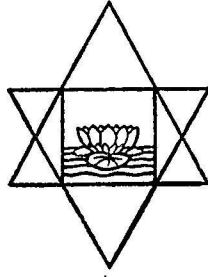


MOTHER INDIA

AUGUST 1953

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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A LETTER FROM SRI AUROBINDO

SPIRITUAL WORK IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD

WHAT you have to realise is that your success or failure depends, first and always, on your keeping in the right attitude and in the true psychic and spiritual atmosphere and allowing the Mother's force to act through you....

If I can judge from your letters, you take its support too much for granted and lay the first stress on your own ideas and plans and words about the work; but these whether good or bad, right or mistaken, are bound to fail if they are not instruments of the true Force.... You have to be always concentrated, always referring all difficulties for solution to the force that is being sent from here, always letting it act and not substituting your own mind and separate vital will or impulse..

Proceed with your work, never forgetting the condition of success. Do not lose yourself in the work or in your ideas or plans or forget to keep yourself in constant touch with the true source. Do not allow anybody's mind or vital influence or the influence of the surrounding atmosphere or the ordinary human mentality to come between you and the power and presence of the Mother.

May 15, 1928

SRI AUROBINDO

OUR YOGA AND THE MOTHER

(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters)

Keep full reliance on the Mother. When one does that, the victory even if delayed, is sure.

You have seized the right principle again, to be all for the Mother and to have full confidence that one has only to go on quietly in that confidence and all will come that needs to come and all be done that the Divine wills to be done. The workings of the world are too subtle and strange and complex for the human mind to understand it—it is only when the knowledge comes from above and one is taken into the higher consciousness that the understanding can come. Meanwhile what one has to follow is the dictates of the deeper psychic heart within based on that faith and love which is the only sure guiding star.

6-7-1937

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It is the Force that Mother is pouring into you that makes the change, replacing the ordinary body consciousness by the true physical consciousness.

Experiences are necessary to prepare the consciousness—by repeated and many experiences the consciousness changes and finally settles into the true consciousness in which constant union with the Mother is possible.

22-4-1936

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BRINGING OF THE MOTHER'S LIGHT INTO THE SUBCONSCIENT

When one is in the physical consciousness, then the sleep is apt to be of the subconscious kind, often heavy and unrefreshing, the dreams also of the subconscious kind, incoherent and meaningless or if there is a meaning the dream symbols are so confused and obscure that it is not possible to follow it. It is by bringing the Mother's Light into the subconscious that this can be dispelled and the sleep becomes restful or luminous and conscious.

13-7-1937

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OUR YOGA AND THE MOTHER

When ideas come that bring depression, they should not be accepted. It needs many years of sadhana to enter into the Divine Consciousness and be united in every part with the Mother; there is therefore no cause for depression in the fact that it is not done fully as yet. It is enough that the Mother is there and her Force working—the rest is sure.

22-9-1936

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To think of these difficulties in that way is to bring depression on oneself. The only way to deal with them is not to accept any reason as justifying depression and disturbance, but rather to be resolved to keep a calm equality in all circumstances and put the difficulties before the Mother's Force to deal with. It is also a mistake to accept the idea that you have gone far from the Mother, for such an idea throws a veil over the consciousness and prevents you from feeling the presence of the Mother who is always there with you. One must keep the consciousness turned towards her allowing no ideas to come between—that brings the psychic being more and more into action and when the psychic is active, all things begin to solve themselves without the mind needing to be active. You are perfectly able to do that, for you have done it before. It is the poise that you must get back to and keep always: That is the one way

19-4-1937

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Difficulties are not a reason for going away; they are a reason for turning more to the Mother, drawing closer to her in your heart and opening yourself to her Force for overcoming the difficulties. All talk of return for the Mother's keeping you here is absurd and out of place. It is not for a return that the Mother does anything or keeps people, it is in order to lead them towards the divine realisation. I can only think that all you write is the result of attacks producing despondency. Physical attacks have been falling on some of the best workers in the Ashram—it is part of a struggle that we are going through in the attempt to bring down the divine Light into Matter. But it is a mistake to give way to the despondency. The right way is to shake off the suggestions, lay all before the Mother, call for her help, open your body consciousness to her Force. Do this persistently and you will find that you are able to go through and conquer.

13-5-1936

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When people say that the Mother is supporting untruth, what is this untruth that she is supporting? What they mean is that she is acting contrary

MOTHER INDIA

to *their* ideas and desires—*their* ideas and desires are the truth and if the Mother's knowledge and will do not support that, then the Mother's knowledge and will are themselves made up of untruth, *asatya*. Or she is supporting people they dislike! What the Mother is supporting and maintaining is her work and, if anyone does her will, she supports them in doing it. The pretension of X or others that they know what is the truth and the Mother does not, is absurd. If they do not want to follow the Mother's will and want to follow their own minds and desires they can do it as X is doing; it is leading him out of the Ashram. But they must not pretend that what they think and want is the Truth and the Mother's knowledge and will are a falsehood—if they do, why are they here?

All this comes from their not plunging themselves into sadhana and spiritual experience and living in them—they live too much in their outer mind and vital and their ego. It is because you have done the sadhana and met the Mother within that you are able to understand and cleave to her. It was that the Mother was thinking when she said that you at least were faithful.

29-8-1935

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It is as you say about the Mother's body. The struggle of the old habits of nature with the Light is very obstinate and the brunt of the attacks falls on her.

The feeling you have shows that that is wanted—the turning to us and the psychic deliverance it brings. If that can be established the psychic will rule in the physical consciousness and even in the body and the obstacles will disappear. What is important in the physical is the persistence of a steady will to change the nature. The habit of the mind rushing out to all kinds of small things is the very nature of the physical consciousness, but by a steady insistence, the turning of it to the right direction can grow more and more and last longer and longer till it becomes the settled turn of the physical nature.

23-5-1937

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A change must come by the pressure of the psychic on the outward going consciousness. About the interview and spoken guidance, that is a mistaken idea. Mother has on the contrary diminished interviews because it was not the right way now and people were depending upon the outer and not the inner touch. Those who come hardly profit in that way—it is from within the touch must come which makes a radical change.

29-6-1937

THE SECRET OF LIFE*

ANANDA

THE world lives in and by Ananda. From Ananda, says the Veda, we were born, by Ananda we live, to Ananda we return, and it adds that no man could even have the strength to draw in his breath and throw it out again if there were not this heaven of Bliss embracing our existence as ether embraces our bodies, nourishing us with its eternal substance and strength and supporting the life and the activity. A world which is essentially a world of bliss—this was the ancient Vedantic vision, the *drishti* of the Vedic *drashta*, which differentiates Hinduism in its early virility from the cosmic sorrow of Buddhism and the cosmic disillusionment of Mayavada. But it is possible to fall from this Bliss, not to realise it with the lower nature in the *Apara Prakriti*, not to be able to grasp and possess it. Two things are necessary for the fullness of man's bliss,—the fullness of his being and the fullness of his knowledge creating by their union the fullness of the strength in all its manifestations, *viriyam*, *balam*, *bhrajās*, *tejas*, *ojas*. For Ananda, Sat and Chit make one reality, and Chit is in its outward working pure force to which our Rishis gave the name of Tapas. To attain even here upon earth this fullness of bliss dependent upon fullness of existence, illumination and force, must always be humanity's drift, man's collective endeavour. To attain it within himself here and beyond, *īha cha amutra cha*, must always be the drift of the human unit, the individual's endeavour. Wherever the knowledge in him thinks it can grasp this bliss, it will fix its heaven. This is Swarga, Vaikuntha, Goloka; this is Nirvana.

LIFE

The object and condition of Life is Ananda; the means of Ananda is Tapas; the nature of Tapas is Chit; the continent and basis of Chit is Sat. It is therefore by a process of Sat developing its own Ananda through Tapas which is Chit that the Absolute appears as the extended, the eternal as the evolutionary, Brahman as the world. He who would live perfectly must know Life, he who would know Life, must know Satchidananda.

* From old Writings

MOTHER INDIA

Pleasure is not Ananda; it is a half-successful attempt to grasp at Ananda by means which ensure a relapse into pain. Therefore it is that pleasure can never be an enduring possession. It is in its nature transient and fugitive. Pain itself is obviously not Ananda; neither is it in itself anything positive, real and necessary. It has only a negative reality. It is a recoil caused by the inability to command pleasure from certain contacts which becomes habitual in our consciousness and, long ingrained in it, deludes us with the appearance of a law. We can rise above transitory pleasure; we can get rid of the possibility of pain.

Pleasure, therefore, cannot be the end and aim of life; for the true object and condition of Life is Ananda and Ananda is something in its nature one, unconditioned and infinite. If we make pleasure the object of life, then we also make pain the condition of life. The two go together and are inseparable companions. You cannot have one for your bedfellow without making a life-companion of the other. They are husband and wife and, though perpetually quarrelling, will not hear of divorce.

But neither is pain the necessary condition of life, as the Buddhists say, nor is extinction of sensation the condition of bliss.

