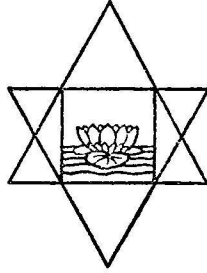


# MOTHER INDIA

JUNE 1953

Price: Re. 1.



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>
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	... <i>Nirodbaran</i>	I
VISIONS AND DREAMS ( <i>Based on Talks with the Mother</i> )	... <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	7
PAGES FROM A JOURNAL: THE EARLY CONVERSATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO ( <i>From the Notes of Anilbaran Roy</i> )	... <i>Compiled by "Synergist"</i>	12
THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA ( <i>The Diary of "AB"</i> )	... <i>Compiled by "Synergist"</i>	61
THE FUTURE POETRY: CHAPTER 17—THE POETS OF THE DAWN—(2)	... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	19
ASHRAM GLIMPSES	... <i>An American Newcomer</i>	27
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO <i>Chapter XIV—Karma Yoga and its Indispensability</i>	... <i>Rishabhchand</i>	32
THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT— <i>Life in Vedic Times</i>	... <i>Sisirkumar Mitra</i>	39
THE MOTHER'S MUSIC ( <i>Two Poems</i> )	... <i>Prithvisingh</i>	45
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE:		
MYSTIC APPROACH TO THE VEDA AND THE UPANISHAD BY M. P. PANDIT	... <i>Review by R. N. Khanna</i>	47
ESCAPE FROM TARTARY	... <i>K. D. Sethna</i>	50
<b>Students' Section</b>		
A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE	... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	52
ANANDAMATH	... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	53
A VISION	...	54
POEMS:		
BEAUTY	... <i>Aniruddha</i>	55
THE SEEKER	... <i>Ranajit</i>	55
NOCTURNE	... <i>Prithivindra</i>	56
ON TRUTHFULNESS	... <i>Jibendra</i>	57
ON WRITING POETRY	... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	60
SELECTIONS FROM WORLD LITERATURE	...	
(A) PROSE—MATHEW ARNOLD	... <i>Compiled by</i>	61
(B) POETRY—WORDSWORTH	... <i>"Synergist"</i>	63

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the April issue)*

### ON WOMEN\*

15-1-1935

MYSELF: Is it not true that women are more receptive and psychic than men?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish! Neither more receptive nor even more hysteric. Men, I find, can equal them even at that. It is true that they declare hunger-strikes more easily, if you think with Gandhi that that is a sign of psychicism (soul-force). But after all Non-cooperation has taken away even that inferiority from men.

19-1-1935

MYSELF: A medical man writes that in Greece and Rome during the Middle Ages women had great freedom and a superior form of instruction. In his own profession, though there have been women professors since the 17th century in famous Italian Universities—in Bologna, Naples, etc.—they have done nothing to advance their special science. Then again, there have been no women of first rank in painting, music, literature etc., except Rosa Bonheur, who however had to shave her chin and dress as a man.

SRI AUROBINDO: In Greece woman was a domestic slave except the Hetairae and they were educated only to please. In Rome, "She remained at home and spun wool," was the highest eulogy for woman. It was only for a brief period of the Empire that woman began to be more free, but she was never put on an equality with man. Your medical man was either an ignoramus or was talking through his hat at you.

What an argument—from exceptional conditions as against the habits of millenniums! What about administration, rule, business, in which women have

\* Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's marginal comments in my note-book—Nirodbaran.

## MOTHER INDIA

shown themselves as capable and more consistently capable than men? These things need no brains? Any imbecile can do them?

MYSELF: Of course no one can dispute that at the time of suffering and illness it is their tender hand that soothes.

SRI AUROBINDO: It means that is what men have mainly demanded of them—to be their servants, nurses, cooks, children-bearers and rearers, ministers to their sex-desires etc. That has been their occupation and aim in life and their natures have got adapted to their work. All that they have achieved else than that is by the way—in spite of the yoke laid on them. And then man smiles a superior smile and says it was all due to woman's inferior nature, not to the burden laid on her.

MYSELF: Whatever may be the reason of the difference between a man and a woman, it can't be gainsaid that they can efface themselves more completely or more easily for the sake of love.

SRI AUROBINDO: They have been trained to it through the ages—that is why. Subjection, self-effacement, to be at the mercy of man has been their lot—it has given them that training. But it has left them also another kind of ego which is their spiritual obstacle—the ego which is behind the abhiman and hunger-strike.

MYSELF: Can it be said that because they live more in their heart than in their head, their path is easier?

SRI AUROBINDO: All these clear-cut assertions are mental statements—mental statements are too clear-cut to be true, as philosophy and science have begun to discover. Life and being are too complex for that.

MYSELF: In the Ashram, I have noticed that out of sheer love, women have followed their husbands into the travails of the Unknown, but when the husbands have been groaning with doubt and despair, they have been sitting happily and confidently in the lap of the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO: Great Scott! What a happy dream!

MYSELF: It seems that in Yoga women have one advantage, the sex-instinct in them is not as strong as in men.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no universal rule. Women can be as sexual as men or more. But there are numbers of women who dislike sex and there are very few men. One Sukhdev in a million, but many Dianas and Pallas Athenes. The virgin is really a feminine conception; men are repelled by the idea of eternal virginity. Many women would remain without any waking of the sexual instinct if men did not thrust it on them and that cannot be said of many, perhaps of any man. But there is another side to the picture. Women are perhaps less physically sexual than men on the whole,—but what about vital sexuality, the instinct of possessing and being possessed etc. etc.?

MYSELF: How is it that Ramakrishna always used to ask his disciples to avoid *kamm-kanchan*; Buddha was no less strict.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the old monastic idea. It arises from the extreme sexuality of men. They see in women *Narakasya dwaram* because that door is so wide open in themselves. But they prefer to throw the blame on women.

That was not due to sex but to woman's desire for new experience and knowledge. (In reply to my statement that man's fall from heaven was due to woman).

MYSELF: This letter of mine is pretty long. I am waiting to have from you a royal verdict covering and satisfying all points.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't cover and satisfy all points—it would need a volume. I had kept your book in order to write something less flippant and insufficient than the marginal notes about this grave matter. But I have had enough work today for any two Sundays, so I had to leave aside all that was not urgent.

26-1-1935

MYSELF: Apropos of our discussion, let me put before you Mother's opinion on the matter. She says that women are not more bound to the vital and material consciousness than men. On the contrary, as they do not have the arrogant mental pretensions of men, it is easier for them to discover their psychic being and be guided by it.

SRI AUROBINDO: No doubt, they can discover their psychic being more easily,—but that is not enough. It is the first step. The next is to live in the

## MOTHER INDIA

psychic. The third is to make the psychic the ruler of the being. The fourth is to rise beyond the mind. The fifth is to bring what is beyond into the lower nature. I don't say that it is always done in that order, but all that has to be done.

MYSELF: Mother also says that women are conscious in their sentiments, and that the best of them are conscious in their acts. If that is so, there is no more question about it.

SRI AUROBINDO (underlined the words "no more question" and wrote in the margin): That is too much to say. There may not be so much mental questioning but there may be a lot of vital questioning and resistance.

MYSELF: You will agree that women are more intuitive than men?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that of course—but it is the spontaneous intuition of the heart or of the vital mind, not the Intuition with a capital I.

MYSELF: As they live in the vital, their difficulties in the sadhana will be less, I suppose.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. How can living in the vital make things easier? The vital is the main source of difficulties in the Yoga. The difficulty with men is not purely mental. There too it is vital—only men call in their intellect to defend their vital against the coming or the touch or the pressure of the Divine, women call in their vital mind to do the same thing

MYSELF: Nolini writes in his book, "Woman's whole being is concentrated on the thing she clings to, but man's vision is not so inclusive. *Nishta* is the very nature and ideal of women."

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the spirit in which she is concentrated. There is the psychic and spiritual and there is the unregenerate vital. The unregenerate vital way creates enormous difficulties, and the desire to possess means a vehement vital egoism. How can vehement egoism be helpful for the spiritual life?

MYSELF: If the *Nishta* can be transformed for higher and diviner things then her path becomes easier, I suppose.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this *Nishta*? If the woman recoils from the vital to the spiritual and psychic (the vital converting itself into an instrument of realisation), then what you say may be true. But there lies the whole question.

MYSELF: Since ancient times women have been trained to accept a position of subjection by Manu and others. Is it because men are more sexual? It would be rather hard on us to be accused of this?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because of man's desire to be the master and keep her in subjection,—the Hitler and Mussolini attitude. The sex is an additional stimulus.—No more hard than you deserve.

MYSELF. Then again, it is said that woman's centre of life and consciousness is in the vital, whose nature is to pull the *jiva* down to earth.

SRI AUROBINDO: Woman's living in the material and vital is not the cause. It is man's living in the vital and material that is the cause of his finding her an obstacle. She also finds him an obstacle and could say of him that he is *narakasya dwaram*. The assumption that man lives less in the vital and material than woman is not true. He makes more use of his intellect for vital and material purposes—that is all.

MYSELF: Can we not then justify Buddha, Ramakrishna and others who advocated isolation from women? After all, is it not essentially the same principle here, because if vital relations are debarred, nothing remains except a simple exchange of words?

SRI AUROBINDO: The relation has to be limited because sex immediately trots into the front. You are invited to live above the vital and deeper than the vital—then only you can use the vital aright. Buddha was for Nirvana, and what is the use of having relations with anybody if you are bound for Nirvana? Ramakrishna insisted on isolation during the period when a man is spiritually raw—he did not object to meeting when he becomes ripe and no longer a slave of sex.

MYSELF: Now, I have learnt a lot on the subject, but it has not been wholly satisfying, since the answers were in the nature of marginal comments. I would like to have a coherent, harmonious whole. My note book can wait on your table till Monday.

## MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry, but you can't get today either the volume or the harmonious whole. Woman will have to wait as she has done through the centuries and may have to do again if Hitler and Mussolini have their way. The men have crowded her out. Next time better not discuss her yourself—that will save me from the temptation of marginals. As for Monday—no, sir! it is almost as impracticable as the Saturdays.

NIRODBARAN

## VISIONS AND DREAMS\*

ONE can have visions in the mind, in the vital or in the subtle physical. Mental visions are those which one seems to see within the head, as if they were happening there. Of course there is a mental world; you can go out into that region and have experiences. But usually mental visions are imaged thoughts and attached to your brain centre: you feel them moving in or about your forehead. Vital visions are of a different kind. They are more concrete, more living and colourful; and they possess a greater effective force good or bad. Visions in the subtle physical are very near the physical world, the external reality; they relate to things, persons and happenings in the outer life. They, however, often represent the things in symbols and figures, not exactly as they are. Here, for example, is a vision of this kind. A person is sitting in a room and there are also animals there, of the familiar species, a dozen of them, cats, dogs, goats, sheep, etc. Only they are of very small size. Indeed at one moment they are all together on the lap of the person. They are extremely tame and gentle, all playing and amusing themselves together in perfect amity and harmony. They are a happy company. Now all on a sudden the door bursts open and a tiger appears, wild and ferocious. At his sight all the animals get frightened and rush out pell-mell, leaving the cosy shelter of the person's lap. Thus the little menagerie is ruined and the sweet home broken up. This vision is a symbolic representation of what actually happened. A group of people assembled around the person, people with some ideal and aspiration. They were a happy company working and living together in peace and harmony. Now a different man came on the scene, obscure and violent: he succeeded in creating disharmony and disaffection and the work that was steadily built up and was full of promise lay in ruins in the end. Here the animals represented the men, but not in a general way and on the whole; each animal stood for a particular person and this connection was nothing casual or arbitrary. Each person was represented by a particular animal, not merely because of a particular vital character common between the two but also because of a common physical characteristic. Indeed a man bears in him as part of his physical personality the stamp of a particular animal.

There is another type of vision which is still closer to the physical; it gives not merely a symbolical version of the physical, but the very picture of the actuality. You see things exactly as they are and as they happen in the material

\* Based on talks with the Mother



world. I will tell you an experience of mine. I saw, in a vision, that I was in an office and at a counter; I noticed the objects and persons as they were there, I remembered even the very words exchanged between me and the clerk, even the exact figure of an amount of money talked about. I woke up, but I said to myself all this could not happen, I could never be at such a place and never talk in the way I did. All that was quite outside the range of probability. And yet things did happen exactly as foreseen in the vision, to the very letter. After five years I was in Japan, at Kobe. I had forgotten all about the matter. But as things began to happen in the way already reported, I had a strange feeling that all this was something known and familiar, that I was repeating an old experience. Then suddenly I remembered my vision and saw how it had come true.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VISION AND A DREAM?

