhelmed by even material misfortunes that look mountainous are suddenly aided, uplifted and carried over to safety and at times to the very opposite of their state. The only condition laid down for this salvation is that a modicum somewhere of tenacity and faith should aspire, however blindly, to the Divine. This salvation is illustrative of the Supermind's power to deliver the Light or Truth from the deepest darkness or falsehood, its capacity to turn the very Inconscient on which our universe is to all appearances based into a mould for the Superconscient which is the real secret support of the universal evolution, its omnipotent ability to manifest "one entire and perfect chrysolite" out of a maximum wreck of glittering dreams. Perhaps such power is, from a general point of view, the most important sign of the supramental Presence: a civilisation in crisis needs it acutely. And in recognition indeed of its importance now and in the future and as also a reminder that the apparently extreme tragedy of Sri Aurobindo's passing from the material scene is in fact the most glorious triumph of his life-mission to bring the Supermind here bodily amongst us, the Mother gave on the first of January this year her message to the world which is as much Sri Aurobindo's message: "Lord, Thou hast told us: Do not give way, hold tight. It is when everything seems lost that all is saved."

K. D. SETHNA

THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE

SRI AUROBINDO

(a) THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE*

By our analysis of the path of Karmayoga we have been able to map out in its broad lines and essential stages the movement by which the soul, liberated from desire and egoism, can become free in the Divine. The realisation of the Divine, the Lord, the supreme Self through works, the union with the Divine by works and in works, the power to live in the presence of That and in its being and no longer in the ego is the goal to which by this path we ascend. And it is evident that by this path we can arrive also at the supreme knowledge which is the fruit of the Yoga of knowledge and the supreme love and ecstasy which is the fruit of the Yoga of devotion. Nevertheless, the particular form of the knowledge at which we shall first arrive by the path of works is that of the Self as the supreme, transcendent and universal Purusha holding and conditioning the works of Nature in the individual life and soul; and the particular form of devotion proper to this path is that offered to the Lord as the Master of the world and its works, the devotion of self-surrender, self-dedication, sacrifice of all our being and activities to the Divine. The whole knowledge and the whole ecstasy, not limited by any form, can be added and must come to us, if we seek them, once we stand in the presence and live in the being of the Lord and supreme Soul. But they come more directly, with a more spontaneous and integral fullness by the special self-discipline and the peculiar methods which belong to the other two branches of the triune path. To these paths, successively, we must now direct our attention.

We have chosen the Karmayoga as our starting-point because for the great majority of men at the present day this is the direction in which the awakening soul most naturally turns. Action and life are nearer to human aspiration today and occupy a larger part in the mentality of the race than either abstract thought or absorbing religious faith. Nevertheless, knowledge and devotion are the real dominant strain in the nature of many even of those who are led by their ideals or the atmosphere in which they live to place the

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MOTHER INDIA

highest value on work done for God or humanity; and for these knowledge or devotion and not works is the true starting-point. Our nature much more than our education or acquired ideals is the real sign-post; by following the path it indicates we arrive more swiftly and surely at the goal. As, then, we have studied in its principles, chief movements and broad results the Yoga of works, so now we should study the Yoga of knowledge,—not in its well-known forms and conventional terms, but always in the active principles that underlie them, and not towards the dissolution of our world-existence which is the sole aim recognised by the Jnanayoga long current in India, but as part of the integral Yoga which recognises the Lord no less than the pure quiescent Self, God in the world no less than the world-transcending Ineffable and accepts therefore the divine Play on the basis of the divine Repose, the divine Action that is supported by the divine Quiescence, the Word that is the self-expression of the Silence.

We must therefore try to go down from the first to the root of the whole matter. When we speak of a Yoga of knowledge, we imply that there is an object of knowledge to which men ordinarily do not turn the eye of the mind but to which we wish to attach ourselves, that there is a state of knowledge with regard to that object which is other than our ordinary consciousness of ideas and forms and things, and that there are means and faculties of knowledge by which we can arrive at that state and possess that object,—means and faculties which though they must necessarily start from our ordinary instruments of knowledge yet must as necessarily go beyond them if the supra-sensuous and supramental object we seek is to be attained. We must therefore determine first, as strictly as we can, that object of knowledge, that state of knowledge and those means and faculties of knowledge which we contemplate; for according to our determination of them will be the aim and process of our Yoga.

And, first of all, we must state concisely what are this object, this state and this means as they are prescribed by the established system or systems of the Yoga of knowledge still current in the East, so that there may be no confusion or misunderstanding, since we ourselves propose while using the same name yet to depart from the severe rigidity of the traditional line of walking. These systems, whatever their other differences, all proceed on the principle that there is a pure transcendent state of non-cosmic existence or a non-existence which alone is the object of knowledge and that all cosmic existence or all that we call existence is a state of ignorance; even its highest and most blissful conditions are a supreme ignorance and therefore to be severely renounced by the seeker

of the absolute Truth. This supreme quiescent Self or this absolute Nihil is the object of knowledge. The state of knowledge to be attained is Nirvana, an extinction of ego, an extinction of mental, vital and physical activity and a supreme illumined quiescence and pure bliss of impersonal tranquillity. The means is meditation, concentration, loss of the mind in its object. Action is permissible in the first stages in order to purify the seeker, to make him morally and temperamentally a fit vessel for the knowledge, and this action must either be confined to the performance of the rites of worship and the prescribed duties of life rigorously ordained by the Hindu Shastra or, as in the Buddhistic discipline, must be guided along the eightfold path to the supreme practice of the works of compassion which lead towards the practical annihilation of self in the good of others. But in the end, in the severe and pure Jnanayoga, action must be abandoned for quiescence; it may prepare, but it cannot give salvation; continued adherence to it is incompatible with, may be an insuperable obstacle to the attainment of the goal. For it would seem obvious that the state of supreme quiescence, being the very opposite of action, cannot be attained by those who persist in works. Similarly devotion, love, worship are disciplines for the unripe soul, are the methods of ignorance. For they are offered to something other, higher and greater than ourselves; but in the supreme knowledge there is no such thing, there being only one self or no self at all and therefore either no one to do the worship and offer the love and devotion or no one to receive it. Thought alone remains, thought that finally through its own quiescence in knowledge brings about the quiescence of the whole being.

Such in its fundamental principles is the standpoint of the pure Jnanayoga, and we can see that it comes by the intellect, the thinker in us separating himself from all the rest of what we are phenomenally, from the heart, the body, the life, the senses to arrive at his own exclusive fulfilment in that which is beyond himself. The truth which underlies and justifies this attitude is that all the activities and formations of our being are really the conscious developments of an essential Being which is beyond its own developments and mutations, in its essence immutable and therefore superior to all activities, and that in the hierarchy of our psychological functions the thought is nearest to this Self in its aspect of the knower who regards all activities but is superior to them all. The heart and other functions are, essentially, active functions which turn always towards action, though they also may arrive automatically at a certain quiescence by fullness of satisfaction in their activities or else by a reverse process of exhaustion through perpetual dissatisfaction. But the thought, though an active function, is more capable of arriving at quiescence by its own conscious choice and will, by the illumined intellectual perception of this Self which is higher

than all our activities. Besides, we being mental beings and thought our highest or at least our most constant, normal and effective means for enlightening our mentality, the functions of thought, meditation, contemplation, the dwelling of the mind on its object, are indispensable aids to our realisation of that which we pursue and may even claim to be the leaders of our journey.

But this is only one side of the question. In reality, thought is only the scout and pioneer; the real leader of our journey, the captain of our march, the first and most ancient priest of our sacrifice is the Will,—not that wish of the heart or that preference of the mind to which we give the name, but that dominant and often veiled force of our being which really determines our orientation and of which the intellect and the heart are more or less blind and automatic servants and instruments. The Self, it is true, is superior to all activities and not bound by any of them, but equally it is true that all activities proceed from the Self and are determined by it, are the operations of its own force of conscious being and not of something other than the Self. In these activities the Self expresses a conscious Will which seeks to fulfil its own being, a Will that is one with its knowledge of its self and of that which it seeks to express; and of this the will in us, the dominant force of our being, is the individual form, more nearly in communication with the Supreme because profounder than the surface activities of our thought. We must know then what that will is in the universe and in ourselves, before we can accept the way and culmination of pure Jnanayoga as the sole or even as the highest way and aim for the seeker.

The thought ought not to follow only its own exclusive satisfaction; for it is here as the guide, up to a certain point, of the heart, the life and the other members and has to see not only what is its own ultimate satisfaction but whether there is not an ultimate satisfaction intended also for these other members. If the object of the Supreme Will in the universe was merely a descent into the activity of the ignorance operated by the mind as instrument through sensation and an ascent into the quiescence of knowledge equally operated by the mind through thought, then this exclusive path of abstract thought would be justified. But the chances are that there is an aim less aimless, a truth of the world more large and complex than this simplistic and trenchant view of things allows us to envisage. If the thought, instead of following its own abstractive tendency, turns to consider that the heart, life and even the body are also forms of the divine conscious being, may also be means by which the soul returns to or at least is meant to enjoy its recovered complete self-awareness, then it may find that the object of the Supreme Will is a culmination in which the whole being is intended to receive its divine satisfaction.

THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE

The whole question is whether we are to proceed to self-knowledge by a process of elimination, whether we are to reject successively the body, the life, the senses, the heart, the thought in order to merge into the quiescent Self or whether we are intended to arrive by whatever means at an integral self-fulfilment, the only thing eliminated being the ignorance itself, the falsity of the being which figures as the ego, the falsity of the life which figures as mere corporeal existence and vital craving, the falsity of the senses with their subjection to material shows and to dual sensations, the falsity of the heart with its desires and its dual emotions, the falsity of the thought with its exclusions of the Truth of things and its limited and exclusive concentrations. If an integral self-fulfilment is intended, then there must be some culmination for the experiences of the heart which will justify its instinct of love, joy, devotion and worship, for the senses which will justify their pursuit of divine beauty and good in the forms of things, for the life which will justify its pursuit of works, no less than for the thought in its tendency towards abstract knowledge. There is something supreme in which all these transcend themselves and meet and find their own absolutes, not something utterly other than themselves from which they are all cast away.

This, at least, is the standpoint we have taken, and it is the whole sense of what we have called the integral Yoga. In applying or adapting the Yoga of knowledge to this integral view and to a synthetic process, we must therefore restate in other and larger terms than those of the pure Jnanayoga the object of our knowledge and the status of knowledge to which we aspire, and we must consider more amply the means and faculties which we intend to use.

The object of knowledge is the One, the Divine, alike in its relations to our individual self and to the universe and in its transcendence of both these terms. The poise our view of the true knowledge takes is this that neither the world nor the individual are what they seem to be; the report which our mind and our senses give us so long as they are unenlightened by a faculty of knowledge higher than themselves, is a false report. At the same time what the world and the individual seem to be are a figure of what they really are and through that figure we have to arrive at the reality. Equally, the report of the mind and the senses, however mistaken, is a basis from which we have to proceed. We have to correct the values they give, first by the action of the pure intellect enlightening and setting right the conclusions of the sense-mind and physical intellect, secondly, by the knowledge which exceeds all intellect and brings to us the true light in which the abstract terms of the pure reason are converted into the actuality of spiritual experience and the concrete vision of the soul. When that is done, we find that the ignorance of the mind and the senses and

MOTHER INDIA

all the apparent futilities of human life were not an otiose blunder and useless excursion of the conscious being, but a rough ground for the self-expression of that Being, a material foundation for its self-unfolding and self-possessing in the terms of the universe.

In relation to the individual that Reality is our own true and supreme self. Knowledge seeks to arrive at that true self and therefore rejects misleading appearances. It declares that the body is not our self but a form: the experience of Matter and the physical nerves and brain as the foundation and truth of all things which is the basis of materialism, is a delusion because it mistakes a form of consciousness for the essence of being. Matter and the physical nerves and brain are simply the foundation for an action of a vital force which serves to connect the Self with the form of its works, and the material movements are merely a physical notation by which the soul represents its perceptions and makes them effective in the terms of Matter; they are a language, a notation, a hieroglyphic, a system of symbols, not themselves the deep and true sense of things. Neither is vitality, the energy which plays in the body, nerves and brain, our Self; it is only a form. The experience of a life-force instrumentalising Matter as the foundation, source and true sum of things which is the basis of vitalism, is also a delusion because it takes something outward for the essence. Life-force is simply the dynamisation of a consciousness which exceeds it and that consciousness only becomes valid to us when we arrive at the higher term of Mind,—Mind which is only apparently a creation of Life, but is really the ulterior sense and secret of Life itself; for Mind is the expression not of Life, but of that of which Life itself is a less luminous expression. But our mentality also is not our Self; it is a form. The experience of mind as the creator of forms and things and of these forms and things as only existing in the Mind which is the basis of idealism, is also a delusion because this also does not arrive at the essence of being, but only at a form of being. Mind is only the play of a conscious existence which is not limited by mentality but exceeds it. Thus Knowledge arrives at the conception and realisation of a pure existence, self-aware, self-blissful, unconditioned by mind and life and body which is the original and essential nature of our existence. This is our own supreme Self.

In relation to the universe the Reality is Brahman. All the general terms to which we can reduce the universe, Force and Matter, Name and Form, Purusha and Prakriti, are still not entirely that which the universe really is. As all that we are is only play and form of the supreme Self unconditioned by mind and life and body, so the universe is only play and form of a supreme

Existence which is unconditioned by force and matter, unconditioned by name and form, unconditioned by the fundamental distinction of Purusha and Prakriti. And then we perceive and realise that our supreme Self and the supreme Existence which has become the universe are one self and one existence. The individual is simply one expression of the universal Being; finding his own supreme Self he finds that his own real self is not his personality, his individuality, but is this universal Being.

But since this supreme Existence is not conditioned by the individual or by the universe, Knowledge eliminates these two forms and arrives at the conception of something utterly Transcendent which is unnameable and unknowable by the speech and the mind, a sheer Absolute. That Absolute we cannot call personal or impersonal, for it is beyond personality and beyond impersonality; nor One nor Many, for it is beyond the distinction of unity and multiplicity; nor ascribe to it either quality nor absence of quality, for it is beyond all limitation by quality and yet it is not limited either by qualityless void, but is rather capable of infinite quality. It is that which manifests itself as the supreme impersonal Self and the individual soul, as the formless Brahman and the universe. It is the Lord, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha, the All. But it is not merely an intellectual conception at which knowledge arrives; although That is unknowable to the mind, yet as through our individual being and through the names and forms of the universe we arrive at the realisation of the self that is Brahman, so by the realisation of the self we come to a certain realisation also of this utter Absolute of which our true self is the essential form in our consciousness (*swarupa*).

This is the last, the eternal knowledge beyond which human thought cannot go. Our minds may deal with it intellectually on various lines, may build upon it what philosophies we please, may limit it, modify, overstress this side of the truth, understress that other, deduce from it erroneous deductions or partial corollaries; but our intellectual variations and imperfect statements make no difference to the ultimate fact that if we push thought and experience to the end, this is the knowledge at which we must arrive and it is only by ignoring, denying or limiting the complete experience of the soul that we can put away from us this eternal truth. We can take nothing away from it and add nothing essential to it, the attempt to do so only creates a hiatus or a perversion.

The object of the Yoga of knowledge can therefore be nothing else than this eternal Reality, Self, Brahman and Transcendent that dwells over and in all, manifest in the individual and in the universe. It matters not what knowledge we pursue, self-knowledge or knowledge of the universe, to this, unless we

choose to stop short on the path, we must come at last. The one question that remains is what will be the practical result of pursuing the path of knowledge to the end. Three obvious possibilities present themselves; either to lose all individuality and all world-existence in the unknown and unknowable, which seems to be what is meant by the extreme Buddhist conception of Nirvana, or to lose personality in the quiescent impersonal Self and equally to desist from world-existence, or to accept world-existence even as Brahman, as the Self, as the Transcendent accepts world-existence, with the same divine Will in us made conscious and put in possession of itself so that it may embrace with freedom and help with mastery the divine upward movement in the individual and the universe. This third possibility is the consummation we have throughout accepted as the one appropriate object of an integral Yoga.

It is evident that the culmination of the path of knowledge need not necessarily entail extinction of our world-existence since That to which we assimilate ourselves and into which we enter has always the complete and ultimate knowledge and yet supports by it its play in the world. Neither need we assume that our world-existence ends because by attaining to knowledge its object or consummation is fulfilled and therefore there is nothing more afterwards; for what we gain at first is only self-realisation by the individual in the essence of his being and there will still remain the self-fulfilment of Brahman in the manifestation by the individual in himself and by his presence, example and action in others and in the universe at large,—the work which the Great Ones remain to do. That self-fulfilment cannot be worked out so long as we remain in the egoistic consciousness; for that consciousness can only be a field of preparation, it can consummate nothing. The self-fulfilment of Brahman in the manifestation is only possible on the foundation of the Brahman-consciousness and therefore through the acceptance of life by the liberated soul, the Jivanmukta.

Therefore the object of knowledge for us is really double. We aim at the realisation of the Self pure and essential, but also at the realisation of the Self through knowledge in the manifestation; of Brahman in itself, but also of Brahman in the universe; of the Transcendent which cannot be expressed, but also of its unfolding in the individual and in the all. This is the integral knowledge and we shall accept it in its integrality, knowing that every where and in all conditions all is One and that it is only the mind which for the convenience of its own thinking and aspiring seeks to cut a line of division in the eternal unity. The liberated knower living and acting in the world does not forfeit that unity, is not false to his knowledge, for the Supreme is here manifest in the world no less than in the most utter and ineffable self-extinction.

THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE

(b) THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE

If the Self, the Divine both in its own pure being and in its manifestation of that being in the world is to be the object of Yogic knowledge, and not at all or not at least directly and for their own sake our ordinary objects, such as the external appearances of life and matter or the superficial psychology of our thoughts and actions, it is evident that the knowledge for which Yoga strives must be different from what men ordinarily understand by the word. We mean ordinarily by knowledge an intellectual appreciation of the facts of life, mind, matter and the laws that govern them, founded upon our sense-perception and upon reasoning from our sense-perceptions and undertaken partly for the pure satisfaction of the intellect, partly for practical efficiency and the added power which knowledge gives in managing our lives and the lives of others, in utilising for human ends the overt or secret forces of Nature and in helping or hurting, in saving and ennobling or in oppressing and destroying our fellow-men. Yoga, indeed, being commensurate with all life, includes all these subjects and objects; for there is a Yoga¹ which can be used for self-indulgence as well as for self-conquest, for hurting others as well as for their salvation. But "all life" includes not only life as humanity now leads it but also the higher existence which humanity is capable of but does not yet possess and it is this which is the peculiar and appropriate object of Yogic discipline.

The higher existence contemplated is not merely an improved mentality, a greater dynamic energy or a purer moral life and character. Its superiority is not merely in degree but in kind; it consists in a change not merely of the manner of our being but of its very foundation. Yogic knowledge seeks that which is the very basis of all our existence; it tries to discover and possess, in the words of the Upanishad, that by the right knowledge of which all is rightly known. For it starts from the premiss that all this world visible or sensible to us and all too in it that is not visible is merely the phenomenal expression of something beyond the mind and the senses. Only by attaining to that can we know the word aright; for the knowledge which the senses and intellectual reasoning from the data of the senses can bring us, is not true knowledge, it is only the science of appearances; and even appearances cannot be properly known unless we know first the reality of which they are images. This reality is their self and there is one self of all.

¹ Yoga develops power, it develops it even when we do not desire or consciously aim at it; and power is always a double-edged weapon which can be used to hurt or destroy as well as to help and save. Be it also noted that all destruction is not evil.

It is evident that however much we may analyse the physical and sensible, we cannot by that means arrive at the knowledge of the Self or of ourselves or of that which we call God. The telescope, the microscope, the scalpel, the retort and alembic cannot go beyond the physical, although they may arrive at subtler and subtler truths about the physical. If then we confine ourselves to what the senses and their physical aids reveal to us and refuse from the beginning to admit any other reality or any other means of knowledge, we are obliged to conclude that nothing is real except the physical and that there is no Self in us or in the universe, no God within and without, no ourselves even except this aggregate of brain, nerves and body. But this we are only obliged to conclude because we have assumed it firmly from the beginning and therefore cannot but circle round to our original assumption.

If, then, there is a Self, a reality not obvious to the senses, it must be by other means than those of physical Science that it is to be sought and known. The intellect is not that means. Undoubtedly there are a number of supra-sensuous truths at which the intellect is able to arrive, which it is able to perceive and state as intellectual conceptions. The very idea of Force for instance on which Science so much insists, is a conception, a truth at which the intellect alone can arrive by going beyond its data; for we do not sense this universal force but only its results, and the force itself we infer as a necessary cause of these results. So also the intellect by following a certain line of rigorous analysis can arrive at the intellectual conception and the intellectual conviction of the Self and this conviction can be very real, very luminous, very potent as the beginning of other things. Still, in itself intellectual analysis can only lead to an arrangement of clear conceptions, perhaps to a right arrangement of true conceptions; but this is not the knowledge at which Yoga aims. For it is not in itself an effective knowledge. A man may be perfect in it and yet be precisely what he was before except in the mere fact of the greater intellectual illumination. The change of our being at which Yoga aims, may not at all take place.

It is true that intellectual deliberation and right discrimination are an important part of the Yoga of knowledge; but their object is rather to remove a difficulty than to arrive at the final and positive result of this path. Our ordinary intellectual notions are a stumbling-block in the way of knowledge; for they are governed by the error of the senses and they found themselves on the notion that matter and body are the reality, that life and force are the reality, that passion and emotion, thought and sense are the reality; and with these things we identify ourselves, and because we identify ourselves with

these things we cannot get back to the real self. Therefore, it is necessary for the seeker of knowledge to remove this stumbling block and to get right notions about himself and the world; for how shall we pursue by knowledge the real self if we have no notion of what it is and are on the contrary burdened with quite opposite ideas to the truth? Therefore right thought is a necessary preliminary, and once the habit of right thought is established, free from sense-error and desire and old association and intellectual prejudgment, the understanding becomes purified and offers no serious obstacle to the farther process of knowledge. Still, right thought only becomes effective when in the purified understanding it is followed by other operations, by vision, by experience, by realisation.

What are these operations? They are not mere psychological self-analysis and self-observation. Such analysis, such observation are, like the process of right thought, of immense value and practically indispensable. They may even, if rightly pursued, lead to a right thought of considerable power and effectivity. Like intellectual discrimination by the process of meditative thought they will have an effect of purification; they will lead to self-knowledge of a certain kind and to the setting right of the disorders of the soul and the heart and even of the disorders of the understanding. Self-knowledge of all kinds is on the straight path to the knowledge of the real Self. The Upanishad tells us that the Self-existent has so set the doors of the soul that they turn outwards and most men look outward into the appearances of things; only the rare soul that is ripe for a calm thought and steady wisdom turns its eye inward, sees the Self and attains to immortality. To this turning of the eye inward psychological self-observation and analysis is a great and effective introduction. We can look into the inward of ourselves more easily than we can look into the inward of things external to us because there, in things outside us, we are in the first place embarrassed by the form and secondly we have no natural previous experience of that in them which is other than their physical substance. A purified or tranquillised mind may reflect or a powerful concentration may discover God in the world, the Self in Nature even before it is realised in ourselves, but this is rare and difficult.¹ And it is only in ourselves that we can observe and know the process of the Self in its becoming and follow the process by which it draws back into self-being. Therefore the ancient counsel, know thyself, will always stand as the first word that directs us towards the knowledge. Still, psychological self-knowledge is only the

¹ In one respect, however, it is easier, because in external things we are not so much hampered by the sense of the limited ego as in ourselves; one obstacle to the realisation of God is therefore removed.

experience of the modes of the Self, it is not the realisation of the Self in its pure being.

The status of knowledge, then, which Yoga envisages is not merely an intellectual conception or clear discrimination of the truth, nor is it an enlightened psychological experience of the modes of our being. It is a "realisation," in the full sense of the word; it is the making real to ourselves and in ourselves of the Self, the transcendent and universal Divine, and it is the subsequent impossibility of viewing the modes of being except in the light of that Self and in their true aspect as its flux of becoming under the psychical and physical conditions of our world-existence. This realisation consists of three successive movements, internal vision, complete internal experience and identity.

This internal vision, *drishti*, the power so highly valued by the ancient sages, the power which made a man a Rishi or Kavi and no longer a mere thinker, is a sort of light in the soul by which things unseen become as evident and real to it—to the soul and not merely to the intellect—as do things seen to the physical eye. In the physical world there are always two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, *pratyaksha*, of that which is present to the eyes, and *paroksha*, of that which is remote from and beyond our vision. When the object is beyond our vision, we are necessarily obliged to arrive at an idea of it by inference, imagination, analogy, by hearing the descriptions of others who have seen it or by studying pictorial or other representations of it if these are available. By putting together all these aids we can indeed arrive at a more or less adequate idea or suggestive image of the object, but we do not realise the thing itself; it is not yet to us the grasped reality, but only our conceptual representation of a reality. But once we have seen it with the eyes,—for no other sense is adequate,—we possess, we realise; it is there secure in our satisfied being, part of ourselves in knowledge. Precisely the same rule holds good of psychical things and of the Self. We may hear clear and luminous teachings about the Self from philosophers or teachers or from ancient writings; we may by thought, inference, imagination, analogy or by any other available means attempt to form a mental figure or conception of it; we may hold firmly that conception in our mind and fix it by an entire and exclusive concentration;¹ but we have not yet realised it, we have not seen God. It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means the veil of the mind is

¹ This is the idea of the triple operation of Jnanayoga, *cravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*, hearing, thinking or mentalising and fixing in concentration.

rent or swept aside, only when a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality, *jyotirmaya Brahman*, and conception gives place to a knowledge-vision in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye, that we possess in knowledge; for we have seen. After that revelation, whatever fadings of the light, whatever periods of darkness may afflict the soul, it can never irretrievably lose what it has once held. The experience is inevitably renewed and must become more frequent till it is constant; when and how soon depends on the devotion and persistence with which we insist on the path and besiege by our will or our love the hidden Deity.

This inner vision is one form of psychological experience; but the inner experience is not confined to that seeing; vision only opens, it does not embrace. Just as the eye, though it is alone adequate to bring the first sense of realisation, has to call in the aid of experience by the touch and other organs of sense before there is an embracing knowledge, so the vision of the self ought to be completed by an experience of it in all our members. Our whole being ought to demand God and not only our illumined eye of knowledge. For since each principle in us is only a manifestation of the Self, each can get back to its reality and have the experience of it. We can have a mental experience of the Self and seize as realities all those apparently abstract things that to the mind constitute existence—consciousness, force, delight and their manifold forms and workings: thus the mind is satisfied of God. We can have an emotional experience of the Self through Love and through emotional delight, love and delight of the Self in us, of the Self in the universal and of the Self in all with whom we have relations: thus the heart is satisfied of God. We can have an aesthetic experience of the Self in beauty, a delight-perception and taste of the absolute reality all-beautiful in everything whether created by ourselves or Nature in its appeal to the aesthetic mind and the senses; thus the sense is satisfied of God. We can have even the vital, nervous experience and practically the physical sense of the Self in all life and formation and in all workings of powers, forces, energies that operate through us or others or in the world: thus the life and the body are satisfied of God.

