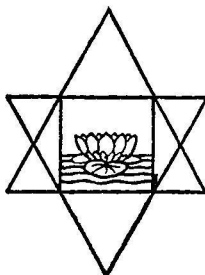


MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1954

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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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THE AVATAR OF EARTH'S TRANSFORMATION

(A PROPHECY FROM THE PAST: NARAD'S SPEECH IN
"SAVITRI", BOOK VI, CANTO 2)

...ONE yet may come armoured, invincible;
His will immobile meets the mobile hour;
The world's blows cannot bend that victor head;
Calm and sure are his steps in the growing Night;
The goal recedes, he hurries not his pace,
He turns not to high voices in the Night.
He asks no aid from the inferior gods;
His eyes are fixed on the immutable aim.
Man turns aside or chooses easier paths;
He keeps to the one high and difficult road
That sole can climb to the Eternal's peak;
The ineffable planes already have felt his tread;
He has made heaven and earth his instruments,
But the limits fall from him of earth and heaven;
Their law he transcends but uses as his means.
He has seized life's hands, he has mastered his own heart.
The feints of Nature mislead not his sight,
Inflexible his look towards Truth's far end;
Fate's deaf resistance cannot break his will.
In the dreadful passages, the fatal paths,
Invulnerable his soul, his heart unslain,
He lives through the opposition of earth's Powers
And Nature's ambushes and the world's attacks.
His spirit stature transcending pain and bliss
He fronts evil and good with calm and equal eyes.
He too must grapple with the riddling Sphinx
And plunge into her long obscurity.
He has broken into the Inconscient's depths
That veil themselves even from their own regard:
He has seen God's slumber shape these magic worlds.
He has watched the dumb God fashioning Matter's frame,

MOTHER INDIA .

Dreaming the dreams of its unknowing sleep,
And watched the unconscious Force that built the stars.
He has learnt the Inconscient's workings and its law,
Its incoherent thoughts and rigid acts,
Its hazard wastes of impulse and idea,
The chaos of its mechanic frequencies,
Its random calls, its whispers falsely true,
Misleaders of the hooded listening soul.
All things come to its ear but nothing abides;
All rose from the silence, all goes back to its hush.
Its somnolence founded the universe,
Its obscure waking makes the world seem vain.
Arisen from Nothingness and towards Nothingness turned
Its dark and potent nescience was earth's start;
It is the waste stuff from which all was made;
Into its deeps creation can collapse.
Its opposition clogs the march of the soul,
It is the mother of our ignorance.
He must call light into its dark abysms,
Else never can Truth conquer Matter's sleep
And all earth look into the eyes of God.
All things obscure his knowledge must relume,
All things perverse his power must unknot:
He must pass to the other shore of falsehood's sea,
He must enter the world's dark to bring there light.
The heart of evil must be bared to his eyes,
He must learn its cosmic dark Necessity,
Its right and its dire roots in Nature's soil.
He must know the thought that moves the demon act
And justifies the Titan's erring pride
And the falsehood lurking in earth's crooked dreams:
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
Imperishable and wise and infinite,
He still must travel Hell the world to save.
Into the eternal Light he shall emerge
On borders of the meeting of all worlds;
There on the verge of Nature's summit steps

THE AVATAR OF EARTH'S TRANSFORMATION

The secret Law of each thing is fulfilled,
All contraries heal their long dissidence.
There meet and clasp the eternal opposites,
There pain becomes a violent fiery joy;
Evil turns back to its original good,
And sorrow lies upon the breasts of Bliss:
She has learnt to weep glad tears of happiness;
Her gaze is charged with a wistful ecstasy.
Then shall be ended here the Law of Pain.
Earth shall be made a home of Heaven's light,
A seer heaven-born shall lodge in human breasts;
The superconscient beam shall touch men's eyes
And the truth-conscious world come down to earth
Invading Matter with the Spirit's ray
Awaking its silence to immortal thoughts,
Awaking the dumb heart to the living Word.
This mortal life shall house Eternity's bliss,
The body's self taste immortality...

SRI AUROBINDO

HEAVEN'S LIGHT AND MORTAL DOOM

THE Parthenon's pillars built to upbear the sky
Could keep not even an earthly roof; and all
That Colour kindled for the Eternal's eye
In deep Ajanta fades; no rhythms recall
The two grand plays the terrible chisel-stroke
Of the titan mind of Aeschylus set beside
Prometheus Bound: their power Time's brute hand broke.
Heaven's light passes—divine Aurobindo died.