They do not leave the same impression behind. In order to know clearly you must develop the faculty. There are so many different kinds of things that you have to distinguish. In a dream generally you take part in the scene, you are yourself an actor. In a vision you do not usually act, you observe; you witness what is happening as if it were a cinema show.

Dreams are normally the projection of impressions stored in the brain. Each contact with the world during the day is registered in a cell of your brain: thus one nerve point means one impression. There are then thousands of these in your brain. In the day they are under the control of the logic of the waking consciousness; they are held down and made to appear in an orderly fashion and when needed. But in sleep the controlling force is absent, so the logical sequence is broken. All the diverse elements come up at any opportunity and meet, collide and jostle together in the most unmannerly way. The merest chance makes a combination producing the queerest image and a most fantastic story. When you are asleep, if the body happens to move from one side to another, or you shake your head this way or that, the nervous impressions, like so many coloured marbles, as it were, also get a shaking and come against one another without rhyme or reason creating a bizarre dream scene. Even in case the body happens to lie quiet, the mind may not: as a result thought activities go on uncontrolled, the imbedded impressions are released in a chaotic manner. When this happens, then even if the body seems to have gone into sleep and rested, as a matter of fact, on getting up one finds oneself perhaps more fatigued than ever before. That is because of the wild activity of the brain-cells.

## VISION AND DREAMS

To remedy that you must be conscious in your sleep, controlling even your dream. Usually you are helpless in the matter of your dreams: they come and possess you as it were, they come and go in the way they like and you have no power over them. Instead of being at the mercy of your dream impressions and suffering them passively, you have to learn to control and react, you should stand back and observe and be conscious of what is happening; instead of becoming an unconscious instrument, you must get back your will and exercise it consciously. Here is an example of how it is done. A person was very often visited by a tiger in his dream; it used to frighten him terribly. He did not know what to do, however, except shake in terror and await the worst fate. I told him not to fear, but to face the animal when it appears, bravely look into its eyes, keep his gaze fixed there and see what happens. I told him nothing further. I wanted the person to experience himself and verify what I knew would happen. Indeed the next day the person came beaming and narrated his story. He said that he had done as he was asked to. He looked into the eyes of the tiger as it was approaching him and kept on looking. The wonder! The tiger began to shrink in size, became smaller and smaller, ultimately was transformed into a mild little cat. That is how a dream was controlled, an unreality unmasked. I can tell you another story of mine in this connection. Some of you might have had the experience of the same dream being repeated often or continued for days together. When I was quite young, I used to go out in dream to a very beautiful place and see and experience nice things. It was the same place I was frequenting often. Once as I lay in bed and enjoying my usual visit, it became very late in the morning and I was suddenly called out from sleep. My dream was interrupted and had to break up in the middle. On the following day, however, while retiring I made the resolution that I must take up the thread of my dream story exactly at the place where I had to stop. And it did happen like that. The dream did not repeat what had already taken place but started exactly from the place at which I had felt it on the previous night. In other words, you have to learn how to exercise your conscious will effectively upon your sleep world.

### PERSONS WALK IN SLEEP. HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

The phenomenon is called somnambulism. There are people who have a conscious mental activity in sleep and their body responds directly to this activity without the intervention of the vital. The vital is asleep, it is practically absent. But the mind continues to be active and the body automatically obeys the mind. A forceful thought, a strong idea gets hold of the mind, and although the vital has withdrawn itself and does not act as the intermediary, the body like

a docile instrument executes the mind's impulses; the eyes remain closed and because there is not the intervention of the wakeful vital the actions are unerring and straight to the point. In your waking condition, for example, it may be difficult for you to walk calmly along a precipice, you become easily nervous, a somnambulist would run over a ridge without the slightest stumble, his senses do not dissipate his attention.

I shall narrate two cases of somnambulism which you may find interesting. A person saw, in dream, of course, a bit of a phrase written as on a mirror, but really in his mental atmosphere. A little away from it, further down, he saw another bit and observed that the two together would complete the phrase. So he got up and walked straight to the real mirror that was there in the room and in which he thought the bits of phrase were stuck; he wanted to take off one bit from its place and put it by the side of the other. But as he actually stretched his hand he knocked against the mirror and the shock woke him up; to his wonder he found himself standing in front of the mirror and trying to scratch its surface! The other case was that of a person who suddenly got the inspiration to write poetry while in sleep. The inspiration possessed him so strongly that he got up from his bed, even though completely asleep, and went to his writing table, brought out paper and pen, sat and wrote down what came to him and retired to bed again. In the morning when he saw the poem and in his own handwriting, he was for a moment completely taken aback. He could not remember that he had written the poem and yet the handwriting was there as the clearest proof. He had to conclude that he must have done it in his fit of somnambulism.

It is not proper to wake up suddenly a person who is asleep. For in sleep very often you are not in the body, you go out of it into other worlds. Sometimes only a very thin cord—of vital consciousness—keeps your connection with the body. If you are suddenly called to wake up, you may not have sufficient time to come back wholly into your body; the body then would not be able to function normally and the sudden shock might even cause a permanent lesion.

There is no necessity of an alarm-bell if you wish to get up at a particular hour. What you have to do is to make a resolution, put a will into the body that it has to wake up at such an hour and then go quietly to sleep. If the will is strong enough you are sure to wake up just in time. You may not like to get up and might prefer to sleep over again, but that is another matter, your resolution would have had its effect. And it is a surer method than that of the time-piece. For the time-piece may fail you all of a sudden, but this will not.

## VISIONS AND DREAMS

Anyway the chief thing is to have a quiet peaceful sleep without disturbance or a nightmare. For that, you must learn how to go to sleep. You must lie quiet and slowly quiet your mind. Gather all your wandering thoughts and lay them to rest. Make your brain as empty as possible and calmly call for the peace to flow into you and fill you; the body in repose and the thoughts tranquilized, you will enter into a perfect state of repose in sleep.

22-4-53

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

### THE EARLY CONVERSATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Compiled from the Notes of Anilbaran Roy

#### *Compiler's Note*

*Before Sri Aurobindo went into seclusion in order to carry on a yogic-spiritual action by which he could prepare conditions in earth-life suitable for establishing the Supermind, he used to have long conversations with his disciples. Exact verbatim reports of these were not taken down, but some of the disciples used to keep notes. Anilbaran Roy was in the habit of writing down after the conversations were over most of the things that had been discussed.*

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

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

*“Synergist”*

Anilbaran started a discussion on the mind and the emotions by referring to the distinction between elementary feelings and emotions—the latter involving processes of thought.

## PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

Sri Aurobindo replied: "Your distinction is at least fifty year old psychology. Now psychologists do not make such a distinction between feelings and emotions. Formerly they used to lay stress on mental classification—they used to analyse and cut up everything; nowadays, they at least try to reach the fundamentals."

"I do not say that there is any absolute distinction between the two," Anilbaran remarked. "I was only referring to a practical distinction—a distinction that we perceive; for example, there are emotions which arise only when we contemplate upon certain ideas.—The Gita says: *Dhyāyato viṣyān puṁśah saṅgas teṣ hūpajāyate*—In him whose mind dwells on the objects of sense with absorbing interest, attachment to them is formed. (II.62). We think of some objects, we get attached to them, and then arise the different passions; here it is clearly laid down that passions arise from thinking and contemplation."

"The Gita speaks of a certain kind of passion; it does not say that this is the only way by which emotions and feelings arise. Then again, *dhyāyato* means not thinking but running after; when the mind runs after something, it gets attached to it."

"I can raise feelings simply by thinking; thus by thinking of a dead relative or a friend I can raise the feeling of grief."

"There was a time when by thinking of an illness I could produce that illness in my body; that does not mean that thinking produces that illness. Our feelings are associated with certain ideas, and by bringing in those ideas we can recall the feelings associated with them. That is the difference between animals and men—animals have the same vital feelings as men, but man imposes his mind on these feelings, and tries to raise them up to the mental plane."

"I raised the question in order to understand the relation between the different planes—the mental, the vital, and the physical."

"But why do you raise the question in that way? All the emotions belong to the vital. I make a distinction between the vital proper and the mental-vital. The vital proper is concerned directly with life; all the feelings there centre round desire which is a means of effectuating life—desire for possession, ambition, lust—and all the six passions, *śadaripu*. These vital feelings may be raised to the mental plane and there associated with other emotions of the heart; there may also appear psychic feelings—lust here turns into what we ordinarily call love."

“What is the physical?”

“First tell me what you understand by the physical.”

“By the physical I mean material objects without life and mind.”

“The human body is material, but there is life and mind involved in it. If one can properly observe, he will find a sort of life and mind in the cells of the body, though the life there is not organised life as we generally see, nor the mind similar to what we ordinarily call mind. On the physical plane all action is mechanical. Even if the life and the mind withdraw, the physical may continue its habituated action. When we speak of the physical mind, we refer to the mind which sees only the physical or the material aspect of things—it does not see the life or the mind beyond it.”

“That is the ordinary mind.”

“Most minds are nothing more than that. Those who want to raise themselves must first know the truth—the true nature of their being. But the mind cannot do that; it cannot raise the subconscious into the conscious; it is unable to discern the different forces that are at play. Hence light is to be sought from above, and with the help of that all the processes of our being are to be observed and put in their proper places. In this way, analysing the vital feelings we can find what they really mean, what is the truth behind each, and we can deal with these feelings and processes according to that truth.”

“Is the transformation of our being performed by the light of the Truth?”

“Yes, but the light of the Truth is accompanied by power in the Supramental...Then again, simply knowing by the mind does not help us in transforming our being; hence, a silent will is to be exerted, so that the necessary change may be accomplished.”

Another disciple now joined the discussion: “How is it that though the mind often has the knowledge, yet the required change in the nature cannot be accomplished?”

“Because the mind has not sufficient power over the vital. Will is mostly vital, and if the vital ignores what the mind says, nothing can be accomplished. In most cases of yogic discipline, the vital is lulled to sleep, or it allows the mind

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

to have its own way up to a certain point; any moment it may rush in and upset the whole or may secretly influence the mind, though the person himself may not be aware of it."

"This means that until we can effect the necessary change by the light and power of the Truth from above, we must keep the vital under check by the mental control," someone remarked.

"I do not very much believe in such a control—it only mutilates the vital functions..... However, at a certain period of my life I felt that I had acquired complete mental control over the vital."

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Be very careful to let no influence diminish your confidence in me and allow nothing or nobody to separate you from me.

THE MOTHER



## THE SADHANA OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

### *Compiler's Note.*

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

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

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

*"Synergist"*

### MY SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER.

#### THE SUBCONSCIENT DIFFICULTY

*(Cont.nued from the March Issue)*

AB. Many people seem to have a fixed idea that when the subconscious is fully active, a sadhak has to wait till the higher forces work out the clearing

of the sub-nature. Those who believe in it will naturally have to wait. But there is another process in which one need not make a halt on the journey. No doubt, it is more difficult and laborious; one has to be constantly vigilant, and observe certain rules strictly.

Whenever the inertia<sup>1</sup> tries to bring us down from the higher state, we should not allow it at any cost, for if once we let ourselves be lowered, then half the battle is lost. Coming down here means entering into a regular battle-field, and to enter into a tussle with inertia is the worst possible thing; it is struggling with the lower forces on *their* plane.

Some people may argue that it is not possible to stay above all the time when the inertia has taken hold of us. I would like to reply to them at the very outset, that this kind of thought or feeling is not really theirs; it belongs to the lower nature and not to their true being—the soul or the self. At least one thing can be done—the moment we feel that the inertia is dragging us down and we cannot resist it, we must say, “It is not I who am being pulled down, it is the nature. I, the self, am always with the Mother, above the head. It is *prakriti* itself that is giving me this false impression of being lowered in consciousness, and it is this that brings my condition down.” All this is not a mental theory, but the real truth of the matter. One can try this method and find out for oneself.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that much at least everybody who has felt the inner consciousness should be able to do.

AB.: In fact, if the self were to get involved in the rising inertia, how will any one come out of it at all?

Now, if it is granted that the self is always above the evolutionary nature and nothing of it can touch it or soil it, why should a person, who is this self, think that he is not the self but a part of the manifested nature: This false identification, this losing of one's self, is the one thing that creates difficulties, falls, attacks, despairs, depressions, etc.

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AB.: I have always observed that those who spend their life and money as a sacrifice to the Divine, go safely over the pits and obstacles in the path and are saved from darkness. Though they may not be conscious themselves, yet the

<sup>1</sup> I wrote all this in reference to *tamas*, inertia, a particular form taken by the power of Negation—the power that resists and denies the Divine. This same power may appear through other forms also, like sex, ego, etc.

Divine spreads the Light over them whenever the night comes, and builds bridges over the pits. Everyone will not find this easy to understand. I too did not know it till the Divine Mother told me. From the beginning She does not reveal Herself openly, saying, "You see, my children, it was I who lighted the path for you, and it was I who built a bridge for you to cross the abyss." This profound knowledge is difficult to have without the light of the psychic.