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THE SILENCE BEHIND LIFE

There is a silence behind life as well as within it and it is only in this more secret, sustaining silence that we can hear clearly the voice of God. In the noise of the world we hear only altered and disturbed echoes of it; for the Voice comes always—who else speaks to us on our journey?—but the gods of the heart, the gods of the mind, the gods of desire, the gods of sense take up the divine cry, intercept it and alter it for their purposes. Krishna calls to us, but the first note, even the opening power or sweetness, awakes a very brouhaha of these echoes. It is not the fault of these poor gods. The accent of power is so desirable, the note of sweetness is so captivating that they must seize it, they would be dull and soulless, there would be no hope of their redemption if they did not at once leap at it and make it their own. But in becoming their own, it ceases to be entirely his. How many who have the religious faith and the religious temperament, are following the impulses of their heart, the cravings of their desire, the urgency of their senses, the dictates of their opinion

THE SECRET OF LIFE

when they fully imagine that their God is leading them! And they do well, for God is leading them. It is the way He has chosen for them, and since He has chosen it, it is the best and wisest and most fruitful way for them. Still it is their God—not one they have made in their own image as the Atheist believes, but One who makes Himself in the image that they prefer, the image that best suits with their nature or their development. "In whatever way men come to me, in that way I love and cleave to them." It is a saying of fathomless depth which contains the seed of the whole truth about God and religion. After all it is only in this way that the conditioned can meet the Absolute, that which has a nature or dharma of its own with that which is beyond all limit of nature or dharma. After the meeting of the soul with God,—well, that is a different matter. The secrets of the nuptial chamber cannot all be spoken.

Nevertheless, there is a higher way of meeting Him than that which leads us through subjection to the Gods. By perfect Love, by perfect Joy, by perfect satisfaction, by perfected mind one can hear what the Voice truly says, if not the Voice itself, catch the kernel of the message with a soul of ecstatic perfection, even if afterwards the Gods dilate on it and by attempting to amplify and complete it, load it with false corollaries or prevent some greater fullness of truth from coming to us. Therefore this way also, though it is high, cannot be the highest.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS*

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE HIGHER POWER AND LITERARY PURSUITS

MYSELF: For creation, for effective expression style is very important—*le style, c'est l'homme*, as they say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course; without style there is no literature—except in fiction where a man with a bad style like Dickens or Balzac can make up by vigour and the power of his substance.

MYSELF: For an effective style, reading is very necessary. In order to manufacture your style, which is incomparable, your enormous reading must have helped a lot, I am sure.

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me! I never manufactured my style; style with any life in it cannot be manufactured. It is born and grows like any other living thing. Of course it was fed on my reading which was not enormous—I have read comparatively little—(there are people in India who have read fifty times or a hundred times as much as I have), only I have made much out of that little. For the rest it is Yoga that has developed my style by the development of consciousness, fineness and accuracy of thought and vision, increasing inspiration and an increasing intuitive discrimination (self-critical) of right thought, word-form, just image and figure.

MYSELF: Methinks you are making just a little too much of Yogic Force. Its potency as regards matters spiritual is undeniable, but for artistic or intellectual things one can't be so sure about its effectiveness. Take Dilip's case; some one could very well say: "Why give credit to the Force? Had he been as assiduous, sincere etc. elsewhere, he would have done just the same".

SRI AUROBINDO: Will you explain to me how Dilip who could not write a single good poem and had no power over rhythm and metre before he came

* Correspondence with Nirodbaran.

and, suddenly, not after long "assiduous efforts" blossomed into a poet, rhythmist and metrist after he came here? Why was Tagore dumbfounded by a lame man throwing away his crutches" and running freely and surely on paths of rhythm? Why was it that I who never understood or cared for writing, suddenly in a single hour by an opening of vision got the eye to see the mind of understanding about colour, line and design? How was it that I who was unable to understand and follow a metaphysical argument and on a page of Kant or Hegel or Hume or even Berkeley left either dazed and uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested because I could not fathom or follow, suddenly began writing pages of the stuff as soon as I met the Arya and am now reputed to be a great philosopher? How is it that at a time when I felt it difficult to produce more than a paragraph of prose in a time to time and more than a mere poem short and laboured, perhaps in two months, suddenly after concentrating and practising Pranayama I began to write pages and pages in a single day and kept sufficient faculty to edit a big daily paper and afterwards to write 60 pages of philosophy every month? Kindly reflect a little and don't talk facile nonsense. Even if a thing can be done in a moment or a few days by Yoga which would ordinarily take months, "assiduous, sincere and earnest" cultivation, that would of itself show the power of the Yoga-force. But a faculty that did not exist appears quickly and spontaneously or impotence changes into highest potency or an obstructed mind changes with equal rapidity into fluent and facile sovereignty. If you see that evidence, no evidence will convince you because you are determined to think otherwise.

MYSELF: So about your style too, it is difficult to understand how much Force has contributed towards its perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be difficult for you to understand, but it is not difficult for me, since I have followed my own evolution from stage to stage in a perfect vigilance and following up of the process. I have made no endeavour in writing. I have simply left the higher Power to work and when it did not work, I made no efforts at all. It was in the old intellectual days that I sometimes tried to force things and not after I started the development of poetry and prose by Yoga. Let me remind you also that when I was writing the Arya and also since whenever I write these letters or replies, I never think of seeking for expressions or try to write in good style; it is out of a silent mind that I write whatever comes ready-shaped from above. Even when I correct, it is because the correction comes in the same way. Where then is the place

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for even a slight endeavour or any room at all for "my great endeavour Well?

By the way, please try to understand that the supra-intellectual (not supramental only) is the field of a spontaneous automatic action. To get it to get yourself open to it needs efforts, but once it acts there is no effort. Your grey matter does not easily open; it closes up also too easily, so each time effort has to be made, perhaps too much effort—if your grey matter would sensibly accommodate itself to the automatic flow there would not be the difficulty and the need of "assiduous, sincere and earnest endeavour" each time it thinks. Well?

I challenge your assertion that the Force is more easily potent to produce spiritual results than mental (literary) results. It seems to me the other way round. In my own case the first time I started Yoga, Pranayama, etc, I laboured five hours a day for a long time and concentrated and struggled for five years without any least spiritual result, (when the spiritual experiences did come they were as unaccountable and automatic as—as blazes), but poetry came like a river and prose like a flood and other things too that were mental, vital and physical, not spiritual riches or openings. I have seen in many cases the activity of the mind in various directions as the first or at least early result. Why? Because there is less resistance, more co-operation from the confused lower members for these things than for a psychic or a spiritual change. That is easy to understand at least. Well?

1-II-1935

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”

MENTAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE HIGHER TRUTH

ANILBARAN: When the mind is transformed by the higher Power, what are the changes that occur in it?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Which part of the mind—the thinking mind?

ANILBARAN: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: The reasoning and the fanciful constructions of the mind cease—there remains only a play of intuition.

ANILBARAN: Does not reason remain at all?

SRI AUROBINDO: When the whole mind is intuitivised, it knows directly and therefore need not reason. Now, I see X before me—why should I argue whether he is there or not?

ANILBARAN: Reason may not be required for acquiring Truth but for the practical application of Truth it may be necessary.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you think that Truth is not practical? Truth is not something abstract.—As long as the mind reasons there is always the possibility of error.

ANILBARAN: As regards mental constructions, are they always incorrect? May they not be inspired by Truth?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mind may build on its intuitions but there is every likelihood of its committing mistakes and errors.

The mental transformation is a gradual process. First the reasoning and the constructions are silenced. Then the mind becomes intuitivised; afterwards one feels that there is something above which is much more than intuition; intuition gradually goes downwards and the higher Truth takes its place. You feel it difficult to understand how all reasoning and mental constructions can cease—this can only be understood when you know what intuition is.

ANILBARAN: Are reasoning and mental constructions obstacles to the coming of the Truth?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, if you go on eternally with these things, the Truth will not come.

ANILBARAN: Then we must correct these things before the Truth can come down!

PAGES FROM A JOURNAL

SRI AUROBINDO: You cannot do that—it is only the Truth that can change the nature and the activities of the mind. You can only make them quiet, so that the Truth may come down and take up the transformation.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE: If the mind is silenced, will the Truth come down?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you do nothing else, by merely silencing the mind, you will have only a silent mind and nothing else.

DISCIPLE: When a developed mind opens to the Truth and when an undeveloped one opens, which will be the richer?

SRI AUROBINDO: At first you have to see whether the undeveloped mind can open itself to the higher Truth; generally it cannot. It may have a narrow opening, but then the result will be limited—the higher Truth may afterwards develop the mind. But if the mind is developed, there is already rich material upon which the Truth can work. On the other hand, the too much developed mind is also an obstacle—it has its fixed habits, a fixed groove in which it sticks tenaciously. Then again, with the coming of the Truth, mind may suddenly develop new powers,—e.g. painting, poetry and so forth.

DISCIPLE: Does not that pre-suppose that some preparation was already done in the man?

SRI AUROBINDO: When was he prepared?

DISCIPLE: Say, in his past life.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean to say that if a man suddenly begins to understand the Chinese language, it means that he was a Chinese in his past birth?

ANILBARAN: When the higher Truth descends, it brings both knowledge and power as well as Shanti; what are the manifestations of power?

SRI AUROBINDO: Power manifests in so many ways—it transforms the whole being in the end.

ANILBARAN: But in the beginning, how does it manifest? How are our ordinary activities affected?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: They begin to be transformed.