But this one death where Heaven's own self gave room
For dire eclipse of its eternity
Has spent the whole blind force of mortal doom
Against the Soul's vision of a wondrous sod
In which the Undying can work His artistry.
Now Man breaks free to grow for ever God.

K. D. SETHNA

BIRTH OF THE WORD

WHEN white on white, O living large,
And written high in fire
The letters loom like Pharoah's barge
Ah then the kings aspire

To bring to earth the blazoned word,
The flaming "VICTORY",
To cut across, with Time's own sword,
Time's honoured blasphemy

And, banners high, ride the Night,
Down deep-dug dungeon ways,
Along the star-sprung highway bright
Of massed white power-Rays.

O Victory, thy time has come!
The Word gives birth today;
There issues forth from out the womb
Of Death Future's transforming Ray.

Let earth awake! Let men be still.
Silence now would speak
In vibrant Light, a term to thrill
The heart, its bonds to break.

Who are the victors over Death
If not the men to hear
Resounding in the bowels of earth
The royal Word, tone-pure?

MOTHER INDIA

What weapon wields the warrior might
To vanquish with a glance
If not that wild white wing, man's birthright
To loving innocence?

What potioned magic seals the Sign,
Prophetic mastery,
Of Light in Life on earth, what new brine
Preserves our destiny?

The massed white Rays have reached their goal,
The Darkness echoes clear,
The Path is dug, the Way made whole:
The fiery Word now casts out fear.

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SHIVA OF MYSTIC FIRE

PINNACLED Trance of the Ineffable!
Bodied grandeur of vast and mystic fire!
O sun living within the limbs of gold,
Reveal to me Thy face of infinite hush.
Make my vision limitless and pure and free
To view Thy burning face of indrawn power,
To see with spirit's eye thy spirit's frame.
Concealed within Thy flame-meditation's gulf,
Thou waitest supreme for Thy irrevocable hour
When Thou shalt wake out of Thy diamond sleep
And stare with Thy omnipotent eyes of the peak
At this world with all its roll of ignorance,
Hurling Thy puissance from Thy undying brow,
The trident of Thy swift all-conquering will
To smite and break this oblivion of night,
To bring on earth Thy noon's everlasting call.
Thy power shall dance within this universe-field
Like meteor-sweep of sudden avalanche
To trample down the gloom's everlasting den.
And when accomplished is Thy golden toil
Thou shalt once more retreat to Thy self of flame,
Plunged in a chasm of splendoured somnolence;
A marvel Day shall wake beneath Thy feet.

ROMEN

ILION

SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK V—THE BOOK OF ACHILLES

MEANWHILE grey from the Trojan gates Talthybius journeyed,
Spurred by the secret thought of the Fates who change not nor falter.
Simois sighed round his wheels and Xanthus roared at his passing,
Troas' god like a lion wroth and afraid; to meet him
Whistling the ocean breezes came and Ida regarded.
So with his haste in his wheels the herald oceanward driving
Came through the gold of the morn o'er the trampled green of the pastures
Back to the ships and the roar of the sea and the iron-hooped leaguer.
Wide to the left his circle he wrote where the tents of Achilles
Trooped like a flock of the sea-fowl pensive and still on the margin.
He past the outposts rapidly coursed to the fosse¹ of the Argives.
In with a quavering cry to the encampment over the causeway
Bridging the moat of the ships Talthybius drove in his chariot
Out of the wide plains azure-roofed and the silence of Nature
Passing in to the murmur of men and the thick of the leaguer.
There to a thrall of the Hellene he cast his reins and with labour
Down from the high seat climbed of the war-car framed for the mighty.
Then betwixt tent-doors endless, vistaed streets of the canvas,
Slowly the old man toiled with his eager heart, and to meet him
Sauntering forth from his tent at the sound of the driving car-wheels
Strong Automedon came who was charioteer of Achilles.

"Grey Talthybius, whence art thou coming? From Troya the¹ ancient?
Or from a distant tent was thy speed and the King Agamemnon?
What in their armoured assembly counsel the Kings² of the Argives?"

"Not from the host but from Troy, Automedon, come I with tidings,
Nor have I mixed with the Greeks in their cohorts ranked by the Ocean,
Nor have I stood in their tents who are kings in sceptred Achaia,

¹ Alternative: "moat".

² The original word was "chiefs".

ILION

But from Achilles sent to Achilles I bring back the message.
Tell me, then, what does Pelides,—whether his strength he reposes
Soothed by the lyre or hearing the chanted deeds of the mighty,
Or does he walk as he loves by the shore of the far-sounding waters?”