All this knowledge and experience are primary means of arriving at and of possessing identity. It is our self that we see and experience and therefore vision and experience are incomplete unless they culminate in identity, unless we are able to live in all our being the supreme Vedantic knowledge, He am I. We must not only see God and embrace Him, but become that Reality. We must become one with the Self in its transcendence of all form and manifestation by the resolution, the sublimation, the escape from itself of ego and all

MOTHER INDIA

its belongings into That from which they proceed, as well as become the Self in all its manifested existences and becomings, one with it in the infinite existence, consciousness, peace, delight by which it reveals itself in us and one with it in the action, formation, play of self-conception with which it garbs itself in the world.

It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how we can do more than conceive intellectually of the Self or of God; but it may borrow some shadow of this vision, experience and becoming from that inner awakening to Nature which a great English poet has made a reality to the European imagination. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of what realisation is. For, first, we see that he had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his meditation, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem "A slumber did my spirit seal," where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, "rolled round in its diurnal course with stocks and stones and trees." Exalt this realisation to a profounder Self than physical Nature and we have the elements of the Yogic knowledge. But all this experience is only the vestibule to that supra-sensuous, supramental realisation of the Transcendent who is beyond all His aspects, and the final summit of knowledge can only be attained by entering into the superconscient and there merging all other experience into a supernal unity with the Ineffable. That is the culmination of all divine knowing; that also is the source of all divine delight and divine living.

That status of knowledge is then the aim of this path and indeed of all paths when pursued to their end, to which intellectual discrimination and conception and all concentration and psychological self-knowledge and all seeking by the heart through love and by the senses through beauty and by the will through power and works and by the soul through peace and joy are only keys, avenues, first approaches and beginnings of the ascent which we have to use and to follow till the wide and infinite levels are attained and the divine doors swing open into the infinite Light.

(c) THE SYNTHESIS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF KNOWLEDGE

IN the last chapter¹ we have spoken of renunciation in its most general scope, even as we spoke of concentration in all its possibilities; what has been said, applies therefore equally to the path of Works and the path of Devotion as to the path of Knowledge; for on all three concentration and renunciation are needed, though the way and spirit in which they are applied may vary. But we must now turn more particularly to the actual steps of the Path of Knowledge on which the double force of concentration and renunciation must aid us to advance. Practically, this path is a reascent up the great ladder of being down which the soul has descended into the material existence.

The central aim of Knowledge is the recovery of the Self, of our true self-existence, and this aim presupposes the admission that our present mode of being is not our true self-existence. No doubt, we have rejected the trenchant solutions which cut the knot of the riddle of the universe; we recognise it neither as a fiction of material appearance created by Force, nor as an unreality set up by the Mind, nor as a bundle of sensations, ideas and results of idea and sensation with a great Void or a great blissful Zero behind it to strive towards as our true truth of eternal non-existence. We accept the Self as a reality and the universe as a reality of the Self, a reality of its consciousness and not of mere material force and formation, but none the less or rather all the more for that reason a reality. Still, though the universe is a fact and not a fiction, a fact of the divine and universal and not a fiction of the individual self, our state of existence here is a state of ignorance, not the true truth of our being. We conceive of ourselves falsely, we see ourselves as we are not; we live in a false relation with our environment, because we know neither the universe nor ourselves for what they really are but with an imperfect view founded on a temporary fiction which the Soul and Nature have established between themselves for the convenience of the evolving ego. And this falsity is the root of a general perversion, confusion and suffering which besiege at every step both our internal life and our relations with our environment. Our personal life and our communal life, our commerce with ourselves and our commerce with our fellows are founded on a falsity and are therefore false in their recognised principles and methods, although through all this error a growing truth continually seeks to express itself. Hence the supreme importance to man of Knowledge, not what is called the practical knowledge of life, but of the pro-

¹ In the *Arya*, this chapter does not immediately follow the last one, *The Status of Knowledge*—it comes after the chapter on *Renunciation*.—The Editor.

foundest knowledge of the Self and Nature² on which alone a true practice of life can be founded.

The error proceeds from a false identification. Nature has created within her material unity separate-seeming bodies which the Soul manifested in material Nature enfolds, inhabits, possesses, uses; the Soul forgetting itself experiences only this single knot in Matter and says "I am this body." It thinks of itself as the body, suffers with the body, enjoys with the body, is born with the body, is dissolved with the body; or so at least it views its self-existence. Again, Nature has created within her unity of universal life separate-seeming currents of life which form themselves into a whorl of vitality around and in each body, and the Soul manifested in vital Nature seizes on and is seized by that current, is imprisoned momentarily in that little whirling vortex of life. The Soul, still forgetting itself, says "I am this life"; it thinks of itself as the life, craves with its cravings or desires, wallows in its pleasures, bleeds with its wounds, rushes or stumbles with its movements. If it is still mainly governed by the body-sense, it identifies its own existence with that of the whorl and thinks "When this whorl is dissipated by the dissolution of the body round which it has formed itself, then I shall be no more." If it has been able to sense the current of life which has formed the vortex, it thinks of itself as that current and says "I am this stream of life; I have entered upon the possession of this body, I shall leave it and enter upon the possession of other bodies: I am an immortal life revolving in a cycle of constant rebirth."

But again Nature has created within her mental unity, formed in the universal Mind separate-seeming dynamos as it were of mentality, constant centres for the generation, distribution and reabsorption of mental force and mental activities, stations as it were in a system of mental telegraphy where messages are conceived, written, sent, received, deciphered, and these messages and these activities are of many kinds, sensational, emotional, perceptual, conceptual, intuitional, all of which the Soul manifested in mental Nature accepts, uses for its outlook on the world and seems to itself to project and to receive their shocks, to suffer or to master their consequences. Nature instals the base of these dynamos in the material bodies she has formed, makes these bodies the ground for her stations and connects the mental with the material by a nerve-system full of the movement of vital currents through which the mind becomes conscious of the material world and, so far as it chooses, of the vital world of Nature. Otherwise the mind would be conscious of the mental world

²*Atmajñāna and tattvajñāna.*

first and chiefly and would only indirectly glimpse the material. As it is, its attention is fixed on the body and the material world in which it has been installed and it is aware of the rest of existence only dimly, indirectly or sub-consciously in that vast remainder of itself with regard to which superficially it has become irresponsive and oblivious.

The Soul identifies itself with this mental dynamo or station and says "I am this mind." And since the mind is absorbed in the bodily life, it thinks "I am a mind in a living body" or, still more commonly, "I am a body which lives and thinks." It identifies itself with the thoughts, emotions, sensations of the embodied mind and imagines that because when the body is dissolved all this will dissolve, itself also will cease to exist. Or if it becomes conscious of the current of persistence of mental personality, it thinks of itself as a mental soul occupying the body whether once or repeatedly and returning from earthly living to mental worlds beyond; the persistence of this mental being mentally enjoying or suffering sometimes in the body, sometimes on the mental or vital plane of Nature it calls its immortal existence. Or else, because the mind is a principle of light and knowledge, however imperfect, and can have some notion of what is beyond it, it sees the possibility of a dissolution of the mental being into that which is beyond, some Void or some eternal Existence, and it says, "There I, the mental soul, cease to be." Such dissolution it dreads or desires, denies or affirms according to its measure of attachment to or repulsion from this present play of embodied mind and vitality.

Now, all this is a mixture of truth and falsehood. Mind, Life, Matter exist and mental, vital, physical individualisation exists as facts in Nature, but the identification of the soul with these things is a false identification. Mind, Life and Matter are ourselves only in this sense that they are principles of being which the true self has evolved by the meeting and interaction of Soul and Nature in order to express a form of its one existence as the Cosmos. Individual mind, life and body are a play of these principles which is set up in the commerce of Soul and Nature as a means for the expression of that multiplicity of itself of which the one Existence is eternally capable and which it holds eternally involved in its unity. Individual mind, life and body are forms of ourselves in so far as we are centres of the multiplicity of the One; universal Mind, Life and Body are also form of our self, because we are that One in our being. But the self is more than universal or individual mind, life and body and when we limit ourselves by identification with these things, we found our knowledge on a falsehood, we falsify our determining view and our practical experience not only of our self-being but of our cosmic existence and of our individual activities.

The Self is an eternal utter Being and pure existence of which all these things are becomings. From this knowledge we have to proceed; this knowledge we have to realise and make it the foundation of the inner and the outer life of the individual. The Yoga of Knowledge, starting from this primary truth, has conceived a negative and positive method of discipline by which we shall get rid of these false identifications and recoil back from them into true self-knowledge. The negative method is to say always "I am not the body" so as to contradict and root out the false idea "I am the body", to concentrate on this knowledge and by renunciation of the attachment of the soul to the physical get rid of the body-sense. We say again "I am not the life" and by concentration on this knowledge and renunciation of attachment to the vital movements and desires, get rid of the life-sense. We say, finally, "I am not the mind, the motion, the sense, the thought" and by concentration on this knowledge and renunciation of the mental activities, get rid of the mind-sense. When we thus constantly create a gulf between ourselves and the things with which we identified ourselves, their veils progressively fall away from us and the Self begins to be visible to our experience. Of that then we say "I am That, the pure, the eternal, the self-blissful" and by concentrating our thought and being upon it we become That and are able finally to renounce the individual existence and the Cosmos. Another positive method belonging rather to the Raja-yoga is to concentrate on the thought of the Brahman and shut out from us all other ideas, so that this dynamo of mind shall cease to work upon our external or varied internal existence: by mental cessation the vital and physical play also shall fall to rest in an eternal samadhi, some inexpressible deepest trance of the being in which we shall pass into the absolute Existence.

This discipline is evidently a self-centred and exclusive inner movement which gets rid of the world by denying it in thought and shutting the eyes of the soul to it in vision. But the universe is there as a truth in God even though the individual soul may have shut its eyes to it and the Self is there in the universe really and not falsely, supporting all that we have rejected, truly immanent in all things, really embracing the individual in the universal as well as embracing the universe in that which exceeds and transcends it. What shall we do with this eternal Self in this persistent universe which we see encompassing us every time we come out of the trance of inner meditation? The ascetic Path of Knowledge has its solution and its discipline for the soul that looks out on the universe. It is to regard the immanent and all-encompassing and all-constituting Self in the image of the ether in which all forms are, which is in all forms, of which all forms are made. In that ether cosmic Life and Mind move as the Breath of things, an atmospheric sea in the ethereal, and constitute from it all these forms;

but what they constitute are merely name and form and not realities; the form of the pot we see is a form of earth only and goes back into the earth, earth a form resolvable into the cosmic Life, the cosmic Life a movement that falls to rest in that silent immutable Ether. Concentrating on this knowledge, rejecting all phenomenon and appearance, we come to see the whole as an illusion of name and form in the ether that is Brahman; it becomes unreal to us; and the universe becoming unreal the immanence becomes unreal and there is only the Self upon which our mind has falsely imposed the name and form of the universe. Thus are we justified in the withdrawal of the individual self into the Absolute.

Still, the Self goes on with its imperishable aspect of immanence, its immutable aspect of divine envelopment, its endless trick of becoming each thing and all things; our detection of the cheat and our withdrawal do not seem to effect one tittle either the Self or the universe. Must we not then know also what it is that thus persists superior to our acceptance and rejection and too great, too eternal to be affected by it? Here too there must be some invincible reality at work and the integrality of Knowledge demands that we shall see and realise it; otherwise it may prove that our own knowledge and not the Lord in the universe was the cheat and the illusion. Therefore we must concentrate again and see and realise also this which persists so sovereignly and must know the Self as no other than the Supreme Soul which is the Lord of Nature, the upholder of cosmic existence by whose sanction it proceeds, whose will compels its multitudinous actions and determines its perpetual cycles. And we must yet concentrate once again and see and realise and must know the Self as the one Existence who is both the Soul of all and the Nature of all, at once Purusha and Prakriti and so able both to express himself in all these forms of things and to be all these formations. Otherwise we have excluded what the Self does not exclude and made a wilful choice in our knowledge.

The old ascetic Path of Knowledge admitted the unity of things and the concentration on all these aspects of the one Existence, but it made a distinction and a hierarchy. The Self that becomes all these forms of thing is the Virat or universal Soul; the Self that creates all these forms is Hiranyagarbha, the luminous or creatively perceptive Soul. The Self that contains all these things involved in it is Prajna, the conscious Cause or originally determining Soul; beyond all these is the Absolute who permits all this unreality, but has no dealings with it. Into that we must withdraw and have no farther dealings with the universe, since Knowledge means the final Knowledge, and therefore these lesser realisations must fall away from us or be lost in That. But evidently

from our point of view these are practical distinctions made by the mind which have a value for certain purposes, but no ultimate value. Our view of the world insists on unity; the universal Self is not different from the perceptive and creative, nor the perceptive from the causal, nor the causal from the Absolute, but it is one "Self-being which has become all becomings," and which is not any other than the Lord who manifests Himself as all these individual existences nor the Lord any other than the sole-existing Brahman who verily is all this that we can see, sense, live or mentalise. That Self, Lord, Brahman we would know that we may realise our unity with it and with all that it manifests and in that unity we would live. For we demand of knowledge that it shall unite; the knowledge that divides must always be a partial knowing good for certain practical purposes; the knowledge that unites is *the* knowledge.

Therefore our integral Yoga will take up these various disciplines and concentrations, but harmonise and if possible fuse them by a synthesis which removes their mutual exclusions. Not realising the Lord and the All only to reject them for silent Self or unknowable Absolute as would an exclusively transcendental, nor living for the Lord alone or in the All alone as would an exclusively Theistic or an exclusively Pantheistic Yoga, the seeker of integral knowledge will limit himself neither in his thought nor in his practice nor in his realisation by any religious creed or philosophical dogma. He will seek the Truth of existence in its completeness. The ancient disciplines he will not reject, for they rest upon eternal truths, but he will give them an orientation in conformity with his aim.

We must recognise that our primary aim in knowledge must be to realise our own supreme Self more than that Self in others or as the Lord of Nature or as the All; for that is the pressing need of the individual, to arrive at the highest truth of his own being, to set right its disorders, confusions, false identifications, to arrive at its right concentration and purity and to know and mount to its source. But we do this not in order to disappear into its source, but so that our whole existence and all the members of this inner kingdom may find their right basis, may live in our highest self, live for our highest self only and obey no other law than that which proceeds from our highest self and is given to our purified being without any falsification in the transmuting mentality. And if we do this rightly we shall discover that in finding this supreme Self we have found the one Self in all, the one Lord of our nature and of all Nature, the All of ourselves who is the All of the universe. For this that we see in ourselves we must necessarily see everywhere, since that is the truth of His unity. By discovering and using rightly the Truth of our being

THE YOGA OF KNOWLEDGE

the barrier between our individuality and the universe will necessarily be forced open and cast away and the Truth that we realise in our own being cannot fail to realise itself to us in the universality which will then be our self. Realising in ourselves the "I am He" of the Vedanta, we cannot but realise in looking upon all around us the identical knowledge on its other side, "Thou art That." We have only to see how practically the discipline must be conducted in order that we may arrive successfully at this great unification.

NOTES FROM MOTHER'S TALKS

I

THIS MYSTERY OF EXISTENCE

HAVE you ever asked yourself why there is this universe at all, at least this earth with which we are so much concerned and which seems to us so real, so authentic? It would perhaps be very wise on your part if you did not! I have often spoken to you of Theon. He was truly a sage in his own way. People used to come to him and ask questions. Many asked why there was an universe. He would answer, "But what is that to you?" Some would ask, "Why is the universe like this?" To that he would say, "It is what it is, how does it matter?" Others again would remark, "I do not consider the world a satisfactory affair." There, we begin to come more to the point. To those who find the world unsatisfactory I would say, Get to work, try to change it. Find a way that it may be otherwise, that it may be made better. Things are what they are, it is no use speculating over that and getting worried. Seek for the means of remedy, so that things may be made what they should be. Why are things what they are? Not that one cannot know the reason, although one may not always be sure of it. The best thing to do is to take whatever is as it is and try to change it towards that which it should be. Now the wonder of it is that if you are sincere, if you want to know sincerely and work sincerely, you will come to know why things are what they are—the cause, the origin and the process, for they are all one. There is one truth at the base of things; if that were not there, nothing would be. If you seize that truth, you seize at the same time the origin of the creation and the means of changing it as well. In other words, if you are in contact with the Divine—for the Divine is that base—you are in possession of the key to all things, you know the why, the how and the process for change. One thing to do then is to start doing the thing. But you might say, it is too much, too difficult, too big for you—to work in the world or for the world. Well then, start with yourself. You are a little mass of substance, a symbol or representative of the universe. Let your work then be to form and fashion that particle. Concentrate upon it, go within—even within that little person of yourself you will find the long looked-for key.

6-5-1953

NOTES FROM MOTHER'S TALKS

II

EQUALITY OF THE BODY—EQUALITY OF THE SOUL

Equality of the external being means good health, a solid body, controlled nerves—when you are not shaken by the least shock, when you are calm, quiet, poised, balanced. In that condition you can receive into you a great force from above (or, from the environing energy around you) and yet not get upset. If one of you at any time had received some such force, he must have known by experience that without a perfectly sound physical health, one could not contain or hold it. You cannot remain still, you are restless, you move about, talk, cry, weep, jump or dance, just to throw out the energy you are unable to hold. You scatter about what it is not possible for you to gather and assimilate. In order to be able to gather and assimilate the force, the body and the nerves must be quiet and strong.

Equality of the soul is different; it is psychological, not physical. It is the power to bear the impact of things, good or bad, without being grieved or elated, discouraged or enthused, without any upsetting or disturbance. Whatever happens you remain serene and at peace. But both the equalities are necessary. There are many equalities, in fact. Apart from the equality of the vital, and the equality of the body, there is also the equality of the mind proper. That is to say, all ideas from all quarters may come into your head, even the most contradictory: yet you remain quiet, untroubled, and even unconcerned. You are a witness, you see them, sort them, arrange them, put each idea in its proper place, appreciate the value of each, determine the relation of each to the other, and to the whole, but you are not swayed by any particular one.

15-4-1953

III

PERSONAL EFFORT AND WILL

In personal effort there is a feeling of effort, of tension: the effort is felt as personal i.e. you rely upon yourself and you have the impression that if you do not do at each step what is to be done all will be lost. Will is different. It is the capacity to concentrate upon what one does so that it may be done well and to continue to do so till the thing is done.

MOTHER INDIA

Supposing under given circumstances a work has come upon you. Take an artist, for example, a painter. He has an inspiration and has decided to do a painting. He knows very well that if he has not the inspiration he will not be able to do anything good, the painting would be nothing more than a daub. If he is simply passive, with neither effort nor will, he would tell the Divine: Here I leave the palette, the brush and the canvas, you will do the painting now. But the Divine does not act in that way. The painter himself must arrange everything, concentrate upon his subject, put all his will upon a perfect execution. On the other hand, if he has not the inspiration, he may take all the trouble and yet the result be nothing more than a work like other thousands of examples. You must feel what your painting is to express and know or find out how to express it. A great painter often gets a very exact vision of the painting he is to do. He has the vision and he sets himself to work out the vision. He labours day by day, with a will and consciousness, to reproduce as exactly as possible what he sees clearly with his inner sight. He works for the Divine; his surrender is active and dynamic. For the poet too it is the same thing. Anyone who wants to do something for the Divine, it is the same.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

Is there at all or is there still a secret of the Veda?

According to current conceptions the heart of that ancient mystery has been plucked out and revealed to the gaze of all, or rather no real secret ever existed. The hymns of the Veda are the sacrificial compositions of a primitive and still barbarous race written around a system of ceremonial and propitiatory rites, addressed to personified Powers of Nature and replete with a confused mass of half-formed myth and crude astronomical allegories yet in the making. Only in the later hymns do we perceive the first appearance of deeper psychological and moral ideas—borrowed, some think, from the hostile Dravidians, the “robbers” and “Veda-haters” freely cursed in the hymns themselves,—and, however acquired, the first seed of the later Vedantic speculations. This modern theory is in accord with the received idea of a rapid human evolution from the quite recent savage; it is supported by an imposing apparatus of critical research and upheld by a number of Sciences, unhappily still young and still largely conjectural in their methods and shifting in their results,—Comparative Philology, Comparative Mythology and the Science of Comparative Religion.

It is my object in these chapters to suggest a new view of the ancient problem. I do not propose to use a negative and destructive method directed against the received solutions, but simply to present, positively and constructively, a larger and, in some sort, a complementary hypothesis built upon broader foundations,—a hypothesis which, in addition, may shed light on one or two important problems in the history of ancient thought and cult left very insufficiently solved by the ordinary theories.

We have in the Rigveda,—the true and only Veda in the estimation of European scholars,—a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient lan-

guage which presents a number of almost insoluble difficulties. It is full of ancient forms and words which do not appear in later speech and have often to be fixed in some doubtful sense by intelligent conjecture; a mass even of the words that it has in common with classical Sanskrit seem to bear or at least to admit another significance than in the later literary tongue; and a multitude of its vocables, especially the most common, those which are most vital to the sense, are capable of a surprising number of unconnected significances which may give, according to our preference in selection, quite different complexions to whole passages, whole hymns and even to the whole thought of the Veda. In the course of several thousands of years there have been at least three considerable attempts, entirely differing from each other in their methods and results, to fix the sense of these ancient litanies. One of these is prehistoric in time and exists only by fragments in the Brahmanas and Upanishads; but we possess in its entirety the traditional interpretation of the Indian scholar Sayana and we have in our own day the interpretation constructed after an immense labour of comparison and conjecture by modern European scholarship. Both of them present one characteristic in common, the extraordinary incoherence and poverty of sense which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns. The separate lines can be given, whether naturally or by force of conjecture, a good sense or a sense that hangs together; the diction that results, if garish in style, if loaded with otiose and decorative epithets, if developing extraordinarily little of meaning in an amazing mass of gaudy figure and verbiage, can be made to run into intelligible sentences; but when we come to read the hymns as a whole we seem to be in the presence of men who, unlike the early writers of other races, were incapable of coherent and natural expression or of connected thought. Except in the briefer and simpler hymns, the language tends to be either obscure or artificial; the thoughts are either unconnected or have to be forced and beaten by the interpreter into a whole. The scholar in dealing with his text is obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication. We feel that he is not so much revealing the sense as hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistency.

Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies. In the fixed tradition of thousands of years they have been revered as the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in Brahmana and Upanishad, in Tantra and Purana, in the doctrines of great philosophical schools and in the teachings of famous saints and sages. The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge,—the

received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. But if we accept the current interpretations, whether Sayana's or the modern theory, the whole of this sublime and sacred reputation is a colossal fiction. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naive superstitious fancies of untaught and materialistic barbarians concerned only with the most external gains and enjoyments and ignorant of all but the most elementary moral notions or religious aspirations. Nor do occasional passages, quite out of harmony with their general spirit, destroy this total impression. The true foundation or starting-point of the later religions and philosophies is the Upanishads, which have then to be conceived as a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas.

But this conception, supported by misleading European parallels, really explains nothing. Such profound and ultimate thoughts, such systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as are found in the substance of the Upanishads, do not spring out of a previous void. The human mind in its progress marches from knowledge to knowledge, or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been obscured and overlaid, or it seizes on old imperfect clues and is led by them to new discoveries. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins anterior to itself, and these in the ordinary theories are lacking. The hypothesis, invented to fill the gap, that these ideas were borrowed by barbarous Aryan invaders from the civilised Dravidians, is a conjecture supported only by other conjectures. It is indeed coming to be doubted whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a myth of the philologists.

Now, in ancient Europe the schools of intellectual philosophy were preceded by the secret doctrines of the mystics; Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries prepared the rich soil of mentality out of which sprang Pythagoras and Plato. A similar starting-point is at least probable for the later march of thought in India. Much indeed of the forms and symbols of thought which we find in the Upanishads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas supposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teaching such as those of the Greek mysteries.

Another hiatus left by the received theories is the gulf that divides the material worship of external Nature-Powers in the Veda from the developed religion of the Greeks and from the Psychological and spiritual ideas we find attached to the functions of the Gods in the Upanishads and Puranas. We may accept for the present the theory that the earliest fully intelligent form of

human religion is necessarily,—since man on earth begins from the external and proceeds to the internal,—a worship of outward Nature-Powers invested with the consciousness and the personality that he finds in his own being.

Agni in the Veda is avowedly Fire; Surya is the Sun, Parjanya the Rain cloud, Usha the Dawn; and if the material origin or function of some other Gods is less trenchantly clear, it is easy to render the obscure precise by philological inferences or ingenious speculation. But when we come to the worship of the Greeks not much later in date than the Veda, according to modern ideas of chronology, we find a significant change. The material attributes of the Gods are effaced or have become subordinate to psychological conceptions. The impetuous God of Fire has been converted into a lame God of Labour; Apollo, the Sun, presides over poetical and prophetic inspiration; Athene, who may plausibly be identified as in origin a Dawn-Goddess, has lost all memory of her material functions and is the wise, strong and pure Goddess of Knowledge; and there are other deities also, Gods of War, Love, Beauty, whose material functions have disappeared if they ever existed. It is not enough to say that this change was inevitable with the progress of human civilisation: the process also of the change demands inquiry and elucidation. We see the same revolution effected in the Puranas partly by the substitution of other divine names and figures, but also in part by the same obscure process that we observe in the evolution of Greek mythology. The river Saraswati has become Muse and Goddess of Learning; Vishnu and Rudra of the Vedas are now the supreme Godhead, members of a divine Triad and expressive separately of conservative and destructive process in the cosmos. In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig Veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Viswamitra. In the same Upanishad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss, and he seems to be identified with the power of the will and responsible for human actions. In other Upanishads the gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man. Soma, the plant which yielded the mystic wine for the Vedic sacrifice, has become not only the God of the moon, but manifests himself as mind in the human being. These evolutions suppose some period, posterior to the early material worship or superior Pantheistic Animism attributed to the Vedas and prior to the developed Puranic mythology, in which the gods became invested with deeper psychological functions, a period which may well have been the Age of the Mysteries.

As things stand, a gap is left or else has been created by our exclusive pre-occupation with the naturalistic element in the religion of the Vedic Rishis.

I suggest that the gulf is of our own creation and does not really exist in the ancient sacred writings. The hypothesis I propose is that the Rigveda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the Gods. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit, perhaps even dangerous to the ordinary human mind or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence they favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle. Their formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race. The ritual system recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda,—the secret words, *nīnyā vachānsī*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols and the psychological functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task, for which these chapters and the translations that accompany them are only a preparation.