It is a mistake if those who have well advanced on the way think that they need special care and attention from Mother or a little extra during the Pranam. Their correct attitude should be to wish that She would give as little time to them as possible, so that the beginners and those who have fallen into a constant struggle with the lower forces would get a little more attention. Those who are really advanced can receive all that She wishes to give them without their coming to Her physical form to receive it. I mean by "advanced sadhaks" only those who do not make their sadhana depend entirely on physical dealings with Her; even if She did not see them for a month, I am sure their progress would not be hampered. It is when these sadhaks come to Her that She must be finding a little relief, for whatever She grants them is received spontaneously and easily—She does not have to press it into them as She has to do with the others.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is perfectly correct. People's notions about these things are quite topsy-turvy. It is possible to give all that is needed in a few seconds.

AB: Once You wrote to me: "If you are fully conscious the transformation of the outer being ought not to be difficult." I think the time has come when this outer being must be included in our union, love, and Ananda. We must no longer let it remain with the general Nature. Though it is still in connection with it, we must try to separate it, as we did with the inner, and put it in direct control of its source above.

I shall do whatever is required of me, for I am aware that the transformation of the outer being is most difficult, and if a sadhaka does not cooperate with You, it takes a very long time to accomplish it. You can bring about the divine change in the inner being without much difficulty, in spite of not receiving much help from the sadhak,—his help would, however, effect the change much quicker even here; but to transform the exterior personality, the sadhaka's full consciousness and alert vigilance are needed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is only with that that it can be done. Otherwise it takes long, lasting for many years.

"AB"

## THE FUTURE POETRY

17

THE POETS OF THE DAWN—2

A poetry whose task is to render truth of the Spirit by passing behind the appearances of the sense and the intellect to their spiritual reality, is in fact attempting a work for which no characteristic power of language has been discovered,—except the symbolic, but the old once established symbols will no longer entirely serve, and the method itself is not now sufficient for the need,—no traditional form of presentation native to the substance, no recognised method of treatment or approach, or none at once sufficiently wide and subtle, personal and universal for the modern mind. In the past indeed there have been hieratic and religious ways of approaching the truths of spirit which have produced some remarkable forms in art and literature. Sufi poetry, Vaishnava poetry are of this order, in more ancient times the symbolic and mystic way of the Vedic singers, while the unique revelatory utterance of the Upanishads stands by itself as a form of inspired thought which penetrates either direct or through strong unveiling images to the highest truths of self and soul and the largest seeing of the Eternal. One or two modern poets have attempted to use in a new way the almost unworked wealth of poetical suggestion in Catholic Christianity. But the drift of the modern mind in this direction is too large in its aim and varied in its approach to be satisfied by any definite or any fixed symbolic or hieratic method, it cannot rest within the special experience and figures of a given religion. There has been too universal a departure from all specialised forms and too general a breaking down of the old cut channels; in place of their intensive narrowness we have a straining through all that has been experienced by an age of wide intellectual curiosity to the ultimate sense of that experience. The truth behind man and Nature and things, behind intellectual and emotional and vital perception is sought to be seized by a pressure upon these things themselves, and the highly intellectualised language and way of seeing developed by this age is either used as it is with more meaning or strained or moulded anew or given some turn or transformation which will bring in the intensity of the deeper truth and vision. An intellectualism which takes this turn can choose one of three methods. It may prolong the language and forms it already possesses and trust to the weight of the thing it has to say and the power of its vision to inform this vehicle with another

spirit. It may strain, heighten, transfigure the language and forms into a more intensive force of image, mould and expression. Or it may strive for some new and direct tone, some sheer cry of intuitive speech and sound born from the spirit itself and coming near to its native harmonies. The moulds too may either be the established moulds turned or modified to a greater and subtler use or else strange unprecedented frames, magical products of a spiritual inspiration. On any of these lines the poetry of the future may arrive at its objective and cross the borders of a greater kingdom of experience and expression.

But these earlier poets came in an age of imperfect, unenriched and uncompleted intellectuality. The language which they inherited was admirable for clear and balanced prose speech, but in poetry had been used only for adequate or vigorous statement, rhetorical reasoning, superficial sentimentalising or ornate thought, narrative, description in the manner of a concentrated, elevated and eloquent prose. The forms and rhythmical movements were unsuitable for any imaginative, flexible or subtly feeling poetry. Their dealing with these forms was clear and decisive; they were thrown aside and new forms were sought for or old ones taken from the earlier masters or from song and ballad moulds and modified or developed to serve a more fluid and intellectualised mind and imagination. But the language was a more difficult problem and could not be entirely solved by such short cuts as Wordsworth's recipe of a resort to the straightforward force of the simplest speech dependent on the weight of the substance and thought for its one sufficient source of power. We find the tongue of this period floating between various possibilities. On its lower levels it is weighted down by some remnant of the character of the eighteenth century and proceeds by a stream of eloquence, no longer artificial, but facile, fluid, helped by a greater force of thought and imagination. This turn sometimes rises to a higher level of inspired and imaginative poetic eloquence. But beyond this pitch we have a fuller and richer style packed with thought and imaginative substance, the substitute of this new intellectualised poetic mind for the more spontaneous Elizabethan richness and curiosity; but imaginative thought is the secret of its power, no longer the exuberance of the life-soul in its vision. On the other side we have a quite different note, a sheer poetical directness, which sometimes sinks below itself to poverty and insufficiency or at least to thinness, as in much of the work of Wordsworth and Byron, but, when better supported and rhythmical, rises to quite new authenticities of great or perfect utterance, and out of this there comes in some absolute moments a native voice of the spirit, in Wordsworth's revelations of the spiritual presence in Nature and its scenes and peoples, in Byron's rare forceful

sincerities, in the luminous simplicities of Blake, in the faery melodies of Coleridge, most of all perhaps in the lyrical cry and ethereal light of Shelley. But these are comparatively rare moments, the mass of their work is less certain and unequal in expression and significance. Finally we get in Keats a turning away to a rich, artistic and sensuous poetical speech which prepares us for the lower fullnesses of the intellectual and aesthetic epoch that had to intervene. The greatest intuitive and revealing poetry has yet to come.

Byron and Wordsworth are the two poets who are the most hampered by this difficulty of finding and keeping to the native speech of their greater self, most often depressed in their elevation, because they are both drawn by a strong side of their nature, the one to a forceful, the other to a weighty intellectualised expression; neither of them are born singers or artists of word and sound, neither of them poets in the whole grain of their mind and temperament, not, that is to say, always dominated by the aesthetic, imaginative or inspired strain in their being, but doubled here by a man of action and passion, there by a moralist and preacher, in each too a would-be "critic of life" who gets into the way of the poet and makes upon him illegitimate demands; therefore they are readily prone to fall away to what is, however interesting it may otherwise be, a lower, a not genuinely poetic range of substance and speech. But both in the deepest centre or on the highest peak of their inspiration are moved by powers for which their heavily or forcibly intellectualised language of poetry was no adequate means. It is only when they escape from it that they do their rare highest work. Byron, no artist, intellectually shallow and hurried, a poet by compulsion of personality rather than in the native colour of his mind, inferior in all these respects to the finer strain of his great contemporaries, but in compensation a more powerful elemental force than any of them and more in touch with all that had begun to stir in the mind of the times,—always an advantage, if he knows how to make use of it, for a poet's largeness and ease of execution, succeeds more amply on the inferior levels of his genius, but fails in giving any adequate voice to his highest possibility. Wordsworth, meditative, inward, concentrated in his thought, is more often able by force of brooding to bring out that voice of his greater self, but flags constantly, brings in a heavier music surrounding his few great clear tones, drowns his genius at last in a desolate sea of platitude. Neither arrives at that amplitude of achievement which might have been theirs in a more fortunate time, if ready forms had been given to them, or if they had lived in the stimulating atmosphere of a contemporary culture harmonious with their personality.

Byron's prodigious reputation, greater and more prolonged on the continent than in his own country, led perhaps to too severely critical an under-

valuing when his defects became nakedly patent in the fading away of the helpful glamour of contemporary sympathies. That is the penalty of an exaggerated fame lifted too high on the wings or the winds of the moment. But his fame was no accident or caprice of fortune; it was his due from the Time-Spirit. His hasty vehement personality caught up and crowded into its work in a strong though intellectually crude expression an extraordinary number of the powers and motives of the modern age. The passion for liberty found in him its voice of Tyrrhenian bronze. The revolt and self-assertion of the individual against the falsities and stifling conventions of society, denial, unbelief, the scorn of the sceptic for established things, the romance of the past, the restlessness of the present, the groping towards the future, the sensuous, glittering, artificial romance of the pseudo-East, the romance of the solitary, the rebel, the individual exaggerated to himself by loneliness, the immoral or amoral superman, all that flawed romanticism, passionate sentimentalism, insatiable satiety of sensualism, cynicism, realism which are the chaotic fermentation of an old world dying and a new world in process of becoming,—a century and a half's still unfinished process,—caught hold of his mood and unrolled itself before the dazzled, astonished and delighted eyes of his contemporaries in the rapid succession of forcibly ill-hewn works impatiently cut out or fierily molten from his single personality in a few crowded years from its first rhetorical and struggling outburst in *Childe Harold* to the accomplished ease of its finale in *Don Juan*. Less than this apparent plenitude would have been enough to create the rumour that rose around the outbreak of this singular and rapid energy. No doubt, his intellectual understanding of these things was thin and poverty-stricken in the extreme, his poetic vision of the powers that moved him had plenty of force, but wanted depth and form and greatness. But he brought to his work what no other poet could give and what the mentality of the time, moved itself by things which it had not sufficient intellectual preparation to grasp, was fitted to appreciate, the native elemental force, the personality, the strength of nervous and vital feeling of them which they just then needed and which took the place of understanding and vision. To this pervading power, to this lava flood of passion and personality, were added certain pre-eminent gifts, a language at first of considerable rhetorical weight and drive, afterwards of great nervous strength, directness, precision, force of movement, a power of narrative and of vivid presentation, and always, whatever else might lack, an unflinching energy. It was enough for the immediate thing he had to do, though not at all enough for the highest assured immortality.

These things which Byron more or less adequately expressed, were the ferment of the mind of humanity in its first crude attempt to shake off the con-

ventions of the past and struggle towards a direct feeling of itself and its surrounding world in their immediate reality. But behind it there is something else which seems sometimes about to emerge vaguely, an element which may be called spiritual, a feeling of the greatness of man the individual spirit commensurate with Nature and his world, man in communion with the greatness of Nature, man able to stand in the world in his own strength and puissance, man affirming his liberty, the claim to freedom of a force as great within as the forces which surround and seem to overwhelm him. It is a Titanism, the spirit in man seen through the soul of desire, in revolt, not in self-possession, man the fallen archangel, not man returning to godhead: but it reposes on, it is the obscure side of a spiritual reality. He could not break through the obstructions of his lower personality and express this thing that he felt in its native tones of largeness and power. If he could have done so, his work would have been of a lasting greatness. But he never found the right form, never achieved the liberation into right thought and speech of the Daemon within him. The language and movement he started from were an intellectual and sentimental rhetoric, the speech of the eighteenth century broken down, melted and beaten into new shape for stronger uses; he went on to a more chastened and rapid style of great force, but void of delicacy, subtlety and variety; he ended in a flexible and easy tongue which gave power to even the most cynical trivialities and could rise to heights of poetry and passion: but none of these things, however adapted to his other gifts, was the style wanted for this greater utterance. Art, structure, accomplished mould were needs of which he had no idea; neither the weight of a deep and considered, nor the sureness of an inspired interpretation were at his command. But sometimes language and movement rise suddenly into a bare and powerful sincerity which, if he could have maintained it, would have given him the needed instrument: but the patience and artistic conscientiousness or the feeling for poetic truth which could alone have done this, were far from him. Considerable work of a secondary kind he did, but he had something greater to say which he never said, but only gave rare hints of it and an obscured sense of the presence of its meaning.