ANILBARAN: Is the power felt in the body?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but at first it comes through the mind. Power may be manifested in many ways—in writing articles or in learning to play a violin. (One of the disciples was at that time learning to play the violin—Anilbaran)

THE FUTURE POETRY

19

THE VICTORIAN POETS

THE epoch associated in England with the name of Victoria was in poetry, like that of Pope and Dryden, an age of dominant intellectualism; but, unlike that hard and sterile period, it has been an imaginative, artistic intellectualism, touched with the greater and freer breath of modern thought and its wide interest and fullness of matter, not brass-bound in furbished and narrow bands of social ease and polite refinement, but alive, astir, capable of personal energy and inspiration, aesthetical in its refinements, above all not entirely satisfied with itself, but opened up to some mountain-top prospects, struck across by some moments of prophecy. But still whether we compare it with the inspirations from which it turned or with the inspiration which followed and replaced it, it is a depression, not a height, and without being either faultily faultless or splendidly null, as epochs of a too self-satisfied intellectual enlightenment tend to look in the eyes of the more deeply thinking ages,—as the Roman Augustan, the French grand century, the pinchbeck English Augustan,—it leaves an impression of a too cramped fullness and a too level curiosity. It is a descent into a comfortable and pretty hollow or a well-cultured flatness between high, wild or beautiful mountain ranges behind and in front a great confused beginning of cliff and seashore, sands and rocks and breakers and magic of hills and sea-horizons. There is much in this work to admire, something here and there to stimulate, but only a little that lifts off the feet and carries to the summits of the poetic enthusiasm.

The descent from the uncertain but high elevations of the first romantic, half spiritual outbreak is very marked, baffling and sudden. This is not in the nature of a revolt, an energetic audacity of some new thing,—except for a moment in Swinburne,—but a change of levels, a transition to other more varied but less elevated interests, the substitution of a more curious but less impetuous movement. The rich beauty of Keats is replaced by the careful opulent cultivated picturesqueness of Tennyson, the concentrated personal force of Byron by the many-sided intellectual robustness and energy of Brown-

ing, the intense Nature poetry and the strong and grave ethical turn of Wordsworth by the too intellectually conscious eye on Nature and the cultured moralising of Arnold, the pure ethereal lyricism of Shelley by Swinburne's turgid lyrical surge and all too self-conscious fury of foam-tossing sound, and in place of the supernatural visions of Blake and Coleridge we have the mediaeval glamour and languorous fields of dream of Rossetti and Morris. There is a considerable gain, but a deep loss; for this poetry has a more evolved richness, but in that greater richness a greater poverty. The gain is in fullness of language, a more conscious and careful art, a more informed and varied range of thought and interest; but the loss is in spiritual substance and the Pythian height of inspiration. There is a more steady working, but with it a clogged and heavier breath; a wealth of colour and nearer strain of thinking, but a lower flame of the spirit. This labour is assured and in its way always good, but it has a paucity of greatness and a too temperate impulsion.

The intellectual preparation of the previous poetry, the depth and wealth of experience which must found the greatest and most successful audacities of spiritual vision, had been insufficient, coming as it did after a shallow and superficial age of the acute, but limited cult of Reason. The work of the middle nineteenth century was to prepare anew the intellectual ground and to lead up to a more conscious, enriched and careful artistic execution. But it was a tract of intellectual effort in which there was much width of a kind and considerable invention, but a very insufficient height and profundity. In England there was the added misfortune of a reign of rampant philistinism. The Victorian period for all its activity and fruitfulness was by no means one of those great intellectual humanistic ages which the world will look back to with a satisfied sense of clarity or of uplifting. The great flood of free thinking, free inquiry, scientific and artistic vivacity, the rapid breaking of fresh ground, the noble political enthusiasms which stirred France and Germany and Italy and created a new force of democratic humanism in Russia, swept in vain past the English shores defended by their chalk cliffs and downs of self-content or only broke across them in a few insignificant waves. It is the most unlovely and uninspiring period of the English spirit. Never was the aesthetic sense so drowned in pretentious ugliness, seldom the intelligence crusted in such an armoured imperviousness to fine and subtle thinking, the ebb of spirituality so far out and low. It was a period of smug commercial middle-class prosperity, dull mechanism, hard utilitarianism and a shoddy liberalism bursting and running over with self-content in its narrow practical rationality, spiritual poverty and intellectual ineptitude. Unteachable, it bore with a scornful complacency or bewildered anger or a listening ear of impervious indulgence the lightning shafts of Arnold's irony, the turbid fulmi-

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nations of Carlyle, the fiery raids of Ruskin or saw unaffected others of its fine or great spirits turn for refuge to mediaevalism or socialistic utopias. The work of these forerunners was done in a wilderness of intellectual commonness and busy mediocre energy; it bore fruit afterwards, but only when the century was in its wane and other infant powers of the immenser future were beginning to raise their heads of cloud and light.

But this work of revolt and preparation was done chiefly in prose. Poetry flourishes best when it is the rhythmical expression of the soul of its age, of what is greatest and deepest in it, but still belongs to it, and the poetry of this period suffers by the dull smoke-laden atmosphere in which it flowered; though it profited by the European stir of thought and seeking around and held its own, achieved beauty, achieved in one or two poets a considerable energy, some largeness, occasional heights, there is still something sickly in its luxuriance, a comparative depression and poverty in its thought, a lack in its gifts, in its very accomplishment a sense of something not done. It cannot compare in power, wing, abundance of genius and talent with the contemporary work done in France: as in all intellectual ages the grand stream of poetical achievement is to be found, in spite of the greater poetic energy of the Anglo-Celtic mind, on the continent, in the clear and competent labour of the Latin intelligence. There is certainly much imaginative beauty, much artistic or fine or strong technical execution,—a great deal more in fact of this element than at any previous time, —much excellent work high enough in the second rank, but the inner surge and satisfaction of a free or deep spirit, the strong high-riding pinion or the skyward look, these things are rare in Victorian poetry.

The fame of Tennyson, now a little dimmed and tarnished by the breath of Time, occupied this epoch with a great and immediate brilliance. He is unquestionably the representative English poet of his time. He mirrors its ordinary cultivated mind as it shaped in the English temperament and intelligence, with an extraordinary fidelity and in a richly furnished and heavily decorated mirror set round with all the art and device that could be appreciated by the contemporary taste. There has been no more consummate master of the language, and this mastery is used with a careful, sure and unfailing hand. Whatever has to be expressed, whether it be of considerable, mediocre or no worth, is yet given a greater than its intrinsic value by a power of speech which without any such remarkable or astonishing energy as would excite or exalt the mind or disturb it from a safe acquiescence and a luxurious ease of reception, has always a sufficient felicity, curiously worked even when it affects simplicity, but with a chastened if not quite chaste curiosity. The turn of phrase

almost always hits the mind with a certain, sometimes easy, sometimes elaborate poetic device. It turns always to find and does find the pictorial value of the thing to be described, and even, if such a phrase can be used, the pictorial value of the thought to be seized. There is a similar happiness of device and effect in the verse; if there are no great lyrical, odic or epic outbursts to sweep us out of ourselves, there is the same well-governed craft of effective turn and invention as in the language, the same peculiar manner of easily carried elaborateness, a leisurely but never sluggish self-considering self-adorning flow which succeeds in being immediately received and accepted. The art with which the subject matter is dressed up is of the same kind; a restrained elaborateness, a curious picturesqueness of presentation, a taking, opulent and effective form. The refinement and felicity are not of a kind which call for any unusual receptive power or aesthetic fineness to meet it and feel all its beauty; there is enough and to spare to attract the cultured, nothing to baffle or exceed the ordinary mind. This art is that of a master craftsman, a goldsmith, silversmith, jeweller of speech and substance with much of the decorative painter in his turn, who never travels beyond general, well-understood and popular ideas and forms, but gives them by his fineness of manner and felicity of image a charm and distinction which belong more properly to rarer and greater or lovelier motives. The achievement is of a kind which would hardly be worth doing more than once, but done that once and with such mastery it takes its place and compels admiration. The spirit is not filled, but the outer aesthetic mind is caught and for a time held captive.

But it is doubtful whether the future will attach to Tennyson's poetry anything at all near to the value it assumed for the contemporary English mind. When we try to estimate the substance and see what it permanently gives or what new thing it discovers for the poetic vision, we find that there is extraordinarily little in the end. Tennyson wrote much narrative poetry, but he is not a great narrative poet. There is a curious blending of incompatible intentions in all his work of this kind and even his exceptional skill could not save him from a brilliant failure. He has on the one side a will to convey some high spiritual and ethical intention of life through the imaginative use of tale and legend, and that gives a scope for a very noble kind of poetry, but he has not the power to lay a great hold on the ancient figures and recreate them to be symbols of a new significance. The *Idylls of the King* miss both the romantic and the idyllic beauty and arrive only at a graceful decorated effective triviality. The grand old Celtic myths and traditions already strangely mediaevalised by Malory, but full still of life and large humanity and colour are modernised into a baffling and disappointing superficiality and miss all greatness and power

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of life. There is no congruity between the form and symbol and the feeling and substance. They seem solely to be used to frame a conventional sentimentalism of Victorian demesticity and respectable social ethics. But the wearing of the white and scentless flower of a blameless life in a correct button-hole and a tepid sinning without the least tinge of passion or conviction by decorated puppets who are too evidently lay-figures of very modern ladies and gentlemen disguised as knights and dames, was hardly a sufficient justification for evoking the magic figures of old legend and romance. The life so masqueraded misses reality and it does not arrive at any great compensating imaginative or interpretative representation; modernism and the affectation of mediaevalism, conventional reality and the falsetto tones of pseudo-romance destroy each other and produce a glittering incongruity. There is a void of the true sincerity of poetic vision at the heart of the original conception and no amount of craft and skill in language or descriptive detail and picture can cure that original deficiency. The poet has no meditative, no emotional, impassioned, no close or revealing grasp on life, and on the other hand no deep interpretative idea, and without one or other of these things narrative poetry of the modern kind cannot succeed; it becomes a body without soul or life-breath. Even when Tennyson confines himself to the poetic modern tale without these disguises or any motive but the ethically pointed telling, he arrives at the same result, a richly coloured triviality.