The hypothesis, if it proves to be valid, will have three advantages. It will elucidate simply and effectively the parts of the Upanishads that remain yet unintelligible or ill-understood as well as much of the origins of the Puranas. It will explain and justify rationally the whole ancient tradition of India; for it will be found that, in sober truth, the Vedānta, Purāna, Tantra, the philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back in their source to Vedic origins.

MOTHER INDIA

We can see there in their original seed or in their early or even primitive forms the fundamental conceptions of later Indian thought. Thus a natural starting-point will be provided for a sounder study of Comparative Religion in the Indian field. Instead of wandering amid insecure speculations or having to account for impossible conversions and unexplained transitions we shall have a clue to a natural and progressive development satisfying to the reason. Incidentally, some light may be thrown on the obscurities of early cult and myth in other ancient nations. Finally, the incoherencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained and disappear. They exist in appearance only, because the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. That thread found, the hymns appear as logical and organic wholes and the expression, though alien in type to our modern ways of thinking and speaking, becomes, in its own style, just and precise and sins rather by economy of phrase than by excess, by over-pregnancy rather than by poverty of sense. The Veda ceases to be merely an interesting remnant of barbarism and takes rank among the most important of the world's early Scriptures.

CHAPTER II

A RETROSPECT OF VEDIC THEORY

Veda, then, is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. In that original epoch thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning and speech accepted modes of expression which in our modern habits would be inadmissible. The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind's ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*drastà*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *Sruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words themselves, *drishti* and *sruti*, sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions; these and cognate words signify, in the esoteric terminology of the hymns, revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration.

In the Vedic idea of the revelation there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture. Knowledge itself was a travelling and a reaching, or a finding and a winning; the revelation came only at the end, the light was the prize of a final victory. There is continually in the Veda this image of the journey, the soul's march on the path of Truth. On that path, as it advances, it also ascends; new vistas of power and light open to its aspiration; it wins by a heroic effort its enlarged spiritual possessions.

From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric, as well as its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice; it is the spirit's hymn of battle and victory as it discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man, man's praise of the divine Light, Power, and Grace at work in the mortal. It is far, therefore, from being an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation, nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Only, out of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received, there

MOTHER INDIA

arise a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated and a fixed symbolic language which, perhaps, in that early human speech, was the inevitable form of these conceptions because alone capable by its combined concreteness and power of mystic suggestion of expressing that which for the ordinary mind of the race was inexpressible. We have, at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which had become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates.

The hymns possess indeed a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique, great variations of style and poetical personality; they are not the work of rude, barbarous and primitive craftsmen, but the living breath of a supreme and conscious Art forming its creations in the puissant but well-governed movement of a self-observing inspiration. Still, all these high gifts have deliberately been exercised within one unvarying frame work and always with the same materials. For the art of expression was to the Rishis only a means, not an aim; their principal preoccupation was strenuously practical, almost utilitarian, in the highest sense of utility. The hymn was to the Rishi who composed it a means of spiritual progress for himself and for others. It rose out of his soul, it became a power of his mind, it was the vehicle of his self-expression in some important or even critical moment of his life's inner history. It helped him to express the god in him, to destroy the devourer, the expresser of evil; it became a weapon in the hands of the Aryan striver after perfection, it flashed forth like Indra's lightning against the Coverer on the slopes, the Wolf on the path, the Robber by the streams.

The invariable fixity of Vedic thought when taken in conjunction with its depth, richness and subtlety, gives rise to some interesting speculations. For we may reasonably argue that such a fixed form and substance would not easily be possible in the beginnings of thought and psychological experience or even during their early progress and unfolding. We may therefore surmise that our actual Sanhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages. It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or version of a more ancient¹ lyric

¹ The Veda itself speaks constantly of "ancient" and "modern" Rishis, (*purvah . nutanah*), the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge.

evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler (Vyasa), with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendants, to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains—secure perhaps only in appearance—of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason.

But these are only speculations and inferences. Certain it is that the old tradition of a progressive obscuration and loss of the Veda as the law of the human cycle has been fully justified by the event. The obscuration had already proceeded far before the opening of the next great age of Indian spirituality, the Vedantic, which struggled to preserve or recover what it yet could of the ancient knowledge. It could hardly have been otherwise. For the system of the Vedic mystics was founded upon experiences difficult to ordinary mankind and proceeded by the aid of faculties which in most of us are rudimentary and imperfectly developed and, when active at all, are mixed and irregular in their operation. Once the first intensity of the search after truth had passed, periods of fatigue and relaxation were bound to intervene in which the old truths would be partially lost. Nor once lost, could they easily be recovered by scrutinising the sense of the ancient hymns; for those hymns were couched in a language that was deliberately ambiguous.

A tongue unintelligible to us may be correctly understood once a clue has been found; a diction that is deliberately ambiguous, holds its secret much more obstinately and successfully, for it is full of lures and of indications that mislead. Therefore when the Indian mind turned again to review the sense of Veda, the task was difficult and the success only partial. One source of light still existed, the traditional knowledge handed down among those who memorised and explained the Vedic text or had charge of the Vedic ritual,—two functions that had originally been one; for in the early days the priest was also the teacher and seer. But the clearness of this light was already obscured. Even Purhiths of repute performed the rites with a very imperfect knowledge the power and the sense of the sacred words which they repeated. For the material aspects of Vedic worship had grown like a thick crust over the inner knowledge and were stifling what they had once served to protect. The Veda was already a mass of myth and ritual. The power had begun to disappear

out of the symbolic ceremony; the light had departed from the mystic parable and left only a surface of apparent grotesqueness and naivete.

The Brahmanas and the Upanishads are the record of a powerful revival which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of spiritual thought and experience. This movement had two complementary aspects, one, the conservation of the forms, another the revelation of the soul of Veda,—the first represented by the Brahmanas,¹ the second by the Upanishads.

The Brahmanas labour to fix and preserve the minutiae of the Vedic ceremony, the conditions of their material effectuality, the symbolic sense and purpose of their different parts, movements, implements, the significance of texts important in the ritual, the drift of obscure allusions, the memory of ancient myths and traditions. Many of their legends are evidently posterior to the hymns, invented to explain passages which were no longer understood: others may have been part of the apparatus of original myth and parable employed by the ancient symbolists or memories of the actual historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the hymns. Oral tradition is always a light that obscures; a new symbolism working upon an old that is half lost, is likely to overgrow rather than reveal it; therefore the Brahmanas, though full of interesting hints, help us very little in our research; nor are they a safe guide to the meaning of separate texts when they attempt an exact and verbal interpretation.

The Rishis of the Upanishads followed another method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions; or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms. What they found, they expressed in other terms more intelligible to the age in which they lived. In a certain sense their handling of the texts was not disinterested; it was not governed by the scholar's scrupulous desire to arrive at the exact intention of the words and the precise thought of the sentences in their actual framing. They were seekers of a higher than verbal truth and used words merely as suggestions for the illumination towards which they were striving. They knew not or they neglected the etymological sense and employed often a method of symbolic interpretation of component sounds in which it is very

¹ Necessarily, these and other appreciations in the chapter are brief and summary views of certain main tendencies. The Brahmanas for instance have their philosophical passages.

difficult to follow them. For this reason, while the Upanishads are invaluable for the light they shed on the principal ideas and on the psychological system of the ancient Rishis, they help us as little as the Brahmanas in determining the accurate sense of the texts which they quote. Their real work was to found Vedanta rather than to interpret Veda.

For this great movement resulted in a new and more permanently powerful statement of thought and spirituality, Veda culminating in Vedanta. And it held in itself two strong tendencies which worked towards the disintegration of the old Vedic thought and culture. First, it tended to subordinate more and more completely the outward ritual, the material utility of the mantra and the sacrifice to a more purely spiritual aim and intention. The balance, the synthesis preserved by the old Mystics between the external and the internal, the material and the spiritual life was displaced and disorganised. A new balance, a new synthesis was established, leaning finally towards asceticism and renunciation, and maintained itself until it was in its turn displaced and disorganised by the exaggeration of its own tendencies in Buddhism. The sacrifice, the symbolic ritual became more and more a useless survival and even an encumbrance; yet, as so often happens, by the very fact of becoming mechanical and ineffective the importance of everything that was most external in them came to be exaggerated and their minutiae irrationally enforced by that part of the national mind which still clung to them. A sharp practical division came into being, effective though never entirely recognised in theory, between Veda and Vedanta, a distinction which might be expressed in the formula, "the Veda for the priests, the Vedanta for the sages."

The second tendency of Vedantic movement was to disencumber itself progressively of the symbolic language, the veil of concrete myth and poetic figure, in which the Mystics had shrouded their thought and to substitute a clearer statement and more philosophical language. The complete evolution of this tendency rendered obsolete the utility not only of the Vedic ritual but of the Vedic text. Upanishads, increasingly clear and direct in their language, became the fountainhead of the highest Indian thought and replaced the inspired verses of Vasistha and Viswamitra.¹ The Vedas, becoming less and less the indispensable basis of education, were no longer studied with the same zeal and intelligence; their symbolic language, ceasing to be used, lost the remnant of its inner sense to new generations whose whole manner of thought

¹ Again this expresses the main tendency and is subject to qualification. The Vedas are also quoted as authorities; but as a whole it is the Upanishads that become the Book of Knowledge, the Veda being rather the Book of Works

MOTHER INDIA

was different from that of the Vedic forefathers. The Ages of Intuition were passing away into the first dawn of the Age of Reason.

Buddhism completed the revolution and left of the externalities of the ancient world only some venerable pomps and some mechanical usages. It sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice and to bring into use the popular vernacular in place of the literary tongue. And although the consummation of its work was delayed for several centuries by the revival of Hinduism in the Puranic religions, the Veda itself benefited little by this respite. In order to combat the popularity of the new religion it was necessary to put forward instead of venerable but unintelligible texts Scriptures written in an easy form of a more modern Sanskrit. For the mass of the nation the Puranas pushed aside the Veda and the forms of new religious systems took the place of the ancient ceremonies. As the Veda had passed from the sage to the priest, so now it began to pass from the hands of the priest into the hands of the scholar. And in that keeping it suffered the last mutilation of its sense and the last diminution of its true dignity and sanctity.

Not that the dealings of Indian scholarship with the hymns, beginning from the pre-Christian centuries, have been altogether a record of loss. Rather it is to the scrupulous diligence and conservative tradition of the Pandits that we owe the preservation of Veda at all after its secret had been lost and the hymns themselves had ceased in practice to be a living Scripture. And even for the recovery of the lost secret the two millenniums of scholastic orthodoxy have left us some invaluable aids, a text determined scrupulously to its very accentuation, the important lexicon of Yaska and Sayana's great commentary which in spite of its many and often startling imperfections remains still for the scholar an indispensable first step towards the formation of a sound Vedic learning.

GOD AND MAN

A LECTURE BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

(This lecture was originally prepared by S. R. Alless for the Conference on "Religion and Contemporary Man" held at Benteveld, Holland, in September, under the auspices of the "World Congress of Faiths and The World Alliance for Friendship through Religion." He was unable to go to Holland, but his Lecture was sent to to the World Congress of Faiths for publication in their journal.)

WHEN I was kindly invited by Rev. Peacock to speak on Eastern spiritual techniques for the West, I was very glad, because I felt that as Sri Aurobindo epitomises in himself both the East and West, his ideas about the realisation of a synthesis between the two through the power of the Spirit would interest the listeners. First a student at St. Paul's, and then a Greek and Latin scholar at Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo on his return to India developed into a spiritual leader and a seer-philosopher—Romain Rolland called him "the last of the great Rishis." However, on later reflection I decided to speak on a different subject, a subject which I thought was more fundamental to our life and more directly connected with the problem under discussion at the Conference, the question of the relation between God and Man.

By way of an introduction I may say that in spite of a widespread feeling of frustration and a great deal of turmoil and confusion in our social and political life, there are tendencies all over the world pointing, however gropingly, towards the Spirit; from behind the veil of night some light seems to be pressing through, making its presence felt in different directions. But although these tendencies are gaining ground, in most cases there does not seem to be right guidance, real first-hand knowledge which can canalise these tendencies into spiritually creative activities. On the one hand, there are haphazard efforts to do something without a clear perception of ends, goals and purposes; on the other hand, there is a great amassing of intellectual knowledge about things mystical and spiritual. Commentaries are daily published on the teachings of famous saints, mystics, and yogis, discussing at length their systems and disciplines, but there is hardly a body of *direct* knowledge, patiently gathered year after year, and employed for the spiritual development of man and the problems dealing with the organisa-

tion of his outer life today. These Commentaries can be called the modern shastras; they may make men pundits, scholars, but they cannot make them spiritual, divine—they cannot radically transform their lives. No doubt, these intellectual efforts have an important task to fulfill; their value should by no means be underrated, for they certainly help to turn men's minds Godwards. And this indeed is a necessary step, especially in the West, but they cannot make men realise God; their limitations are obvious. Intellectualising and idealising about the Spirit is good, but it is not enough; most certainly not for the seeker of the Divine Reality. What we should do is to get down to fundamentals, to basic things; we must first have the experience, and create new forms, intellectual, ethical, social, directly out of this experience. Not the limited reason intellectualising about the experiences of the past, but the Spirit itself, acting directly, must become the governing and formative power of our inner and outer life.

The subject of this Conference is *Religion and Contemporary Man*. Before proceeding further we should examine the terms used; in defining and explaining them we shall find a clue to our problem. First, what is religion, and secondly, what is Man? We can make a broad statement, that just as philosophy arises out of the mind's seeking for knowledge, its search for the absolutes of Truth, Good and Beauty, and wide and comprehensive generalisations and concepts which would explain the nature of God, man, and the universe, and the *raison d'être* of existence, so religion fundamentally arises out of the soul's aspiration to unite with the source of its being, to seek perfection and lead a diviner existence than the present ignorant and obscure mental-vital-physical existence. Of course, this impulse does not work overtly and directly from the very first, and is not easily distinguishable; it works from behind the veil of the nature parts, the mind, the vital, and the physical, but as man evolves spiritually and his seeking becomes purer, this impulse towards divinity becomes more clearly recognisable. Religion, however great and noble and divine its basic urge, is still a mixture, not a pure flame—it is a compromise between man's lower and higher parts; the lower, with its desires and cravings, its egoism and self-will, failing to rise up to the higher with its movements of aspiration, faith, purity, and self-consecration. At its worst, religion becomes a ceremonial sustained by lip-worship—more religiosity than religion; but at its best, it passes on into something that transcends it, into the domain of the Spirit. It then ceases to be just religion and becomes spirituality. In his *Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo explains the difference between spirituality and other human endeavours which are usually mistaken for it. He writes: "It must therefore be emphasised that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not

even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution,—the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.” This by no means implies that man’s ethical and humanitarian endeavours should cease once he takes to the spiritual life; on the contrary, he is able to use a more effective dynamism for his altruistic activities. There is a shift in the poise of the consciousness from the mind to the Spirit; the mind now becomes the instrument of the Spirit. Therefore, we may state that any religion,—whatever its symbolism, outer form, and accompanying ritual,—which does not make God its ultimate goal, is not religion but something else. Religion must start with worship of God and love of God, finally leading to a union with Him. But the union, if it is to be catholic and all-embracing, should be not only through love but also through knowledge; and this realisation, in order to be complete as well as effective in life, should include within itself union through works. So an integral union with God through love, and knowledge, and works should be the aim of religion; man’s religious aspirations should be directed towards this end. He has not only to unite with God apart from the world, but realise Him and manifest Him in life; he has to identify his consciousness with the Divine Will working in the universe, and reorder his life in accordance with its dictates; and this necessitates a comprehensive and integral union with Him.

Further, the knowledge should be wide and many-sided, taking into its orbit His different aspects, otherwise religion would tend to be narrow and sectarian. On the other hand, the tendency towards over-simplification should be avoided,—a point of view which ignores all the aspects of the Divine except the Impersonal, putting it forward as the sole Reality in which all things merge and find their identity of essence. This stand-point, while recognising the unity in essence of all existents, fails to perceive the many-sidedness and integrality of the Divine. No doubt, the Divine Reality is the same in essence every-

where, but it is an Infinite Reality, and cannot be restricted to this particular status; a higher experience reveals that there can be a difference in the sameness; for example, there is the Personal aspect, Ishwara, the Father in Heaven, —God, and there is the Impersonal one, Parabrahman, the Absolute; there is the static aspect, one that bases and supports all existence and permeates it like a divine ether, and there is the dynamic one, which creates and maintains this universe of a myriad worlds against the ground of the stability and immutability of the static aspect. So, what Sri Aurobindo calls an integral knowledge, or rather a knowledge of the Integral Divine Reality, as differentiated from the Essential Reality, which is only an aspect of It, is needed for a comprehensive understanding of all religions and faiths. Only through such an integral knowledge can it be possible to trace each religion to its source—through the spiritual experience on which it is based. A well-known Professor of Religion and Philosophy asked me at the last International Congress of Philosophy at Brussels: “How can you know the difference as well as the similarity between the truth of one religion or spiritual system and another; how can you evaluate these?” My answer was: “By tracing them to their fundamental spiritual experiences; that is the only true way. By the reason and its arguments, however skillful, you cannot evaluate something that transcends reason and belongs to a plane higher than its cognitive level. To differentiate between the experiences, a spiritual knowledge of the highest order is, of course, needed, not an intellectual knowledge about spiritual experiences, which is quite a different thing.”

We now have a fairly good idea about the sense and significance of religion. The next question is: What is man? For obvious reasons it is not possible to discuss here at great length this question even within the restricted sphere of our enquiry, but a brief statement can be made: Man is not only a natural being, a nature organism, with a mind, a vital force and a body, a formation of Nature, but is also a soul-being—an entity directly connected with God. This is the immortal part of his total personality, a part whose possibilities have not been truly fathomed. It can be said that man has a double relation with God; in his nature parts he is connected with God through His emanatory manifestation, universal Nature—the cosmic unfolding in Time and Space of the potentialities locked in the depths of His Being; through his soul he is connected with God in His Transcendent aspect, — His supra-cosmic status beyond the temporal sequence,—as well as in His Individual aspect, the Lord seated in the heart of all creatures, the Divine within who guides man in his evolutionary march and leads him gradually from darkness to light. This inner soul relation is direct, while the other is through an intermedium, through the

machinery of Nature. The connection through Nature is determined by Law, and governed through Process—mind-process, vital-process, and material-process; this determinism remains unless it is modified by a higher one arising out of his soul relation with the Transcendent. And this is the truth behind what is known as Grace. It is the Divine Grace leaning down to earth from the Transcendent in answer to man's aspiration and invocation, prayer and devotion, love and self-surrender, that intervenes and modifies the workings of Nature. It works through the forces of Nature and sometimes even directly—controlling their operations by its higher dynamism. Man today, brought up in the hey-day of scientific progress, finds it difficult to believe that there can be any Power greater than that revealed through Nature; Professor Broad humorously remarks: "It seems to me they confuse the Author of Nature with the editor of *Nature*."

* * *

The last question is: What has religion to offer contemporary man, taking the term religion in its highest sense? And that is how we must consider it, for a thing should not be judged by its distortion but by its inner truth-content, and its highest manifestation. Can religion help man to find abiding peace and happiness, light and knowledge, and aid him in rearranging his individual and collective life in consonance with this knowledge? This is the challenge religion has to face. Will it cease to be merely a thing of creed and dogma and ceremonial, and found itself on living spiritual experience; will it exceed itself and take its stand on the Spirit, and make its aim union with God, in love, in knowledge, in works? That is the question it has to answer. If it does not, it will cease to attract men with a genuine spiritual urge and aspiration. Religion today, even at its best, is on the intellectual, ethical, and emotional level; it has a true impulse behind it, but hardly any spiritual light or divine illumination in it. Shining words which originally meant a great deal to the saints, mystics, and yogis who first used them, can have little dynamic value for contemporary man unless he has an experience himself which is similar to those for which the words stand. Let us get down to fact, to reality; let us not go on intellectualising about the Spirit, but get to the Spirit, the Divine. At least, let us feel Its direct influence in our lives, and allow it to mould our being in the image of the Supramental truth. By surrendering our ignorant and egoistic self-will, let us learn to be the instruments of the Divine Will. Sri Aurobindo assures us that all this is possible; through his own experience and those of his disciples, whom he has helped to contact the Divine, he is able to give this assurance. In fact, his work always has been to invoke the Transcendent Grace

MOTHER INDIA

for men, and show them through his own realisations how it could be made an actuality in their lives. The cardinal tenet of his teaching is that two things are needed—an aspiration that calls from below, and a Grace from above that answers. This truth has become the basis of the spiritual life of several people who look up to him and his associate, the Mother, for guidance.

So we may sum up and say that the real value of religion for contemporary man is this, that it helps him to attain a higher level of consciousness through direct spiritual experience—a level on which his problems and conflicts can more easily be solved; in most cases these will even cease to exist, for they are foreign to this new consciousness. They are the reflexes of his ignorant and obscure consciousness, and have no place where there is unity and harmony between the inner and the outer being, between soul and nature, between God and man; this condition of the human consciousness will also ensure unity between man and man, for he will find his oneness with all in the Divine Being. I can do no better than end this lecture with Sri Aurobindo's own words, spoken with authority because through knowledge and realisation: "The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda."

S. R. ALBLESS.

IS THERE A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN ENGLAND?*

Is there a spiritual awakening in England after a long phase of agnosticism—is there a seeking for spiritual realities in spite of the influence of Logical Positivism, which is at present the dominant trend in its philosophical outlook? The present writer was asked this question some time after he had come to London from the International Congress of Philosophy held at Brussels.

If by England only professional philosophers and their immediate followers were meant, the answer would be "No". To reduce problems of Being and Knowledge to Semantics is not exactly conducive to creating St. Pauls and St. Francis. Logical Positivism has its place in philosophy as a rigorous negative discipline for clearing confused thinking, but it is in no position to pass verdicts on metaphysical realities. However, this philosophical trend does not happen to be the only one in England. When a well-known professor of philosophy was asked by me at Brussels if he was a Logical Positivist, he replied, "If I were one I would probably hang myself."

Again, if by England we mean its people in general, the correct reply would be that they are spiritually perplexed but not yet spiritually awakened. Just after the last war when they were feeling the Kierkegaardian *Angst*—dread and anguish—they were perhaps on the verge of an awakening, but now they seem to be sliding along once again into a humdrum existence, though with misgivings and a feeling of frustration. The outer mask is the same as ever, but there is something inexplicable gnawing at the inner soul. These people are conventionally religious, and certainly highly ethical; they do believe in spiritual values and in the reality of the Spirit, but this belief is something remote from their lives. They are not spiritually awakened, in the sense that they have not yet felt the need of opening themselves to direct spiritual experience; but if given the right lead they may do so.

But if by England we are to take its few aspiring individuals who are sensitive to finer and subtler influences, and who quietly seek the Spirit and

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attempt to lead a life that is not purely materialistic and utilitarian, then it can be said that there is some kind of an awakening, at least a tendency that points towards an awakening. The importance of such a tendency should not be minimised just because it is represented by a few; it is always the few who have led human evolution and created values. One must be free from the illusion of quantity when evaluating a subtle phenomenon of this nature. Secondly, many of these individuals may not be professional philosophers—it is not professional philosophers alone who influence people; there are philosophically minded prose writers, there are poets, historians, and men of science who also mould the minds of the people. Witness the influence of Aldous Huxley, Yeats and Eliot, or Toynbee, or Eddington and Jeans. England has not been influenced culturally only by its Lockes and Humes, and Bentham and Mills; it has had its Carlyles and Ruskins and Arnolds, and its Wordsworths and Shelleys and Blakes too. If today at Southampton Row you see men walking with their Ayers and Russells, outside Foyles you see others strolling with their Eliots and Huxleys and Grahame Greenes. Eliot now writes comedies and preaches pure mysticism in them. The second Act of his *Confidential Clerk* has an unmistakable mystic strain in it. Even in the philosophical camp itself there is a fissure, for the Logical Positivists form only one group of influential thinkers. There are people like H. H. Price, Broad, Thouless, Tomlin and others, who have spiritual leanings; and there are writers on matters of general philosophical, scientific, and spiritual interest, like Kenneth Walker, whose books usually have a ready market. Among foreign writers, the existentialist Gabriel Marcel is quite well-known, especially after his Gifford lectures, and is more popular than Sartre or even Heidegger. A religious existentialist who is not averse to metaphysics, he promises to become a fairly strong influence in England. Karl Jaspers is also quietly read by many. Kierkegaard and Buber are gaining ground, especially among those who are both religious and philosophic by temperament, while the purely religious prefer Barth. In the field of religion, apart from Christian Revivalist movements, there is the World Congress of Faiths, which under Baron Palmstierna and others does good work in promoting an interest in the spiritual teachings of different faiths and creeds.

Indian philosophy is looked upon with respect by those who are familiar with it. During a discussion with me on Cognition, Price remarked, "The good thing about your Indian Philosophy is that it is empirical." Many critics of Indian philosophy have not quite realised this. Such a remark coming from a Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford shows that Indian philosophy has things to offer to the intellectual world, and is not something buried in the past. The professor's reaction was not surprising, because the Indian systems of

philosophy based on direct spiritual experience would naturally have greater appeal for the empirical British mind than the speculative systems of the continentals,—that is, of course, when they admit the reality of such experience, and do not dismiss it as subjective phantasy. Among the admirers of Indian philosophy, there are first the followers of Buddhism; Ramakrishna and Vivekananda also have their adherents, and now Sri Aurobindo is slowly coming to the fore. To give an example, Kenneth Walker in the preface to his new book *Only the Silent Hear* writes that he is indebted to three men most, Whitehead, Sri Aurobindo, and professor Peiper. Sri Aurobindo is known in intellectual circles as a profound mind, but there does not seem to be much understanding—except in a few like Walker—about his unique contribution to human thought and life. His experience-concept of the Supermind, his ideas regarding man's further evolution and the progressive divinisation of his existence have not been properly grasped in all their implications. This can be said of the condition in India too.

There is also another trend in the intellectual sphere which points towards realities other than those of the material world as we ordinarily understand it. The writings of those interested in Para-psychology like Tyrrell, Thouless, Broad, Price and Carington are read by an appreciable number of people. These may be called the broad tendencies in English thought today; rigid classifications should be avoided because ideas work in a very incalculable way, and a thinker may often influence many without directly having a large following.