Wordsworth, with a much higher poetic mind than Byron's, did not so entirely miss his greatest way, though he wandered much in adjacent paths and finally lost himself in the dry desert sands of the uninspired intellectual mentality. At the beginning he struck in the midst of some alloy full into his purest vein of gold. His earliest vision of his task was the right vision, and whatever may be the general truth of his philosophy of childhood in the great Ode, it seems to have been true of him. For as intellectuality grew on him, the vision faded; the first clear intimations dimmed and finally passed leaving



behind an unillumined waste of mere thought and moralising. But always, even from the beginning, it got into the way of his inspiration. Yet Wordsworth was not a wide thinker, though he could bring a considerable weight of thought to the aid of the two or three great things he felt and saw lucidly and deeply, and he was unfitted to be a critic of life of which he could only see one side with power and originality,—for the rest he belongs to his age rather than to the future and is limited in his view of religion, of society, of man by many walls of convention. But what the poet sees and feels, not what he opines, is the real substance of his poetry. Wordsworth saw Nature and he saw man near to Nature, and when he speaks of these things, he finds either his noblest or his purest and most penetrating tones. His view of them is native to his temperament and personality and at the opposite pole to Byron's. Not that which is wild, dynamic or tumultuously great in Nature, but her calm, her serenity, the soul of peace, the tranquil Infinite, the still, near, intimate voice that speaks from flower and bird, sky and star, mountain and stream, this he knew, felt and lived in as no poet before or after him has done, with a spiritual closeness and identity which is of the nature of a revelation, the first spiritual revelation of this high near kind to which English poetry had given voice. Some soul of man, too, he sees, not in revolt,—he has written unforgettable lines about liberty, but a calm and ordered liberty,—in harmony with this tranquil soul in Nature, finding in it some original simplicity and purity of his being and founding on it a life in tune with the order of an eternal law. On this perception the moralist in Wordsworth founds a rule of simple faith, truth, piety, self-control, affection, grave gladness in which the sentimental naturalism of the eighteenth century disappears into an ethical naturalism, a very different idealisation of humanity in the simplicity of its direct contact with Nature unspoiled by the artifice and corruption of a too developed society. All that Wordsworth has to say worth saying is confined to these motives and from them he draws his whole genuine thought inspiration.

But it is in the Nature-strain of which he is the discoverer that he is unique, for it is then that the seer in him either speaks the revelatory thought of his spirit or gives us strains greater than thought's, the imperishable substance of spiritual consciousness finding itself in sight and speech. At other times, especially when he fuses this Nature-strain with his thought and ethical motive, he writes sometimes poetry of the very greatest; at others again it is of a varying worth and merit; but too often also he passes out from his un-inspired intelligence work with no stamp of endurance, much less of the true immortality. In the end the poet in him died while the man and the writer lived on; the moralist and concentrated thinker had killed the singer, the

intellect had walled up the issues of the imagination and spiritual vision. But even from the beginning there is an inequality and uncertainty which betray an incomplete fusion of the sides of his personality, and the heavy weight of intellectuality shadows over and threatens the spiritual light which it eventually extinguished. Except in a small number of pieces which rank among the greatest things in poetry, he can never long keep to the pure high poetic expression. He intellectualises his poetic statement overmuch and in fact states too much and sings too little, has a dangerous turn for a too obvious sermonising, pushes too far his reliance on the worth of his substance and is not jealously careful to give it a form of beauty. In his works of long breath there are terrible stretches of flattest prose in verse with lines of power, sometimes of fathomless depth like that wonderful

*Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone,*

interspersed or occurring like a lonely and splendid accident, *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*.<sup>1</sup> It has been said with justice that he talks too much in verse and sings too little; there is a deficient sense of the more subtle spirit of rhythm, a deficiency which he overcomes when moved or lifted up, but which at other times, hampers greatly his effectiveness. His theory of poetic diction, though it has a certain truth in it, was, as he practised it, narrow and turned to unsoundness; it betrayed him into the power of the prosaic and intellectual element in his mind. These defects grew on him as the reflective moralist and monk and the conventional citizen,—there was always in him this curious amalgam,—prevailed over the seer and poet.

But still one of the seer-poets he is, a seer of the calm spirit in Nature, the poet of man's large identity with her and serene liberating communion: it is on this side that he is admirable and unique. He has other strains too of great power. His chosen form of diction, often too bare and trivial in the beginning, too heavy afterwards, helps him at his best to a language and movement of unsurpassed poetic weight and gravity charged with imaginative insight, in which his thought and his ethical sense and spiritual sight meet in a fine harmony, as in his one great Ode, in some of his sonnets, in *Ruth*, even in *Laodamia*, in lines and passages which uplift and redeem much of his less satisfying work, while when the inner light shines wholly out, it admits him to the secret of the very self-revealing voice of Nature herself speaking through the human personality in some closest intimacy with her or else uttering the

<sup>1</sup> "Rare swimming in the vast gurge."

MOTHER INDIA

· greatness of an impersonal sight and truth. He has transparencies in which the spirit gets free of the life-wave, the intelligence, the coloured veils of the imagination, and poetic speech and rhythm become hints of the eternal movements and the eternal stabilities, voices of the depths, rare moments of speech direct from our hidden immortality.

SRI AUROBINDO

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## ASHRAM GLIMPSES

By An American Newcomer

“HOME IS WHERE MOTHER IS”

Hundreds of us in the Ashram are far from home, ten thousand miles away in some cases. But somehow we are not homesick, for after all “home is where Mother is.”

Seeing two attractive lads of perhaps eight and sixteen beaming at me as I left the dining hall the other day, I asked them where they were from. The older, mustering up enough English to tell me that they were from distant Nepal, added, “We are brothers, and have come here without our parents.” I said, “You are far from home.” He replied with a big smile, “*Mother* is here.”

We are told of instances of four and five year olds demanding of their parents, and confidently asking the Mother for permission to stay on, although they know their family members are about to return “home.” A mother tells us of her three year old son who, during a long siege of fever at their home far away, said on two occasions that the Ashram Mother was standing by his bed and smiling. No wonder they are now here, and feeling very much at home, as we all are.

“REMEMBER AND OFFER”

As I draw near the place of the Master’s *Samadhi*, does my whole being come alive as when I first approached this hallowed spot, this place of poignant and precious memories and realizations? Or do I detect a trace of that stubborn human tendency to lose the keen edge off my devotion with the passage of time and the onset of habit? Then let me awake to the fact that here, of all places, I must “remember and offer”—*myself*. Let me read *as for the first time* the Mother’s words engraved at the *Samadhi*:

To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master,  
to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so  
much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped,

## MOTHER INDIA

endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.

## FAITHFULNESS

The Master's touch has wrought its transformations not only on persons, but also on words. In the case of an old-fashioned term like "faithfulness", Sri Aurobindo has lifted it to a new level of meaning and challenge to spiritual growth: "Faithfulness is to admit and to manifest no other movements but only those prompted and guided by the Divine." To at least one sadhak, recent times of meditation on this definition of faithfulness have been the prelude to deepening experiences. The phrase, "even for a moment", in the inscription at the *Samadhi*, is particularly significant when one remembers that it was written concerning one Incarnation of Faithfulness by Another who supremely exemplifies that virtue before our eyes.

## SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL ANTENNAE

One of the prime tests of Faithfulness in any ashram, especially one of some eight hundred inmates, must be the sadhak's will to let the Divine tame "that unruly member, the tongue", as St. James describes it in writing about problems of the early Christian fellowship. A neophyte feels the need of extending and sensitizing his spiritual antennae and of drawing in and de-sensitizing his social antennae. One wonders if, when the ancient Aryans described the Soul as "the leader of the march set in our front", they had in mind the marvellously sensitive antennae of their insect neighbors.

Many of us come here with our social nature over-developed. We soon discover that to chatter means to scatter. We wonder at times whether we should not put on "blinkers" such as are used on a race horse to prevent his looking anywhere except straight towards the goal. We are not surprised to be told that Mother sometimes gets "fed up" with the much unnecessary talk among us sadhaks. She has said, "The world is deafened by useless words." If we are "faithful" to our high calling, we shall, as the Master says, "admit and manifest *no other* movements but *only* those prompted and guided by the Divine"—a searching standard.

## ASHRAM GLIMPSES

At a sort of summer ashram in the mountains of America, we once had a guest who fancied herself a violinist. Everyone else in the place, despite charitable tendencies, was convinced that she would never be able to make music. In her hands "violin" was synonymous with "violence". One evening after dinner, as this "troubler of the folk" began to saw away on her "fiddle", our cat, who had recently become a mother, came out from under a couch where she had hidden her kittens, looked up at the source of the discord, then carried her kittens one by one out of the room and up the stairs to safety, while everyone but the violinist was convulsed with laughter.

Mother, rescue me too from useless noise, especially my own! Inspire me to be *faithful* by the Master's exacting standards. Not long ago a sadhaka, wrestling with a mood of discouragement, cried out in prayer, "Mother, I *need* you!" Swiftly and assuringly came the answer, as to a baby kitten, "Just be *quiet* and let me carry you."

## MOTHER'S MINISTRY OF FLOWERS

A fellow-sadhak asked a small group of us, "What has impressed you most about the Ashram? That is, after the Mother, of course." Several of us answered, "The flowers." And why should we not think of the two together, seeing how much Mother says to us through Her symbolic ministers of beauty and truth? On many a morning, on our way to our Master's *Samadhi*, my spiritual comrade and I are wide-eyed over some strikingly timely message, answering a current spiritual need, which has come to us from the Mother's flower room. For her service there She has chosen those of adharic qualities through whom She can, morning by morning, select and give us from the scores of species at hand the single bloom or the combination which delivers a telling message—if we keep our spiritual wireless attuned.

One of the Mother's flower servitors, in particular, is himself a living symbol of the transformations in which She specializes. From the devious and scheming ways of the practice of law to a beautiful simplicity and transparency in the Mother's ministry of flowers is a striking instance of the changeableness of human nature in Her hands.

## HE LABORS IN MY SUBCONSCIENT, TOO

We were reading of the Master's Herculean spiritual Task which caused Him to leave his "Golden Temple". As I was picturing Him as purging life's

## MOTHER INDIA

Augean stables, or taming the jungle of the subconscious, or waging relentless warfare on some Kurukshetra of the Abyss, my spiritual comrade startled me by saying, "Is He not at work in *our* subconscious, too?" The more I think of this, the more I am moved by awe and gratitude.

## THE ASHRAM INDUSTRIES

A vivid testimonial to the Yoga of Divine Works is the Ashram industries. Who would expect to find a foundry in an ashram, and one which turns out a great variety of metal products of the best quality? Besides, there is the excellent work of the farms and gardens, the dairy, the cottage industries and the weaving service, the furniture service, the large printing press operating in ten languages, the workshops for many purposes, paper-making, carpentry, ceramics, concrete blocks, oil and flower mills, laundry, tailor shops and many other services. Not that one continues to marvel at the quality of the work and the spirit of the service, for that is perfectly explained by its source in devotion to the Divine Mother and in Her unflinching Grace which flows into Her workers and out into the creations of their hands.

The Ashram industries, like the multiform life of the Ashram as a whole, are also a tribute to the organizing and administrative genius of the Mother. A widely travelled American engineer, visiting recently, was much impressed by this phase of our life, in which his part of the world is supposed to excel. But here again is one of those Divine paradoxes, for instead of *promoting* these industries and other Ashram activities "from the top down", as is the way of the world, the Mother, we are told, gave permission for the starting of the bakery, for example, only when a sadhak approached Her and said, "Mother, I would like to try making bread for the Ashram", and so with other industries. Perhaps our engineer friend went away with a new appreciation of the basic importance of that Divine science, "the engineering of human consent" in the process of world-changing.

## DON'T WASTE CURRENT

This part of India continues to live under a "Don't waste current" campaign. There is a serious shortage of light and power which not only restricts to certain hours the work of the Ashram Press, for example, but makes itself felt in many small ways and also in the use of auxiliary generating units of our own.

## ASHRAM GLIMPSES

On the material plane we have too many outlets for the electric power available. But on the spiritual plane THE FORCE IS HERE but it goes begging for *adhars*! O Divine Mother, O Divine Master, may we offer no hindrance to your work of fashioning us into ready channels of your Light and Power!

### THIS GROWING CLIMATE

We cannot imagine a better climate for growth than we find here. If life itself is definable in terms of growth, this is of prime importance to us. Here are such floods of inspiration as we have never known, a constant and creative stimulus to growth in the Life Divine. As on the Ashram farms and in the Mother's gardens the physical climate permits the growth of any kind of crop or variety of flowers practically any time of year, so the spiritual climate is suited to constant and all-round development.

We find that this invigoration of spirit has a marked effect on our ability as newcomers to keep physically fit through the hot season. The Union Jack flies no more from our neighbor's roof, for he, the Honorary Consul and a veteran in India, has gone off to the hills for the summer, but the Mother's flag still waves merrily (to the spiritual eye) from the "summer palace" of bamboo and palm-leaves built by Her providence on our roof.

### SRI AUROBINDO'S COMPASSION

On the hottest day thus far, we see on leaving the dining hall that Portulaca, which is a match for the fiercest summer blasts, has just been set out in a recently cleared space. We do not wonder when we are told that this flower symbolizes "Sri Aurobindo's Compassion." A few days later, as I was again leaving the dining hall, a fellow sadhak asked my opinion of a world event of possibly serious consequences. He remarked that the Mother's will is against war. Then my glance fell again on "Sri Aurobindo's Compassion," and it struck me that the Master's compassion is not only personal in his intimate and infinite solicitude as Gurudev, but also world-embracing, even cosmic, as Yugavatar.