This principal work of his maturity fails; its popularity springs from its work of detail and its appeal to the superficial sentiment of the time: but some earlier work of the kind had a nobler success. In the *Morte d'Arthur* there is some natural magic and vision which if it had been sustained and kept the same delicate and mystic strain, might have made the cycle of Idylls a new poetic revelation. In other poems, in the *Lotos-eaters*, *Ulysses*, *Oenone*, where set narrative is avoided and the legend is a starting-point or support for thought, vision and beauty, some fullness of these things is reached; but still the form is greater than the substance which has no heights and only occasionally strikes depths. Tennyson does not figure largely as a lyrical poet in spite of one or two inspired and happy moments; for he has neither the lyrical passion and intoxication nor the profounder depth of lyrical feeling. In his description of Nature there is no greater seeing, but a painting of vivid details detached for simile and ornament, and though he worked up a great accuracy of observation and colour, the deeper sincerity of the born Nature-poets is absent. Finally he gives us a good deal of thinking of a kind in often admirably telling phrase and with much art of setting, but he is not a revealing poetical thinker. His thought seldom escapes from the conventional limits of cultivated, but not a large or

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original Victorian mind, it beautifies most often the obvious and commonplace or the current and acceptable ideas; with rare exceptions he has neither exaltations nor profundities nor subtleties nor surprises. A great poetical craftsman turning many forms to account for the displaying of an unusual power of descriptive and decorative language and a verse of most skilled device, but no very great purpose and substance, this he is from beginning to end of his creation. His art suffers from the excess of value of form over value of content; it incurs a liability to a besetting note of artificiality, a frequent falsetto tone of prettiness, an excessive stress, a colouring which is often too bright for the stuff it hues and is unevenly laid, but it is always taking and effective. By his very limitation of mind he becomes the representative poet of a certain side of the English mentality, not in its originality and adventurous power, but in its temperate convention and fixity, renders its liberalism and its conservatism, its love of freedom and dislike of idealism, its surface common sense of doubt and traditional belief, its successful way of dealing with its material, its formal ethicism and its absence of passion. But to all these things he brings an artistic decorative quality which is new in English poetry. He has left his stamp on the language and has given starting-points and forms for poets of a rarer force to turn to greater uses and pass beyond them to a new construction.

Tennyson is the most representative and successful poet of the Victorian epoch. Others who have not the same limitations, either fall below him in art or have a less sustained and considerable bulk and variety of work. Swinburne brings in into the poetry of the time an element to which the rest are strangers, passion, fire, lyrical sublimity and some strains of prophecy. He brings in too the continental note of denial, atheistic affirmation, sceptical revolt, passionate political idealism, but to these things he gives the Anglo-Celtic aggressiveness and vehemence, not the Latin sureness and clarity. He is a great lyrist, but like many of his contemporaries revels too much in device and virtuositities of form and his lyrical thought and sentiment turned always towards the choric ode and dithyramb loses itself too often in a sonorous gurge and violence of sound. The quieter classical power of Arnold which voices the less confident search of a self-doubting scepticism, has more lucidity, balance and grace, a fine though restricted and tenuous strain of thought and a deep and penetrating melancholy, the mediaevalism and aesthetic mysticism of Rossetti, the slow dreamy narrative of Morris which takes us to a refuge from the blatancy and ugliness of the Victorian environment into the gracious world of old story and legend, bring in each their own significance for the age and help towards that enrichment of the language of thought and artistic poetical feeling which is the chief work of this intervening time. They have all three this characteristic that

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they are studious artists,—it is significant that two of them are painters and decorative craftsmen,—who are concerned to give beauty and finish to the material of poetry rather than original poets with a large power of inspiration. Their range is small, but they have brought into English poetry a turn for fine execution which is likely to be a long-abiding influence.

Browning stands apart from the contemporary poets in his striking force and originality. He is in many ways the very opposite of them all. He is the one robust and masculine voice among these artists, sceptics, idealists or dreamers, always original, vigorous, inexhaustible; with a great range of interests, a buoyant hold on life, a strong and clear eye, an assured belief and hope but no traditional conventionality, he alone adequately represents the curious, critical, eager, exploring mind of the age. He has depth and force and abundance of thought, which if not of the very first greatness and originality, is open to all manner of questioning and speculation and new idea. His regard ranges over history and delights in its pictures of the stir and energy of life and its changing scenes, over man and his thought and character and emotion and action, looks into every cranny, follows every tortuous winding, seizes on each leap and start of the human machine. He is a student, critic, psychologist, thinker. He seeks to interpret, like certain French poets, the civilisations and the ages. His genius is essentially dramatic; for though he has written in many lyrical forms, the lyric is used to represent a moment in the drama of life or character, and though he uses the narrative, his treatment of it is dramatic and not narrative, as when he takes an Italian *fat-divers* and makes each personage relate or discuss in such a way as to reveal his own motive, character, thought and passion. He does not succeed as a dramatist in the received forms because he is too analytic, too much interested in the mechanism of temperament, character, emotion and changing idea to concentrate sufficiently on their results in action; but he has an unrivalled force in seizing on a moment of the soul or mind and in following its convolutions as they start into dramatic thought, feeling and impulse. He of all these writers has hold of the substance of the work marked out for a poet of the age. And with all these gifts we might have had in him the great interpretative poet, one might almost say, the Shakespeare of his time. But by the singular fatality which so often pursues the English poetical genius, the one gift needed to complete him was denied. Power was there and the hold of his material; what was absent was the essential faculty of artistic form and poetic beauty, so eminent in his contemporaries, a fatal deficiency. This great creator was no artist; this strength was too robust and direct to give forth sweetness. There was no lack of a certain kind of skill. If not an artist in verse, Browning is a consummate technician, one might almost say a mechanic in verse; his very roughnesses and

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crudities and contortions have the appearance of device and calculation. He had an immense command of language and was never at a lack for forcible and efficient expression, but in its base it was the language of a prosaist and not a poet, of the intellect and not the imagination. He could throw into it strong colours, has sometimes though too seldom a vigorous richness and strong grace, achieves often a lyric elevation, but they supervene upon this base and do not ordinarily suffuse and change it or elevate it to a high customary level. Much strong and vigorous work he did of a great and robust substance, won many victories, but the supreme greatness cannot come in poetry without the supreme beauty.

This is the balance of the Victorian epoch; a considerable intellectual and artistic endeavour, contradicting, overcoming but still hampered by an ungenial atmosphere; two remarkable poets held back from the first greatness, one by imperfection of form, the other by imperfection of substance; four artists of small range, but with work of an accomplished, but overpitched or thin or languorous beauty; an enrichment and strengthening of the language which makes it more capable of fine and varied and curious thought, and the creation of an artistic conscience which may impose in the future a check on the impulse of an overabundant energy to imperfection of eager haste and vagary in execution. If the promise of the coming age is fulfilled, it may be remembered as a fine, if limited period of preparation for the discovery of new, more beautiful and grander fields of poetry.

THE ACTION OF THE OVERMIND IN POETIC CREATION

A Letter From Sri Aurobindo

(PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME)

THE EDITOR'S QUESTION: A long time ago, you wrote to me that the Overmind has two levels—the intuitive and the gnostic. There are surely several passages in your own poetry as well as in the Upanishads and the Gita that sustain an inspiration from the former; but has no poetry ever come from the Overmind proper which is turned towards the full supramental Gnosis? Do you remember anything either in Sanscrit or in your own work which derives from there? If not, is it possible to give some idea as to what quality of rhythm, language and substance would constitute the difference between the expression of the Overmind Intuition and the Overmind Gnosis? Those four lines I quoted to you from yourself the other day—where do they hail from?—

“Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
An unwall'd mind dissolved in the Infinite,
Force one with unimaginable rest.”

Amal, 3-5-37

SRI AUROBINDO'S REPLY: It is really very difficult for me to say anything in this respect about my own poetry; there is too complex a working of the Consciousness for it to be possible for me to classify and define. As for the Overmind Gnosis, I cannot yet say anything—I am familiar with its workings, but they are not easily definable or describable and, as for poetry, I have not yet observed sufficiently to say whether it enters in anywhere or not. I should expect its intervention to be extremely rare even as a touch; but I refer at present all higher Overmind intervention to the Overmind Intuition in order to avoid any risk of overstatement. In the process of overmental transformation what I have observed is that the Overmind first takes up the illumined and higher mind and intellect (thinking, perceiving and reasoning intelligence)

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into itself and modifies itself to suit the operation—the result is what may be called a mental Overmind—then it lifts these lower movements and the intuitive mind together into a higher reach of itself, forming there the Overmind Intuition, and then all that into the Overmind Gnosis awaiting the supramental transformation. The Overmind “touch” on the Higher Mind and Illumined Mind can thus raise towards the O.I. or to the O.G. or leave in the M.O.; but estimating at a glance as I have to do, it is not easy to be quite precise. I may have to revise my estimates later on a little, though not perhaps very appreciably, when I am able to look at things in a more leisurely way and fix the misty lines which often tend to fade away, being an indefinable border.