So it may be summed up that in England today there are some signs which point towards an awakening to the life of the Spirit. One is usually drawn to the spiritual life in two ways—either through an intense idealistic seeking and a Godward aspiration, or through disillusionment and suffering. The last war has made many in England ask whether all is well with their “greatest-happiness-of-the-greatest-number-through-material-progress” conception of life; they are wondering whether the time is not ripe for giving another answer to the Sphinx who sits by the roadside and goes on asking them, “Knowest thou the meaning of this day?” This time the answer will have to take within its orbit not the absent God of the Deists, a relic of the age of Reason, but the ever-present living God, the fountainhead of all creation. But if England at all takes to spirituality, it will not be a negativistic one which necessitates a withdrawal from the world; it will be on the contrary a type of spirituality that will satisfy the pragmatic bent of its nature, a spirituality that can canalise the forces of the Spirit for the amelioration of human life—perhaps the kind of

MOTHER INDIA

positive spirituality advocated by Sri Aurobindo, whose fundamental tenet is that the aim of spirituality should be “not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.” It is difficult to predict anything with certainty in this fast changing world, especially where the movements of the human psyche are concerned—we can only see as through a glass, darkly.

S. R. ALBLESS

SRI AUROBINDO ON HUMAN GREATNESS

LETTERS TO A YOUNG DISCIPLE

1936

NAGIN: Till the other day I did not know how great men rise, bloom and then fall. So I tried to study Y and X. But even in these cases I had to despair, for I failed to trace any greatness in them except perhaps in their ego!

SRI AUROBINDO: I do not know to whom you refer as great men here; but Y is certainly a great poet. So what is the difficulty in recognising his greatness?

Men with great capacities or a powerful mind or a powerful vital have very often more glaring defects of character than ordinary men—or at least the defects of the latter do not show so much, being like themselves, smaller in scale.

NAGIN: What particularly is there in these men that you call great?

SRI AUROBINDO: By greatness is meant an exceptional capacity of one kind or another which makes a man eminent among his fellows.

NAGIN: A truly great man does not know himself to be great.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a very doubtful statement. Most great men know perfectly well that they are great.

NAGIN: The outer greatness is but an illusion. The true quality of greatness lies inside and to know it we must go within.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why is the outer greatness an illusion?

NAGIN: While speaking about greatness I was thinking of the psychic and spiritual greatness and not of the outer kind like any great capacity nor of any powerful mind or vital. For, I thought the Divine does not care so much for this outer greatness as for the inner—especially in the real seekers of the Truth. That is why I called the outer greatness a mere illusion.

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should the Divine not care for the outer greatness? He cares for everything in the universe. All greatness is the Vibhuti of the Divine, says the Gita.

NAGIN: I am puzzled how a man with a big ego, like X can be an instrument of the Divine, for, where the ego exceeds, the Divine recedes. Both can't work together. And yet X cures diseases wonderfully. How is it that he is used as an instrument by the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Divine is there in all men, so the Divine and the ego do live together. But the Divine is veiled by the ego and manifests in proportion as the ego *first submits itself*, then recedes and disappears. There can be no complete presence by the Divine without disappearance of the ego.

Any man can be an instrument of the Divine, e.g. Kemal Pasha. The thing is to be a perfectly conscious instrument.

NAGIN: Do you really mean to say that people like Kemal Pasha can be called the instruments of the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, certainly, they are unconscious instruments—not for the great divine work, but for the cosmic work in the human race.

NAGIN: By the way, is it true that one can be so extraordinary as to do several things simultaneously without any direct or indirect Yogic discipline, i.e. think of several quite different things at the same time? I was told that Napoleon used to do this...

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, Julius Caesar also—he could dictate 5 letters on different subjects at a time to 5 secretaries without losing the thread of any of them for a moment.

NAGIN: One part of X seems to have turned beautifully towards the Mother and that is why she is able to use him as an instrument in curing cases of illness. The remaining parts seem to be still egoistic. Perhaps if his vital being were less egoistic, he would achieve greater things in his medical practice and in his inner sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO: He can cure the people all right, in spite of ego—the force too does work through his vital and not his mind only, because his vital is strong, ardent and enthusiastic. Most people's vitals are half-dead things,

busy only with their little selfish desires. X's is at most vain and ambitious but not selfish—it is rather large and generous; therefore a good instrument.

Inner sadhana is another matter, there the ego stands as a great obstacle.

NAGIN: Anyway, what has outer greatness got to do with the Yogis? If the sadhakas also aim at the outer greatness what difference will there be between a Yogic life and a worldly life?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously outer greatness is not the aim of Yoga. But that is no reason why one should not recognise the part played by greatness in the order of the universe or the place of great men of action, great poets and artists etc.

NAGIN: Nowadays men's minds have taken such a peculiar turn that they take delight in pointing out the defects and whims of great men. M.B. knows this, I presume, and that is why he has retired to a solitary place and remains quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: People have begun to try to prove that great men were not great, which is a very great mistake. If greatness is not appreciated by men, the world will become mean, small, dull, narrow and tamasic. Why this reference to M.B.? He is not a great man.

NAGIN: I cannot understand how these men with a big and generous vital manage to stock in themselves all kinds of vital vices.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? Vices are simply an overflow of energy in unregulated channels.

NAGIN: If men of exceptional capacities want to exhibit their greatness it is better if they do so only in the field of their power. They will surely be mocked at if they try it in other fields.

Why do great persons have so often more glaring defects of character than ordinary people?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have told you that already. They have more energy and the energy comes out in what men call vices as well as what men call virtues.

NAGIN: You said that one with an exceptional capacity is called a great man. X has that in curing his cases. He also seems to have many vices. Do they also come from an overflow of energy?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, certainly. Many great men even have often very great vices and many of them. Great men are not usually model characters.

NAGIN: What is this “overflow of energy” in the great men you spoke of the other day? We usually associate energy with the vital.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mental, vital, physical, all kinds of energies.

NAGIN: Because the great men have an overflow of energy, does the Divine never care if they use it in virtues or in vices?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should he care? Is he a policeman? So long as one is in the ordinary nature, one has qualities and defects, virtues and vices. When one goes beyond there are no virtues and vices;—for these things do not belong to the Divine Nature.

NAGIN: If an overflow of energy in the great men is merely of the mental, vital or physical kind what is new in it? There are plenty of people in the world who are not great and yet have a lot of energy in themselves. But they don't throw it out always in vices. The great men ought to be able to contain it and hold it back rather than be extravagant with it in wrong uses.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who said there was anything new in it? If there are so many people in the world who have as much energy as great men, why are they not great? If they have such a stupendous lot of energy which they are keeping in reserve why do they not throw it out in something recognisable as great?

NAGIN: If the great men are to lead their lives according to their fancies, considering themselves as the centres of the universe, self-applauding all the time and looking upon ordinary people as mere toys for themselves, what is there in them that we can call great? How are they helping the world and the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the power in them that is great and that power comes from the Divine—by their actions and greatness they help the world and aid the cosmic purpose. It does not matter whether they have ego or not—they are not doing Yoga.

NAGIN: You asked me why the Divine should care for the vices or virtues. I cannot understand it. For, if He does not care for the vices or virtues, how can He care for darkness or light, falsehood or truth?

SRI AUROBINDO: Vice and virtue have nothing to do with darkness or light, truth and falsehood. The spiritual man rises above vice and virtue, he does not rise above truth and light, unless you mean by truth and light, human truth and mental light. They have to be transcended, just as virtue and vice have to be transcended.

NAGIN: If He does not care for the vices, how will the world be divinised? Are not these things supposed to be unhelpful to His work?

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you in a position to make a judgment as to what will or will not help God's work? You seem to have very elementary ideas in these matters. What is your idea of divinisation—to be a virtuous man, a good husband, son, father, a good citizen etc.? In that case, I myself must be undivine,—for I have never been these things. Men like X or W would then be the great Transformed Divine Men.

NAGIN: If God is indifferent to both vices and virtues, what is the need of divinising the world at all? It would naturally mean that everything here is O.K.—in harmony with His divinity.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not. It is only Z who is in perfect harmony with the Divine (he and two others like him); for he is a man without a single vice, all virtues from the crown of his head to the tip of his toe. He is the type of the truly great man as you conceive him. But do you really believe that men like Napoleon, Caesar, Shakespeare were not great men and did nothing for the world or for the cosmic purpose? that God was deterred from using them for his purpose because they had defects of character and vices? What a singular idea!

NAGIN: So far as we know every Avatar came down here in order to deliver the world from falsehood, darkness, vices etc., at least to a certain extent. Each of them preached against these things.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not concerned with what the Avatars did or are supposed to have done (though in that case Krishna seems to have done some very queer and undivine things). My business is with rising above the human consciousness and not with fulfilling limited human ideals; and I look at things from that standpoint.

NAGIN: In defence of X you gave the examples of Napoleon, Caesar and Shakespeare. But they had no vices like X. Their ambition was not so small, petty and trivial but was rather great, heroic and dazzling—worth having by the great men of the world!

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Great or dazzling, or small in the field, ambition is ambition and it is necessary for most for an energetic action. What is the use of calling a thing a vice when it is small and glorifying it when it is big?

NAGIN: Napoleon and Caesar were great not merely in one small thing as in the case of X, but in many things. I suppose many great people were like them, otherwise they would not have been of much use to the world or to the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not only the very very very big people who are of importance to the Divine. All energy, strong capacity, power of effectuation are of importance.

As for N., C. and Sh. not one of them was a virtuous man, but they were great men—and that was your contention that only virtuous men are great men and those who have vices are not great, which is an absurd contention. All of them went after women—two were ambitious, unscrupulous. Napoleon was most arrogant and violent.

Shakespeare stole deer, Napoleon lied freely, Caesar was without scruples.

NAGIN: Sometimes I think X is not aware of any defects in himself and believes the Divine would justify whatever he does.

SRI AUROBINDO: He does not believe anything of the kind...X knows perfectly well the defects of his character and knows that they are defects.... He tries to overcome [them] but has not yet succeeded except with one or two, partially. What of that? Do you think it is so easy to change one's nature?

NAGIN: Of course I don't deny that X has something great in him so far as medical science is concerned. He is able to choose the exact drugs and open himself to the Mother's Force. But that is all. Nothing more.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing more! You speak very lightly about some of the most astonishing achievements I have ever seen. His cures outside the Ashram have been supra-miraculous. The man has in this field intuition, genius, immense power of discernment.

NAGIN DOSHI

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND MAN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Recently some questions were put by the students of the Political Society of the Makerere College, East Africa, to A. B. Purani of Sri Aurobindo Ashram apropos a lecture of his. They are given here, together with the answers.

Q. I. You propound your "ideology" of super-racialism as meaning freedom, equality, fraternity. It has been historically proved impossible in even a small nation like France. How can you expect it in the world? I feel that such an ideology is nothing more than mere speculation. There is a propensity in the world today to destroy human freedom, equality, fraternity. You don't suggest any means for the attainment of your ideal, unless you assume that man is undergoing an evolution from humanity to superhumanity?

A. I. I did not use the word Super-racialism. It is a word suggesting a discredited political ideology which, unfortunately, is practised with vehemence by some races even today as a policy of their States. What I propounded was that the trend of universal evolution through the long vista of the past seems to be making for the evolution of higher than mental consciousness to which man has attained. If we look at the process of universal evolution, we see that it seems to commence with an apparent Inconscient, something which is inert, without consciousness. From this Inconscient, the first emergent or evolute is Matter. This Matter is now studied by Mind and it is seen that Matter is composed of ultimate particles which are electrical in their constitution. The combination of these particles in various numbers, in different designs, produces an immense multiplicity of material objects. Matter thus, though apparently unconscious, seems to act with some kind of subconscious intelligence and Will of its own. The fact that material energy and objects are subject to quantitative determinations shows that Matter is not devoid of the principle of consciousness, or intelligence.

If Matter was really inert and not inert merely in appearance, then Mind could have done whatever it liked with Matter, i.e. Mind could have made Matter do what it liked. One could have produced water by combining iron and sul-

phur, but this is not possible. So Matter has something in its constitution which in spite of its apparent inconscience dictates to it its behaviour. I have laboured this point to show that Life which comes out or seems to evolve out of Matter is not something altogether alien to Matter.

The second evolute or emergent in the process of this great universal evolution is Life. This Life as a principle is the same in the smallest microbes, in the animal kingdom and in the human being. Life emerges or seems to emerge out of Matter; but Being cannot come out of Non-Being. Life cannot come out of non-Life. Therefore Life must have been present in Matter in an involved state. It emerges into manifestation when conditions are ready. But Life as a new phase in the process of evolution has altogether new properties which distinguish it from Matter. And yet though Life differs in its qualities from Matter still it would not be correct to suppose that Life when it emerges abandons Matter. In fact, Life depends upon Matter, lives and grows upon it.

The third emergent in the great process of universal evolution is Mind. As in the previous paragraph we saw that Life was involved in Matter, similarly here also, Mind though a new emergent must have been present in Life in an involved condition. If we observe Life in the insects and the animal we find actually that this is true: in the birds and the quadrupeds, we find the presence of the Principle of Mind. Only, Mind in the animals is a Vital Mind, it is Mind concerned with life processes, Mind that is directed towards needs of life, food or mating or self-preservation from hostile beings. The domestication of animals and their capacity to acquire certain human characteristics shows the presence of the Principle of Mind among the animals. Maurice Maeterlinck, a famous writer, has shown in his popular books that there is the working of the Principle of Intelligence or Mind in the insects and the animals. At Karlsbad in Germany, there was a centre where animals including horses were trained to carry out mental operations like addition and subtraction which again shows the presence of the Principle of Mind as an undeveloped potentiality in the animals. Of course, the animal organism is not fitted for the full emergence of mental consciousness. It is in man that Mind comes fully to the surface as his chief faculty. And let us observe again that this Mind is not completely cut off from both Life and Matter from which it has evolved with altogether new powers of its own. As Life stood on Matter, Mind stands on both Life and Matter, i.e., the human being who is representative of this Principle of Mind has a body made of Matter and also has vitality or life as its basis. The human being has Mind, Life and Matter, all the three principles in him in an indivisible state though Mind is his chief faculty or power.

Thus we see that up till now from apparent inconscience, the universal evolutionary process has given us (1) Matter, this vast material universe, (2) Life and this infinite world of life stretching from the vegetable and insect world to the vast variety of animal Life and (3) Mind with the human being from the primitive to the most developed individual and the collective human existence.

We also saw that this evolutionary process is organic i.e., though a new emergent with altogether new powers comes out, there is no dissociation from the one that is left behind. Life connects itself with Matter and Mind maintains relations with both Life and Matter from which it evolves. Now what I tried to make out was that Mind is not the highest pinnacle of this evolutionary process. Sri Aurobindo has shown in his masterpiece, *The Life Divine*, that this process of universal evolution contains within itself sufficient signs to show that it is not yet complete. Mind has to evolve from it a yet new emergent which he calls for convenience the Supermind. It is the new emergent towards which Mind is already tending. Man in his individual and collective life shows sufficient evidence of this aspiration towards a greater than mental consciousness. The cultural activities of man almost all of them contain at their highest point sufficient evidence of man's contact with supra-intellectual faculties like intuition, inspiration, revelation etc. If man has been moved throughout history occasionally by the sub-conscious instincts, he has also been moved occasionally by the intervention of the Superconscious powers. His poetical creation shows his frequent acquaintance with not mere intellectual imagination but with the faculty of intuition and often with the power of inspiration. Many artistic creations of man, his painting and sculpture, his music and even his architecture bears evidence of his contact with a higher than rational faculty. In the field of action i.e. in the work of leadership of nations, there are occasions when great leaders were moved to most important decisions by either an intuition or a great influx of inspiration. Even in the field of military strategy, and that of material science, we see that at least some of the great decisive movements and inventions were results of flashes of intuition or of a coming down of inspiration.

All the religious movements of man bear open evidence of this great movement of the human spirit attempting to ascend to a higher consciousness than his own. All religions without exception have asserted a supra-rational, a superhuman source of this Universe and of man. They have all asserted the possibility of man being able to attain it. That they have advocated particular processes and in advocating the means to attain to this great superhuman

source, they differ from one another, does not negate the fact of the possibility of man attaining to the superhuman, supra-rational source.

In fact, as my friend, Dr. S. K. Maitra, has written, the greatest *fact* about man is that he is more than man. Sri Aurobindo has given ample evidence in his writings to show that man, the mental being, is transitory and that there is a greater than mental consciousness, the Supermind, the Truth Consciousness, to which man has to attain. This is not merely rational but one could even say the inevitable conclusion on a study of the grand universal evolutionary process. And this higher stage of evolution is not open to a particular race only. It is the prerogative of all humanity if man would only exercise it. The Supermind is potential to all mankind: whoever fulfils the conditions can—irrespective of caste, colour, race, creed or sex,—attain it. And Sri Aurobindo has not only argued out the evolution of man into superhumanity but also made it a practical programme. However I would suggest to those of our friends who are interested in this question to read Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*.

Q. II. In the United Nations Organisation some few Big Powers have the power of "Veto". It is plain enough that the power of veto is detrimental to the welfare and freedom of the small nations. How can the struggle for the small nations' freedom be reconciled with this power of veto? It is clear that every nation tries to ensure the security of its strength.

A. II. You are right in thinking that the Veto reserved by the Great Powers in the Security Council is not in keeping with the freedom and equality of all nations represented in the U.N.O. But there is some justification for this reservation in the historical circumstances which have brought about for the first time in human history the international organisation of the world in the form of the U.N.O. The Great Powers had to suffer tremendous losses in the second world war and though the whole of humanity had to go through plenty of suffering, still the greatest sacrifices had to be borne by these great nations. So when all the nations of the world were to be brought together in a great international organisation, these powers were perhaps legitimately afraid that if the veto was not reserved by them, they would be outvoted on important resolutions concerning their own safety or concerning some new ideology with which they may not be in full agreement.

But I believe that the veto after having been reserved should have been surrendered by all the Great Powers as a psychological gesture on their part to make all nations feel that they were equal partners in maintaining inter-

national peace and wellbeing. There is in my opinion too much insistence on the constitutional red tape at the U.N.O. and there is not sufficient realisation of the importance of the psychological factors. Unity of mankind to be real should be a psychological unity, not merely a unity compelled by international circumstances or a unity based upon balancing of interests. Economics and power politics even though they may not be altogether avoided under the present circumstances, still they can be relegated to the background or to a secondary position. The need of the hour is that all the members of the U.N.O. should *feel* that humanity is one and that all the members constituting the human family are indispensable and that all are equal irrespective of their size and power. If the veto had been voluntarily surrendered by any of the Great Powers, it would have gone a long way in creating confidence in the smaller nations and thus would have brought nearer the psychological unity which is indispensable to make the U.N.O. a success. Let us clearly remember the basic principle that the unity of mankind cannot be established by mere constitution of the U.N.O. or by any institution. These are outer needs and can be at best of secondary importance. The main thing is to create the psychological factor, the living and organic sense of human unity in man so that he would learn to think in terms of the whole humanity.

Q. III. Is the use of violence of any help to a politician, when he uses it against a stronger power?

A. III. Violence generally does not help the enslaved nation unless it can be successfully carried out against the ruling power. Besides, violence can and generally does evoke counter-violence and if there is a stronger power against the struggling nation, naturally its violence would be stronger and more organised than that of the people struggling for freedom.

There are people who believe that the weapon of non-violence is bound to succeed in all cases. That may be due to excessive idealism or moral enthusiasm; for obviously it seems that there are limits to the use of this weapon. Anyhow, as a new method of securing freedom, it gives to a very weak subject nation a good chance of success if properly tried.

Q. IV. What is the proof that Supra-rational Consciousness exists?

A. IV. It depends upon what you mean by the Supra-rational Consciousness. The evidence for what should more properly and comprehensively be called the

Supramental Consciousness has been abundantly given by Sri Aurobindo in his great works, *The Life Divine* as well as *The Human Cycle*. If you look at the answer to Question. I that I have given, you may get a rough outline of that evidence. The seeds of the Supramental Consciousness are contained in man's own present consciousness. The feeling in the heart of the individual that he is more than his body and his desires, the feeling in man that he is a soul or that he has in him a Divine spark which can be evoked into activity though at present not at all or not fully awakened, is, I believe, also a part of the evidence of the Supramental Consciousness. Your question seems to be like that of one who asks: what is the evidence that the Banyan tree must exist when we see only before us the seed of the Banyan tree? I would again refer to my answer to the first question.

Q. V. Do you think human unity is possible before political independence and liberty are achieved? Do you expect Africans, who are being ruled by another power in a way which they resent, to preach the unity of mankind?

A. V. Human unity in the sense of real unity cannot be established unless all the nations are free. But then it presupposes the evolution and development of national consciousness in all the races. Unity in mankind has been tried during historical times by conquest, by spread of Empire, and by spread of colonisation. Unity of mankind by conquering other countries as did Alexander or Jhengiskhan, is perhaps not now possible as Democracy is the most accepted form of collective political life, though it is possible perhaps to have even in democracy a dictator who might act almost like the old conquerors. But all those three methods of uniting mankind politically have failed since the time of the Roman Empire. Even colonial expansion has not brought about human unity because the colonies have gradually tended to fall away from the mother countries and have developed separate interests, tendencies and policies.

So far as the Africans are concerned, I do not know whether all the Africans resent the rule of foreign powers, as you suggest. Also the question is perhaps whether the Africans have evolved a national consciousness of their own. Besides, it is conceivable that a new and composite nationality made up of the Europeans, the Indians and the Africans may evolve on this continent of Africa which is writing the first and a new page in its history, because historical circumstances have perhaps under Providential guidance brought these races together here. It may be perhaps to work out here the evolution of human culture in which many problems of collective psychology would have to be

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND MAN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

solved harmoniously. This would require the play of the highest statesmanship, balancing of interests, cultural contacts, patience, tolerance and generosity on the part of all concerned.

Q. VI. Since the evolution of man into superman is not complete now, and since you say that man must realise this supernature of his before he can form a unity, why would you then condemn the present state of disunity? It is of a necessity that it is so.

A. VI. I did not say that man must realise his supernature *before* he can form human unity. What I said was that unity of mankind if realised would help greatly in man's evolution to the Supermind. Any movement that could really bring man nearer to man would tend in reality to bring man nearer to God. The Supermind being the dynamic Divine Consciousness would therefore come nearer to man in proportion to his attainment of or efforts at real spiritual unity.

I do not merely condemn the present state of disunity, because as you admit and I also know that it is the necessary stage from which man has to move to the realisation of unity. It is not condemnation only that can help, but the realisation that the present state of disunity is not desirable. An active aspiration for unity would be required if man is to realise the goal.

(To be continued)

THE TALE OF NALA*

(A Fragment)

SRI AUROBINDO

NALA, Nishadha's king, paced by a stream
Which ran escaping from solitudes
To flow through gardens in a pleasant land.
Murmuring it came of the green souls of hills
And of the lawns and hamlets it had seen,
The brown-limbed peasants toiling in the sun,
And the tired bullocks in the thirsty fields.
In its bright talk and laughter it recalled
The moonlight and the lapping dangerous tongues,
The sunlight and the skimming wings of birds,
And gurgling jars, and bright bathed limbs of girls
At morning, and its noons and lonely eves.
This memory to the jasmine trees it sang
Which dropped their slow white-petalled kisses down
Upon its haste of curling waves. Far off
A mountain rose, alone and purple vague,
Wide-watching from its large stone-lidded eye
The drowsy noontide earth; vastly outspread
Like Vindhya changed, against the height of heaven
It stood. And on the deep-blue nearness limned
Its shoulder in a mighty indolence
Reclined for giant rest the Titan paused.
The birds were voiceless on the unruffled boughs,
The spotted lizard in a dull-eyed ease
Basked on his sentinel stone, a single kite
Circled above; white-headed over rust
Of brown and gold he stained the azure noon.
Solitary in the spaces of his mind
Among these sights and sounds King Nala paced
Oblivious of the joy of world and kind.
Shrill and dissatisfied the wanderer's cry

* From Sri Aurobindo's old manuscripts, unrevised..

THE TALE OF NALA (A FRAGMENT)

Came to his ear; he saw with absent eye
The rapid waters in their ripple run
Nor marked the ruddy sprouting of the leaves,
Nor heard the dove's rare cooing on the trees.
His thoughts were with a face his dreams had seen
Diviner than the jasmine's moon-flaked glow;
He listened to a name his dreams had known
Sweeter than passion of the crooning bird.
The delicate syllables yearning through his mind
Repeated longingly their soft-wreathed call,
As if some far-off bright forgotten queen
From whom his heart had wandered through the world
Were summoning back to her her truant thrall,
Luring it with the music of her name,
Some sovereign magic face of amber pearly,
Some spirit embodied in a moon-gold flame.
But now a look on him he seemed to feel.
The summit self-uplifted to the sky
Mounting the air in act to climb and join
Heaven's sapphire longing with earth's green unease
Drew his far gaze, which scanned as for a thought
The undecipherable character
Of mingled rocks and woods; but all was lost
In too much light. Dull glared the giant stones;
The woods, fallen sleepy on their mountain couch,
Had nestled in a coverlet of haze.
Like dim-seen shapes of virgins stoled in blue
Huddling close-limbed they slumberous lay.¹
Then from some covert bosom's shrouded riches
A revelation came; for like a gleam
Of beauty from some purple-guarded breast
A passionate glint of lovely whiteness stole
Fluttering awhile, then fast towards him fled
Seeking his vision; and its glowing race
Splintered the sapphire with a silvery hue,
And soon a flame-bright flock of swans was seen
Flying like one and breasting with its shock
Of faery speed the vastness of the noon.

¹ Together clasped in a huddled grace
Sleeping close-limbed the mystic slumberers lay.

MOTHER INDIA

Not only with an argent flashing ran
The brilliant cohort on its skiey path,
But shaking from its wild wings a hail of gold.
Heaven's lustrous tunic of transparent air
Regretted the bright ornament as they passed.
They flew not like the snowy cranes, a wreath
Of flowers driven in the rain-tide's breath,
When thunder calls them northward, but came fast
Ranked in magnificent and lovely lines
Cleaving the air with splendour. All the pride
And rushing glory of their bosoms and wings
Assailed his eyes with silver and with flame.
Over the Nishadhan gardens flying round
They came down whirring softly. Filling awhile
With gentle clamour from their liquid throats
The region, they disturbed with dipping plumes
The turquoise slumber of the motionless lake
Lulled to unrippling rest by windless noon.
A hundred marvellous shapes in mystic crowd
Covered the water like a living robe.
Now on the stream were spread their glorious breasts.
Each close-ranked by her sweet companion's side
Floating they came and preened above the flood
Their long and stately necks like curving flowers.
The water petted with enamoured waves
Their bosoms and the slow air swooned along
Their wings, their motion set a wordless chant
To flow against the chidings of the stream.
A song from heaven was that gliding grace
And hard to speak their beauty, what silver mass
On mass, what flakes and peacock eyes of gold,
What passion of crimson flecked each pure white breast!
It seemed to his charmed sense that in this form
The loveliness of a diviner world
Had come to him winged. Their beauty to tender greed
Moved him of all that living silver and gold.