Less hardy blooms may fade and die, but Sri Aurobindo's Compassion will not fail us till the Monsoon of the Spirit brings New Life to the earth. And (Have you felt them, Gurubhai?) the drops have already begun to fall!.....

JAY



# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the January Issue)*

## CHAPTER XIV

### KARMA YOGA AND ITS INDISPENSABILITY

#### PART I

##### THE BASIS OF KARMA YOGA

KARMA YOGA or the yoga of divine works starts from the foundation of a faith or inner perception that the Divine is not only the incommunicable, featureless Absolute with whom one can be united by the abolition of one's individuality and temporal existence, but the omnipresent Reality, the all-creating, all constituting and all-exceeding eternal Person, at once transcendent, universal and individual, who has to be realised in all His statuses and aspects in a union simultaneously static and dynamic. To be united with Him only in His ineffable transcendence is not an integral union in as much as it excludes His universality and individuality. To be united with Him only in His universal play is also a partial realisation, inasmuch as it leaves out His timeless transcendence and keeps one bound to the cosmic formula and spatial and temporal relations. To be identified with Him everywhere and at all times and beyond Time, and in all states and modes of one's being, is the supreme consummation and the highest fulfilment of human life.

The eternal Witness is also the eternal doer of all actions in the universe. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all names and forms. "Karman varta eva cha," (I am, indeed, occupied with action), says He, though He has no duties devolving upon Him and no obligations to meet. He is Vishvakarmâ, the doer of all actions, for, He says that all these worlds would go to pieces if He did not do action but remained immobile in His inactive silence. His action is to keep the worlds together, to mobilise and marshal the universal energies for the accomplishment of His Will and purpose, and manifest His glory more and more perfectly in every being and creature. In one of its most magnificent chapters, the Gita describes in words of fire the Supreme Godhead as the universal Spirit who demands of the human soul a conscious and obedient parti-

icipation in His world-action. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna before giving him the revealing vision of His universal form: "Thou shalt see my hundreds and thousands of divine forms, various in kind, various in shape and hue; thou shalt see the Adityas and the Rudras and the Maruts and the Aswins; thou shalt see many wonders that none has beheld; thou shalt see today the whole world related and unified in my body and whatever else thou wilt to behold."<sup>1</sup> Sri Krishna then makes His universal Form visible to Arjuna. "It is that of the infinite Godhead whose faces are everywhere and in whom are all the wonders of existence, who multiplies unendingly all the many marvellous revelations of his being, a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking from innumerable mouths, armed for battle with numberless divine uplifted weapons, glorious with divine ornaments of beauty, robed in heavenly raiment of deity, lovely with garlands of divine flowers, fragrant with divine perfumes. Such is the light of this body of God as if a thousand suns had risen at once in heaven. The whole world multitudinously divided and yet unified is visible in the body of the God of Gods. Arjuna sees Him, God magnificent and beautiful and terrible, the Lord of souls who has manifested in the glory and greatness of his spirit this wild and monstrous and orderly and wonderful and sweet and terrible world, and overcome with marvel and joy and fear he bows down and adores with words of awe and with clasped hands the tremendous vision. 'I see,' he cries, 'all the gods in Thy body, O God, and different companies of beings, Brahma the creating lord seated in the Lotus, and the Rishis and the race of the divine Serpents. I see numberless arms and bellies and eyes and faces, I see Thy infinite forms on every side, but I see not Thy end nor Thy middle nor Thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form universal. I see Thee crowned and with Thy mace and Thy discus, hard to discern, because Thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an encompassing blaze, a sun-bright, fire-bright Immeasurable. Thou art the supreme Immutable whom we have to know, Thou art the high foundation and abode of the universe, Thou art the imperishable guardian of the eternal laws, Thou art the sempiternal soul of existence."<sup>2</sup>

It is this supreme Person, Purushottama, who is the object of the love and devotion of the Karmayogi,—Purushottama, who is at once transcendent and immanent, one and many, the eternal Formless and the assumer of all cosmic forms. He is the Absolute, the Indefinable and the Unknowable, of which the

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

Upanishads speak as "Atmapratyayasaram, Shantam, Shivam, Adwaitam"<sup>1</sup> and at the same time "vishwarupam, bhavabhutam"<sup>2</sup> The Karmayogi bases his life and all its movements upon this vision of the integrality of the Supreme and refuses to twist away from the harsher, sterner and fiercer aspects of Him, in order to take refuge in the fathomless peace and silence of His ineffable transcendence or the love and bliss and beauty of His spiritual Presence. He seeks union with Him in the multitudinous delight and labour of His universal movement as well as in the peace and tranquillity of His supracosmic silence. He aspires to be His playmate in this mysterious and marvellous world-game and an obedient and efficient collaborator in the working out of His Will and purpose in it. He seeks an integral realisation, an integral union, an integral perfection and fulfilment, and has no exclusive predilection for either peace or power or knowledge or bliss. The all-embracing, all pervading Divine is his goal and he advances towards it with an aspiration and effort characterised by an increasing inclusiveness and synthesis. For him all is He, Truth and its temporal perversion, falsehood; light and its diminished vibration, darkness; Bliss and its wriggling distortion, suffering. An immeasurable hunger for the Supreme consumes all preferences of his mind and heart and imposes a discipline on each part of his being, so that, purified and illuminated, each may seek Him alone and no objects of its egoistic affections, and express Him alone in itself and its movements. He feels and perceives that his whole being belongs to God, and that it is his whole being he has to offer Him, and not only his naked soul or his mind or heart; and that this offering, this joyous sacrifice, is the only means of his ascent to his essential infinity and immortality, and his real, constant, dynamic union with the One and unity with all existence. And he resolves to offer not only his whole being, but *his whole becoming*,—not only all that he is, but also all that he is destined to be. He makes the Divine the very reason of his existence, the source and support of all his striving, and the eternal repose of his consciousness and being. This offering of the becoming marks the real Karmayogi, for he is a seeker not only of liberation, but of perfection and fulfilment—a manifold, full-orbed, rainbow-rich splendour of perfection and fulfilment here in his earthly life. He does not regard the world as a snare or an illusion, or only a place of trial and training, but as a rich field for the harvesting of the highest beatitudes of the divine union and the sublimest glories of the divine manifestation. It is true that the field wears at first the aspect of a battlefield; but it does not daunt the Karmayogi; on the contrary, it affords him an occasion for adventure, for staking his all for God's

<sup>1</sup> Immersed in essential Self-awareness, the Calm, the Good, the One without a second

<sup>2</sup> Universal in form, self-created in the becoming

victory in the world of division and darkness. He is born as God's warrior to fight God's battle and establish God's opulent kingdom here,<sup>1</sup> and not to fly away from the grim realities of life and its complex and baffling problems. Envisaging God as the doer of all works as well as the eternal non-doer, he aspires, by an active surrender of his whole being, to climb to the integral divinity of this double poise and live in the world as a radiant channel of God's transforming Force.

This all-embracing and all-exceeding truth of the omnipresent Reality and Life and Nature having been once accepted as the foundation of Karma-yoga, a question naturally arises from the confused mass of spiritual traditions of the past as to how one can become a luminous channel of the divine Light and Force so long as one lives in the world of dualities and in the Nature of the three gunas. The Gita replies to this question with its gospel of life in the Divine, "nivasishyasi mayyeva," and the ancient truth of the two Natures, higher and lower, para and apara. An accomplished karmayogi lives, not the normal human life of desire and attachment, but the divine life of unity and creative harmony in the immortal consciousness of the Infinite, though he apparently moves and works like others in the world; and he does not live in the lower nature of the fettering qualities, but in the inalienable freedom and purity of the Para Prakriti, of which the lower Nature is only a darkened derivative. The Gita stops short only at a sparkling hint of the Divine Life and the transcendence of the Gunas, but Sri Aurobindo takes up this hint and elaborates it into a glowing evangel of the Divine Life, created by the transfiguring and revealing dynamism of the Para Prakriti, the supreme Divine Nature, the Mother. The soul of man in its evolution inevitably passes through the lower Nature of the three gunas,<sup>2</sup> but when it is liberated, it does not shuffle off all Nature and retire into its immutable unembodied essence, but, seated securely in the higher, converts and perfects his lower Nature of mind, life and body, and, manifesting God's glory through this transformed triple instrument, enjoys immortality here, even on this earth.<sup>3</sup> And it is only after liberation that he can really and effectively fulfil the self-law of his essential Nature, swabhava and swadharma. If liberation meant a disappearance from the field of life, which is a field of self-expression and divine manifestation, then the self-nature of the soul would find no opportunity for self-unfoldment, but would be condemned to eternal sterility. Swabhâva and swadharma ren-

<sup>1</sup> Dharmakshetré kurukshetré

<sup>2</sup> Avidyayâ mrityum tîrtwa

<sup>3</sup> Vidyâyâmrítamashnuté

dered nugatory, life discredited and discouraged, and the world spurned as a nightmare, the soul would be left with the single alternative of a precipitate retreat, if it were awakened enough to find itself choking in the darkness of its material tenement. That cannot evidently be the intention of God in the world and the denouement of the soul's long and difficult evolution in it. The Gitâ does not countenance this intolerant escapism, and the Veda and the Upanishads declare against it, and affirm in organ tones the reality of life, its teleological significance and the spiritual necessity and efficacy of its works. In the Ishôpanishad it is definitely stated that those who follow exclusively after the Knowledge of the One (Vidyâ) enter into a greater darkness than those who pursue the life of Ignorance (Avidyâ). For, an exclusive pursuit of the One means, in fact, a disregard or ignoring of the same One in the Many; and, therefore, the realisation of the Transcendent One to the exclusion of the universal Many or the One in the Many, is, indeed, a partial realisation, which the Upanishad characterises as a greater darkness, because once the soul has merged in the Transcendent One, it is lost for ever to the Truth of the divine immanence in the world and His Will to universal self-expression. The Karma-yoga of the Gitâ is founded on the basis of the unity of all existence, and Sri Aurobindo gives it the largest possible extension, both in theory and practice, in order that it may eventually move untrammelled in the infinite rhythms of the supramental Force.

Holdng up before humanity the sublime ideal of an integrated realisation of all the three kinds of liberation, *sâyujya*, *sâmipyâ* and *sârûpya* or *sâdharmya*<sup>1</sup>, Sri Aurobindo attaches a very great importance to karmayoga; for, without it the realisation of *sâdharmya* or *sârûpya* would not be possible. To be of the same nature as the Divine, it is imperative that one should rise from this ignorant and stumbling nature of the three gunas into the supramental nature; and it is karmayoga alone that can be the ladder of this dynamic ascent. Cessation or diminution of karmayoga will lead to an arrest of the divine dynamism and therefore of the ascent into *sâdharmya*.

Again, by liberation Sri Aurobindo means not only the freedom of the soul or the Purusha from the meshes of Nature but the emancipation of Nature herself from her own lower formulation of the three gunas into the illimitable freedom of her creative Consciousness-Force. This release and transmutation

<sup>1</sup> *Sâyujya* means liberation into an absorbed union with the Divine, *Sâmipyâ* into a blissful nearness of the Divine, and *Sârûpya* or *Sâdharmya* into the infinite and luminous Supernature of the Divine.

of Nature demand an uninterrupted karmayoga, a free exercise of all the parts and elements of the human nature in a growing spirit of dedicated service and in the emergent light of spiritual knowledge. Not escape from Nature, but a sovereign possession and joyous utilisation and enjoyment of a divinised Nature, is the great objective of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo; and it is indispensable for man's perfection and fulfilment on earth through an integral union with the Divine. The Integral Yoga aims at union with the Divine not only in His Consciousness but also in His Nature.

There is another conception of karmayoga which regards works only as a means of psychological purification, chittashuddhi, and sees no further spiritual utility in it. When the purification is achieved, works are either rigorously clipped and curtailed, or made to flow only through philanthropic or altruistic channels. They feed and represent the sattwic elements of the nature of the spiritual seeker, and only indirectly and rather dimly reflect his spiritual realisations. According to this conception, too much action distracts the spiritual aspirant and had better be reduced to its bare minimum, indispensable for the maintenance of his body and his contact with the world. The motor springs of energy, physical and vital, are thus left to starve and atrophy in the heat and stress of an exclusive concentration on the peace and silence of the Immutable.