3-5-1937

SRI AUROBINDO

ON THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA

THESE two poems are epical in their motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the world, but are entirely of their own kind and subtly different from others in their principle. It is not only that although they contain an early heroic story and a transmutation of many primitive elements, their form belongs to a period of highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture, is enriched with a body of mature thought and uplifted by a ripe nobility and refined gravity of ethical tone and therefore these poems are quite different from primitive edda and saga and greater in breadth of view and substance and height of motive—I do not speak now of aesthetic quality and poetic perfection—than the Homeric poems, while at the same time there is still an early breath, a direct and straightforward vigour, a freshness and greatness and pulse of life, a simplicity of strength and beauty that makes of them quite another kind than the elaborately constructed literary epics of Virgil or Milton, Firdausi or Kalidasa. This peculiar blending of the natural breath of an early, heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual, even the philosophic mind is indeed a remarkable feature; these poems are the voice of the youth of a people, but a youth not only fresh and fone and buoyant, but also great and accomplished, wise and noble. This however is only a temperamental distinction: there is another that is more far-reaching, a difference in the whole conception, function and structure.

One of the elements of the old Vedic education was a knowledge of significant tradition, Itihasa, and it is this word that was used by the ancient critics to distinguish the Mahabharata and the Ramayana from the later literary epics. The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihasas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose. The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not intend merely to tell an ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things

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with a high success; they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation. The Mahabharata has been spoken of as a fifth Veda, it has been said of both these poems that they are not only great poems but dharma-shastras, the body of a large religious and ethical and social and political teaching, and their effect and hold on the mind and life of the people have been so great that they have been described as the bible of the Indian people. That is not quite an accurate analogy, for the bible of the Indian people contains also the Veda and Upanishads, the Purana and Tantras and the Dharmashastras, not to speak of a large bulk of the religious poetry in the regional languages. The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice; it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India. All these things were brought together and disposed with artistic power and a telling effect in a poetic body given to traditions half legendary, half historic but cherished henceforth as deepest and most living truth and as a part of their religion by the people. Thus framed the Mahabharata and Ramayana, whether in the original Sanscrit or rewritten in the regional tongues, brought to the masses by Kathakas,—rhapsodists, reciters and exegetes,—became and remained one of the chief instruments of popular education and culture, moulded the thought, character, aesthetic and religious mind of the people and gave even to the illiterate some sufficient tincture of philosophy, ethics, social and political ideas, aesthetic emotion, poetry, fiction and romance. That which was for the cultured classes contained in Veda and Upanishad, shut into profound philosophical aphorism and treatise or inculcated in dharma-shastra and artha-shastra, was put here into creative and living figures, associated with familiar story and legend, fused into a vivid representation of life and thus made a near and living power that all could readily assimilate through the poetic word appealing at once to the soul and the imagination and the intelligence.

The Mahabharata especially is not only the story of the Bharatas, the

epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India. It is said popularly of it and with a certain measure of truth that whatever is in India is in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation; it is the poem of itself written by a whole people. It would be vain to apply to it the canons of a poetical art applicable to an epic poem with a smaller and more restricted purpose, but still a great and quite conscious art has been expended both on its detail and its total structure. The whole poem has been built like a vast national temple unrolling slowly its immense and complex idea from chamber to chamber, crowded with significant groups and sculptures and inscriptions, the grouped figures carved in divine or semi-divine proportions, a humanity aggrandised and half uplifted to super-humanity and yet always true to the human motive and idea and feeling, the strain of the real constantly raised by the tones of the ideal, the life of this world amply portrayed but subjected to the conscious influence and presence of the powers of the worlds behind it, and the whole unified by the long embodied procession of a consistent idea worked out in the wide steps of the poetic story. As is needed in an epic narrative, the conduct of the story is the main interest of the poem and it is carried through with an at once large and minute movement, wide and bold in the mass, striking and effective in detail, always simple, strong and epic in its style and pace. At the same time though supremely interesting in substance and vivid in the manner of the telling as a poetic story, it is something more,—a significant tale, Itihasa, representative throughout of the central ideas and ideals of Indian life and culture. The leading motive is the Indian idea of the dharma. Here the Vedic notion of the struggle between the godheads of truth and light and unity and the powers of darkness and division and falsehood is brought out from the spiritual and religious and internal into the outer intellectual, ethical and vital plane. It takes there in the figure of the story a double form of a personal and a political struggle, the personal a conflict between typical and representative personalities embodying the greater ethical ideals of the Indian Dharma and others who are embodiments of Asuric egoism and self-will and misuse of the Dharma, the political a battle in which the personal struggle culminates, an international clash ending in the establishment of a new rule of righteousness and justice, a kingdom or rather an empire of the Dharma uniting warring races and substituting for the ambitious arrogance of kings and aristocratic clans the supremacy, the calm and peace of a just and humane empire. It is the old struggle of Deva and Asura, God and Titan, but represented in the terms of human life.

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The way in which this double form is worked out and the presentation of the movement of individual lives and of the national life first as their background and then as coming into the front in a movement of kingdoms and armies and nations show a high architectonic faculty akin in the sphere of poetry to that which laboured in Indian architecture, and the whole has been conducted with a large poetic art and vision. There is the same power to embrace great spaces in a total view and the same tendency to fill them with an abundance of minute, effective, vivid and significant detail. There is brought too into the frame of the narrative a very considerable element of other tales, legends, episodes, the most of them of a significant character suitable to the method of Itihasa, and an extraordinary amount of philosophical, religious, ethical, social and political thinking sometimes direct, sometimes cast into the form of the legend and episode. The ideas of the Upanishads and of the great philosophies are brought in continually and sometimes given new developments, as in the Gita; religious myth and tale and idea and teaching are made part of the tissue; the ethical ideals of the race are expressed or are transmuted into the shape of tale and episode as well as embodied in the figures of the story, political and social ideals and institutions are similarly developed or illustrated with a high vividness and clearness and space is found too for aesthetic and other suggestions connected with the life of the people. All these things are interwoven into the epic narrative with a remarkable skill and closeness. The irregularities inevitable in so combined and difficult a plan and in a work to which many poets of an unequal power have contributed fall into their place in the general massive complexity of the scheme and assist rather than break the total impression. The whole is a poetic expression unique in its power and fullness of the entire soul and thought and life of a people.

The Ramayana is a work of the same essential kind as the Mahabharata; it differs only by a greater simplicity of plan, a more delicate ideal temperament and a finer glow of poetic warmth and colour. The main bulk of the poem in spite of much accretion is evidently by a single hand and has a less complex and more obvious unity of structure. There is less of the philosophic, more of the purely poetic mind, more of the artist, less of the builder. The whole story is from beginning to end of one piece and there is no deviation from the stream of the narrative. At the same time there is a like vastness of vision, an even more wide-winged flight of epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in the detail. The structural power, strong workmanship and method of disposition of the Mahabharata remind one of the art of the Indian builders, the grandeur and boldness of outline and wealth of colour and minute decorative execution of the Ramayana suggest rather a transcript into

literature of the spirit and style of Indian painting. The epic poet has taken here also as his subject an Itihasa, an ancient tale or legend associated with an old Indian dynasty and filled it in with detail from myth and folklore, but has exalted all into a scale of grandiose epic figure that it may bear more worthily the high intention and significance. The subject is the same as in the Mahabharata, the strife of the divine with the titanic forces in the life of the earth, but in more purely ideal forms, in frankly supernatural dimensions and an imaginative heightening of both the good and the evil in human character. On one side is portrayed an ideal manhood, a divine beauty of virtue and ethical order, a civilisation founded on the Dharma and realising an exaltation of the moral ideal which is presented with a singularly strong appeal of aesthetic grace and harmony and sweetness; on the other are wild and anarchic and almost amorphous forces of superhuman egoism and self-will and exultant violence, and the two ideas and powers of mental nature living and embodied are brought into conflict and led to a decisive issue of the victory of the divine man over the Rakshasa. All shade and complexity are omitted which would diminish the single purity of the idea, the representative force in the outline of the figures, the significance of the temperamental colour and only so much admitted as is sufficient to humanise the appeal and the significance. The poet makes us conscious of the immense forces that are behind our life and sets his action in a magnificent epic scenery, the great imperial city, the mountains and the ocean, the forest and wilderness, described with such a largeness as to make us feel as if the whole world were the scene of his poem and its subject the whole divine and titanic possibility of man imaged in a few great or monstrous figures. The ethical and the aesthetic mind of India have here fused themselves into a harmonious unity and reached an unexampled pure wideness and beauty of self-expression. The Ramayana embodied for the Indian imagination its highest and tenderest human ideals of character, made strength and courage and gentleness and purity and fidelity and self-sacrifice familiar to it in the suavest and most harmonious forms coloured so as to attract the emotion and the aesthetic sense, stripped morals of all repellent austerity on one side or on the other of mere commonness and lent a certain high divineness to the ordinary things of life, conjugal and filial and maternal and fraternal feeling, the duty of the prince and leader and the loyalty of follower and subject, the greatness of the great and the truth and worth of the simple, toning things ethical to the beauty of a more psychical meaning by the glow of its ideal hues. The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanumana, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human

image of its ethical ideals, it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite yet firm soul tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable thing than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct.