And to the Argive herald grey Automedon answered;
“Now from the meal he rests and Briseis lyres to him singing
One of the Ilian chants of old in the tongue of the Trojans.”
“Early then he has eaten, Automedon, early reposes?”
“Early the meat was broached on the spits, Talthybius, early
High on the sands or under the tents we have eaten and rested.
None knows the hour of the hunt red, fierce nor the prey he shall leap on,
All are like straining hounds; for Achilles shares not his counsels,
But on the ships, in the tents the talk has run like Peneus;
These upon Troy to be loosed and the hard-fighting wolf-brood of Priam,
These hope starkly with Argos embraced, to have done with the Spartan,
Ending his brilliance in blood, to sport on the sands of the margent
Playing at bowls with the heads of the Cretan and crafty Odysseus.
Welcome were either or both, we shall move in the dances of Ares,
Quicken heart-beats dulled and limbs that are numb with reposing.
War we desire and no longer this ease by the drone of the waters.”

So as they spoke, they beheld far-off the tent of Achilles,
Splendid and spacious even as the hall of a high-crested chieftain,
Lofty, held by a hundred stakes to the Phrygian meadow.
Hung were its sides with memories bronze and trophies of armour,
Sword and spear and helmet and cuirass of fallen heroes
Slain by the hand of mighty Achilles warring with Troya.
Teemed in its canvas rooms the plundered riches of Troas,
Craftsman’s work and the wood well-carved and the ivory painted,
Work of bronze and work of gold and the dreams of the artist.
And in those tents of his pride, in the dreadful guard of the Hellene,
Nobler boys and daughters of high-born Phrygians captive,
Borne from the joyless ruins that now were the sites of their childhood,
Served in the land of their sires the will of the Pthian Achilles.
There on a couch reclined in his beauty mighty and golden,
Loved by the Fates and doomed by them, spear of their will against Troya,
Peleus’ hero son by the foam-white child of the waters
Dreaming reposed and his death-giving hand hung lax o’er the couch-side.
Near him dark-eyed Briseis, the fatal and beautiful captive,
Sung to the Grecian victor chants of the land of her fathers,
Sang the chant of Ilus, the tale of the glories of Troya.

Trojan boys and maidens sat near the singer and listened
 Heart-delighted if with some tears; for easy are mortal
 Hearts to be bent by Fate and soon we consent to our fortunes.
 But in the door-way Automedon stood with the shadowy Argive
 And at the ominous coming the voice of the singer faltered,
 Faltering hushed like a thought melodious ceasing in heaven.

But from his couch the Peleid sprang to action, rejoicing,
 Gladly delivered from patience long and he cried to the herald.
 "Long hast thou lingered in Ilium, envoy, mute in the chambers
 Golden of Priam old; while around thee darkened the counsels
 Wavering blindly and fiercely of minds that revolt from compulsion,
 Natures at war with the gods and their fortunes. Fain would I fathom
 Whatever the thoughts of Deiphobus locked in that nature of iron
 Now that he stands confronting his fate in the town of his fathers.
 Peace dwells not in thy aspect. Sowst thou a seed then of ruin
 Cast from the inflexible heart and the faltering tongue of Aeneas
 Or with the golden laugh of the tameless bright Alexander?"
 Grey Talthibius answered; "Surely their doom has embraced them
 Wrapping her locks round their ears and their eyes, lest they see and escape her,
 Kissing their tongue with her fatal lips and dictating its answers.
 Dire is the hope of their chiefs and fierce is the will of their commons.
 'Son of the Aeacids, spurned is thy offer. The pride of thy challenge
 Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.
 Neither shall Helen captive be dragged to the feet of her husband,
 Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers' Eurotas.
 Death and the fire may prevail on us, never our wills shall surrender
 Lowering Priam's heights and darkening Ilium's splendours;
 Not of such sires were we born, but of kings and of gods. Larissan,
 Not with her gold Troy purchases safety but with her spear-point.
 Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles, call on thy helpers
 Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour,
 Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,
 Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.'
 So they reply; they are true to their death, they are constant for ruin.
 Humbler answer hope not, O hero, from Penthesilea;
 Insolent, warlike, regal and swift as herself is her message:
 'Sea of renown and of valour that fillest the world with thy rumour,
 Speed of the battle incarnate, mortal image of Ares!
 Terror and tawny delight like a lion one hunts or is hunted!
 Dread of the world and my target, swift-footed glorious hero!