The philosophy underlying this conception is a life-chilling philosophy of negation which denies reality to the world and its evolutionary labour and tolerates action only as a preliminary means of purification, to be abandoned as soon as its utility is over. It flies right in the face of the comprehensive outlook of the Veda, the Upanishads<sup>1</sup> and the Gita in splitting existence into two: Reality and Illusion. While the ancient wisdom declares that "the world is nothing but Brahman," that "the One Atman, who dwells in the hearts of all beings, has assumed all these multiple forms", and that "all these creatures have the one Existent as their source, the one Existent as their structure and the one Existent as their foundation", this dialectical pseudo-monism tortures and juggles with the scriptural texts to uphold its theory of the unreality of the world, the unsubstantiality of life, and the eventual futility of all action. Against the magnificent vision recorded in the Gita of "a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking from innumerable mouths. robed in heavenly raiment of deity", it opens up a dismal panorama of mirages and nightmares and delusions and snares, and beckons to the soul of man to free itself and flee,

<sup>1</sup> *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (All this world is verily the Brahman), *Brahmavedam Vishvamudam Varistham* (All this universe is verily the Supreme Brahman)

as fast as it can, to a heaven of peace and silence beyond. It breeds in the common run of men a sick world-weariness, a self-justifying indolence or a morbid asceticism, and corrodes and saps their vitality. If ideas and thoughts have any moulding force, those of this school of philosophy have had the most blighting and enervating effect upon the national life of India and are to a great measure responsible for the later decline of her culture and the crippling of her creative endeavours.

The Integral Yoga has nothing to do with this ascetic conception of Karma. It knows that "works are only outward and distracting when we have not found oneness of will and consciousness with the Supreme. When once that is found, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. If knowledge is the very state of oneness and the love its bliss, divine works are the living power of its light and sweetness." Recognising, adoring and seeking union with the Transcendent and universal Master of all works, it regards karmayoga as an indispensable part of itself, and the most effective medium of manifesting God's Power and greatness upon earth. It knows also that knowledge, exclusively pursued, may lead to an immersion in the motionless Self, away from the creative movement of the universal Spirit; that love and devotion, in their unilateral intensity, may lead to the absorbed ecstasy of the All-Beautiful in the secret chamber of the human heart, impervious to the vibrations of the outer world; but that karmayoga cannot proceed except at least on an initial basis of incipient knowledge and developing love, and that it cannot progress except through the widening illumination of knowledge and the thrilled longing of love;—the very spirit of it is one of harmonisation of the various strands of our being, and antithetical to all exclusiveness. "All works culminate in knowledge," says Sri Krishna; and, one might add, also in exalting and unifying love. The works of a yogi well out of an increasing knowledge and a flaming love—they are radiant and rapturous pulses of power. How can one offer all one's action to the Divine unless one has some perception and knowledge of the reality of His existence and a moved feeling of love and devotion for Him? Karmayoga thus reconciles knowledge and love in itself, and gives the amplest scope to every part of our being and every energy and faculty of our nature for the highest perfection and fulfilment in life.

It is this immense base of the unity of all existence and the unifying vision of the great universal labour upon which Karmayoga stands in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and bids fair to open up a new chapter of spiritual synthesis in the cultural history of humanity.

RISHABHCHAND

## THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

### LIFE IN VEDIC TIMES

The cultural and religious life of the Vedic age marks an advanced stage which would have been impossible had not its social life been equally progressive. The Rigvedic society was patriarchal and the family was its unit. Marriages were mostly monogamous; freedom of choice was permitted. The Wedding Hymn and a number of marriage rules of the Vedic age are still followed by the Hindus of today. Vedic marriage, like the Hindu marriage of today, is indissoluble by human agency. Indeed, marriage has ever been held by the Hindus as a sacrament. The wife was the husband's partner in religious ceremonies. There were sacrifices which the husband could not perform without the companionship of his wife. Widow remarriage, though rare, and love marriages were not unknown.

The social fabric did not know any sharp division into castes of the later-day, but the existence then of some form of it is suggested by the Purusha-sukta of the Rigveda which significantly posits that brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras—the four principal castes—have been created respectively from the head, the breast or the arms, the thighs, and the feet of the Creator. There is a deep truth in this symbolic expression which will be shown later. Anyway, the four castes did exist in the Rigvedic times but in broad, fluid divisions, since no rigid distinction could be made in that age when the influence of Aryan culture was spreading fast among other tribes and communities, absorbing them within the expanding scope of the Vedic society. Mention may be made here of the five tribes of people who offered sacrifice to Agni and participated in the Soma-sacrifice. They included at least two who had not been adherents of Aryan ideals before. In the Rigvedic Battle of the Ten Kings the Aryans had a number of unAryan tribes as their equals and allies.

The Rigvedic priesthood was not hereditary. Women enjoyed much freedom and were highly cultured. Quite a number of seers were women who composed hymns. The famous *Devi-Sukta* of the Rigveda is the work of the woman-Rishi Vak, the daughter of the great Rishi Ambhrin, who expresses therein her realisation of identity with Universal Consciousness. The well-



known *Ratri-Sukta* is believed to be composed by another woman-Rishi named Ratri. It may be noted that both these Suktas are most popular among the Tantrikas, the followers of the Mother-cult. Sarparajni composed a famous Agni hymn and presided over many sacrifices. Apala got skin disease and her husband deserted her but she was not to be daunted. She got cured by worshipping Indra and became a bigger Rishi than her husband. That women took part in military activities is evident from the example of Visvapala who was a great general who lost a foot in a battle and got the Aswins to fix an iron leg and again went to war. The wife of Rishi Mudgala was a great charioteer.

That the people in Vedic times lived in plenty is indicated in the gorgeous manner in which sacrifices were performed. Great store was set by hospitality. In fact, there were sacrifices—*Dana-yajnas* (large offerings made to the gods and in their name given away)—especially meant for the cultivation of this natural tendency of the Indian heart. There is a verse in the Rigveda called *Danastuti* in praise of munificence.

Vedic society in later times saw the system of caste more defined than before. The brahmanas were engaged in the study and propagation of the Vedic ideals, as embodied among others in the sacrificial rites and ceremonials; the kshatriyas, in the protection of the country and maintenance of peace; the vaishyas, in agriculture and trade; the shudras, in rendering service to all. The relative position of the brahmanas and the kshatriyas in society was not yet a fixed one. The kshatriyas that were seers or rishis, had the same status as the brahmanas. Indeed, some of them, as in the Upanishads, were even teachers of brahmanas. There were kshatriya kings who were seers possessing the highest wisdom. And these are not rare or isolated instances of the fluidity of the caste-system. The Satapatha Brahmana gives the shudra a place in the Soma sacrifice. Satyakama Jabala and Janashruti were certainly not the only ones who, though shudra, the former, besides, being of questionable birth, were admitted to the study of the Upanishads under famous teachers of the age. Satyakama later became a great teacher of spiritual knowledge and had a large number of disciples including brahmanas and King Janaka. Mahidasa, the author of the Aitareya Brahmana, had a shudra mother. The Rishi Kuvasha Ailusha was born of a shudra maid-servant. There were some reactionary views that try to justify severity of treatment towards the shudras, and this, maybe, because they had been admitted to the Aryan fold from un-Aryan tribes. The marriage customs were almost the same as in the Rigvedic times. The brahmanas and kshatriyas married women of other castes.

## THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

The economic life of the Rigvedic people centred round agriculture which was in a very developed state. Mainly pastoral, they valued cows and bullocks as their best possession. Sanctity was attached to the cows, as one of their appellations means 'not to be killed'. The people knew hunting with all its tricks many of which are followed even now. Crafts in wood, metal including gold, leather and weaving were in their highly evolved forms, which show their wide popularity and patronage. The Rigveda alludes to golden cups. Commercially the Rigvedic people were no less advanced. They had trade relations and through them cultural intercourse with many distant lands and with lands beyond the seas. The principle of barter served as a sort of currency. Milk, rice, barley and their various products and preparations were the food of the people, which also included meat generally of sacrificed animals. Two garments and one under-garment comprised the dress of the people. Both men and women used to adorn themselves with ornaments and jewellery. The Atharvaveda furnishes details of the occupations and of the economic life of the people of the later period. In the Brahmanas are found classifications of agricultural operations. The mention in them of a large number of commercial manufacturers, merchant-princes and of bodies like the trade-guilds, indicates a remarkable industrial development of the period. Gold, silver and copper were in extensive use.

The construction of sacrificial altars, palaces and dwelling houses, mentioned in the Rigveda, suggests a knowledge of the building art. The Rigveda refers to the worship, before building a house, of a god called *Vastospati*, the guardian deity of the homestead. To this a writer on the subject traces the origin of *Vastuvidyā*—the Indian science of architecture, whose application especially for sacrificial purposes is given more prominence in the Yajurveda. The Atharvaveda gives some ideas of town-planning, and the suggestions in it for the construction of dwelling houses show how progressive the people of the age were. The Brahmanas use the word *śilpa* to mean sculpture, singing, dancing and music. The people of the age indulged in drinking spiritous liquors and also in gambling which however was condemned. Dancing and music were cultivated by both sexes, which, along with chariot-racing, horse-racing and dicing were among the amusements of the Vedic people. The Rigvedic term *sabha* is interpreted by some scholars to mean a kind of social club where some administrative business also was transacted. Men of position are described as coming to the *sabha* in pomp and splendour.

It is quite possible that in their daily life as in their religious and cultural life, the Rigvedic people had many things in common with the builders of the

Sindhu Valley culture, an idea of which is given in the previous chapter. The view is gaining ground that these two cultures are not separate and apart; the points of similarity between them are coming more and more to light.

Rigvedic culture is also remarkable for its polity. How the unit of the family—*kula*—evolved into a state is difficult to say. But the terms in the Rig-veda like *grama* or *janman* (village), *vis* (group of villages), *jana* (a group of *visas*), and *rastra* (country or state) imply the stages of this growth and point to the importance of each of these stages in the process of the earliest political development of India. There was the title of *kulapati* for the head of the family or a number of families forming a village, that of *vispati* for the head of canton or a group of villages, that of *janaraj* or king for the head of a *jana*. But as capacity and personal worth counted more in those days than hereditary rights, a *kulapati* or a *vispati* could be a *janaraj* provided he possessed the requisite qualities of leadership. There are instances of *janarajas* chosen by the people through their *kulapatis* and *vispatis* who had considerable voice in such elections.

Rigvedic India spread over a large area divided into a number of tribal principalities each of which was a political unit generally ruled by a king. The oldest form of India's collective life grew in natural surroundings and in fertile regions mothered by the vast river-systems of northern India. Thus had the Vedic kings their territories on the banks of the Sindhu, the Saraswati, the Yamuna, and other rivers. The extent of these states however was undergoing changes through the impact of forces then working for political and cultural expansion. And this was not infrequent in those formative days of India's history when the political as well as the cultural integrity of the country was far from what Nature intended it to be.

Monarchy then was the normal form of government in Vedic times. But it was a constitutional monarchy not always hereditary as already pointed out. Rigvedic kings had as their advisers both in religious and political matters some of the most leading spiritual figures of the age. Vasistha and Vishvamitra, greatest among the Rishis, held such positions. This is the origin of the glorious tradition in India of wise selfless sages serving as ministers and advisers of kings throughout her ancient history. Kingship in Vedic times had to depend much on the love and loyalty of the people. A Rigvedic hymn says: "May all the people bestow their love on you, so that you may not lose your kingdom." There was besides a ritual of *Anumati* which is interpreted to mean that the king had to seek the approval of the people. These facts reflect the democratic tendency of the Vedic people, which is believed to have continued throughout the Vedic

period. The terms *gana* (people) and *ganapati* or *jyestha* (elder or people's headman) also suggest non-monarchical institutions of the age. This tendency was more marked in the popularity of the institutions like the *sabha* and the *samiti*.

The *sabha*, as already said, was a popular assembly of elders, a kind of meeting-place where men would gather mainly for purposes of social intercourse. But it also transacted those items of administration which would come up for disposal. Generally associated with village-life, it played its part as a centre of unity, the basis of progressive and prosperous collective life. The *samiti* however was a more powerful body in that it exercised greater influence over the administration of the country and acted as a healthy check on the power of the king. It was, as it were, the Central Assembly for the whole State, whose membership was open to the aristocracy of the land. A king would find his job difficult, if not impossible, if he could not carry the *samiti* along with him. Political power in the Rigvedic times was synonymous with domination of the *samiti*. The Vedic age witnessed the whole country studded with *sabhās* and *samitis*. And these assemblies had women also as their members. In the last hymn of the Rigveda, a king makes a most solemn exhortation to the members of the *samiti* to have always among them a spirit of harmony and concord.