* * *

“For now thy heaven-born pride must learn to range
My gardens of the earth and haunt my streams,
And to my call consent. If thou resist

THE TALE OF NALA (A FRAGMENT)

I will imprison thee in a golden cage
And bind thy beauty with a silver chain".
A laughter beautiful arose from her
Thrilling her throat with bubbling ecstasies,
Sweet, satisfied because he praised her grace.
And with mysterious mild deep-glowing eyes
In long and softly wreathing syllables
The wonder spoke: "Release me, for no birds
Are we, O mortal, but the moon-bosomed nymphs
Who to the trance-heard music of the gods
Sway in the mystic dances of the sky,
Apsaras, daughters of the tumbling seas.
Shaped by thy fancy is my white winged form".
But Nala to his bright prisoneer swan replied:
"And now thou chooseth thyself by all thy words,
My divine captive and white-bosomed slave,
Bird of desire or goddess luminous-limbed
To satisfy my pride and my delight
Thou stoopst to me from unattainable heavens.
Thou shalt possess my streams, O white-winged swan,
And dance, O Apsara singing in my halls.
Between the illumined pillars thou shalt glide
When flute and breathing lyre and tumbrel call,
Adorning with thy golden rhythmic limbs
The crystalline mosaic of my floors.
What I have seized by force, by force I keep".
Her eyes now smiled on him; against his bosom
She laid in all its tender curving grace
The long white wonder of her neck upraised
In suppliant wreaths and flattering his cheek
With her soft gleaming head sweetly she cried:
"Because thou art bright and beautiful and bold,
So have I come to thee and thou hast seized
Whom if thou hadst set free, thy joy were lost,
So in thy mind from some celestial space
A name and face have come, yet are on earth,
Which if thou hadst not held with yearning's stays,
Thy mortal life would have been given in vain.
Forced by thy musing in the sapphire noon
Out of the mountain's breast to thee I flew"...

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO AND AESTHETICS

(Continued from the previous issue)

(5) THE ARTIST'S PERSONALITY

BEAUTY and Delight are, in a special sense, the primary source of all poetry and art. "Delight is the soul of existence", says Sri Aurobindo, "beauty the intense impression, the concentrated form of delight; and these two fundamental things tend to be one for the mind of the artist and the poet, though they are often enough separated in our cruder vital and mental experience. These twin powers meet, make a consonance of the perfect harmony of his work and are the first deities he serves." (p. 497 Arya. March 1920). The other powers have to make themselves acceptable to Beauty and Delight "before they can mix with them in a compelling and attracting oneness." The highest labour of the thinking mind will sink into oblivion if it is deficient in this essence. The highest trifle will have an unaging youth if it manages to get itself 'saturated with this sweetness of poetic delight and beauty.'

The artist lives in the light of these ideals and builds a temple for them in the untrodden regions of his mind,—his habitual self. In what manner is the work of the artist related to his personality?

"Do not construct your poetry," says Sri Aurobindo, "with the brain-mind, the mere intellect—that is not the source of true inspiration. Write always from the inner heart of emotion and vision." (p. 253 L. 3). His expositions of the psychology of the artist and of artistic creation have added considerably to our knowledge of the subject. He writes with the detachment and the natural ease of a seer who has been an artist himself.

Poets and artists are defined by Sri Aurobindo as men of genius whose consciousness has in some way or other attained to a higher dynamis of conception and expression than ordinary men can hope to have. Genius is the result of an intervention or influence from a higher consciousness than the ordinary human mental. It is only in a few that the rare phenomenon occurs of a part of the consciousness being moulded into a habitual medium of expression of its greater light and force.

Every operation of genius has at its back or infused within it an intuition, revelation, or inspiration, an illumination or at the least a hint or touch or influx, from some greater power or level of conscious being than those which men ordinarily possess or use. The power of inspiration is creative energy. There can be inspiration also without words,—a certain intensity in the light and force and substance of the knowledge is the essence of inspiration. Few poets can keep a sustained level of the highest inspiration. The very highest comes by intermittent drops. In practice, most poets have to sustain the inspiration by industry. A second inspiration can improve on the first; but where the improving is done by the mind, the retouches spoil the work.

Inspiration comes always through the creative, higher or emotional vital. It is the vital force of creative beauty which gives the substance and impetus of inspiration and determines its form. The most genuine and perfect poetry is written when the original source is able to throw its inspiration pure and unaltered into the vital and there it takes its true native form and power of speech exactly reproducing the inspiration. When the vital is too active and gives too much of its own initiative, the poetry remains powerful but is inferior in quality and less authentic.

There is the outer consciousness of the poet which transmits what it receives. It should be entirely passive and transmit without alteration. If it is too lethargic and blocks, or too active and makes its own version, then you have the poetry that fails. It is the interference of the creative vital and the outer consciousness either by obstruction or by too great an activity of their own or by both together that causes the difficulty and labour of writing. In his highest or freest moments the poet is the mouthpiece of the Gods. The intellect labours to substitute its own inferior and toilsome productions for the true speech and rhythm that ought to have come. The brain tries to fashion out of itself or to give its own version of what the higher sources are trying to pour down. But the true word, rhythm and substance are all the time waiting complete and ready behind but are blocked by some part of the transmitting agency which prefers to translate rather than to receive and to transcribe. Sri Aurobindo gives a fascinating analysis of a sonnet by Manmohan Ghose to illustrate how the intellectual mind interferes with the inspiration (p.66-68 L. 3.).

But it is not always a relapse but an oscillation that one finds in almost every poet. Each has a general level, a highest level and a lower range in which some defects of his poetical faculty come out.

The key to a person's creation must be discovered in his inner mental personality, not in his outward mind or life. The physical mind of a man may have been in actual life selfish and hard; but in his fiction the man may be a benevolent philanthropist reformer. An artist may be merely a medium for a creative Force. Or, man being a multiple personality, the poet or artist in him may be only one of the many personalities in him. Its work done, it may retire and leave the man to the others. It is through the poet personality in him that the creative Force works and this may be "either a mere reed through which the Spirit blows but laid aside after the time is over, or it may be an active power having some say even in the surface mental composition and vital and physical activities of the total composite creature." (p. 54 L. 3.).

Poetry can start from any plane of consciousness. But it must always come through the vital if it is to be alive. The linking of the vital creative instrument to a deeper psychic experience is necessary if poetry is to be original, subtle and delicately perfect. "There are always two parts of oneself which collaborate in poetry—the instrumental which lives and feels what is written, makes a sort of projective identification with it, and the Seer-Creator within who is not involved, but sees the inner significance of it and listens for the word that shall entirely express this significance. It is in some meeting place of these two that what is felt or lived is transmuted into true stuff of poetry." (p. 50. L.3.).

All poetry is mental or vital or both, sometimes with a psychic tinge. The power from above mind comes in only in rare lines and passages, 'lifting up the mental and vital inspiration towards its own light and power' Poetry may come from the subliminal depths or even from the superconscious sometimes. But it does not come usually through the form of dreams. "It comes either through word-vision or through conscious vision and imagery whether in a fully waking or an inward-drawn state; the latter may go so far as to be a state of samadhi,—*swapna samadhi*. In all these cases it is vision rather than dream that is the imaging power. Dreams also can be made a material for poetry; but everyone who dreams or has visions or has a flow of images cannot by that fact be a poet." (p. 239-40. L. 3.).

Some have thought that a preoccupation with technique comes in the way of the poet's inspiration. If the substance is adequate, the attention to technique can only give the substance greater beauty. Even devices like a refrain, internal rhymes, etc. can indeed be great aids to the inspiration and the expression—just as can ordinary rhyme. The search for technique is simply the search for the best and most appropriate form for expressing what has to

be said and once it is found, the inspiration can flow quite naturally and fluently into it. There can be no harm therefore in close attention to technique so long as there is no inattention to substance.

(6) THE ORIGINATING SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Some deeper or higher plane of consciousness is always the originating source of inspiration. But can we recognise the distinctive qualities of these planes in the mighty confluence that is poetry or art? Sri Aurobindo's thought on these problems is his most original contribution to the theory and psychology of art. The distinctions enunciated by him are based on his own experience and on ancient Indian thought and have a revelatory importance, not only for aesthetics, but also for yogic psychology and metaphysics.

If the higher or lower vital is itself the originating source, the result is spontaneous lyrical poetry. Shakespeare is a poet of the vital inspiration, Homer of the subtle-physical. In the poetry of the Inner Mind or subliminal consciousness, there is usually a certain spontaneous intensity of vision, but not of that large or rich sweep or power which belongs to the Illumined Mind; moreover, it is more subtle and fine and has not the wideness which is the characteristic of the planes that rise towards the Overmind. The inner Mind can get the reflection of the higher experience of the overhead or spiritual planes, though it does not have it naturally. It is quite usual for artists to receive things from a plane above the physical mind,—“a subtle-vital world of creative art and beauty in which these things are prepared and come down through the fit channel.” There is the vision-mind which is also part of the inner being.” The inner mind, vital, physical are not bound by the dull and narrow limitations of our outer physical personality and the small scope of the world it lives in.” (p. 63. L. 3.). There are many kinds of vision in the Inner Mind and dynamic vision is one of them. The Intuitive Mind stretches from the Intuition, which is an overhead plane, down to the intuitivised inner mind—it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power. “The mystic mind is turned towards the occult and spiritual, but the inner mind can act without direct reference to the occult and spiritual, it can act in the same field and the same material as the ordinary mind, only with a larger and deeper power, range and light and in greater unison with the universal Mind.” (p. 71. L. 3.). There is also an earth-memory from which one gets or can get things of the past more or less accurately according to the quality of the mind that receives them.

As for the psyche, the psychic fire burns in the deeper heart and from there is lighted in the mind, the vital and the physical body. In the mind it creates a light of intuitive perception and discrimination which sees at once what is the true vision or idea and the wrong vision or idea....In the vital it is kindled as a fire of right emotion and a kind of intuitive feeling, a sort of tact which makes for the right impulse. In the body it initiates a similar but still more automatic correct response to the things of physical life. When it fills the frontal consciousness, it dominates its instruments and teaches them their true action. The turn of the psychic in art is different from that of the above-head planes. "It has less greatness, power, wideness, more of sweetness, delicate beauty, beauty of emotion also, fine subtlety of true perception, an intimate language, etc.—Arnold's expression 'sweetness and light' can very well be applied to the psychic as the kernel of its nature. The spiritual (overhead) planes, when they take up these, give them a wide utterance, powerful audacity, strength and space." (p. 91 L. 3.) Shelley's stanza, "We look before and after" from *The Skylark* shows no touch of the overhead inspiration. It shows the mind and the heart, the vital emotion, working at their highest pitch under the stress of a psychic inspiration. The rhythm is of the same character, a direct, straightforward, lucid and lucent movement welling out limpidly straight from the psychic source. The lyric stanzas beginning "I can give not what men call love" are perhaps the purest example of the psychic inspiration in English poetry.

Coming to the overhead planes, the poetry of the Higher Mind has a strong tread, often with bare unsandaled feet and moves in a clear-cut light; a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character. The outflow of the Illumined Mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. Intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye. It is different from the mental intuition which is frequent enough in poetry that does not transcend the mental level. Its rhythm has a certain decisive and inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke.

The Overmind is not a transcendental consciousness as Supermind is. It is a cosmic consciousness. It stands behind every particular in the cosmos and is the source of all our mental, vital or physical actualities and possibilities. Because it stands behind, as if covered by a veil, something of it can glimmer through and that brings in the overmind touch or note. We cannot get this touch

frequently unless we have torn the veil, made a gap in it or rent it largely away and seen the very face of what is beyond and lived in the light of it. Or we can draw upon it from time to time without ever ascending into it if we have established a line of communication between the higher and the ordinary consciousness. Things then tend to be seen, not as the mind or heart or body sees them, but as this greater consciousness feels or sees or answers to them.

The Overmind thinks in a mass. Its thought, feeling, vision, is high or deep or wide or all these things together. It has a corresponding language and rhythm. In the direct overmind transmission, this something behind is forced close to the front by a combination of words which causes the suggestion of a deeper meaning or by the force of an image or, most of all, by an intonation and a rhythm which carry up the depths in their wide wash or long march or mounting surge. There is an inevitable felicity in the intonation and the association of the sounds and an inspired selection or an unusual bringing together of words. In Shakespeare's "And in this harsh world draw thy breath of pain," the combination of words and sounds is so arranged as to force on the mind and still more on the subtle nerves and sense the utter absoluteness of the difficulty and pain of living for the soul that has awakened to the misery of the world. In Wordsworth's "The winds come to me from the fields of sleep," there is an indirect transmission of something of the Overmind substance through the highest intuitive consciousness; and, because it is not direct, the Overmind movement or rhythm is absent. Wordsworth's "Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone" and Shakespeare's "In the dark backward and abysm of time" reveal the direct transmission. There are others less ideative or more emotional and simply descriptive, such as Marlowe's:—

*Is this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"*

There is Milton's "Those thoughts that wander through eternity." Milton's line lives by its choice of the word 'wander' to collocate with 'through eternity'. If he had chosen any other word, it would no longer have been an overhead line, even if the surface sense had been exactly the same. In these overmind passages, one has the sense of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, but has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in time ages ago and which returns into the infinite to go sounding on for ages after. In fact, the word-rhythm is only part of what we hear, a support for the rhythm we listen to behind in 'the Ear of the ear'. To a certain extent, this is what all great poetry tries to have, but it is only the Overmind rhythm to which it is natural and easy as breathing, and in which it is not only behind the word-

rhythm but gets into the word-movement itself and finds a kind of fully supporting body there.

The *mantra* is what comes from the Overmind inspiration. Ordinarily it does not come out pure in human poetry. Lines from the highest intuitive mind-consciousness, as well as these from the overmind, can have a *mantric* character. The rhythm too may have a certain kinship with *mantric* rhythm, but it may not be the thing itself, only the nearest step towards it.

In *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo has explained the different grades of perfection in poetic style,—adequateness, effectivity, illumination, inspiredness and, finally, inevitability. All the first four styles can be raised to inevitability in their own line. The supreme inevitability is something more than all this. It can be seen in the most different kinds of style, goes out of all classifications and is unanalysable.

There are, besides, mingled inspirations, several levels meeting and combining and modifying each other's notes. An overmind transmission can contain or bring with it all the rest. Again, there are, in mental poetry (as distinguished from overhead poetry) derivations or substitutes for all the styles based on overhead planes. Milton's 'grand style' is such a substitute for the manner of the Higher Thought. "The Higher Mind is the first plane where one becomes aware of the Self, the One everywhere and knows and sees things through an elevated thought-power and comprehensive mental sight—not illumined by any of the intense or upper lights but as in a large strong and clear daylight. The poetic intelligence is quite different; it is the mind and its vision moving on the wings of imagination akin to the intellect proper but lifted above it. The Higher Mind is a spiritual plane, this is not. But the larger philosophic and the larger poetic intelligence are nearer to it than the ordinary intellect and may receive its influence. When Milton starts his poem,

*Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree....*

he is evidently writing from the poetic intelligence. There is nothing of the Higher Mind knowledge or vision either in the substance or style. But there is a largeness of rhythm and sweep of the language which has a certain kinship to the manner natural to what is above. Naturally, something from the higher planes can come into the poetry whose medium is the poetic intelligence and uplift it. That happens in such lines as

"Those thoughts that wander through eternity." (p. 65—6.4.3.)

Shakespeare's poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the Illumined Mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined overhead inspiration itself as in the lines:—

*Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brain
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?*

But the rest of that passage falls away in spite of the high-pitched language and resonant rhythm, far below the overhead strain.

In all these critical distinctions, there is an approach as subtle as overhead poetry. 'How much of this description will be to the ordinary reader of poetry at all intelligible or clearly identifiable?', asks Sri Aurobindo. (p. 117. L.3.). Here was a sage who looked out at things from depths and heights of spiritual realisation for nearly forty years, surrounded by his visions of the future. He kindled on the horizon of man constellations that spell a new civilisation. To study his views on poetry and art is to grow familiar with one of the many mansions in the mind of the Master. With the right intuitive keenness and receptivity, the reader can feel these distinctions and he can perceive them clearly when his own mind becomes, to quote Wordsworth, a mansion of all lovely forms. One needs to remember, above all, in this connection that mere mentalised knowledge, however clearly formulated, is but an empty ideation unless supplemented by discrimination drawing on authentic experience.

THE SUN-SKELETON

BEHIND the time-sleep's incommunicable night
Frozen to calm thunder-puissant loneliness,
Within His cosmic-body's infinitude
Drowns the sun-skeleton of golden light—
A burning reinforcement of ageless might.
Without, a still grey mask of Death's changeless mood;
Within, a blaze curtained by passing hood
Of oblivion—an omnipotence and God-sight.

Within the dust-transience a Permanence keeps
Burning in its solitary temple-home,
A river of flame that never dies or sleeps—
An eternity untouched by moon-lost gleam.
This skeleton of sun shall bring His Apocalypse
And form the brilliant base of His noon-day form.

ROMEN.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XV

PART II

LOVE—ITS PLACE AND POWER

THE love we ordinarily offer to the Divine when we turn towards Him is not always of the purest kind in the beginning. Its nature depends upon the part of our being from which it proceeds. It may be our physical being turning unintelligently, mechanically, inertly, under the dull drive of a secret impulsion, towards the Divine. Our love then takes a physical form—merely external, ritualistic or ceremonial—and partakes somewhat of the nature of our outer human relations. Or it may be our vital-emotional being turning towards the Divine. Our love is then characterised by some strength and intensity of the emotions. But these emotions are usually turbid, excited, disquieting and often depressing. They are mixed with the desires and demands of our unpurified nature and manifest the common symptoms of abhiman, revolt etc., when those desires and demands are not satisfied. There is always in such forms of bhakti an “impatience for result and dissatisfaction if the result is not immediate.” These symptoms indicate that the bhakti is not pure and selfless, it is tainted by egoistic cravings and insistences. Abhiman, however much it may have been associated with certain legendary forms of bhakti, is a disturbing and impeding movement of the vital being. “The sooner you get rid of abhiman,” writes Sri Aurobindo to a disciple, “the better. Any one who indulges abhiman puts himself under the influence of the hostile forces. Abhiman has nothing to do with true love; it is, like jealousy, a part of the vital egoism.¹ Indulgence in maudlin emotions is also a vital perversion of true bhakti. Emotions are very helpful if they are pure and deep and quiet. “The deeper the emotion, the more intense the bhakti, the greater is the force for realisation and transformation. It is oftenest through intensity of emotion that the psychic being awakes and there is an opening of the inner doors to the Divine.”² But slushy emotionalism and effusive sentimentality are crudely egoistic, and suggest a

¹ & ² Letters of Sri Aurobindo—vol. II

weakness in the emotional being of the bhakta. They waste the energy of the vital and disturb concentration and peace which are indispensable in sadhana. The Vedic and Upanishadic ideal of a perfect calm and control in the whole being—intellectual, emotional vital and physical—is the best condition for an unhampered progress in the Integral Yoga.

The love and bhakti which well out of the psychic are the purest and most spontaneous. But before we consider the nature and power of psychic love, let us be sure of what we mean by bhakti. Though we have here taken love and bhakti together as two aspects of the same psychic feeling, Sri Aurobindo defines them as follows:

“The nature of bhakti is adoration, worship, self-offering to what is greater than oneself; the nature of love is a feeling or a seeking for closeness and union. Self-giving is the character of both; both are necessary in the Yoga and each gets its full force when supported by the other.”¹

Incidentally we can also learn the distinction between spiritual and psychic love:

“The love that belongs to the spiritual planes is of a different kind—the psychic has its own more personal love, bhakti, surrender. Love in the higher or spiritual mind is more universal and impersonal. The two must go together to make the highest divine love.”²

Psychic love springs from a living sense of essential identity seeking to realise itself in the bliss of perfect union with the Divine. In its widest perfection, it is a yearning for an integral divine union in the context of the terrestrial existence. In fact, the psychic is the bridge between the material world and the world of Spirit. It is because of the psychic that Matter rises towards Spirit in a growing *élan* of love and aspiration, and Spirit descends into Matter with its splendour of light and power and harmony and peace. The psychic or the soul is all love and devotion and aspiration, full of an irresistible yearning for the Divine. Its sole business is to turn our entire being Godwards by saturating it with its own love and devotion, and prepare it for the work of divine manifestation. The psychic love is a white flame which is inextinguishable, and it mounts straight towards the Divine. A total and constant self-giving, a self-consecration through service, a progressive surrender of the whole

¹ Letters of Sri Aurobindo—vol. IV

² Letters of Sri Aurobindo Vol IV

nature, an instinctive recoil from all that is undivine or anti-divine—these are the natural movements of the psychic being, once it is awakened and comes to the front of our nature. Our mind may have its egoistic intellectual gratifications, our vital may have the satisfaction of its desires, our physical being may have its material pleasures and comforts to pursue, but the soul in us has nothing but a one-pointed tension towards the Divine and a consuming passion for a union and communion with Him. It has no other interest and no other aim in life. Its love for God is, therefore, the purest and most disinterested, and supremely capable of bringing down the transforming light of divine Love upon earth. It is this psychic love that the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga has to develop in himself and infuse into all parts of his being, so that his whole being may become a single flame of love rising towards the Divine. What Sri Aurobindo calls the sun-lit path is the path of the psychic leading the human being to God. It is a path of unflagging aspiration and spontaneous devotion, and a cheerful trust and confidence in the Divine. There is no room in it for any morbid self-pity or the excessive rigours of austerity; none at all for discouragement and despondency. The calm and serenity of the psychic repel all vital impatience and overeagerness. Its immaculate sincerity is the guarantee of its fulfilment. It knows how to wait in patience and smiling surrender. The bhakta in whom the psychic love has awakened looks for Grace, but “he is ready to wait in perfect reliance—even if need be, all his life—knowing that it will come, never varying in his love and surrender because it does not come now or soon.” His peace is impregnable, because his faith is unfathomable; and this faith is not a mere belief or trust, but a luminous certitude, an indubitable knowledge.

In fully evolved psychic love there is always an intense and invincible will to the service of the Divine, for the psychic is aware of its mission in the material world and cannot remain content only with personal freedom and a passive union with the Divine. It has a will to fulfil the mission of its descent into Matter, which is the manifestation of the Divine here, on earth, and in the human body. It yearns to serve God by fulfilling His Will here. The tendency in the individual towards the peace and passivity of Nirvana, or the eternal and impersonal silence of self-extinction in the Brahman, is an oblique mental movement, and argues an imperfect psychic awakening. A fully awakened psychic is an eternal warrior, fighting life after life, if need be, for the transformation of Matter and the revelation of God’s Light and Love upon earth. For a perfect illustration of this psychic love and its will and aspiration to divine service, we can only refer to some of the Mother’s Prayers:

MOTHER INDIA

“For the plenitude of Thy Light we invoke Thee, O Lord! Awaken in us the power to express Thee.”

“All is mute in the being as in a desert crypt; but in the heart of the shadow, in the bosom of the silence burns the lamp that can never be extinguished, the fire of an ardent aspiration to know Thee and totally to live Thee.”¹

“O Lord, I would be a love so living that it can fill every solitude and assuage every sorrow.”

“O Lord, I cry to Thee: make me a burning brazier which consumes all suffering and transforms it into a glad light pouring its rays into the hearts of all!”...

“Grant my prayer: Transform me into a brazier of love and limitless compassion.”²

“Divine Master of love, eternal Teacher, Thou guidest our lives. It is in Thee alone that we would live; enlighten our consciousness, guide our steps, and grant that we may do the maximum of what we can do, utilising all our energies solely to serve Thee.”³

The power of psychic love is infinite, for when it unites with the divine Love, it can draw freely upon the latter's omnipotence. The psychic is not content to give only itself to the Divine, it aspires and endeavours to give all its nature and all its instruments of expression also to Him, so that He may transform and illumine them and use them as perfected means of His manifestation in the material life. When psychic love is united with the divine Love and the psychic will with the divine Will, there is no limit to the possibilities of divine manifestation. All knowledge is within the reach of psychic love and all power of effectuation. Whenever and wherever the divine Light or the divine force has been brought down into human life, it has been invariably by the power of psychic love, and not by any other means. The mind's adoration and the heart's love and devotion are powerful aids to the development of psychic love, but in themselves they are incapable of reaching the Divine Love and bringing it down to transform human life. The mind's interest and aspiration may be

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother* Nov. 8, 1914;

² *ibid.*, Feb, 2, 1914;

³ *ibid.*, Jan. 30, 1914.

damped by the frost of life and the heart's ardours even may be quenched, but the psychic love, once awakened, knows no flagging or cooling,—it goes on growing in depth and intensity till it unites with the divine Love and becomes a glowing focus of its transforming force. A life of psychic love is a life of unshakable peace and immeasurable bliss, because it is essentially a life lived in the Divine, beyond the motives of the ego and the goad of desires. It is a life of perfect self-fulfilment, because it is based on unreserved self-giving. Freedom, purity, peace, happiness, power and knowledge, all flow out of the psychic to fulfil the human being who has kindled this white flame in himself and feeds it with constant sacrifice.

But for this fulfilment it is essential that the psychic should rise out of the individual moulds of human nature and widen and heighten itself into universality and transcendence. The love of the psychic being, emancipated from the whirl of human emotions, must launch upon the Infinite and unite with the Love of the Supreme. This union of the Divine Love and psychic love, rendered fully dynamic in life, is the highest secret of the supramental transformation and manifestation on earth.

RISHABHCHAND

THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE VEDANTIC RESURGENCE

THERE are scholars who hold that in the Upanishads can be traced the origin of the pessimistic and otherwordly ideas that, according to them, have influenced the development of India's thought and coloured her attitude to life. This view seems tinged with a bit of exaggeration. While a tendency to an exclusive pursuit of the spiritual Ideal is markedly observable in some of the later Upanishads, the earlier ones emphasise the values of life and the need of harmonising them with the great end of human existence envisaged by the Vedic and Vedantic Seers. In answer to the question 'Who is the greatest among the knowers of Brahman?' the Mundaka says: 'He who plays with the Self, rejoices in the Self and at the same time does all actions, is the best of the God-knowers.' This is the same as the Gita's ideal of the Yoga of Divine Works. The invocatory verse in the same Upanishad says: 'Let us fully enjoy and live our allotted days with firm limbs and a strong body.' The Isha declares: 'Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years.' These are certainly not utterances of an otherwordly mind.