ILION

Thus have I imaged thee, son of Peleus, dreaming in countries
Far from thy knowledge, in mountains that never have rung to thy war-cry.
O, I have longed for thee, warrior! Therefore today by thy message
So was I seized with delight that my heart was hurt with its rapture,
Knowing today I shall gaze with my eyes on that which I imaged
Only in air of the mind or met in the paths of my dreaming.
Thus have I praised thee first with my speech; with my spear I would answer.
Yet for thy haughty scorn who deeming of me as some Hellene
Or as a woman weak of these plains fit but for the distaff,
Promisest capture in war and fame as thy slave-girl in Pthia,—
Surely I think that death today will reply to that promise,—
Now I will give thee my answer and warn thee ere we encounter.
Know me queen of a race that never was conquered in battle!
Know me armed with a spear that never has missed in the combat!
There where my car-wheels run, good fruit gets the husbandman after.
This thou knowest. Ajax has told thee, thy friend, in his dying.
Has not Meriones' spirit come in thy dreams then to warn thee?
Didst thou not number the Argives over ere I came to the battle?
Number them now and measure the warrior Penthesilea.
Such am I then whom thy dreams have seen meek-browed in Larissa,
And in the battle behind me thunder the heroes Eoan,
Ranks whose feeblest can match with the vaunted chiefs of the Argives.
Never yet from the shock have they fled; if they turn from the foeman,
Always 'tis to return like death recircling on mortals.
Yet being such, having such for my armies, this do I promise:
I on the left of the Trojans war with my bright-armed numbers,
Thou on the Argive right come forth, Achilles, and meet me!
If thou canst drive us with rout into Troy, I will own thee for master,
Do thy utmost will and make thee more glorious than gods are,
Serving thy couch in Pthia and drawing the jar from thy rivers.
Nay, if thou hast that strength, then hunt me, O hunter, and seize me,
If 'tis thy hope indeed that the sun can turn back from the Orient,
But if thou canst not, death of myself or thyself thou shalt capture.' ”

Musing heard and was silent a while the strength of Achilles,
Musing of Fate and the wills of men and the purpose of Heaven,
Then from his thoughts he broke and turned in his soul towards battle.
“Well did I know what reply would come winged from the princes of Troya.
Prone are the hearts of heroes to wrath and to God-given blindness
When from their will they are thrust and harried by Fate and disaster:
Fierceness then is the armour of strength against grief and its yieldings.

MOTHER INDIA

So have the gods made man for their purpose, cunningly fashioned.
Once had defiance waked from my depths a fury far-striding
Flaming for justice and vengeance, nor had it, satisfied, rested,
Sunk to its lair till the insulter died torn or was kneeling for pardon.
Fierce was my heart in my youth and exulted in triumph and slaughter.
Now as I grow in my spirit like to my kin the immortals,
Joy more I find in saving and cherishing than in the carnage.
Greater it seems to my mind to be king over men than their slayer,
Nobler to build and to govern than what the ages have laboured
Putting their godhead forth to create or the high gods have fashioned,
That to destroy in our wrath of a moment. Ripened, more widely
Opens my heart to the valour of man and the beauty of woman,
Works of the world and delight; the cup of my victory sweetens
Not with the joys of hate, but the human pride of the triumph.
Yet was the battle decreed for the means supreme of the mortal
Placed in a world where all things strive from the worm to the Titan.
So will I seize by the onset what peace from my soul would sequester,
So will I woo with the sword and with love the delight of my foeman,
Troy and Polyxena, beauty of Paris and glory of Priam.
This was the ancient wrestling, this was the spirit of warfare
Fit for the demigods. Soon in the city of gold and of marble,
There where Ilus sat and Tros, where Laomedon triumphed,
Peleus' house shall reign, the Hellene sit where the Trojan
Thought himself deathless. Arise, Automedon! Out to the people!
Send forth the cry through the ships and the tents of the Myrmidon nation.
Let not a man be found then lingering when o'er the causeway
Thunder my chariot-wheels, nor let any give back in the battle,
Good if he wills from me, till through the conquered gates of the foeman
Storming we herd in their remnants and press into Troy as with evening
Helios rushing sinks to the sea. But thou, Briseis,
Put by thy lyre, O girl; it shall gladden my heart in my triumph
Victor returned from Troy to listen pleased to thy singing,
Bearing a captive bound to my car-wheels Penthesilea,
Bearing my valour's reward, Polyxena, daughter of Priam,
Won in despite of her city and brothers and spears of her kindred.
So by force it is best to take one's will and be mighty."
Joyful, Automedon ran through the drowsy camp of the Hellenes
Changing the hum of the tents as he raced into shoutings of battle;
For with the giant din of a nation triumphant arising
Hellas sprang from her irksome ease and mounted her war-car;

ILION

Donning her armour bright she rejoiced in the trumpet of battle.