In later Vedic literature the king is found to be more powerful in his authority, and stronger in his position, and this was due to the need the people felt of one who would protect the country and build it up into a progressive state. There were therefore *ekratas*, sole paramount sovereigns ruling over large regions. A number of terms designate each a particular form of kingship that ruled during this period over larger territories created out of the old smaller ones through conquest and expansion. There were also confederacies the most famous of which was that of the Kuru-Panchalas already mentioned. It is no longer the west which had its heyday during the Rigvedic times but the middle and eastern regions of the country that were now prominent centres of political and cultural activity. Kosala, Kasi and Videha comprise most of the regions which did not take long to extend farther east to Magadha and Anga whose unAryan elements started to worship Agni in accordance with Vedic ideals.

Kingship in this period was both hereditary and non-hereditary. There were kings, elected by the people's representatives who could as well expel or depose them when they violated *dharma*, 'the sacred law that sustains the universe', regarded in ancient India as the higher authority every king must acknowledge and which, as a Brahman says, 'is indeed the ruler.' The Atharvaveda says: "May the people choose you for their ruler." "Here is the king ap-

pointed for the people's government", declares a Brahmana. The *sabha* and the *samiti* functioned in this period as they had done in the Rigvedic. When a king prays: "May *samiti* and *sabha*, the two daughters of Prajapati, concurrently aid me", he points not only to their importance but also to the fact that they owe their origin to the same divine source from which he derives his power and authority. It also suggests the extreme antiquity of these two popular institutions. The *samiti* continues in this period also to be more powerful than the *sabha*. The Atharvan characterises the *samiti* as the source of the king's stability. The Vedic Samiti, an Indian scholar holds, was a sovereign assembly of the whole people (*vis*). It may be compared to the Greek Agora, Roman Comitia or German folk-moot, but whereas no discussion was permitted in the latter assemblies of Europe, the Vedic Samiti was a deliberative body where speeches were delivered and debates took place.

The period witnessed the performance of various royal sacrifices, coronations and consecrations of kings, in all of which the king would be declared the protector of the people. The Satapatha Brahmana describes the intellectual qualifications of the kings. There were in this period several non-monarchical states of which mention may be made of the *Vairajya* States of the Uttaramadras and Uttarakurus whose people were called *Virats*. The republican character of these states is evident from the fact that there 'citizens and not kings are expressly consecrated for rulership', the term *Virat* meaning 'devoid of a king'.

The States of the Vedic age had each its own military organisation for purposes of both defence and territorial expansion in which smaller states with their tribal rivalries got merged in consonance with Nature's labour in those times to build larger and larger human collectivities for the immediate purpose of strengthening the corporate life of the people, and the ultimate one of unifying the whole race. This process in Vedic India was not always a violent one. Confederacies and alliances were not rare. Tribal allegiances however did not allow these larger States to be still larger, perhaps because their size was self-sufficient and compact enough for the growth of a healthy political and cultural life. Evidences in the Vedic texts show that in their strength of arms and heroism, the Vedic people were not at all unequal to the needs of the age when in her youth India was seeing golden visions of her future, preparing for that long adventure of her soul which began well with her victory over the forces that opposed her onward march.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

THE MOTHER'S MUSIC

THE MOTHER'S MUSIC

NEW YEAR'S DAY — 1952.

As notes of Thy music, Mother, struck the air  
    Vibrant with power and beatitude,  
    Symbol sounds of the hidden Infinitude,  
A flood of light outpoured from Matter's lair.

And lo! the glorious form of our Lord arose  
    In a blue-flamed lotus dear to human sight  
    Companioned by pink or saffron tongues of light,  
A tiny image, the hue of a pearl-white rose.

As in a Revelation's mystic shrine  
    The mortal's sense-bound limits fall away,  
    So Thy harmonic meditation's sway  
Stilled minds to supernature's sight divine.

The massive sweep of Thy compelling chords  
Shall bring to birth the new creation's lords.

PRITHVISINGH

MOTHER INDIA

THE MOTHER'S MUSIC

(January 1, 1953)

Behind the bars of human time and space  
Thy Will prepares the souls for a vast descent  
Of Light and Force compelling the Earth's assent  
To that tremendous change which comes by Grace.

The greater Gods have taken birth in man:  
In pink-gold robes they march to music strange  
As notes are heaved on notes in a widening range  
Of an occult call to aid Truth's deep set plan

The Mother looses forth her powers supreme,  
And the Gods respond and come to do Her will:  
They make obeisance to the Lord and fill  
All earth—though veiled as yet—with heavenly beam.

O Mother Infinite! here Thy vision forms  
A diamond seat of God through passion-storms.

24-2-1953

PRITHVISINGH

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishad** by *M.P.Pandit*.  
Pp. 142. Price Rs. 3:- Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Library, 369, Esplanade,  
Madras. G.T.

The Renaissance of spiritual India is an event of profound importance for modern times and the world's future. For centuries the creative genius of this country lay withdrawn into some dormant depth, allowing her great discoveries of the inner and outer life to be encrusted with superstition and ceremonial, so much so that the world began to doubt whether there ever had existed the mighty culture which had made such splendid history.

Today again India has risen, radiating her spiritual knowledge and opening new horizons for mankind. Sri M.P.Pandit rightly observes: "What looked a certain death, however, proved to be just a slumber. Indian culture, Indian civilisation knows no death because it is based on the eternal verity of the Spirit—the *Sanatana Dharma*. Soon a many-sided powerful revivalist movement was afoot." This is the counter-attack from the East, and but for this reawakening the tide of the material phase of human civilisation would have swept us along and ensured the final doom of the race.

The prime need of the hour was the rescuing of the Veda from the hands of the modern scholars who saw nothing of spiritual value in it and sought to derive from it a grotesquely unfair picture of this ancient culture—and, for this, Indian obscurantism of the medieval times was partly responsible.

M. P. Pandit, closely following Sri Aurobindo, has delved deep into this ancient treasure of spiritual lore and conclusively proved that the true meaning of the Veda can be discovered only if we disburse ourselves of all prepossessions and see what the Rishis have themselves to say about the cryptic nature of the verses. The Veda comes out as the embodiment of the highest spiritual realisations and aspirations of our ancient Rishis, and the Vedic sacrifice is not merely a detailed ritual but the odyssey of the human soul when it aims at the higher planes of Reality. As Sri Aurobindo graphically writes: "The image of this sacrifice is sometimes that of a journey or voyage; for it travels, it ascends; it has a goal—the vastness, the true existence, the light, the felicity—and it is called upon to discover and keep to the good, the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous yet joyful road of the Truth. It has to climb, led by the flaming strength of the divine will, from



plateau to plateau as of a mountain....its aim is to arrive at the far-off ocean of light and infinity." (*Hymns to the Mystic Fire*).

How then came it to be lost and thus dry away in the dreary sands of dead ritual? Pandit hits the nail on the head: "The human mind has an obstinate preference for form, the concrete as opposed to the abstract and no wonder the tendency grew of attaching premier importance to the ritual of the ceremonies and only a subsidiary role to the *mantras* and naturally the Brahmanas became the scripture of external religions." The author very pertinently poses the question: "Is there any basis for the millenniums-old tradition that the Veda is a 'Scripture of divine knowledge, divine worship, divine action'? Do the hymns contain anything in themselves to substantiate this faith voiced by countless saints and sacred books of the past? We have to make our choice one way or the other. Or, in the words of Sri Aurobindo: 'We can no longer enshrine the Veda wrapped in the folds of an ignorant reverence or guarded by a pious self-deceit. Either the Veda is what Sayana says it is, then we have to leave it behind for ever as the document of a mythology and ritual which have no longer any living truth or force for thinking minds, or it is what the European scholars say it is, and then we have to put it away among the relics of the past as an antique record of semi-barbarous worship or else it is indeed Veda, a book of Knowledge and it becomes of supreme importance to know and to hear its message.' "

Pandit has given evidence in his book of his meticulous study, research, scholarship and erudition and above all his capacity to plumb into the inner life of the Spirit. He does not skate on thin ice while bringing out the spiritual content of the mantras. His method of approach also is most systematically planned. He first cites *mantra* after *mantra* where the spiritual sense radiates most obviously and even the most intransigent ritualist has to yield the palm. He has cited *mantras* wherein the Rishis themselves speak of the mystic nature of the hymns. Having thus formed a strong basis for the spiritual significance of the Veda he threads his way firmly through disputed passages and thus maps out a large field.

After a perusal of the book, the hymns, as the author points out, "do not appear any longer to be the simple folk-songs or abject supplications of a primitive, barbarous people they are fancied and made out to be. Instead, they reveal their true character of being the indices, the charts of the spiritual adventure of highly developed men who had pioneered into the realm of the Unknown. Seekers of Light, they realised and enlisted the help and support of the Gods and Goddesses in their fight with the sons of Darkness who are ever after man to thwart his progress."

The chapters on the Vedic Soma shed a vivid light on the whole signi-

fiance of the ceremonies related to it. Any reader who has even a nodding acquaintance with the spiritual life can at once see that the Soma was not an intoxicant but the Immortal Ananda of the Divine that alone can transform our sordid life on earth by its rapturous streams. Such mantras as,

“We have drunk the Soma, we have become the immortals;  
We have attained the Light, we have discovered the Gods”,

leave not a shadow of doubt about the symbolic sense of the Soma.

Another great merit of the book is that it does not ignore the value of the ritualistic interpretation, it does not reject anything to affirm only its own view. The ears of the orthodox need not tingle at this because it assigns a due place to the exoteric sense that has dominated Indian religious practice. He says: “It is not that we deny historicity to these ceremonial functions. On the other hand, the esoteric interpretation insists that these external rites with all the elaborate details did form a feature of the popular religion of the times. Only that was not all, the whole truth. Behind the ritual there lay a deeper significance. The outer act was a mask and a symbol of a concrete happening in the inner life of the Seer, the Rishi.” This clearly shows the unbiased approach of the author to the whole problem.

The chapter on the Upanishads also will be illuminatingly helpful to the seekers of Truth and the ultimate Reality. Everywhere the author's words breathe forth some radiance of his aspiration and his effort to open the eyes of mankind to that which alone can salvage it from the present abyss. He says: “The one preoccupation of all these Upanishads is the *search for Truth*. The seers of these scriptures, the kings, the wise men, the young men (and women) that live in these pages are all afire with thirst for knowledge of the Truth of life, the Truth behind life. No price is too great for the prize and we are told whole lives were spent in pursuit of it.” The book ends with these words: “But the central truths which form the main fabric of the Upanishads are woven round the Odyssey of the human soul which in truth is a progressive self-revelation of the Supreme Creator amid the Symphony of the rhythms of the Universal Spirit.”

The book is written in a charming style and is full of interest not only to the Vedic scholar but also to the lay reader who aspires for the touch of the higher Light. The get-up and the paper are of high quality and the publishers have priced it very reasonably. It arouses in us sanguine expectations about the things to come in this field.

R. N. KHANNA

ESCAPE FROM TARTARY

I am one who seeks on hidden hills of trance  
A wideness free from barbs of iron speech,  
A golden life safe from the ravener's reach,  
A beauty brooding in some blue expanse  
Beyond the long bows of the Tartar Khans.

Nothing they see but hunger to draw nigh  
And grasp in their red hands where the blood's fire  
Leaps in ten flames that would devour the sky,  
Far from the arrows screaming ever higher,  
O for a Yonder to the abysmal eye !

Carrying within their hearts a sputtering hell,  
Sleepless the gaunt black-bearded archers scan  
Night for white wings that with serene waft span  
The distances which keep me mortal man.  
May those rapt swans merge in the Ineffable !

K. D. SETHNA

# *Students' Section*

## A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

When I was with a little knowledge cursed,  
Like a mad elephant I stormed about  
And thought myself all-knowing. But when deep-versed  
Rich minds some portion of their wealth disbursed  
My poverty to raise, then for a lout  
And dunce I knew myself, and the insolence went  
Out from me like a fever violent.

(From : *The Century of Life : Translations from  
Bhartrihari, by Sri Aurobindo*)

# ANANDAMATH

BY BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI

TRANSLATION BY SJ. AUROBINDO GHOSE

## *Prologue*

A wide interminable forest. Most of the trees are SALS, but other kinds are not wanting. Treetop mingling with treetop, foliage melting into foliage, the interminable lines progress; without crevice, without gap, without even a way for the light to enter, league after league and again league after league the boundless ocean of leaves advances, tossing wave upon wave in the wind. Underneath, thick darkness; even at midday the light is dim and uncertain; a seat of terrific gloom. There the foot of man never treads; there except the illimitable rustle of the leaves and the cry of wild beasts and birds, no sound is heard.

In this interminable, impenetrable wilderness of blind gloom, it is night. The hour is midnight and a very dark midnight; even outside the woodland, it is dark and nothing can be seen. Within the forest the piles of gloom are like the darkness in the womb of the earth itself.