But the most significant are the words of the teacher in the Taittiriya which he addresses to his disciple on the termination of his studies. They are almost the same as the Convocation Addresses to students of modern universities. They ring with ardent notes of love and sympathy, envisage a broad outlook on life, a large vision of its ideal,—living in God while living in the world. The teacher commands the disciple to go forth into the world with truth and *dharma* as his ideals. Great as a householder, greater as a benefactor, he should repay the obligations of life, the obligations to gods and ancestors, to parents and guests, regarding all as gods. It should also be his duty to maintain the continuity of the line of his fathers. Pure in thought, pure in action, he should always behave as a knower of Brahman, as one who follows *dharma*. He should be bounteous in his gifts, the greatest of which is the gift of knowledge. He should therefore spread knowledge as widely as he can, teaching the sacred lore to others. 'This is the message. This is the advice. This is the knowledge. This is the

command. Thus should you live and act in life.' There could be no nobler affirmation of the ideal of education, of the ideal of life. And it was this ideal for which the age stood in the history of India.

Knowledge of Brahman, it must be noted, was then the supreme end of education. To know Him, the Rishis declared, was to know all, to have integral knowledge. And was this not only a continuation of the Vedic teachings, a larger renewal of the dominant spirit of the Age of the Mysteries in India? Mention may be made here of the subjects studied in this age which, according to the Chhandogya, covered the whole range of the Vedic literature, all the arts and sciences including music, military and medical knowledge.

The Upanishads are not merely 'a greater efflorescence of the great Vedic beginning.' They have been 'the acknowledged source of numerous profound philosophies and religions that flowed from it in India like her great rivers from their Himalayan cradle fertilising the mind and life of the people and kept its soul alive through the long procession of the centuries, constantly returned to for light, never failing to give fresh illumination, a fountain of inexhaustible life-giving waters.'

Mention has already been made that the *vidyas*—the esoteric sciences—of the Upanishads enshrine some fundamental scientific ideas, and that they are there not only in their seed-forms but often in their flowering. Vedantic mysticism comprises all this in a vastness and sublimity that human spirit has ever reached. Thus the Vedantic idea of Matter is a far deeper truth than what modern science is faintly suggesting today. 'Matter is massed energy' is undoubtedly a great discovery of science. But science has not so far been able to explain the why of it. It is only Vedanta which has done this by its categorical declaration that all is Brahman, all his creation is the creation of his energy. Sir John Woodroff, the eminent exponent of Indian Tantrik thought, says: "My own conviction is that an examination of Indian Vedantic doctrines shows that it is, in most important respects, in conformity with the most advanced scientific and philosophic thought of the West, and that where this is not so, it is science which will go to Vedanta and not the reverse." Sir John Stewart-Wallace says: 'In Vedanta you have one of the greatest syntheses of modern thought. It is synthesis of modern science, philosophy and religion.' To Sri Aurobindo Vedantic thought is like 'a many-mansioned city.'

There is no aspect of Indian thought which is not founded in Vedantic ideas. Every religious or philosophical school has some basis in the doctrines of

the Upanishads. What, for instance, Rishi Ghora in the Chhandogya taught to Krishna became the essential principle of the teachings of the Gita. The quotation from the Rigveda at the end of Ghora's words shows that he revealed to Krishna the Vedic discipline of going beyond the Darkness and rising into the supreme Solar Light, that is to say, into the consciousness of 'the Immutable, the Ever Stable, the Source of Life.' When one has this soul-ascension, everything one does, the daily occupations of life, all become part of the sacrifice, an offering to the Divine—its affirmation and expression. Such a condition brings about the right orientation of the being which consists in *tapas* (organised energy), generosity, rectitude and truthfulness. These are echoed in the Gita almost in the same terms. Even Buddhism derived many of its fundamental ideas from the Vedanta which it restated in fresh terms of intellectual definition and reasoning and carried in that changed form over all Asia and westwards towards Europe.

There is evidence that Pythagoras came into contact with Indian scholars either in India or in Persia. To this is attributed the resemblance of his ideas to the Sankhyan and the Vedantic doctrines of India whose influence on Plato is also acknowledged by competent authorities. Emerson says that it was in Egypt and on his eastern pilgrimages that Plato imbibed the Indian (Vedantic) idea of one Deity in which all things exist. Plato's use of the simile of the charioteer and horses looks like a repetition of a similar simile of the Katha Upanishad. Inspiration from Vedanta is perceptible in the thought of the Gnostics and the Neo-Platonists. This is traced to the Indian scholars who were in Alexandria, Syria and Palestine at the time when these schools were developing there. The origin of the Gnostic idea of the plurality of heavens and spiritual worlds is traced to the Upanishads. Plotinus, the founder of the Neo-Platonist School, is said to have been imbued with Vedantic ideas, of which he had a deep knowledge, says Erdmann. He believed to have got these ideas from his teacher Ammonius Saccas, the famous Alexandrian philosopher who had direct intercourse with Indian scholars. He had an appellation which is taken to be one for a yogi. Plotinus's ideas of the One Reality, the Ineffable Absolute, and of the world as an outflow of the Divine are entirely Vedantic. In speaking of the Reality Plotinus almost repeats the *neti, neti* (He is not this, not this) of the Upanishads.

Sufism restates Vedantic ideas in its own way. The inspired utterance 'I am the Truth' of the famous Sufi mystic Mansur who visited India, is only an echo of 'So'ham' (I am That) of the Upanishads. The Chinese Taoist idea of the Reality is almost the same as that of the Brahman of the Upanishads. Tao is

the cosmic Self—the ‘Atman’ of the Upanishads—and the individual self is one with It. History assigns India’s contact with China to the first century A.C., and Taoism is at least five hundred years older. But the Tantras speak of the existence of this contact in much earlier times.

German metaphysical thought is no less indebted to Vedanta whose influence is unmistakable in the writings of Schiller, Goethe, Herder, Schlegel, Humboldt. The Upanishads, says Schopenhauer, ‘are the solace of my life, they will be the solace of my death. They are the fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom. They contain superhuman conceptions whose originators can hardly be regarded as mere men.’ Deussen says that these conceptions are unequalled in India or perhaps anywhere else in the world. Wagner, the master-musician, tried to interpret Nordic mythology in the light of Vedanta. A German poet of the same name but of a later time has a poem entitled ‘Tattvamasi’, ‘Thou art That’, the famous declaration of the Upanishads.

Amiel’s insistence on ‘Brahmanising souls’ is not a stray instance of Vedantic influence in France. About the middle of the seventeenth century the French traveller Bernier carried to France a manuscript translation of the Upanishads in Persian by the famous Mughal Prince-philosopher Dara Shukoh. It was this translation from which the Upanishads were for the first time rendered into European languages. The recent utterances of the eminent French Indologist Prof. Renou indicate that Vedantic influence in France is much deeper and wider today. This influence started in America with Emerson’s famous essays most of which are nothing but Vedanta in English garb. Thoreau was no less imbued with it. So was also Carlyle. But this is only a very bare outline of a vast subject.

That Vedanta today is a world-idea is testified by the recent publication *Vedanta for the Western World*, edited by Christopher Isherwood. In the growth of this idea in modern times the most outstanding contribution is that of Swami Vivekananda who proclaimed to the world the message of Vedanta and conquered the hearts of millions of his country with the result that the spiritual sons of India are now spread over the entire globe. ‘Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy’ was the call upon his countrymen of this mighty awakener of souls. The study of the truth and nature of the Upanishads, as dealt with here, is inspired by the writings of Sri Aurobindo in whose thought shines the light of Vedanta as he has re-visioned and re-revealed it for the illumination of man who by that light will go beyond the darkness of Ignorance to the Solar Glory, the liberating knowledge of the Truth.

The world-wide influence of Vedantic ideas has a significance for the future of the human race. The Upanishads again and again emphasise that the inmost truth of man is his divinity and his life is given him that he may grow into it and become perfect. The reaffirmation today of this central teaching of the Upanishads by the Masters of the race is the sign that the hour is come when man must prepare himself for a larger life in the Spirit. The call of Vedanta, 'Arise, awake, stop not till the goal is reached', is the call of India's soul echoing down the ages in the ear of the present and the future, echoing more insistently now as the future has to be greater than the past. Schopenhauer was indeed prophetic when he said: 'The Upanishads will bring about a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek literature.'

And this is among the reasons why one cannot say that the curtain was rung down over the Age of the Spirit indicating its close after the Vedantic Seers had made known the immortal truths about the essential divinity of man. The Upanishads themselves are the record of spiritual experiences not of a particular period but of a long travel of seeking which never stopped but took new paths, new forms in later ages when conditions of life changed into more definite patterns, social, political and cultural, that took shape in those external structures devised and erected for the proper organisation of India's collective existence.

And these outer forms of her life and culture have always been inspired and motived by the inherent spiritual tendency of the Indian mind. In fact, there has never been any movement in India that had not behind it a spiritual thought, a resurgence of her soul, of which the most glorious start was made with the heavenward adventures of the Vedic and Vedantic Mystics. This inward urge and impulsion has ever tried to express itself in fresh strivings to enrich and exalt her life and thought, culture and civilisation, with the gains in the world of the Spirit—the light of the bright Dawns, seen and revealed by the early fathers of the race. This light—and what a light it was!—has never completely faded out from India's consciousness. Whatever of it she could revision at great moments of her history she infused into every part and plane of her being which needed it to grow in readiness for the greater future,—a future big with the destiny of the entire world.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

(Concluded)*

* For references see the last page

NEW ROADS

by

NORMAN DOWSETT

NEW ROADS

DEDICATION TO SRI AUROBINDO

THE world knows not, nor yet could it conceive
The mighty holocaust Thy Light has flung
Upon the vast Asuric thoughts of Hell.
No human valuation could describe,
No mortal heart envisage such a deed:
To fling embodied heaven to the depths
Where sleeps the Titan of Inconscient Night.
From this lone ache that nestles in our hearts,
This "smiling" sadness that invades the soul
And wraps Thy Presence round our common loss,
Of this Thy body—dear to mortal sight—
This Golden Grandeur fashioned from a Light
That never was beheld on earth before—
From this, and this small silence like a rose
That now has taken birth within the soul,
We know some measure of Thy gift to man.
Across the Waste-lands there will come New Roads—
New highways from forgotten starless Nights
To Future Flame-Vasts of Remembered Dawns.
New Roads through virgin woods where giant trees
Have kept their silence through the centuries,
New Roads come forth macadamised in Gold,
New-built upon Thy Giant Sacrifice
To pledge the seal of Immortality.

NEW RÔADS

THE IMMACULATE HOUR OF PASSING

DECEMBER 5TH 1950

Then Still the Night

Only the breath of a sigh
Is heard in the leaves,
Only a whispered goodbye
To earth still cleaves;
Only the sound of His flute
Astir on the breeze—
Then still the night—mute
As the silent trees.

PART ONE

I

And when it was over
They stood on a shore
Alone...so it seemed.
Alone with their thoughts—
And some had no thoughts.
Like silent clouds
They moved across a sky
Ever blue in some part,
But ever grey and austere
In a greater part.
Except at dawn
When a rose and a rose-grey
Hue still slept in the waves.
And a sacred breeze
Crept across the sea.
To remind us powerfully
of Thee—
But you were gone!
They said—
And I should be wrong

MOTHER INDIA

If they saw me secretly
smiling;
For were you not by my side?
Did you not lighten my heart
And establish assurance
Within me
And did you not bid me
go to the others?
What was the smile in my heart?
Not the smile of a child
When it first sees light?
Not anything born of a rose—
No, not yet.....
Of fire perhaps;
Or perhaps a regret;
For there was an ache and
a longing—Yet.....
You were quick to assure me
I was belonging.
As I had been on previous
times and occasions.
Moon-proud
or
Sun-kissed—
Air-born
or
star-concieved
Or ocean drawn.
Down through the ages of Time
And an endless endeavour.
Now we had come to an
ultimate.
Face to face on a sun-spot
in Time.
I should be knowing
But I knew not—
For no bird sings
And the cows are no more,
And the kingfisher flies in
the sun, and is gone—

NEW ROADS

Gone too is this ache
In my soul.
I am there, with you,
You are now with me here.

II

I ran across the clouds of night
And found you waiting
Like a sentinel-pillar of white—
Flame
O breath of my soul!
Uprose a great sun in my heart;
The far spaces sing—
And you, O Sweet! were a part
Of everything.
Why could I not know before
That you *both* were one
Like two white wave-crests
Of an ocean vast
That mingle in—a unity
Of Time and Timelessness
Beyond all mental horizons
And I a nothing—
Or a speck of sand
On the shores of Light
Where thy seas play.
Yes, there are others
Who also say—
Whose voices are heard on the wind
But do they know?

III

These half finished diggings
In a Garden of Sorrows
Will come to an end—
And all our tomorrows
Will remember
The perfume of jasmine

MOTHER INDIA

Sensed on the edge of night.
Thou hast kissed the earth,
With the coming of Her Smile
Like a wonder of dawn
Her birth bears Thy Presence,
And wraps it around us.
We are no longer alone.
It was there now
The word-hush
The Silence.
And perhaps something more
That was earthy
Locked up in the soil
of endurance.
A kiss—a caress,
A gold border
On the granite edge of cleaving
Merged with That Moment
In Time,—and Thy Light,
Was no longer leaving.

IV

Then too there was laughter,—
Wild laughter,
Deep down in the womb of
beginnings,
Which when translated
By mind—seemed
Like the hysteria
Of hungry women
Cheated of labour.
But this was illusion;
There was mirth
In the halls of the “mighty”
For to weep in Hell was a sin...
A mortal heart
Is dazed by the touch
Of immortal wings.

NEW ROADS

There was laughter—
Wild laughter
That bade me fly with
the swallows;
And there was a tearing and
breaking of walls
Both within and without;
A burning and flaming
of halls
Where Intellect, was once found written
on the door—
Where Independence used
to stand on guard.
And the laughter said:
“Fly! there is youth in your
blood and the world—
Here is death, and a desolation
of the Past.

V

I sat down in my heart,
And there was Thy Smile
For comfort.
And you taught me to stand apart
From the Play in myself
As a witness
To scenes and their art
enacted
Upon a screen of sense—
Not past or future
But ever becoming.
Where what was past, mingled
With what was to come
And what was to come
Depended on what had been
So that I glimpsed
What *is*
And at the sight of It
I knew not one thing,
Neither did I need to know

NEW ROADS

I was nothing
And had no wish to be.

VI

And although I knew this
The laughter rose from below
And a great wind blew
Through the cold corridors
of thought
And there was a tearing
And breaking of walls.
And I saw oceans
Pouring over lost cities
And fields of corn
Trampled underfoot—
By many beasts.
And old trees were uprooted
And later found
Twisted among steel girders
of abandoned bridges.
And the waters flooded
The churches and the temples
And a great fire
Was upon the waters
And the fire was no less
than the waters.
And I saw—as a sentinel seeing—
Thy hand stretched across
The spaces and the fire
And the waters were stilled.
Then I knew why it was
I had stayed—
There is no point in going—
There or anywhere,
Thou art here!
Or anywhere where
A soul is growing.
And Thy Silence spread over
the world

NEW ROADS

And at that same time
Her flag was
Unfurled.

VII

In my heart I knew
The Silence
And saw, that one day
It would fill the mind—
And the whole of me.
In the shaft of sunlight
Lighting Thy tomb
Was the Silence.
In the bees and the flowers,
In the precious hours
Of prayer,
Was the Silence
And always in Thy Smile.
There was a great “hush” over the world:
In the council chambers
Of men,
In the seats of government,
In the striving unity of minds
Made fearful with the
ravages of war.—
Was the Silence.
A strange mysterious Peace
Found a habitation, and a home
In the hearts of men
Who had known—only despair;
Man looked at man
And recognised himself.

VIII

Things grew now
With a will to grow.
To know, did not matter,
But one needed to grow.

MOTHER INDIA

And a new light was seen,
On colours, in flowers,
And in common things.
A soft tenderness
Grew warm in hearts
Unused to love;
As if behind old images
 of stone
Began again love's heart-beats
Only dreamed of long ago
By an artist god—
New pallisades of thought
Strove to aspire—
New argosies of prayer
Were launched on seas
Of longings;—and despair
Was slain—
And oozed its blood
Like oil upon the ocean
Of desire.
And a new fire
Grew in my heart
And in the hearts of
 others
Dear to Thy Name.
Then we knew we were
 brothers,
And from that same Fire
A great sun was born.
A mighty Calm pervaded life that sang.

IX

O pity the scribe!
What sign or word-song
Could portray,
Explain, describe
The Power behind
The Silence of the Stars—
The roaring flame-vasts

NEW ROADS

Of eternal suns
That spread a million
Light-years o'er the sky
Seen in a moment
With our mortal eye.—
A smear of star-dust
On a window pane.

X

I'll search no lexicon
To seek new words,
No greater erudition could
Appease the flow of wonder
From the birds
That sing Thy praises;—
No form contain the thunder
Of these worlds that pass
Each other in eternity.
But ever will I search
Myself
And ask the question
Is this
Thy White Sincerity,
Is this the wonder
Of the pure in heart?

XI

Mind knows not
Neither can it understand
The workings of the soul.
As man knows not
The passion and the pride
Of Motherhood....
The sacred knowledge
When the seed is sown
And starts to come to life
Beneath the palpitations
Of the heart.

MOTHER INDIA

And yet it can come near,
With toleration,
Tenderness, and love.

XII

But life sang on;
The rhythm and the melody
Of stars—that do attend
The rules of Fate
Came forth in never ending showers,
A fountain of delight
Flung to the dance
Of the immortal hours.
Bright dawns of certitude
Were there—
And always the Peace of
Thy smile.
And the Silence in Her hands.

XIII

There were two things,
Two things most clear:
But to each were given
Many names.
There was Peace,
Which some called silence,
Calm, or even quiet.
And there was Unease
Which some called fear,
disturbance, or even noise.
Both had their poles of contact
With the soul
And man knew both within
himself.
Were these the old empires
Of right and wrong
Garbed in modern robes
Of cellophane and plastic motor cars.?

NEW ROADS

Do we deceive ourselves
Once more, in an endless
Attitudinarian display?
O No! dear God—
That is a mockery
Of a bygone age,
The stage-like struttings
of a past parade,
The ostentatious pomp
Of *étalage*;
And endless insincerities.

XIV

And man,
What is he but a name?
As Thou hast said:
“An ambitious nothing”—
Crying for the moon,
Or a dusty mirror
Echoing the stars!
But here there is Peace,
Because Thou art here.
And everywhere is Thy
Smile.
And the roses are growing—
And Thy Presence mingles
With Her touch—
There is no need of knowing.
At least with the mind—
For it spoils, and recoils....
arranges, estranges
The spark with the flame.
It presupposes—encloses
It stifles and rifles
The Light of its essence—
And love is left only
A subordinate place
And may even fall
From Grace
To sentimentality.

MOTHER INDIA

So the mind must be still
For what can we do?
We who are merely becoming.

XV

She alone is the doer
In Time and in Timelessness—
Through Her we remember,
Each act is a prayer
On the altar of future becomings.
And the dark hours
Of forgetfulness are the despair
Of the soul—
They alone are ours....
But there is always Thy
 smile—
Even in common things
She has fashioned a sheen
That speaks to my heart
Thou art a part—Thy Presence is seen
Everywhere where Her Beauty sings—
And Thy smile
In the heart of the ineffable Silence—
Like the great Peace
from the touch of Her hands.
Thy Presence, is sometimes
A cool breeze which blows
 softly
Through the meditation of the hours.
Words cannot measure Her
 sweetness—
Heaven-born hands
Have conceived Her.
Words cannot find
 an expression
To serve as a garland
To crown Her.
She is the Embodiment of Thy Peace
And Thy Smile.

NEW ROADS

XVI

Fathers do not lecture
Their sons anymore—
Or if they do,
It is because of the old habit,
Not of necessity,
But because the impetus
 of usage
Has yet to run down.
They think not of Fatherhood
That once wore a crown;
They stand not where their
fathers stood—
Omnipresent in the childish
 mind...wearing
A perpetual frown.
This was often a mental image
Nourished by fear
With its roots in a past age
For children to bear
Which lived on in the
Sub-conscient—
The sins of the fathers
Need no longer be;
These things here are clearly seen
And will manifest themselves free
Throughout the world
Of Thy New Beginnings.

XVII

Fear also will go in time—
Here, quite soon.
Fear from want—
It is an illness
In the vital
It is a tentacle of desire.
Fear of others;
Man is a predatory animal

MOTHER INDIA

One personality preys on another
I to I
Ego against ego
Self over self
Intellect surpassing intellect
Soul-stuff—mixed with higher
vital emotions.
Flooding soul-stuff
Mixed with emotions.
Psychic, food for psychic
Purity feeding on purity;
Amrita,
Food for the gods.
Are the gods not appeased?
But we were talking of fear.
Yes it is going,
Here it is seen, almost gone
In the faces of all
Who breathe Thy Name—
In the eyes of the children.
In the easy stride,
The natural relaxation
Of the shoulders.
The people outside,
The people of big cities
and the world
Have a hump on their back
And they carry a world of
sorrows in their breast—
They are like beasts of burden
With a mill-stone round
their necks.
They are full of fear
Because violence is still
in them.
Because also
They are yet to know of Thee.

XVIII

The skies are rain washed,

NEW ROADS

And the trees are green
With a Mother-loveliness
Of England's April—
The birds are in joyous mood
And the flowers are a gleam
With a fresh eagerness
Offering their scent to the air,
Or an awareness
Passing there.
This is Thy Compassion.
In the street a beggar child
Cries for alms,
Or bread?—
She must be fed
Before she can understand.
But it is better so
She need not know
How we strive
On these new roads
Thou hast built for us.
When we arrive
Then grant dear God
That even she
Will not fear from want.

XIX

Only when we are transformed
Can we hope to change others
Or the lot of others—
(Our ears do attend Thee)
Only when we learn to be,
To live, the life of brothers
Do we become
The helper of others—
(Our hearts do attend Thee)
When the crystals of ego
Are broken
And crushed into powder—
And the powder blown

MOTHER INDIA

To the four winds—
This alone is a token,
To God.
This alone is the price
We must pay
For His nearness
But when
It is gone completely?—
Ah then—gladly
I will tell you.

XX

Remembrance of Thee,
That is the question—
Whether it was remembrance
Or awareness?
Perhaps Remembrance;
Then Awareness grows,
And consciousness widens—
Then each act
Is remembering Thee,
And awareness is becoming.
To have glimpsed Thee
In the perfume of honeysuckle,
That is an aid to remembrance
To have seen Thy Face
In the centres
That is more sure.
To have known
Thy Presence as a soft wind
Soothing the ruffled waters
 of the middle mind,
To have felt Thy touch
In the centres
That is awareness.

XXI

An increasing remembrance
 during the daytime

NEW ROADS

Is the sure aid to
Remembrance in sleep
And remembrance in sleep
Is perhaps the first conquest
For the Transformation.
O divine Mother!
I am a child
Unused to Thy mysteries
A nothing, blindly seeking
The way of my soul
Yet Thou hast breathed
A rapture and a bliss
Into my being.
Thou hast lent me wings
On which to soar
To high places
Where the white birds fly,
In virgin spaces,
Where a golden air
Dispels regret
And remorse and despair
Are playthings I forget.
But the secret of remembrance—
Have I learnt it yet?
Is it not in offering?

XXII

They say, it is an age
Of inattention—
Concentration
Comes not easily to a mind
Absorbed in self
And self-amusement;
Preoccupation with self
Or self-adornment.
Children may begin
With being shy,
But shyness soon ceases
As interest increases

MOTHER INDIA

Shyness is self-consciousness
Are men shy before Thee.
O Lord?
If we are preoccupied with self
We cannot remember Thee;
If we are absorbed in self-
 pleasure
We can never know Thee.
If we are given to other things,
other than for Thy sake,
We are ever far from Thee.
If we are of the world
And the world is not always
Thy world
We are lost in forgetfulness.
If we are concerned with
What others think of us
We cannot act according
 to Thy Will.
We are shy before Thee
We are uneasy in the company of Thy sight.

XXIII

“Surrender of Falsehood”
Only Thou could accept
 this flower—
Torn from the soil of the
Ignorance
Snatched from the vine
 of desire
Bleeding with the blood
 of an anguished vital
Wrenched from the briar
Of this entwining ego.
But Thy smile, and its
 understanding,
The gracious touch of Thy hands,
Lifted a sob of delight
From the soul—

NEW ROADS

And for one ineffable
moment
I was taken in Thy heart
To glimpse, the "Ultimate
Embrace"
O Bliss! O Peace!
O Wonderment of God!—
O littleness! O nothing
That I am
O Sweetness that is Grace!

XXIV

It was ever so; the devotion
In a heart untaught to pray.
It was ever so; the worship
Of lips untaught to say
Which came naturally from
the centre
Of hearts untaught to love
It was always so, the
spontaneous talk of God,
Fruitful, before religions
Had been built and martyrs trod
The fields of Christendom
It was ever so; the body's work was prayer
When the craftsman took
delight in work well done.
When art was art—
And counted not the cost,
Nor asked the why or where:
It was ever so, when
Krishna trod the earth
Man worshipped where
The Beauty smiled
And where New Life took birth.
In all religions, Thou canst
be found,
But to no religion
Art Thou bound.

MOTHER INDIA

XXV

We are no longer alone.
Patiently, Oh, how patiently
She has taught us.
And even now what do we
 know of Gratitude?
God said: and is ever saying
I give you the sun—
I give you the sky and the clouds,
 the moon and the stars.
I give you the splendours
of dawns aflame and unending,
I give you the trees and the
 forest
And fill them
 with bird-song.
The Mountains and hills,
The rivers and falls,
The lakes and the oceans.
The fishes that swim—
And everything
That has life and emotion.
And these words formed
 a picture—
As a memory in the heart—
And I saw:
Wings hovered o'er the hush
Of Nature's Smile
And soared upon a flight
Of errant song,
Towards a sculptured harmony
 of clouds
Seeking a new adventure in
 the skies.
White peaks of rainbow grandeur
 wrote His Name
Like new cloud-messengers
 across the blue—
Or signed His signature

NEW ROADS

With dawns of light,
Upon the human canvas
Of the soul.
Vast scenes of colour pageantry
arose,
Thrown on the mind-screen
of a fading past.
Like ancient sailing ships
that haunt the seas
And sail majestically
the Tides of Time.
Vast epics of an ancient past
were there
That held the key to future
dawns to come,
And man began to open to its song,
And hear the hidden symphonies
within.
A vast polyphony of spirit-sounds
Now echoed in his soul and sent their notes
Ringing through the channels of his blood.
And over all upwelling from
the depths
A mighty Calm pervaded life that sang.

XXVI

I am that which exists
But only when I exist
in Thee
I am all that is, that was,
that needs to be
But only when conscious
of Thee
I am the all in the One
The One in the many
But only when I am
in Thee—
To Thee O my Lord,
O Mother, do I

MOTHER INDIA

owe my being,
My becoming in Thee
But who is The Mother—
And who is The Lord?
A leaf is blown by the wind.
But we see not the wind.
A song is written in sand,
But we hear not the song.
A lesson is whispered at
dawn,
But we learn not the
lesson.
A prayer is breathed on
the air
But we know not the
prayer.
A secret is told to the heart,
But we forget the secret.
A Love was given to
the soul,
But the soul is veiled
And we are beyond the
veil, and know not
The Purity of That—
Which *was* Thy Love
But in words we can
say:
She is That which is,
The manifested One
She *is* The Divine
For All is the One and the One
is the Many.
The wind is in the leaf
And the leaf is in the wind—
For all is in the One and
comes from the One.
And all goes back to
The One.
And this is not new.