The poetical manner of these epics is not inferior to the greatness of their substance. The style and the verse in which they are written have always a noble epic quality, a lucid classical simplicity and directness rich in expression but stripped of superfluous ornament, a swift, vigorous, flexible and fluid verse constantly sure of the epic cadence. There is a difference in the temperament of the language. The characteristic diction of the Mahabharata is almost austere masculine, trusting to force of sense and inspired accuracy of turn, almost ascetic in its simplicity and directness and a frequent fine and happy bareness; it is the speech of a strong and rapid poetical intelligence and a great and straightforward vital force, brief and telling in phrase but by virtue of a single-minded sincerity and without any rhetorical labour of compactness, a style like the light and strong body of a runner nude and pure and healthily lustrous and clear without superfluity of flesh or exaggeration of muscle, agile and swift and untired in the race. There is inevitably much in this vast poem that is in an inferior manner, but little or nothing that falls below a certain sustained level in which there is always something of this virtue. The diction of the Ramayana is shaped in a more attractive mould, a marvel of sweetness and strength, lucidity and warmth and grace; its phrase has not only poetic truth and epic force and diction but a constant intimate vibration of the feeling of the idea, emotion or object: there is an element of fine ideal delicacy in its sustained strength and breath of power. In both it is a high poetic soul and inspired intelligence that is at work; the directly intuitive mind of the Veda and Upanishads has retired behind the veil of the intellectual and outwardly psychical imagination.

This is the character of the epics and the qualities which have made them immortal, cherished among India's greatest literary and cultural treasures, and given them their enduring power over the national mind. Apart from minor defects and inequalities such as we find in all works set at this pitch and involving a considerable length of labour, the objections made by western criticism are simply expressions of a difference of mentality and aesthetic taste. The vastness of the plan and the leisurely minuteness of detail are baffling and tiring to a western mind accustomed to smaller limits, a more easily fatigued eye and imagination and a hastier pace of life, but they are congenial to the spaciousness of vision and intent curiosity of circumstance, characteristic of the Indian mind, that spring as I have pointed out in relation to architecture from the habit of

the cosmic consciousness and its sight and imagination and activity of experience. Another difference is that the terrestrial life is not seen realistically just as it is to the physical mind but constantly in relation to the much that is behind it, the human action is surrounded and influenced by great powers and forces, Daivic, Asuric and Rakshasic, and the greater human figures are a kind of incarnation of these more cosmic personalities and powers. The objection that the individual thereby loses his individual interest and becomes a puppet of impersonal forces is not true either in reality or actually in the imaginative figures of this literature, for there we see that the personages gain by it in greatness and force of action and are only ennobled by an impersonality that raises and heightens the play of their personality. The mingling of terrestrial nature and supernature, not as a mere imagination but with an entire sincerity and naturalness, is due to the same conception of a greater reality in life, and it is as significant figures of this greater reality that we must regard much to which the realistic critic objects with an absurdly misplaced violence, such as the powers gained by Tapasya, the use of divine weapons, the frequent indications of psychic action and influence. The complaint of exaggeration is equally invalid where the whole action is that of men raised beyond the usual human level, since we can only ask for proportions consonant with the truth of the stature of life conceived in the imagination of the poet and cannot insist on an unimaginative fidelity to the ordinary measures which would here be false because wholly out of place. The complaint of lifelessness and want of personality in the epic characters is equally unfounded: Rama and Sita, Arjuna and Yudhishthira, Bhishma and Duryodhana and Karna are intensely real and human and alive to the Indian mind. Only the main insistence, here as in Indian art, is not on the outward saliences of character, for these are only used secondarily as aids to the presentation, but on the soul life and the inner soul quality presented with as absolute a vividness and strength and purity of outline as possible. The idealism of characters like Rama and Sita is no pale and vapid unreality; they are vivid with the truth of the ideal life, of the greatness that man may be and does become when he gives his soul a chance and it is no sound objection that there is only a small allowance of the broken littleness of our ordinary nature.

These epics are therefore not a mere mass of untransmuted legend and folklore, as is ignorantly objected, but a highly artistic representation of intimate significances of life, the living presentment of a strong and noble thinking, a developed ethical and aesthetic mind and a high social and political ideal, the ensouled image of a great culture. As rich in freshness of life but immeasurably more profound and evolved in thought and substance than the Greek, as advanced in maturity of culture but more vigorous and vital and young in strength

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than the Latin epic poetry, the Indian epic poems were fashioned to serve a greater and completer national and cultural function and that they should have been received and absorbed by both the high and the low, the cultured and the masses and remained through twenty centuries an intimate and formative part of the life of the whole nation is of itself the strongest possible evidence of the greatness and fineness of this ancient Indian culture.

(From *The Foundations of Indian Culture*)

Students' Section

DEFINITIONS

Patience— is the capacity to wait steadily for the realisation to come.

Perseverance— is patience in action.

Endurance— is the capacity of bearing without depression.

Opening— is a release of the consciousness by which it begins to admit into itself the workings of the Divine Light and Power.

Receptivity—is the capacity of admitting and retaining the Divine workings.

Disinterested work— is work done with no other motive than that of doing as well as possible the Divine Work.

Faith— is confidence in the Divine and the unshakable certitude in the Divine's victory.

Realisation— is the establishment of the supramental Truth upon earth.

Transformation— is the change by which all the movements of the being become ready to manifest the supramental Truth.

Conversion— is the turning of all the movements of the being towards the Divine.

Consciousness— is the faculty of becoming aware of anything through identification. The Divine's Consciousness is not only aware but knows and effects.

Will— is the power of consciousness turned towards effectuation. The Divine's will is the will expressing the highest Truth.

Gratitude— is a loving recognition of the Grace received from the Divine.

(By Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

INTRODUCTION

IN this Series I shall first put before the readers a very brief account of my early life in the Ashram, and then give the questions I used to put to Sri Aurobindo together with His answers.

I came here in 1931 when I was about fourteen years old. In those days Mother was not admitting youngsters in the Ashram. It was only out of Her kindness that She made an exception in the case of four children, Bala, Romen, my brother Shanti, and myself. We did not have a school here at that time, nor were there regular study classes. Before coming here, my mind was occupied with only two things—study and cricket; that was my life and my world. I had almost decided to go to Europe and become a “big” doctor. I first visited the Ashram during my school vacation just for the sake of making a nice long journey, certainly not for taking up Yoga. I stayed for a month and returned in time for the reopening of my school. During that stay what the Mother did within the inner recesses of my being is yet to be truly fathomed. But the result was that I returned home to stay for two days only. I came back here immediately with the full realisation that I could not possibly live, either happily or unhappily without Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Till 1933 I did not know what this blessed thing called Yoga was. Hence Mother and Sri Aurobindo were to me just like my own human mother and father. When the correspondence with Sri Aurobindo started, He had to teach me everything, not only what was meant by Yoga, but also what culture, religion, philosophy, and morality were. He used to correct my English too, for quite a long time. Whatever I have gained in every way is a growth from the seed He and Mother sowed in me during those boyhood days.

One day I wrote two essays during my study in English. My teacher criticised them in such a way that I sought Sri Aurobindo’s opinion on the matter. He made some comments on the essays. These comments and the two essays are both given here.

STUDENTS' SECTION

TWO ESSAYS

(1) ON PEACE

SPIRITUAL peace has not the same meaning as peace in our worldly parlance. In the ordinary life, when one is less depressed, disturbed or despondent than people generally are, one thinks oneself at peace.

Our normal consciousness (viz. our mental, vital and physical consciousness)—inner and outer—whirls constantly in restless actions and movements. It is always pushed to activity; to pass five minutes without some kind of activity would be intolerable to it. That is perhaps the reason why even those who have a philosophical bent are often afraid of silence in the preliminary stage of their practice of Yoga. They take it, or feel it, to be something terrible, blank, fearful. We shall soon see that true silence is never like that. They feel it as such only because they are given up too much to thoughts.

In the absence of sadhana one can have quietness at the most. Even that can be attained only when one is above pain and suffering, strife and quarrel, gloom and despair, at least for the time being. But then, too, there is no true peace or quietude. The latter are the fruition of spiritual experience and a yogic practice is necessary for attaining them.

Worldly quietude or peace is very fragile, momentary, variable. Solid, lasting, self-existent, firm are the attributes of a higher peace. One who has that peace can stand against any turbulence or disturbance, shock or attack from the world, and yet hold his inner peace unmoved.

The ordinary peace is confined to the mind, whereas the yogic peace can descend into the vital and the body also. With many it takes up the mind first and then comes down into the other parts. But even if it has settled only in the mind, it casts its influence on the vital, and therefore we feel a kind of rest down to the very physical, as the physical is usually directed and pushed by the vital.

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(2) ON PEACE AND THE VITAL

The spiritual peace, when it descends, brings with it such a force and

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strength that we feel ourselves safe, secure and poised. The vital cravings, dissatisfactions, disturbances touch us no more; and the vital likes and dislikes no longer interfere with the freedom of our will and aspiration; also, vital depression and despair are made quiet. These are the usual signs of a deep peace.

A peace in the mind is not enough. It can only quiet the mental disturbance and give scope for free thinking. But even this free thinking is hindered by the upsurging of the vital. For, though we are mental beings, we live largely in the vital. Very few live purely and constantly in the mental consciousness. As we are more in the vital, the descent of peace straight into it is indispensable in order to completely calm our whole mental stuff.

But this peace must descend into the inner vital. The inner vital can open to spiritual things more easily than the outer. To bring down and establish peace into the outer vital needs long years of practice and an arduous sadhana. It is sufficient in the beginning to stabilise it in the inner vital. This will bring as a result a calm aloofness from all the lower vital movements, actions and thoughts.