Bird and beast are utterly and motionlessly still. What hundreds of thousands, what millions of birds, beasts, insects, flying things have their dwelling within that forest, but not one is giving forth a sound. Rather the darkness is within imagination, but inconceivable is that noiseless stillness of the ever-murmurous, ever noise-filled earth. In that limitless empty forest, in the solid darkness of that midnight, in that unimaginable silence there was a sound: "Shall the desire of my heart ever be fulfilled?"

After that sound the forest reaches sank again into stillness. Who would have said then that a human sound had been heard in those wilds? A little while after the sound came again, again the voice of man rang forth troubling the hush, "Shall the desire of my heart ever be fulfilled?"

## MOTHER INDIA

Three times the wide sea of darkness was thus shaken. Then the answer came: "What is the stake put down?"

The first voice replied, "I have staked my life and all its riches."

The echo answered, "Life! It is a small thing which all can sacrifice."

"What else is there? What more can I give?"

This was the answer, "Thy soul's worship."



## A VISION

SADHAK: This morning at Pranam time I saw a very small baby standing in front of me with a very happy and cheerful face; it was carrying on its shoulder a pot of water which looked too heavy for it to carry. The baby offered me water from the pot, and told me that Mother would fill it up again. I took the water, and saw to my great surprise the pot being filled up again; it was not possible to say how it was done—it was like magic. When the baby said that Mother would fill it up again, I was very much impressed by its simple faith, and its being conscious of the Mother, young as it was. I would like to know what this vision indicates.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was your psychic being.

21-4-1934

STUDENTS' SECTION

POEMS

BEAUTY

In the soft violet of the night,  
In the white glamour of the day,  
In the blue dusk's dim brooding light,  
In aurora's first awakening ray—

O Beauty Eternal, Thy breath I feel  
Skim o'er all creation with wings unfurled,  
O'er new-birth's splendour, death's dire seal,  
O'er phantom winters, o'er springs dew-pearled.

And in the candid eyes of a child,  
On all that's ancient, all that's new,  
On rain-washed grass, on flowers wild,  
I see thee shed an immortal hue.

And on all things both high and low,  
Lit by the rays of thy ruby lamp,  
That tinges them with an ether glow,  
I see the Divine's flamping stamp.

ANIRUDDHA

THE SEEKER

I pursue the days and musing nights  
Along Time's chequered shore,  
And swiftly fleeting moments' joy  
In memory's casket store.

In the sea of Nature's beauty I plunge  
To find her secrets all,  
The nameless flowers' gleeful smiles  
My eyes with magic enthrall.



MOTHER INDIA

Through the fading light of eve I soar  
To stars that palely shine,  
And drink the joys of their guileless hearts  
In goblets hyaline.

In things that grow and die unseen  
I seek the creator-Hand  
And upwards lifting my eyes serene  
On Beauty's path I stand.

RANAJIT

NOCTURNE

The surges of the stormy sea,  
Sudden in a mystic spell,  
Had ceased to stress their milky foam  
And towards heaven to swell.

The birds alone kept chanting softly  
Praise of sun's parting ray;  
And in the vague abysm of dusk  
Stars twinkled in dismay.

I sat silent; and sitting still  
On the verge of Spirit's deep,  
A voice forlorn and far I heard  
In my heart tenderly weep.

None it reproached; but fondly dropped  
Tear-pearls of unmixed bliss  
Over the bosom of Mother Earth  
And left a sweet flame-kiss

Upon calm Space and coiling Time,  
Then it soared up high and high,  
Gliding along the shoreless blue:  
The realm where virtues lie....

PRITHWINDRA

## ON TRUTHFULNESS

Truthfulness has been regarded as the highest virtue since the dawn of time. It has been universally enjoined but not universally practised. There is no nation, society, individual, religious or philosophical system, no ethics, law or code of conduct that has not advocated it. Laws of diplomacy, statecraft and politics may be the only exceptions to this general rule but there also none dares openly advocate the practice of falsehood, double-dealing, hypocrisy and prevarication. The adage, "Hypocrisy is the homage vice pays to virtue", applies to the conduct of politicians and diplomats and it is a well-known fact that they neither trust nor are in their turn trusted anywhere by any serious-minded men and women who have followed the recent and past trends of history.

When we conceal a truth, deform or distort it, we should analyse the cause of such concealment or distortion. Generally speaking, fear is the cause of falsification of truth, though another, the profit or gain motive, can be added to it. Here fear and gain are indeed the obverse and reverse sides of the same picture. When a child lies, we can at once see that he is doing so for fear of being chastised. Similarly a man sacrifices truth for some gain or profit. Men give false evidence for money. So both the motives of fear and gain are associated with falsehood. Fear may be due to many factors, fear of any untoward consequences to oneself, such as the loss of wealth, power, position, prestige, popularity and a hundred other things. The desire for gain or acquisition of the same things may motivate the falsehood. It is difficult to say what exactly is the motive behind a man's actions. Sometimes untruth may also be due to a mechanical habit. One is so habituated to telling lies commonly called bluffing that he does not see the enormity of it at all. But whatever the motive, the man who prefers falsehood to truth makes a bad choice, for great is Truth and it shall prevail. Truth like murder will out some time or other, now or afterwards and in attempting to conceal it, we are guilty of a double crime; it is aggravating the original wrong which we are trying to cover by our falsehood. There is another disadvantage of lying with which we have to reckon. Once men know that we do not care for truth, they will no longer believe us even if we try to be truthful afterwards. This forfeiture of the confidence of fellow-beings is one of the greatest tragedies of human life and for that we ourselves are responsible. I would deem it hardly worth living if any one were to say of me: "Well, he is a man not to be trusted. His words have no value." After all life is not such a precious thing that it must be stuck to at any cost, even at the cost of truth. We should not therefore say things which we do not care to do, make promises where we have no intention

of fulfilling them, fix appointments which we cannot or do not want to keep. A man is known by his conduct, not by his words however sweet and beautiful they may be. Our words are often at variance with our actions. One who knows human nature knows its many inconsistencies and self-contradictions. We often say, I have no time, when in reality we have no mind, no intention to do a thing. This is certainly not truth. It is better to be blatantly frank and outspoken than to be a hypocrite.

For the spiritual seeker truthfulness in speech and action is indispensable. Truth like obedience, chastity and humility, is the very foundation, the cornerstone of spiritual life. Truth in speech and truth in thought are very important, says Sri Aurobindo. Yet how many of us have the same scrupulous regard for truth? Truth sits lightly upon us and we say one thing and do another, make promises and break them lightly, fail in our engagements and disappoint people in a thousand other ways. No excuses will avail. There is no dearth of circumstances or logic to justify our failures. Self-justification and logic-chopping are one of the gravest defects of the lower vital and all of us are prone to it. One such common justification is, Oh, I had no time or I had other things to do or simply I forgot. If a man cannot properly attend to one thing, why does he undertake others? Do little but do it well (*yogah karmasu kausalam*—yoga is skill in works) and see that our reputation for truth does not suffer for our own neglect, rashness or levity of speech and conduct.

Let us see what the Mother says in this connection:—“If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth?

A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation.”

And yet, in spite of this, there is a tendency rampant amongst us to regard Truth as not only not absolute and binding upon us but as a mere mental construction. The implication is that truth has no other value than what constructions we choose to put upon it to suit our convenience. An admirable pretext for the lower vital mentality! It could not wish for anything better to justify our wanton and reckless disregard for truth and consistency in speech and conduct. It is needless to say that if this attitude of mind were correct, it would not only put a premium upon falsehood but make every decent and honourable human relation on earth impossible and turn our lives into the law of the jungle. For, what after all is the root-cause of the quarrels, dissensions, litigations and wars among mankind if not a blatant and flagrant violation, denial or distortion

## STUDENTS' SECTION

of truth? Remove the cause, make truth the basis of conduct and the guiding principle of life and see if the effects also are not simultaneously removed. Where we fail, let us frankly acknowledge our mistake but never seek to justify it, for that would be trying to defend an absolutely indefensible position. Truth is truth in spite of our constructions and as such should be honoured and respected down to the pettiest detail. Sri Aurobindo has laid much stress on the necessity of the control of speech for sadhana. "Not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do so and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of yogic self-control".

People who lie wantonly seem to me to be lacking in honour and self-respect. If a man has no respect for his own words, how can he expect others to have any respect for him. Truthfulness is therefore a sign of great nobility and self-respect. Once we have pledged our word we must see that it is kept. There is a proverb, *Hatika dant, maradka bat*. As the tusks of an elephant come out, never to go in again, so a gentleman never retracts his word once it is given. Cowards and self-seekers can never be truthful. Truthfulness requires great integrity, sincerity and utter and absolute fearlessness. I shall speak the truth under all circumstances, come what may. So God help me! That is the attitude of the votary of Truth, of the soldier of the Spirit.

Truthfulness is not an ingrained habit of man; it has to be acquired by a vigilant conscious direction of the mind's will and the heart's aspiration. It is true that men are not always masters of events and happenings. There is a higher Power that acts with the human ego as its instrument. Therefore we have the saying that man proposes but God disposes. It is only when we are able to act in consonance with the Divine Will that our acts will become unfailing and omnipotent. But that is a distant and difficult achievement dependent in the first instance upon the dissolution of our ignorant and limited ego.

This however need not depress us. What we can all of us do within the limits of our ego and ignorance is to try to be as truthful in our speech and action as possible. Even this is not an easy task that can be lightly discharged by everybody. It will exert an alertness and a vigilance which may at first impose a serious strain upon us because we are not so well accustomed to truth. Soon however the truth force will grow in us and we shall find the task comparatively easy. The force of habit can make and unmake things when done in a spirit of conscious faith in and reliance upon the Divine Power. *Satyameva*

## MOTHER INDIA

*jayate nanritam.* We conclude with a slight modification of the oft-quoted lines of Julius Caesar:—

“Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should lie  
Seeing that Truth, a necessary end,  
Will out soon or late.”

JIBENDRA

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## ON WRITING POETRY

*For poetry three things are necessary. First, there must be emotional sincerity and poetic feeling....Next, a mastery over language and a faculty of rhythm perfected by a knowledge of the technique of poetic and rhythmic expression.... Finally, there must be the power of inspiration, the creative energy, and that makes the whole difference between the poet and the good verse-writer.*

SRI AUROBINDO  
(From *Letters: Series III*)

## SELECTIONS FROM WORLD LITERATURE

### (A) PROSE

MATHEW ARNOLD\*

#### SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

The pursuit of perfection, then, is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness works in the end for light also; he who works for light works in the end for sweetness also. But he who works for sweetness and light united, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has but one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. Yes, it has one yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive. Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light.....

The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest

<sup>1</sup> *Sri Aurobindo on Arnold*:

“One ought to have in writing English a style which is at its base capable of going to the point, saying with a simple and energetic straightforwardness what one means to say, so that one can add grace of language without disturbing this basis. Arnold is a very good model for this purpose.....” (From *Letters : Third Series*)

knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light. Such a man was Abelard in the Middle Ages, in spite of all his imperfections; and thence the boundless emotion and enthusiasm which Abelard excited. Such was Lessing and Herder in Germany, at the end of the last century; and their services to Germany were in this way inestimably precious. Generations will pass, and literary monuments will accumulate, and works far more perfect than the works of Lessing and Herder will be produced in Germany; and yet the names of these two men will fill a German with a reverence and enthusiasm such as the names of the most gifted masters will hardly awaken. Because they *humanised* knowledge; because they broadened the basis of life and intelligence; because they worked powerfully to diffuse sweetness and light, to make reason and the will of God prevail. With Saint Augustine they said: "Let us not leave Thee alone to make in the secret of thy knowledge, as thou didst before the creation of the firmament, the division of light from darkness; let the children of thy spirit, placed in their firmament, make their light shine upon the earth, mark the division of night and day, and announce the revolution of the times; for the old order is passed, and the new arises; the night is spent, the day is come forth; and thou shalt crown the year with thy blessing, when thou shalt send forth labourers into thy harvest sown by other hands than theirs; when thou shalt send forth new labourers to new seed-times, whereof the harvest shall be not yet."

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STUDENTS' SECTION

(B) POETRY

*WORDSWORTH*

I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD

I wander'd lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretch'd in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:—  
A poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company!  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

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MOTHER INDIA

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
And while the young lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound,  
To me alone there came a thought of grief:  
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong:  
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,<sup>1</sup>

And all the earth is gay;  
Land and sea  
Give themselves up to jollity,  
And with the heart of May  
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—  
Thou Child of Joy,  
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy Shepherd-boy!

\* \* \*

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:

(Compilation by "Synergist")

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the inspiration behind this line, Sri Aurobindo writes:

"If I had to select the line in European poetry which most suggests an almost direct descent from the Overmind consciousness there might come first Virgil's line about the 'touch of tears in mortal things'. We might also add Wordsworth's line 'The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep'.