NEW ROADS

XXVII

There before Thee
One calm night
All was serene.
The groups arranged
For evening concentration,
A golden net was stretched
 across the dark blue
Of the night-sky.
Slowly it descended over
 all assembled there
And it seemed
A Special Presence
Ruled the atmosphere
And there was a square
For everyone.
Was this Thy Promise
Of uncreated Dawns?
Was this a glimpse
Of work yet to be done?
Was this a symbol
From the Cosmic Scene,
A message from
The Supramental Sun?

XXVIII

A voice said:
O I will save thee
 from a sea of troubles;
Come unto me
And I will make thee see
There is no need to grieve.
My Love is vast—
More vast than earthly
 seas,
And yet more tender
 than a smiling rose.
Why dost thou wait?

MOTHER INDIA

Why hesitate?
Plunge all thy longing
Into my embrace.
Sweet world, sweet Face
Sweet flowers that bloom
All is Thy Grace
That fills this room.

XXIX

Come Light!
Into my mind and say
Those things that it should
know—
Come Peace!
Into my heart to stay
That Light
In me may grow.
Dispel all misty thoughts and plays
All actions that obscure
Bring soon our hearts to those Sun-ways
That are forever sure.
A troubled heart
Is unreceptive to Thy
words O Lord
And more so,
even more
When one includes
self-pity—
It is a canker
That throws low
the consciousness;
And veils the heart
From understanding Thee
O Thy great Love!
That leans towards
the earth.
That nourishes all
Life striving to grow
All brave New-birth

NEW ROADS

Aspiring for the light—
The seed, the tree
The tree, the very earth,—
All pray to Thee
And manifest Thy Love,
And are Thy Progress
Labouring to the stars.

XXX

I would lay down my pen,
But Thy Voice sings
Like a fond bird
Compellingly
There is no greater joy
Than to adore Thee
With a singing heart
Overwhelmingly...
Thou, fountain of gold delight!
Endlessly playing
Star-dust flung to the Night
Endlessly praying.
Moon kissed waves of a sea
Ever becoming
Bliss of eternity,
Sun-spaces humming.
Heights of a fathomless sky
Calm as Compassion;
Widths of Infinity
Void of all passion.
Thickness of giant trees
That patiently wait,
Depths of the mighty seas
Echoing Fate.
Strength of a lion's paw,
Quick to destroy
Child playing on the floor
Breaking a toy.
Strains of a melody
Caught on the ear

MOTHER INDIA

Reminding me ever of Thee—
Lover draw near;
Bliss of infinitude
Come to me now!
Rapture of Solitude—
Kiss on my brow.

XXXI

May I always come
And ask these questions?—
And wilt Thou always be
there, to answer me?
Thou hast shown me
“a green valley”
Where I might find Thee
Where ever blows the
“Breeze”, the ineffable
Perfume of Thy living
Presence.
There are cool waters
Where my soul may drink,
And verdant banks
Abloom with every flower.
And lambs that call.
From some far distant hill;
Their cry reminds me
Of Thy “silent hour”
That leans down from the sky.
And here, is answered
All that I should know.

Come silence to my mind
And keep inviolate
The thoughts of purity
That baffle Fate.

XXXII

We need not be caught
 in the stream
Of life—that is a dream
Of fret and fury
The froth and foam
Without a habitation or
 a home.
There are more momentous ways
To spend our days—
More especially to a heart
That knows, the value
Of the smallest part.
We need not push our
 claim to Truth
Against the bold audacity
Of Youth—
Night has its stars,
The Noon-sun has its glare,
And knowing both
We can beware
Of those stupidities that
Youth must know
Before it can itself
Begin to grow.
Love-sight—
That sees in common things
A sweet “significance”
Like fairy rings
That form strange orbs of
light upon an hour
Or weave their magic circle
 round a flower—
Are things of value
 far beyond our ken—
And sad it seems,
We usually know them when
Life’s evening shadows close,
When Peace is real

MOTHER INDIA

And love lives in the rose;
Then all our Yesterdays
Are worth the sum
Of one pure thought,
One perfect action done.

O Psychic Sun
Thou hast begun
Now to descend the stair

Into new fields
Thy Power wields
The Light of Thy Atmosphere

Into new deeps
Where dark yet sleeps
Thy Light-streams dare

XXXIII

O life!—a happy seeking
Of the hours
Where Thy wind blows—
Where Light and Loveliness
Leap to the eye aware,
that in the rose
Is hidden love—
Thy love, that seeks
New worlds of wonder,
Not “love in idleness,”
But love that grows,
And knows how to endure
The bold magnificence of life.
O Mother Sweet!
O Lord of my delight!
O Radiant Bliss!
If This, is not Thee
Then this much I know
I'd not exchange it
For a Universe.

There are no flame-haunts
Where the Night may rest,

NEW ROADS

No star-scene where
Thy Rapture is unknown
No Sun-space
Where Thy Gleam
 has not a Guest
Established there
To sit upon the throne,
Thy Light has blest.

XXXIV

Now in the ooze-heavy deeps
Where Thy Light has descended,
Into that underworld
Of slough, and mire,—
There is a surge and a flood-flow
 stirring.
And above,
In a region of fire
Heavy with smoke,
Black with Inconscient Night
The Winds are moving.
And above still,
In vital worlds ascending
There is a blending
Of colours and forms
Ever Unending
And on earth
In the subtle air
Are the echoes of Thy surging—
In man, and his members.
And across the waters
The Winds are the sea-scapes
Flung to the skies,
Where Thy Signature flames
In the cloud-shapes
Setting a stage
 for
Thy Magnificence
 of
Dawn.

MOTHER INDIA

And above earth
In the star-ways of worship
The Winds and Thy wonder
 find
New Roads.
And beyond the stars
In the sun-lanes of Silence—
Where no wind blows,
The Light-Seeds fashion
The Architecture
Of The Dawn

XXXV

There is always Thy smile,
Not the smile of Thy lips—
But the breathtaking exquisite tips
Of the Lotus at dawn,
Or perhaps—the nectar
From which, the honey bee sips.
A green lawn
Laid out between ancient trees
That incline...to the sun
An invitation to new-birth;
To repine
On the earth?
To surrender?
Behind the sensual
Is ever the urge
To surrender.
But does man know?
Does he see Thy signature
Written in the leaves,
Does he feel the rapture
Of day when Night is at hand?
Does he *know* the pattern
 of worlds
In a snowflake's curl?
The design of a cosmos

NEW ROADS

In the architecture of the atom?
This Science can tell
If it knows,
But does science know?

XXXVI

There is always Thy smile,
And it urges us on
To The Light
Away from the coil of
 the senses
Away from the clutch of earth
And circumstance.
For without Thy Smile
Man is a slave of
 desire—a being
Through which all forces
 move—a vessel
Tossed on the waves of
 accident
Taking upon itself
 both evil and good
As cargo for the seas of
Time and Chance
To arrive on other shores
Of Ignorance.
At best his head and brain
 are mountain peaks
Astir with clouds which beat
like wings
Of eagle thoughts
To soar beyond their summit's
 scope;
His heart the rumblings of
Volcano fires,
A mortal hope
That does at times erupt
 with ardent flame
Aspiring to wed

MOTHER INDIA

Their flickerings
To the Sun—
And below his heart
Are rivers of unease.
And still below
The surging swell
Of vast Inconscient seas,
Unknown desires.
And unplumbed powers
Of potential energy.
All holds the seed-form
of some future god.

XXXVII

Thy Smile is
The Promise of the Dawn.
When Thy Light will stand
Unveiled upon the earth,
When mind will turn a
somersault in mind
To find
itself
One with the body of God.
When consciousness
turns back upon itself
And shows its inner
structure to the world
When Light can find
A natural habitat
In bodies made divine,
Divinely pure—
Where Peace and Joy,
Born from unfailing love,
Are the natural free expression]
of the soul.
For in that end is the beginning
of Time,
And the great Round Up
Of the Herds of Light.

NEW ROADS

XXXVIII

God waits for man
To leave his animal ways—
The lusts and pleasures of a
 transient path—
For Roads of Light
That lead to Fields of Bliss
Where seeds of Fire
Are borne upon the winds
Of Old desire
To blossom in New Meadows,
Meadow—Sweet
With Love and Sacrifice.
There are other Roads
That lead to other endings,
But these are the only Roads
That lead to the New beginnings;
Because these Roads,
The New Roads
Are trod by the Time-Spirit
For God has descended
Upon this earth—
And whenever The Divine
 takes birth
In human form
She, The Mother too is there;
A part
And circumstance of Time,
Part of Himself
And of Himself a part
Of The Eternity.—
To the initiate
An unfailing Sign
A living Symbol
Of Divine Decree.

XXXIX

O man! thy heart
 was made for love—

MOTHER INDIA

For love lies dreaming
On the breast of the hours.
In thee all passion
 and high potent Powers
Nestle within the bosom
Of all Time,
That is itself within
 the human heart—
So lies the possibility,
The claim of man
To Immortality.
Come Love, come Light!
O Majesty! O Sea!
Rush with thy torrents
On the listening blood—
 Ravish Ocean-vast!
And weave my soul
Into thy mighty flood.
O lave me, abandoned
On thy shores of Light
But fill me with
The immensity
Of thy giants thirst.
Yes unto death.
Or immortality!

XXXX

The being is ever striving
 for its proper place,
Which is a point of perfection
 ever higher than where it
 stands
For it is itself
An evolving integrality
Of an evolving universe,
Therefore no Road
 leads to the safe place,
No Road leads to

NEW ROADS

An end in comfort,
 stability or even security;
The only Roads
Are those that lead
To God
And on that God-Road
Alone lies the possibility
 of a Security
 in ever becoming.
There are many Roads,
But these are the New Roads.
Patriotism is a stage
Of consciousness
As religion
Is a stage of consciousness
Man will transcend
 his Patriotism
As he is even now
 growing beyond his
 religion—
As yet not conscious
 of his becoming
Yet growing more conscious
 of his growing.
It is only when man
 has a greater object in life
That he can transcend
 the barriers of an individual
 or national ego—
An object and a purpose
Beyond Patriotism,
Beyond Religion
When the consciousness
 has outgrown both,
 for a purpose
 greater than both—
 God!
The Universal Godhead.
 in the Self!
And what of our aspiring?—

MOTHER INDIA

These are the efforts, the trials
In the days of our learning
Fashioned and beaten
 The Gold
In the fires of our Yearning—
Offered the days of our loving,
And our surrender,
There on the altar of Truth—
Our Faith the defender
Stands—
As a sentinel,
Guarding
The suns of Thy Splendour.
The sun and the moon and the stars
Are silent—near,
The flowers speak not to the air
The forest shadows are but tiger-bars,
A fear
 in the heart of the deer
That trembles the moon-haze atmosphere
The peace in the lotus pool
Is not of man
The Chinese goldfish seeks no shade
For the depths are not deep enough
 to be lazily cool
And no breezes fan
The stillness of this mystic glade
The sigh of labouring earth
Alone is heard,
Like destined footsteps where have trod
A myriad lives—
But few who knew *That* Birth—
Of a lone white bird^c
There on the Flame-Gold Peaks of God.

“The little ones”—
Who are the little ones?—
They are the well wishers,
The friends in the fields of sleep—
The story tellers,

NEW ROADS

The dreamers of strange dreams;
The flatterers
The distracters from the Path,
The seducers—
The lovers of luxury and lust
The gnomes of the earth and the elves of industry,
The pixies of passion and the gremlins of desire
If I follow the little ones
I shall wander into the shades of sleep,
Into the desert of yes, and no
Into the land of wanting and not wanting.
Into the great complacency of living—
Into the abyss that swallows up the sun.
Far from the eternities of the soul
that whisper on the heights.

MEDITATION

Except for a pain
in my right foot
I was nothing.

PART TWO

I

O where is the silence,
And where, O where is Thy smile?
The skies are grey
And overcast,
The mind is occupied
With memories long passed.
The heart is sad,
The blood flows sadly
through the veins.
But behind, what is behind?
Behind the eye-balls
is lust and impatience.
Is it here where falls
the consciousness?
Ah! behind the impatience
...is...
The Silence.

MOTHER INDIA

II

In the heart is a great pain,
Where Thy smile was.
I do not complain
 because
There is always a great
Opportunity
Accompanying every
Obstacle—
Here is another peak
 to be climbed
Another journey
 to be made
New Roads
 to travel
And Thou art here
Even in the very pain in my heart!

III

How odd that sleep
Doth come upon me now
And I should feel
Thy hand upon my brow—
How strange that noon
Should suddenly o'ercast
A shadow "bright" of
Memories long passed,
And steep my mind
In blissful nothingness;
To know again—like seas
That soft caress
The limbs of earth—
The tides of golden sleep;
The soul seed's birth
Left in memories deep.
But mind knows not these things,
Nor has a part
In knowing—

NEW ROADS

Behind the heart
Is the Power,
 new-growing
In this hour
For humankind
To seek beyond
The present powers of mind.
No earthly bond
Need hold our footsteps now.

IV

A jewel...
Red, blood ruby red—
Red like a rose,
Dropped into
The tranquil ocean of my heart.
And there uprose
A Flame, a Fire
Soaring to heights above
Beyond thought and all desire
Offering my love
At the feet of The Shining Ones.

V

New Birth
 is there
With each new dawn—
Each hour a means,
 an opportunity
Offered in Time...
To remember
That we also
 can offer
The Whole bliss of life;
Each dawn that sings
In the heart and blood—
Each breath, a gift
To Immortality.

MOTHER INDIA

VI

Roses were falling from the skies,
My heart rose like a flame—
Raptured the sun-glow in your eyes
Was the memory of His Name.
Brave was your smile and the walls of my heart
Broke with the burden of bliss—
What more could I offer—what mortal part
Yet remained in the deep abyss?
Roses were falling from the skies
While you lifted your gaze divine,
And the thrill of heaven was in Your eyes
As they spoke His name to mine.
Then I found this very bliss was You
And even That I could give,
The self could merge in His ultimate being
And needed no longer to live.

VII

O bird of the blue!
Your soaring high—
Your sudden flight across the sky,
O bare simplicity!
Yet rare—the moment
That aloft can share
The wild uplift of heart,
The flight of soul—
The Flame that wings its way
Beyond the blue
Into eternal peace
For I am you...
My song is in your breast
Each sweep and dive
A challenge to the stars
Each upward flight
A victory flaming
Over day and night.

VIII

These simplicities
 Are like pebbles on the shore—
 Where shines the sun,
 They stand out confident, sure;
 But where a shadow falls
 They close their eyes—they cease
 To cry aloud—their calls
 Echo in the caves of peace
 Or die a death
 Of unremembered silence—
 A flash of sunlight,
 Or the sea-gull's cry
 Awakes old echoes
 In the heart of Time.

IX

The sun is lifted
 By the prayers of heaven.
 Earth wakes
 To The Glory
 Of today or tomorrow.
 The religions sleep,
 Or are otherwise engaged;
 Too busy is the mind
 and "heart" of man—
 Yet GOD is born!
 The world is seeming blind.
 Only the soul
 Will recognise The Dawn—

X

And I cried to my Lord:
 "Where shall I seek Thy Face?"
 He said not a word,
 But soon I came to a place
 Where the temple was zoned
 By mountains towering high

MOTHER INDIA

And a voice intoned
Strange prayers—I wished to die.
Then ceased the temple bell
Its ringing, all was still—
A great Silence fell
Upon each purple hill.
And the Silence slept
Upon our mortal hours...
Dawn softly crept
Across the sleeping flowers
And Love from earth
Was wrung from the tears of Night;
Then I saw the Birth
Of The Children of the Light!

XI

There was a "Sound"
Which heaven could not contain,
An Infinite Melody,
A Cosmic Word.
Thy Name
 was the Growing
Symphony of the stars
And from Thy hallowed hands
 a flood of Light
Rained down upon
These upturned Yearning hearts.
"The Golden Glory"
 entered common things.
Thy Smile
Is as the form
Of a bright goddess
Carved in a luminosity
Beyond our imaginings,
Yet now seen
 through half lights—
Mist-toned hues
Of nebulous dream,
A half-remembered dream

NEW ROADS

Where gratitude grows
Upon a flood of certainty
I need not die,—
These are the Roads
To Immortality—

MEDITATION

A Flame
That flickers not—
An earthen pot
Without a name
Aspiring to receive
The seeds of harmony.



“The intellect, it is said, is man’s highest instrument and he must think and act according to its ideas. But this is not true; the intellect needs an inner light to guide, check and control it quite as much as the vital. There is something above the intellect which one has to discover and the intellect should be only an intermediary for the action of that source of true Knowledge.”

“We may say that there is a higher hemisphere of our being in which Mind luminous and aware of its workings still lives in the Light and can be seen as a subordinate power of the Supermind...”

“Supermind is the grade of existence beyond mind, life and Matter and, as mind, life and Matter have manifested on the earth, so too must Supermind in the inevitable course of things manifest in this world of Matter.”

“The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind.... Its possession would enable the human being to rise beyond the normalities of his present thinking, feeling and being into those highest powers of the mind in its self-exceedings which intervene between our mentality and Supermind.... Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living.... This is the real sense and drive of what we see as evolution.”

SRI AUROBINDO

Students' Section

SRI AUROBINDO'S HELP TO DISCIPLES IN LITERARY WORK

(From his Correspondence with Nirodbaran)

MYSELF: I wonder if for our literary work you put your Force on us in a continuous current!

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not. Why should I? It is not necessary. I put my Force from time to time and let it work out what has to be worked out. It is true that with some I have to put it often to prevent too long stretches of unproductivity but even there I don't put a continuous current. I have no time for such things.

MYSELF: If the Force were constantly acting, we would be able to write poetry in a continuous stream; as it is, we often go on hammering at lines without much success.

SRI AUROBINDO: That depends on the mental instrument. Some people write freely—others do so only when in a special condition.

MYSELF: Can a faculty originally latent in a man, but brought out by Yoga, achieve the same perfection as a faculty which has been there from the very beginning in another man?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not so long as it is latent or not fully emerged. But once it is manifested and settled, there is no reason why it should not achieve equal perfection. All depends on the quality of the inspiration that comes and the response of the instrument.

MYSELF: On what does the favourableness of an adhara depend?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: How can one say on what it depends? It depends on all the past and all the future and on what is behind the present also!! The mental is what has been formed for the present life—naturally if it has by present nature a marked beginning of capacity in a certain direction, it will be more easy for something that is pressing to manifest, to develop through it than it will be for an instrument not so naturally responsive. But “more easy” is all one can say. It does not follow that the facile instrument will do more than the difficult one. There are poets who produce with no difficulty; there are poets who produce with difficulty; there are poets who produce with occasional facility and customary difficulty. All kinds go to make the cosmic hotch-potch.

June, 1935

NIRODBARAN

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

THE PSYCHIC BEING

FOR the November-December issue, covering two great occasions (November 24 and December 5), I have selected one of the best series of letters I received during the year 1933. It is rather long and may run over two or three months. It will be interesting to note that, among the varied correspondence I have had, this is the only one initiated by Sri Aurobindo himself. And what a time he chose—just when my psychic being was to cast its first influence on the mind some six days afterwards!

3-7-1933

SRI AUROBINDO: It seems to me that you must know by this time about the psychic being—that it is behind the veil and its consciousness also; only a little comes out in the mind and vital and physical. When that consciousness is not concealed, when you are aware of your soul (the psychic being), when its feelings and consciousness are yours, then you have got the consciousness of the psychic being. The feelings and aspirations of the psychic being are all turned towards truth and right consciousness and the Divine; it is the only part that cannot be touched by the hostile forces and their suggestions.

4-7-1933

SELF: But how to remove that veil and get the psychic in front? It has to spread its light on our mind, vital and physical and then to surrender them to the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no process for it. It comes like the other things—you have to aspire for it and it can only happen when you are sufficiently advanced.

SELF: May I know the right way of doing our Yoga? Does it start with the process of opening the psychic centre, and then purifying each plane of our consciousness?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Usually the mind opens first or the heart—the psychic centre opens afterwards.

6-7-1933

SELF: Please indicate the difference between the psychic being and what is called the central being. Is our psychic a part of this central being and does it receive the Divine's help through it? In Yoga, how does our central being stand in relation to the rest of us?

SRI AUROBINDO: The central being is above the Adhar—most people are not aware of their central being (Jivatma)—they are aware only of the ego.

The psychic is the soul, it is a portion of the Divine that supports the mind and body in the evolution. The psychic gets the Divine's help directly from the Divine.

The central being is that on which all the others depend. If it makes its surrender, that is, renounces its separate fulfilment in order to be an instrument of the Divine, then it is easier for the mind, vital and physical to surrender.

SELF: Is it a fact that when circumstances are suitable the central being renounces its separate fulfilment and surrenders itself to the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: It has nothing to do with suitable circumstances. If the will of the central being turns towards union with the Divine, then it renounces its separate fulfilment.

SELF: Is it not true that the Supreme instead of working directly on man acts through the Jivatman?

SRI AUROBINDO: For the most part the Supreme acts through the Jiva and its nature and the Jiva and the nature acts through the ego and the ego acts through the outer instruments—that is the play of the Ignorance.

SELF: When one asks the Divine to help him, how does He or She work on him?

SRI AUROBINDO: In whatever way is suitable to the condition of the being at the time.

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SELF: What separates our ego from the Jivatman?

SRI AUROBINDO: Ignorance.

7-7-1933

SELF: Is it true that the psychic can come in front and reign over the mind, vital and physical only when the central being has surrendered itself to the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: If there is the will to surrender in the central being, then the psychic can come forward.

9-7-1933

SELF: From where does the mind or the psychic receive the power of discrimination by which it can know that this is good or that is bad?

SRI AUROBINDO: It belongs to them by nature—only the mind can err, the psychic does not.

SELF: Is it not the Mother who warns us indirectly, through the mind or the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only when the Mother speaks directly that you can say "The Mother has said".

SELF: Nowadays, I notice that when I do not or cannot check the useless thoughts, impulses or any influence from outside, some part within feels a sense of uneasiness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be something psychic-mental, that is an influence of the psychic put out into the mind.

SELF: When the psychic has put its influence into the mind, why is it so weak that it cannot prevent the wrong thoughts and impulses coming in, but simply tolerates them with an uneasy feeling?

SRI AUROBINDO: The mind and the vital have always been dominant and developed themselves and are accustomed to act for themselves. How do you expect an influence coming forward and for the first time to be stronger? The psychic is not uneasy, it makes you uneasy when you do the wrong thing.

MOTHER INDIA

SELF: In what way am I going so wrong that the psychic becomes too feeble to control my vital and its wrong movements?

SRI AUROBINDO: You have been keeping the psychic in the background during a thousand lives and indulging the vital. That is why the psychic is not strong.

11-7-1933

SELF: When the psychic makes me thus uneasy, will not the hostile beings take advantage and throw depression upon the vital or dissatisfaction over the mind?

SRI AUROBINDO: The uneasiness created by the psychic is not depression—it is in the nature of a rejection of the wrong movement.

If the uneasiness causes depression or vital dissatisfaction, it is not the psychic.

14-7-1933

SELF: Again, yesterday while doing the Mother's work a little uneasiness came when I failed to reject useless thoughts and desires. I suppose it must have been psychic. Now, kindly enlighten me how to use the uneasiness in order to control myself better next time.

SRI AUROBINDO: The uneasiness is simply a reminder to you to be more vigilant in future.

SELF: Can a psychic influence in the mind act successfully on the vital movements or has it to act on the vital directly?

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital can be used directly by the psychic influence in the mind.

SELF: Is it true that one should feel that it is the Divine Presence which moves one and does everything for one?

Would it be possible to feel it without a union with the Divine Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: No—that is itself a union with her—to feel the Divine Presence above or in you and moving you.

31-7-1933

SELF: After death, what happens to the adhar—I mean mind, vital and subtle physical—when the psychic being returns to the psychic plane for rest?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is dropped off—unless the being has become strongly individualised on the mental plane or both on the mental and vital. Then it keeps its mental and vital sheaths—otherwise they disintegrate and everything essential is drawn back into the psychic.

1-8-1933

SELF: Why has the psychic being to pass through the other worlds before reaching its own?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because they are there in between and because so long as the vital and mental formations are there, you cannot go elsewhere than in the mental and vital worlds.

2-8-1933

SELF: While passing through the mental and vital worlds, does not the psychic draw back the substance from its mental and vital beings in order to use it for the next birth?

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not necessarily take the same substance as before. If it did, there would be no difference between the past life and the new one.

SELF: Does the psychic really take rest in its plane as we do here in the physical world when tired?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a different kind of rest.

SELF: When does it return to the earth again?

SRI AUROBINDO: Whenever it is due.

4-8-33

SELF: For returning here has not the psychic being to pass through the mental and vital worlds in order to use them in its new life?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

22-9-33

SELF: After death, when the vital retires to its vital plane, what does it do there till the psychic calls it back for the next life on the earth?

SRI AUROBINDO: For most people the vital dissolves after a time as it is not sufficiently formed to be immortal. The soul descending makes a new vital formation suitable for the new life.

23-9-33

SELF: Could the vital of a worldly man whose vitality was very strong, like Napoleon's, be immortal, or only of him who was far advanced in Yoga?

SRI AUROBINDO: Only if it is consciously developed and connected with the psychic being.

24-9-33

SELF: It is said that when one has left this world one enjoys or suffers according to one's Karma. In which world is this done?

SRI AUROBINDO: In whatever worlds you pass through—but it is doubtful whether the statement is more than very partially true.

25-9-33

SELF: But which part of us suffers or enjoys when our physical body is no more there?

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital can suffer or enjoy in the vital world for a time.

NAGIN DOSHI

POEMS

THE FIRE-TOUCH

WHEN in the darkness of eve I bring,
 Filling the body's cup of mire,
The death-curse of primeval time,
 Thou with the burning touch of fire
Dissolvest the pang of mortal night,
 Its sorrows and its nether gloom.
Then on the fields of ashes and death
 Immortality's flowers bloom.

When, filling my heart's goblet I bring
 The swelling and foamy restlessness,
Thy fiery golden touch destroys
 From distorted dream's profound recess
The fickleness of earthly joy.
 Then the gates of heart open apart
And in the abysmal void I feel
 The fullness and glory of thy Heart.

When the sunless gulfs of mind are full
 With morbid bubbles of disbelief
And I am imprisoned within my thoughts,
 Thy fire-touch rouses me from sleep
And lifts me up to the sky of faith
 Where winged stars come flying to me,
And pours in my mind's gaping chasms
 The nectarous shower of ecstasy.