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Questions asked on the Essays, and Sri Aurobindo's Comments

SADHAK: Is all this correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perfectly correct.

SADHAK: My teacher felt disgusted at the second and third paragraphs. He condemned some of the sentences as rubbish. Are the essays so discouraging?

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly not. Why do you suppose R. to be an authority on these things? You go to him for English, not for Yoga knowledge.

SADHAK: He condemns also my use of expressions like "mental stuff", "vital mind" etc. At least here, are they used wrongly?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they are quite in place.

SADHAK: The difference I made here about the inner vital and the outer or lower vital does not coincide with his knowledge. Is there then anything to be corrected in my reference to the inner and outer vital and the peace?

STUDENTS' SECTION

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing at all. Every word is correct. It does not in the least matter whether what you write coincides or not with somebody else's knowledge, so long as it coincides with mine and your own inner perception and experience.

SADHAK: I have heard that R. has studied philosophy widely and is himself the author of a number of books.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that has nothing to do with ordinary philosophy. Philosophy knows nothing about peace and silence or the inner and outer vital. These things are only discovered by Yoga.

SADHAK: I suppose they have such notions because they are given too much to thoughts.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

SADHAK: I am a little doubtful about the truth of what I wrote about philosophy; that is why I have asked you a separate question regarding it. I hope you will kindly point out my errors in thoughts or ideas.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no error in these.

SADHAK: The first essay I sent you was written as an initial training for philosophical thought, for R's class. His judgement was that there were many incorrect ideas, particularly about philosophy, and Silence. But, you said that there was no error there, in that case should I take all I have written as correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: There was no error. Ordinary human minds, Europeans especially, are accustomed to regard thought as indispensable and as the highest thing, so they are afraid of silence. X when he was here asked for Yoga. I told him how to make his mind silent and it became silent. He immediately got frightened and said, "I am becoming a fool, I can't think", so I took what I had given away from him. That is how the average mind regards silence.

NAGIN

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POEMS

SEEN AND UNSEEN

I've seen Thy emerald bowers
In dawn-lit depths of the silver sea;
I've seen Thine blue-gold towers
In sunset clouds of purity.

In lightning and in thunder
I've seen the flash of Thy mighty arms
As they cleft the gloom asunder
And shattered the Dark Magician's charms.

In lilies' kisses white
I've felt on my brow Thy snow-pure kiss;
In golden showers delight
Tasted Thy calm embrace of bliss.

Yet Thee I've never seen
And of Thy touch can never tell
Tho' I breathe Thy breath serene
Tho' in Thy light and shade I dwell.

ANIRUDDHA

THE BLUE LIGHT

Amid bushes and shrubs of emerald glow,
Among tall trees where darkness went up high
A dim ray bathing me alone was I
Enchanted, lost in silence's musical flow.

Of sudden all faded before my gaze
And in that nothingness' tranquillity deep
There flashed a splendour on the field of sleep,
Brilliant like a spark that goes ablaze.

STUDENTS' SECTION

The hand of God in a soft sapphire hue
There glowed and flamed before my steadfast eyes
Its glory lighting the gloom, the violet breeze,
Its radiance turning all into gold and blue..

A moment it lived, then waned the pale blue light
And I again was wrapped by the dark, dark night

ANIRUDDHA

A PRAYER

Make me Thy instrument of might divine,
Attune my heart's lyre with Thy fiery strain,
Dissolving the stamp of dark, O Mother, shine
O'er soul's cloudy domain.

Lift me from the dust to the sky of Purity,
Kindle the lamp of vision in my heart,
Stoop down from Thy throne of golden infinity
Never again to depart.

Imbue my spirit with the shower of Love,
Drown me in fathomless oceans of delight,
Then lift again to the peaks of Truth above
On wings of starry white.

RANAJIT

AUGUST

O hail August! footprint august
On the dim and sandy shore of Time;
O hail thou herald of the age to come,
Bringer of the message sublime!

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Thou art blessed, sacred for ever—
Fosterer of the Absolute Light,
In thee we see the path divine
Guiding the world towards the height.

In a trance of a creation new
Great Shiva's trident dances on:
On thy lap is perpetually cradled
The bright and eternal golden Dawn.

O hail August! we hear in thee
Ringing of the slumberless chime;
Hail O psalmist of the age to come,
The herald of the Truth sublime.

PRITHWIN

THE LORD'S HEART

The profundity of this place seemed like an infinite rock hollowed. Its tranced ecstasies puzzled me. Here was the source of all the psychological qualities manifested in human beings; but they were one and inseparable, unlike in men. Emotions and sentiments here were expressed so differently than by the human heart that they seemed almost unmanifested or reserved.

From here flows a true love which helps man first in his wordly life to make it half divine by elevating him to a noble, cultured, aesthetic or religious life, and then takes him up for a higher spiritual endeavour. Here lies also a Master Power that suggests and supports all human sacrifices in life and sadhana.

This Master Soul came down upon the earth with the psychic beings. It is He who helps secretly to remove the veil from the human soul; it is He who takes man through Ignorance and Falsehood, which he has to pass in order to reach the Divine. It is He who extends companionship to the soul in his lonely and long journey upwards.

17-4-1953

A SADHAK

SELECTIONS FROM WORLD-LITERATURE

Sri Aurobindo

(A) POETRY

TRANCE

A naked and silver-pointed star
Floating near the halo of the moon;
A storm-rack, the pale sky's fringe and bar,
Over waters stilling into swoon.

My mind is awake in stirless trance,
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,
Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation pure and free,
Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,
Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,
Ocean self enraptured and alone!

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(*In Quantitative Metres*)

OCEAN ONENESS*

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;
White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;
A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,
Azure on azure, is mutely gazing

Identified with silence and boundlessness
My spirit widens clasping the universe
Till all that seemed becomes the Real,
One in a mighty and single vastness.

Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,
Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite,
And, sole in a still eternal rapture,
Gathers all things to his heart for ever.

THE INDWELLING UNIVERSAL

I contain the whole world in my soul's embrace:
In me Arcturus and Belphegor burn.
To whatsoever living form I turn
I see my own body with another face.

All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes;
The one heart that beats within all breasts is mine.
The world's happiness flows through me like wine,
Its million sorrows are my agonies.

Yet all its acts are only waves that pass
Upon my surface; only for ever still,
Unborn I sit, timeless, intangible:
All things are shadows in my tranquil glass.

My vast transcendence holds the cosmic whirl;
I am hid in it as in the sea a pearl.

* Alcaics. Modulations are allowed, trochee or iamb in the first foot or a long monosyllable; an occasional anapaest in place of an iamb is permitted; a bacchius can replace a dactyl.

STUDENTS' SECTION

SELECTIONS FROM *Savitri*

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life's cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulfs.
A wider consciousness opens then its doors;
Invading from spiritual silences
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile
To commune with our seized illumined clay
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance
Or in some deep internal solitude
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,
The signals of eternity appear.
The truth mind could not know unveils its face,
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,
We love what common hearts repel and dread;
Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;
A Voice calls from the chambers of the soul;
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.
These signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul.

Bk. I. Canto 4.

The universe removed its coloured veil,
And at the unimaginable end
Of the huge riddle of created things
Appeared the far-seen Godhead of the whole,
His feet firm-based on Life's stupendous wings,
Omnipotent or lonely seer of Time,

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Inward, insciutable, with diamond gaze.
Attracted by the unfathomable regard
The unsolved slow cycles to their fount returned
To rise again from that invisible sea...

A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space,
An Everlastingness cut off from Time;
A strange sublime unalterable Peace
Silent rejected from its world and soul.
A stark companionless Reality
Answered at last to his soul's passionate search:
Passionless, wordless, absorbed in fathomless peace,
Keeping the mystery none would ever pierce,
It brooded inscrutable and intangible
Facing him with its dumb tremendous calm...

There was no mind there with its need to know,
There was no heart there with its need to love.
All person perished in its namelessness.
There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
Only itself was real to itself.
A pure existence safe from thought and mood,
A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,
It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,
One and unique, unutterably sole.
A Being formless, featureless and mute
That knew itself by its own timeless self,
Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
Uncreating, uncreated and unborn,
The One by whom all live, who lives by none,
An immeasurable luminous secrecy
Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest,
Above the changing cosmic interlude
Abode supreme, immutably the same,
A silent Cause occult, impenetrable,—
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.

Bk. III. Canto I.

STUDENTS' SECTION

And Savitri heard the voice, the warped echo heard
And turning to her being of power she spoke:
"Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To help mankind and help the travail of Time.
Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;
Because thou art, men's souls can climb the heavens
And walk like Gods in the presence of the Supreme.
But without wisdom power is like a wind,
It can breathe upon the heights and kiss the Sky;
It cannot build the extreme eternal things.
Thou hast given men strength, wisdom thou couldst not give.
One day I will return, a bringer of light,
Then I will give to thee the mirror of God;
Thou shalt see self and world as by him they are seen
Reflected in the bright pool of thy soul.
Thy wisdom shall be vast as vast thy power.
Then hate shall dwell no more in human hearts,
And fear and weakness shall desert men's lives,
The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,
Its lion roar that claims the world as food,
All shall be might and bliss and happy force."

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And Savitri heard the voice, the warped answer heard
And turning to her being of light she spoke:
"Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace,
Thou art a portion of my self put forth
To raise the spirit to its forgotten heights
And wake the soul by touches of the heavens.
Because thou art, the soul draws near to God;
Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate
And knowledge walks unslain in the pit of Night.
But not by showering heaven's golden rain
Upon the intellect's hard and rocky soil
Can the tree of Paradise flower on earthly ground
And the Bird of Paradise sit upon life's boughs
And the winds of Paradise visit mortal air.
Even if thou rain down intuition's rays,
The mind of man will think it earth's own gleam,

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His spirit by spiritual ego sink,
Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell
Where only a bright shadow of God can come:
His hunger for the eternal thou must nurse
And fill his yearning heart with heaven's fire
And bring God down into his body and life.
One day I shall return, His hands in mine
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds."

Bk. VII. Canto 4.

(B) PROSE

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES

Not to go on for ever repeating what man has already done is our work, but to arrive at new realisations and undreamed-of masteries. Time and soul and world are given us for our field, vision and hope and creative imagination stand for our prompters, will and thought and labour are our all-effective instruments.

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Man seeks at first blindly and does not even know that he is seeking his divine self; for he starts from the obscurity of material Nature and even when he begins to see, he is long blinded by the light that is increasing in him. God too answers obscurely to his search; He seeks and enjoys man's blindness like the hands of a little child that grope after its mother.

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The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the Divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.

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Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only

STUDENTS' SECTION

the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes.

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All religions have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualise mankind. For that there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution.

The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretations of present happening and forecast of man's future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity.

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Meanness and selfishness are the only sins that I find it difficult to pardon; yet they alone are almost universal. Therefore these also must not be hated in others, but in ourselves annihilated.

Nobleness and generosity are the soul's ethereal firmament; without them, one looks as an insect in a dungeon.

Let thy virtues be not such as men praise or reward, but such as make for thy perfection and God in thy nature demands of thee.

Altruism, duty, family, country, humanity are the prisons of the soul when they are not its instruments.

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Selfishness is the only sin, meanness the only vice, hatred the only criminality. All else can easily be turned into good, but these are obstinate resisters of deity.

ON THE DIVINE LIFE

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest

periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of God-head, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.

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It is almost universally supposed that spiritual life must necessarily be a life of ascetic sparseness, a pushing away of all that is not absolutely needed for the bare maintenance of the body; and this is valid for a spiritual life which is in its nature and intention a life of withdrawal from life. Even apart from that ideal, it might be thought that the spiritual turn must always make for an extreme simplicity, because all else would be a life of vital desire and physical self-indulgence. But from a wider standpoint this is a mental standard based on the law of the Ignorance of which desire is the motive; to overcome the Ignorance, to delete the ego, a total rejection not only of desire but of all the things that can satisfy desire may intervene as a valid principle. But this standard or any mental standard cannot be absolute nor can it be binding as a law on the consciousness that has arisen above desire; a complete purity and self-mastery would be in the very grain of its nature and that would remain the same in poverty or in riches: for if it could be shaken or sullied by either, it would not be real or would not be complete. The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there would be the same plastic principle; a rigid standardisation, however necessary for the mind's arrangement of things, could not be the law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying unity might well become manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order.

A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fitly be characterised as a divine life; for it would be a life in the

STUDENTS' SECTION

Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material Nature.

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The divine life will give to those who enter into it and possess it an increasing and finally a complete possession of the truth-consciousness and all that it carries in it; it will bring with it the realisation of the Divine in self and the Divine in Nature. All that is sought by the God-seeker will be fulfilled in his spirit and in his life as he moves towards spiritual perfection. He will become aware of the transcendent reality, possess in the self-experience the supreme existence, consciousness, bliss, be one with Sachchidananda. He will become one with cosmic being and universal Nature: he will contain the world in himself, in his own cosmic consciousness and feel himself one with all beings; he will see himself in all and all in himself, become united and identified with the Self which has become all existences. He will perceive the beauty of the All-Beautiful and the miracle of the All-Wonderful; he will enter in the end into the bliss of the Brahman and live abidingly in it and for all this he will not need to shun existence or plunge into the annihilation of the spiritual Person in some self-extinguishing Nirvana. As in the Self, so in Nature, he can realise the Divine. The nature of the Divine is Light and Power and Bliss, he can feel the divine Light and Power and Bliss above him and descending into him, filling every strand of his nature, every cell and atom of his being, flooding his soul and mind and life and body, surrounding him like an illimitable sea and filling the world, suffusing all his feeling and sense and experience, making all his life truly and utterly divine. This and all else that the spiritual consciousness can bring to him the divine life will give him when it reaches its utmost completeness and perfection and the supramental truth-consciousness is fulfilled in all himself; but even before that he can attain to something of it all, grow in it, live in it, once the Supermind has descended upon him and has the direction of his existence. All relations with the Divine will be his: the trinity of God-knowledge, divine works and devotion to God will open within him and move towards an utter self-giving and surrender of his whole being and nature. He will live in God and with God, possess God, as it is said, even plunge in him forgetting all separate personality, but not losing it in self-extinction. The love of God and all the sweetness of love will remain his, the bliss of contact as well as the bliss of oneness and the bliss of difference in oneness. All the infinite ranges of experience of the Infinite will be his and all the joy of the finite in the embrace of the Infinite.

The descent of the Supermind will bring to one who receives it and is

fulfilled in the truth-consciousness all the possibilities of the divine life. It will take up not only the whole characteristic experience which we recognise already as constituting the spiritual life but also all which we now exclude from that category but which is capable of divinisation, not excluding whatever of the earth-nature and the earth-life can be transformed by the touch of the Supermind and taken up into the manifested life of the Spirit. For a divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive having nothing to do with the common earthly existence: it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed, spiritualise whatever can be spiritualised, cast its influence on the rest and effectuate either a radical or an uplifting change, bring about a deeper communion between the universal and the individual, invade the ideal with the spiritual truth of which it is a luminous shadow and help to uplift into or towards a greater and higher existence.

ON THE INTEGRAL YOGA

THE supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being. The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us. It opens swiftly or gradually, petal by petal, through successive realisations, once the mind of man begins to turn towards the Eternal, once his heart, no longer compressed and confined by attachment to finite appearances, becomes enamoured, in whatever degree, of the Infinite. All life, all thought, all energising of the faculties, all experiences passive or active, become thenceforward so many shocks which disintegrate the teguments of the soul and remove the obstacles to the inevitable efflorescence. He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of the spirit; but once it is received, attainment is sure, whether conquered swiftly in the course of one human life or pursued patiently through many stadia of the cycle of existence in the manifested universe.

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It is therefore through the sacrifice of love, works and knowledge with the psychic being as the leader and priest of the sacrifice that life itself can be transformed into its own true spiritual figure. If the sacrifice of knowledge rightly done is easily the largest and purest offering we can bring to the Highest, the sacrifice of love is not less demanded of us for our spiritual perfection; it is even

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more intense and rich in its singleness and can be made not less vast and pure. This pure wideness is brought into the intensity of the sacrifice of love when into all our activities there is poured the spirit and power of a divine infinite joy and the whole atmosphere of our life is suffused with an engrossing adoration of the One who is the All and the Highest. For then does the sacrifice of love attain its utter perfection when, offered to the Divine All, it becomes integral, catholic and boundless and when, uplifted to the Supreme, it ceases to be the weak, superficial and transient movement men call love and becomes a pure and grand and deep uniting Ananda.

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In the Way of Knowledge we may arrive at a point where we can leap out of personality and universe, escape from all thought and will and works and all way of Nature and, absorbed and taken up into Eternity, plunge into the Transcendence; that, though not obligatory on the God-knower, may be the soul's decision, the term pursued by the self within us. In the Way of Devotion we may reach through an intensity of adoration and joy union with the supreme All-Beloved and remain eternally in the ecstasy of his presence, absorbed in him alone, intimately in one world of bliss with him; that then may be our being's impulsion, its spiritual choice. But in the Way of Works another prospect opens; for travelling on that path, we can enter into liberation and perfection by becoming of one law and power of nature with the Eternal; we are identified with him in our will and dynamic self as much as in our spiritual status; a divine way of works is the natural outcome of this union; a divine living in a spiritual freedom the body of its self-expression. In the Integral Yoga these three lines of approach give up their exclusions, meet and coalesce or spring out of each other; liberated from the mind's veil over the self, we live in the Transcendence, enter by the adoration of the heart into the oneness of a supreme love and bliss, and all our forces of being uplifted into the one Force, our will and works surrendered into the one Will and Power, assume the dynamic perfection of the divine Nature.

ON BEAUTY

The search for beauty is only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulsions, desires. It is only in the middle a satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of perfect process and harmonious combination. Behind them the soul of beauty in us desires

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the contact, the revelation, the uplifting delight of an absolute beauty in all things which it feels to be present, but which neither the senses and instincts by themselves can give, though they may be its channels,—for it is supra-sensuous,—nor the reason and intelligence, though they too are a channel,—for it is suprarational, supra-intellectual,—but to which through all these veils the soul itself seeks to arrive. When it can get the touch of this universal, absolute beauty, this soul of beauty, this sense of its revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event, a human life, an idea, a stroke of the brush or the chisel or a scintillation of the mind, the colours of a sunset or the grandeur of the tempest, it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. It is in truth seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms. When, fulfilled in our growing sense and knowledge of beauty and delight in beauty and our power for beauty, we are able to identify ourselves in soul with this Absolute and Divine in all the forms and activities of the world and shape an image of our inner and our outer life in the highest image we can perceive and embody of the All-Beautiful, then the aesthetic being in us who was born for this end, has fulfilled himself and risen to his divine consummation. To find highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God.