When, filling my little life I bring
 The darkness of thousand centuries
And out of this gloom I fail to find
 The path for my soul's release,

MOTHER INDIA

Thou comest in my house of clay
And thy fire-touch kindles my soul:
Then in that moment of oneness I know
That Thou art the path, and Thou the goal.

RANAJIT

THE TRAVELLER

I've come from a far and unknown land
And far have I to go—
Beyond the stars, the Sun-god's strand,
O'er twilight realms of snow.

I know not why was I even led,
Nor where this road will end;
I see my path in the morning red
Vanishing behind a bend.

An unseen Presence leads me on
Thro' storms and sweet sunshine,
Thro' the coming days from those by gone
Towards the Eternal's shrine.

ANIRUDDHA

BLISS-BUD

IN the depths of sorrow's womb
Flashed a ray unknown,
A seed of bliss immense
Awoke the sod and stone!

Loud ego's painful thorns
Stemmed the growth of peace—
A thousand misshapened dreams
Murked its argent release.

POEMS

But the nascent ethereal plant
Knew not the face of fear,
But sought to gaze above,
And soothe the moment's tear...

In an epic dawn at last
The Beauty's message came:
Then the bliss-bud revealed
Its deep diamond-flame;

Undying and immaculate,
It brought an ache divine
Towards an unreached sea
Of burning god-gold wine!

PRITHWINDRA

REVELATION

No more my heart shall sob, or grieve.
My days and nights dissolve in God's own Light.
Above the toil of life my soul
Is a Bird of Fire winging the Infinite.

I have known the One, his secret Play;
And passed beyond the sea of Ignorance-dream.
In tune with Him, I sport and sing,
I own the golden Eye of the Supreme.

Drunk deep of the Immortality,
I am the root and boughs of a teeming vast.
My Form I have known, and realised,
The Supreme and I are one—all we outlast.

CHINMOY

THE KING OF RAINBOWLAND

THERE was a boy who wished to be a king, and not an ordinary king at that; he wished to be the King of the rainbow,—that lovely seven coloured arch where, he thought, lived only little beautiful children like himself. It is not known how this strange idea got into his head, but somehow it did and obsessed him. With his seven-year-old mind he would dream, day and night, of his beautiful realm, of the games that he would play there with his lovely subjects, and of all the fun that they would have. And such was his enthusiasm that his mother was also fascinated by it; and whenever he came to her with some new ideas and plans concerning his rainbow kingdom—which he did every few minutes—she would smile and kiss him and would soon be lost in the picture that he held before her.

Thus they lived, mother and child, with their fantastic dream, which they dared not think would ever be realised, and which they strictly kept a secret between themselves...

But one night their dream came true! Flame—that was the name of the boy—saw his kingdom, the fair rainbowland. Until then he had only thought about it, had imagined it, but had never actually seen it, not even in a dream. What he now saw surpassed his imagination. He saw this universe with all its beautiful stars and planets, and surrounding it an enormous seven-hued bangle. It seemed to him as if he was looking into an Arabian Night's crystal. He heard, or felt some words vibrating in his mind:

“The Rainbowland surrounds this universe like an enormous seven-hued bangle. Most of the time a thick covering of mist veils this land, and that is why only after a shower, when this mist is washed away, men get a glimpse of its ethereal splendour reflected by silver white clouds. Just like the Fairyland, this is a realm of eternal smile, beauty, joy, peace and happiness. Only beautiful flower-like children live here with the youthful Rainbow Queen.

“Unlike the fairies, these rainbow folk have no connection whatever with the people of the Earth, nor have they much knowledge about that planet. They are too far away for that. Only the Queen knows everything, for she alone has

THE KING OF RAINBOWLAND

studied the great 'Book of Fate' where all events of all times of the whole creation are kept recorded in mysterious hieroglyphs. She knows that there are secret links that join all the worlds of the universe to one another, and that one such link exists between the Earth and the Rainbow. She also knows that after her a mortal child of Earth will reign in the immortal Rainbowland"...

All this while Flame was gazing into the interior of this strange world. It was, he found, a realm of eternal light and joy. Here the sun's rays were as soothing as the moonlight and as warm as a mother's caress, and they flooded the land, the sky and the water. Hills of rubies, emeralds and sapphires were all ablaze, and their myriad-hued flames were reflected by the crystal streams and on the silver-gold houses. Laughing rainbow-children with their seven-coloured wings, were everywhere. On the hills and in the bright colourful forests and meadows, they played about with peacocks and deers or sang with the rainbow-plumaged birds; or in the calm blue seas they swam and dived with the mermaids.

"Ah, what a paradise it must be!" he thought.

Suddenly his attention was drawn to the Ruby Palace, for all the children abruptly began to leave their games and hurry towards it. Their Queen had called them!

In a few moments they all gathered in the big hall. The Rainbow Queen was already there, sitting before a huge globe of crystal. When she saw them she greeted them with a smile. "Come, children", she said, "I am sure you will all like to hear a story". Everyone jumped up with joy saying,—"Yes, yes", "A nice story", "A big story".—"Then sit down quietly around the crystal," said the Queen, "and listen attentively, for it is a story that concerns you all".

When everyone was comfortably seated she began.

It was the most bizarre tale that the rainbow folk had ever heard. It was the story of the Earth, that little, unknown planet of paradox, where birth and death, youth and old age, joy and sorrow, hope and despair march side by side; where brother kills brother, and people sacrifice everything for a stranger; where men can be worse than the demons, and at the same time greater than the Gods.

As they listened their eyes became glued to the crystal. The pictures that appeared on it surpassed their wildest imagination. What a strange land! What grotesque creatures! How gruesome was this grey planet! And yet, at times how great, and how beautiful!

When she finished her story the children broke out with questions, for she had used many unfamiliar terms in her narrative. What is death? What is suffering? What is misfortune? What is old age? ..Patiently she answered them one by one, a smile always playing on her lips; death is only a process of changing the form. Suffering is the good that urges man on. Misfortune is the hand that lifts up the human beings. Failure is but success in disguise. Hatred is only the reflection of love in a distorting mirror..

When she had answered all the questions, she said, "Now, my darlings, I'll tell you something about our planet, about our fair Rainbowland. You have all heard of the 'Book of Fate'. Of course you have not read it because the right moment for you to do so has not come as yet. Now I'm going to tell you something which is written in that book and which must be fulfilled. Listen carefully then. I was sent to this Rainbowland for a certain purpose; what that purpose is, you need not worry about. Only know that now my work here is done and I will have to go back to the 'Satyaloka', from where I came. But before I go, I must choose a king for you. Now, it is written in the 'Book of Fate', that after me a mortal child will reign in this land. That was why I told you this story about the Earth from where your king is to come. This is the auspicious moment, given in the 'Book of Fate', for bringing your king. And so now I will go down to the Earth. Will, Faith and Knowledge will accompany me. But before I go I will show you your king. Look into the crystal once more. His name is Flame, and at this very moment he is seeing all that is transpiring here. He knows that we are coming down to Earth in order to bring him to our Rainbowland and crown him. Look, children, there he is!"

They all looked into the crystal and saw a lovely child lying by the side of his mother, half-awake and half-asleep, as if in a trance. And as their eyes met, he smiled.

A rap on the door woke Flame. He sat up on the bed and softly called his mother. "Ma, ma, wake up, the Rainbow Queen has come. She is waiting to take us away to the Rainbowland, our Rainbowland". Then he ran to the door, his mother at his heels, and opened it wide.

It was a beautiful and calm full-moon night and it was snowing heavily. The trees, the houses, the fields were completely covered up by silver-white snow. And amidst this pure, transforming whiteness stood four ethereal figures.

When they saw Flame, they greeted him joyfully, "Hail, oh Rainbow King!" The smiling queen advanced towards Flame and his mother, and placed

THE KING OF RAINBOWLAND

a flower-crown on his head. "Flame, as you already know, your dream has come true, and we have come to take you to your magnificent Rainbowland. All the children, the birds, the trees, the hills—the entire Rainbowland eagerly awaits you, their King. Come with us to your beautiful Kingdom".

In his joy Flame knew not what to do. He laughed, he leaped, he danced, and again and again embraced and kissed his lovely subjects. But suddenly he stopped, almost in the middle of a leap, and looked back where bathed by the silver moonlight his mother stood like a marble statue. He forgot all his joy and ran to her. Then putting his arms around her he asked, "And my mother? Rainbow Queen, won't she come with us? If she doesn't then I too cannot go. Not even—not even to the Rainbowland."

The Rainbow Queen smiled. "Why, of course, my child. She too will come. She will always be with you. Now come. Let us start, we should not delay any longer". Saying this, she took Flame and his mother by the hand, and Will, Faith and Knowledge joined them. Then hand in hand they began to soar upwards, appearing in the magic moonlight like a garland of white flowers.

Next morning Flame and his mother were missing. After a long search their lifeless bodies were discovered, deeply buried in the snow. There was no sign of suffering on their faces, rather they looked happy. Both were smiling....

Why they had left home in the cold winter night and come out to die on the snow remained for ever a mystery.

ANIRUDDHA

END OF "STUDENTS' SECTION"

A "CALL" FROM PONDICHERRY

ON the evening of the 29th November 1950, as I was resting after a heavy day, a servant brought me a telegram which read: "FLY—URGENT—MOTHER". Never could I have imagined the amount of meaning there was in those few words.

Then it came to me—Is Sri Aurobindo ill?—Why otherwise would the Mother send such a telegram? Other thoughts crept into my mind and I could not decide how best to equip myself for the errand.

The next morning, 30th November, I flew to Madras, only to find that the next train for Pondicherry did not leave until 9-50 p.m., and so I would reach my destination by 7-a.m. the next morning. It was a torment to think that after travelling 1000 miles in 5 hours it was now to take me twenty hours to cover 100 miles. I looked at the telegram—read it once again—No! I could not waste time, so I hired a car.

It took me an hour to obtain a permit from the Police authorities, who looked me over thoroughly, trying to decide whether I was a smuggler or some thirsty drinker wanting a joy ride to French India. They finally decided however that I could go. The driver being assured of extras, my car literally flew along the roads to Pondicherry having only to stop twice at the inefficient and rude customs barriers—and by six in the evening I was at the Mother's feet in the Ashram playground. As usual She greeted me with her heavenly smile, saying She had expected me that very evening. She then told me of Sri Aurobindo's illness and asked me to examine Him; She added that She would be coming to his room after the programme was over in the playground.

On the way Dr. Nirod of the Ashram and my young colleague Dr. Satya Sen acquainted me with the history and present condition of the Master. Softly but quickly I ascended the stairs and entered the room. There I looked on the Master, my divine patient, semi-recumbent on His bed, seemingly unconcerned, eyes closed, like a statue of massive peace. I approached the bed, knelt by His side and made my pranams at His feet. Champaklal called: "Look, Master, who has come". There was a quiver on His face; heavy

eyelids opened a little—then all was still again. But again Champaklal called: "Master, see, Sanyal has come". This time He opened His eyes fully, looked at me and smiled—Oh such a smile, serene and beautiful, it carried one to ecstasy, lighting the innermost corners of the heart.

He placed His hand on my head and lovingly patted it a few times—all thoughts vanished, it seemed my heart had stopped. I was overpowered with a mighty peace and calm. He had closed His eyes—except for His respiration all was still and a great silence reigned. Then Champaklal whispered delightedly, "He has given you a Darshan Smile and Blessing".—It was a blessing no words could describe; only one who has seen it and known it in his heart could appreciate what it meant, it for it was an experience of the soul.

I waited for the opportunity to become the doctor. I asked Him what the trouble was and whether I could give Him any relief. I put to Him the regular professional questions, perhaps then forgetting that my patient was the Divine housed in a mortal frame, and He answered: "Trouble? Nothing troubles me—and suffering! one can be above it." I mentioned the urinary difficulties. "Well, yes", He answered, "I had some difficulties but they have been relieved, and now I do not feel anything." Again there was silence.

We retired to the next room and I had a consultation with Nirod and Satya. His urine analysis report had arrived, showing slight albumen and sugar, sp. gr. a little above normal. The Mother now entered the room and stood in silence near the foot of the bed and watched Sri Aurobindo. Soon She called me out into the next room where I explained the position to Her, that He was suffering from a mild kidney infection—otherwise there was nothing very serious as far as could be judged from the urine report.

We thought that, *Deo volente*, continuous drainage would suffice and antibiotics would gradually improve the rest.

The following morning, 1st December, was very encouraging; our Lord was absolutely alert and responsive and His temperature was normal. After His sponging He took His simple breakfast and even cracked jokes with us. I was giving Him a scalp massage and enquired if He was liking it or not. He remarked: "I know you went to England for your Fellowship but where did you learn massaging?" I suggested that we would like to have His blood examined for a detailed bio-chemical examination, to which He smiled and retorted: "You doctors can think only in terms of diseases and medicines, but always there

is much more effectual knowledge beyond and above it. I do not need anything". All of us were very happy by this most remarkable improvement and the day passed on.

The next day, 2nd December, there was little change except for a rise of one degree in temperature towards the evening. The day was a heavy one for the Mother as it was the second day of the annual display in the playground; but as soon as the activities were over She came to His room and stood at the foot of His bed. Her countenance was very grave but She did not say anything. I suggested, as the urinary infection was again flaring up in spite of continuous drainage, that we should try Antibiotics and Infusion therapy. Mother then warned me that orthodox methods of treatment were unsuitable for Him—not only would Sri Aurobindo not like them but they would be harmful. She also reminded me that my patient was the Divine, "He will work out whatever is necessary." I could only give some simple medicines to allay symptoms if any.

We doctors were in a state of perplexity; true, our patient was an Avatar; true, He had cured innumerable ailments in the sadhaks as also in Himself several times—would He not now cure Himself?

Champaklal once entreated Him in a favourable moment: "Why don't you use your force and cure yourself, Master?" He kept silent and showed rather a dislike for such questions.

December 3rd—After a rather quiet and restful night He looked better that morning and when the usual morning routine was over Nirod offered Him some fruit juice which He enjoyed.

The temperature had dropped to normal and so much was our relief that at 11 a.m. while making my Pranams to the Mother I ventured to suggest that as the Master was steadily improving I might perhaps leave that evening. The Mother remained silent; She looked very grave. I looked into Her eyes and felt a quiver, a pain in my heart. What had I said? Was She not willing? Why did I suggest my departure instead of waiting for Her to tell me? I felt a wrench at my heart and I blurted out: "I would rather stay a few more days". A smile lit all Her face. "Yes," She said. In the afternoon the picture rapidly changed. The temperature had risen to 101 degrees. There was a definite respiratory distress. The Mother came into the room at 4 p.m. and stood watching. All the afternoon we had found it difficult to get Him to drink water or fruit juice, so now we sought Her help. She brought the spoon near His lips. Immediately He

A "CALL" FROM PONDICHERRY

opened His eyes, took a few sips and lapsed back into unresponsiveness. The Mother came with us into the ante-room and then for the first time declared: "He is fully conscious within but is losing interest in Himself". We could understand very little and dared not question further. Satya was restless as energetic treatment could not be instituted. The Mother simply said: "It all depends on Him".

As the darkness closed in upon us our hearts grew heavier. At times Nirod or Champaklal would offer Him sips to drink and He would even remark on His choice of tomato or orange juice or something of that sort, then would lapse back into a state of unresponsiveness.

Not once would He say or at any time indicate that He was uncomfortable or thirsty, but if we changed His position or offered Him a drink He smilingly accepted it. The Mother came at 11 o'clock at night as usual; the moment She offered Him a drink He was all alert and obediently drank a cupful of fruit juice—then again He lapsed into a state of repose.

The distress continued now with little sign of abating and The Mother took me into the ante-room remarking: "I don't know, He has no interest in Himself". I suggested intravenous medication from the next day onwards, but She advised me not to disturb Him.

The long night passed, a long and worrying night. Nirod and Champaklal kept watch throughout.—If there is a quiver of the lips,—it may be that He wants a drink. If a shake of the hand—perhaps He needs His handkerchief. They are there to serve Him; that is their sadhana—life dedicated to the service of their Master.—I remembered Sri Aurobindo one day telling me of his early days of sadhana, when he used to sit up all through the night. Champaklal, then a mere boy, would lie on the stairs below, waiting for any summons. On another occasion some time before, I mentioned to Sri Aurobindo that Dr. Nirod would change the medicine when needed; He remarked. "Nirod is no doctor to me".

We continued keeping a careful watch on the urinary flow and He was still passing 50 ozs. in 24 hrs. at sp. gr. of 1012-1010. Nirod would sit by the bottle and watch each drop as it fell and if there was any delay, which was often the case, he would immediately draw my attention to it.

December 4th—At dawn His temperature had dropped to 99 degrees. The respiratory distress was negligible and He seemed bright and responsive.

The morning duties were over and we settled Him in His usual sitting position. There He sat majestic and serene. At about 9 a.m., The Mother came and helped Him to take a light breakfast. As She walked into the ante-room, the room used for our consultations, I smiled to Her and said; "The Master seems cheerful again and taking interest". The only answer She made was "Mmm" and then went out of the room.

I settled by the side of the bed and gently massaged the Master's body while Nirod and Champaklal were attending to their duties. After a little while He opened His eyes and asked the time. I told Him 10 o'clock, I saw He was in a mood to talk so I ventured: "How do you feel"? He replied, "I am comfortable." There was a pause; He looked at the clock and then asked how Bengal was faring, especially the refugees. I narrated to Him their pitiable plight and implored: "Surely the Divine can help them?" My Lord answered, "Yes, if Bengal seeks the Divine." He closed His eyes and went into silence (samadhi).

But alas, it was only a brief lull—a belied hope. From midday the respiratory difficulty reappeared with greater amplitude and the temperature went up to 102 degrees. This time signs of distress could be seen in the face but there was not a word, not a protest.

The Mother came about 1 p.m. She watched for some time before entering the adjoining room with me. Then She said, "He is withdrawing".

Though He looked apparently unconscious, whenever He was offered drinks, He would wake up and take a few sips and wipe His mouth himself with His handkerchief. To all of us it seemed apparent that a consciousness came from outside when He was almost normal, and then withdrew when the body quivered and sank down in distress. He was no longer there!

By 5 o'clock again He showed signs of improvement. He was quite responsive. We helped Him out of His bed. After which He walked to the arm-chair to rest. For the moment He seemed a different personality. He sat there with His eyes closed—calm and composed with a radiating consciousness. We remarked on the majestic beauty of His form as He sat there; such calm and beatitude brought to my mind the Vedic Rishis. But this did not last long. After three quarters of an hour He became restless and wanted to be back in bed. Respiratory distress appeared with redoubled momentum. From midday onwards the urine output which had been good all these days definitely diminished and the distress was very prominent. Though He seemed to be unconscious He was not, which was evident by the fact that He drew Champaklal

A "CALL" FROM PONDICHERRY

several times to His breast and kissed him lovingly and this Divine compassionate embrace was extended to Nirod and myself. It may be mentioned that this emotional behaviour was evident here for the first time; but He had taken nothing to drink the whole day.

The Mother came back after Her usual attendance at the playground. She laid her garland at the foot of the bed, a thing which She does daily, and stood watching Sri Aurobindo. She looked so grave and quiet that it almost distressed me. I went to the ante-room to wait for Her. She entered and I gave Her the report and told Her that Glucose had been given by Satya and we wanted to arrange for intravenous infusions etc. She said quietly and firmly, "I told you this is not necessary, He has no interest in Himself, He is withdrawing".

We sat round His bed, wondering why He was losing interest in Himself; He, if He so desired, could certainly cure Himself as He had done on so many other occasions,—Nirod has seen Him curing the illnesses of others. But now at this crucial hour He had no interest in Himself! Was He going to sacrifice Himself?

At about 11 p.m. the Mother came into the room and helped Sri Aurobindo to drink half a cup of tomato juice. A strange phenomenon—a body which for the moment is in agony, unresponsive, labouring hard for breath, suddenly becomes quiet; a consciousness enters the body, He is awake and normal. He finishes the drink, then, as the consciousness withdraws, the body lapses back into the grip of agony.

At midnight the Mother came again into the room, looked intently for some time as if there was a silent exchange of thought between them; then She left.

At 1 a.m. (5th) She returned and again looked at the Lord and stood at the foot of the bed. There was no sign of agony, fear, or anxiety on Her face. Not a thought, not a feeling could I fathom in Her expression. With Her eyes She asked me to go into the other room and She followed me in. She asked, "What do you think? Can I retire for one hour?" This is a significant hour: The Mother retires—Her consciousness leaves Her body, none are to call or enter Her room then. This is imperative.—I murmured, "Mother, this is beyond me." She said, "Call me when the time comes."

I stood behind the Master and started stroking His hair which He always liked. Nirod and Champaklal sat by the side of the bed and were caressed His feet. We were all quietly watching Him. We now, knew that anything might

MOTHER INDIA

happen, any time, only a miracle could save us and the world. I perceived a slight quiver in His body, almost imperceptible. He drew up His arms and put them on His chest, one overlapping the other—then all stopped. Death, the cruel death that was waiting so long—we had been keeping vigil for it—had descended on our Lord. I told Nirod to go and fetch the Mother. It was 1-20 a.m.

Almost immediately the Mother entered the room. She stood there, near the feet of Sri Aurobindo. Her hair had been undressed and was flowing about Her shoulders. Her look was so fierce that I could not face those eyes. With a piercing gaze She stood there. Champaklal could not bear it and sobbingly he implored, “Mother, tell me Dr. Sanyal is not right, He is alive.” The Mother looked at him and he became quiet and composed as if touched by a magic wand. She stood there for more than half an hour. My hands were still on His forehead. My mind wandered. He lay, my Guru, Rishi Sri Aurobindo, Avatar of the new era of the dawn, a thing past! Only a few seconds ago I was watching and hoping for a miracle to happen; could there be a more appropriate time than this? Sri Aurobindo is no more! He was alive, and now He is history. Thoughts kaleidoscoped in my brain. I could almost see thousands of people passing by the bed, whispering aloud—“Here lived Sri Aurobindo.” But it cannot be; I am standing here by His side, my hands almost touching Him, I am watching Him breathe, yes, every movement, all is much more quiet now,—I could not think any more. A sharp pain went through my head. I looked at the Mother. Softly She came to me and touched my head, stilled my thoughts, quietened my mind. No trace of agony was left, I could now think normally. I asked Her, “What is to be done, we have to arrange for the last offices.” She quietly said, “He will be given Samadhi, under the Prayer tree, in the place where the giant maidenhair plants are arranged.” So, this place had been earmarked beforehand; such is the way of the Divine!

The Mother also reminded me of the formalities that had to be observed, a French doctor must certify the death first. Then only members of the Ashram and the public could be informed. Nolini Gupta and Amrita were called and stood there as stunned. Pavitra stood at the feet of the Master, tears rolling down his cheeks.

We were busy in dressing the Lord. The Mother had already agreed to my request to call the Ashram photographers (sadhaks) to take the last pictures.

The French physician of the Hospital, Major Barbet, examined the Master's body and we both signed the death certificate.

A "CALL" FROM PONDICHERRY

Now the sadhaks of the Ashram were to be informed. It was now dawn, the eastern sky was slowly getting clearer and clearer, a shaft of light appeared over the horizon. Quietly I left the Ashram.

As I sat by the window, bewildered, in my room at Golconde, I saw the hurried but silent progress of the Ashramites towards the Ashram.—Sri Aurobindo has passed away—I felt a violent pang in my heart. I looked at the sky. Look!...There, Sri Aurobindo is rising again—the eternal Sun bursting forth with a million rays.

As the day wore on, longer and longer became the stream of people, eager but calm and patient, to have a last Darshan of the great Rishi. In the afternoon I again entered the room where our Lord lay serene and majestic. A never-ending stream of people, laymen, clergymen, doctors, lawyers, rickshaw pullers, labourers, rich men, poor men, all filed past the sage, silent but inspired. At dusk the Ashram door was closed. The Mother blessed me, asking me to come again early in the morning. I left for Golconde. Champaklal and Nirod were keeping vigil night and day.

December 6th—I entered Sri Aurobindo's room before dawn. Mother and I had a look at Him; how wonderful, how beautiful He looked, with a golden hue. There were no signs of death as science had taught me, no evidence of the slightest discoloration, or decomposition. The Mother whispered, "As long as the supramental light does not pass away, the body will not show any signs of decomposition, and it may be a day or it may take many more days". I whispered to Her, "Where is the light you speak of—can I not see it?" I was then kneeling by Sri Aurobindo's bed, by the Mother's feet. She smiled at me and with infinite compassion put her hand on my head. There He was—with a luminous mantle of bluish golden hue around Him.

With the morning came the procession of people, taking a last glimpse of the Divine Master. The Mother said to me, "People do not know what a tremendous sacrifice He has made for the world. About a year ago, while I was discussing things I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone, 'No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation I might go, you will have to fulfil our yoga of supramental descent and transformation!'"

After that night, there dawned on us the third day of Sri Aurobindo's passing. The Mother and I had a look at His body. As yet there was no sign of

MOTHER INDIA

decomposition. The French surgeon corroborated the findings, this being required by the law of the state.

I was talking with the Mother, in Her room. In my own foolish way I voiced my apprehension for Her health and the strain She put on her fragile frame. She smiled at me, and asked, "Do you think I get all this energy from my frugal meals? Of course not, one can draw infinite energy from the universe when needed!" She also added, "No, I have no intention of leaving my body for the present. I have yet a lot of things to do. So far as I am concerned, it is nothing to me. I am in constant contact with Sri Aurobindo".

Sri Aurobindo's sudden decision of withdrawal stirred the minds of us all. Was it a retreat? Or was it a means used by Him to attain something for the earth? Who can answer?

With our limited mental logic, whatever we try to explain will only be part of the truth, or may even be a distortion. What we need is a supreme faith in Him that if many a battle is apparently lost the ultimate victory of the war is inevitable. Sri Aurobindo has no doubt withdrawn from us, from our physical eye, but the Mother is continuing the fight for humanity as the Mahashakti.

While we all feel as if we were sliding down the incline to disappointment,—for the world torn with dissension, distrust, hatred and greed, looking for a ray in the sky, a divine gesture—for the uplift of humanity—a transformed humanity—the Mother holds out HOPE.

I took leave of the Mother on the 7th evening—taking a last look at the Master's luminous body,—the Divine in a mortal frame, beautiful, calm, and still without a sign of decomposition. I naively asked the Mother, "Why was I not allowed to treat the Lord as I would have done in the routine way, and why was I called in?" Mother consoled me by saying, "We wanted you to be here, not so much for treatment." The Mother blessed me three times and all my sorrows, my disappointments, my doubts vanished, and my mind was aglow with hope. I bowed at Her feet, and looked up to see the Divine Mother, the Mahashakti smiling at me.

DR. PRABHAT SANYAL

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