But to the herald grey the Peleid turned and the old man
Shuddered under his gaze and shrank from the voice of the hero;
"Thou to the tents of thy kings, Talthybius, herald of Argos!
Stand in the Argive assembly, voice of the strength of Achilles.
Care not at all though the greatest and fiercest be wroth with thy message.
Deem not thyself, old man, as a body and flesh that is mortal,
Rather as living speech from the iron breast of the Hellene.
Thus shalt thou chide the vanquished chiefs who have fled from a woman,
Thus shalt thou speak my will to the brittle and fugitive legions:—
'Now Achilles turns towards Troya and fast-flowing Xanthus,
Now he leaps at the iron zone, the impregnable city.
Two were the Forms of the Gods that o'erhung the sails of Pelides
When with a doubtful word in his soul he came wind-helped from Hellas
Cleaving the Aegean deep towards the pine-crested vision of Ida.
Two are the Fates that stride with the hero counting his exploits.
Over all earthly things the soul that is fearless is master,
Only on death he can reckon not whether it comes in the midnight
Treading the couch of Kings in their pride or speeds in the spear-shaft.
Now will I weigh down that double beam of the Olympian balance
Claiming one of the equal Fates that stand robed for the fighter,
For to my last dire wrestle I go with the Archer of heaven,
And ere the morning gleam have awakened the eagles on Ida,
Troy shall lie prone¹ or earth shall be empty of Pthian Achilles.
But for whatever Fate I accept from the ageless Immortals,
Whether cold Hades dim or Indus waits for my coming
Pouring down vast to the sea with the noise of his numberless waters,
I with Zeus am enough. Your mortal aid I desire not,
Rushing to Troy like the eagle of Zeus when he flies towards the thunders,—
Winged with might, the bird of the spaces, upbuoying his pinions.
Nor shall my spirit look back for the surge of your Danaan fighters,
Tramp of the Argive multitudes helping my lonely courage,
Neither the transient swell of the cry Achaian behind me
Seek, nor the far-spreading voice of Atrides guiding his legions.
Need has he none for a leader who himself is the soul of his action.
Zeus and his fate and his spear are enough for the Pthian Achilles.
Rest, O wearied hosts; my arm shall win for you Troya,
Quelled when the stern Eoans break and Penthesilea

¹ Alternative to "lie prone". "stoop low".

MOTHER INDIA

Lies like a flower in the dust at my feet. Yet if Ares desire you,
Come then and meet him once more mid the cry and the trampling! Assemble
Round the accustomed chiefs, round the old victorious wrestlers
Wearied strengths Deiphobus leaves you or sternest Aeneas.
But when my arm and my Fate have vanquished their gods and Apollo,
Brilliant with blood when we stand amid Ilion's marble splendours,
Then let none seat deaf flame on the glory of Phrygia's marbles
Or with his barbarous rapine shatter the chambers of sweetness
Slaying the work of the gods and the beauty the ages have lived for.
For he shall moan in the night remote from the earth and her greenness,
Spurred like a steed to its goal by my spear dug deep in his bosom;
Fast he shall fleet to the waters of wailing, the pleasureless pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon has laboured.
Seized and dishelmed and disgirdled of Apollonian ramparts,
Empty of wide-rolling wheels and the tramp of a turbulent people
Troy with her marble domes shall live for our nations in beauty
Hushed mid the trees and the corn and the pictured halls of the ancients,
Watching her image of dreams in the gliding waves of Scamander,
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Grecians¹.
So shalt thou warn the arrogant hearts of Achaia's chieftains
Lest upon Greece an evil should fall and her princes should perish.
Herald, beware how thou soften my speech in the ears of thy nation
Sparing their pride and their hearts but dooming their lives to the death-stroke.
Even thy time-touched snows shall not shield thy days from my sword-edge".

Wroth grew the old man's heart, but he feared Achilles and slowly
Over the margin grey on the shore of the far-sounding ocean
Silent paced to the tents of the Greeks and the Argive assembly.
There on the sands while the scream of the tide as it dragged at the pebbles
Strove in vain with their droning roar, awaiting their chieftains
Each in his tribe and his people far down the margin Aegean,
Argolis' sons and Epirote spears and the isles and the southron,
Locris' swarms and Messene's pikes and the strength of the Theban,
Hosts bright-armed, bright-eyed, bright-haired, time-hardened to Ares,
Stretched in harsh and brilliant lines with a glitter of spear-points
Far as the eye could toil. All Europe helmeted, armoured
Swarmed upon Asia's coasts disgorged from their ships in their hundreds.
There in the wide-winged tent of the council that peered o'er the margin,
High where the grass and the meadow-bloom failed on the sand-rifted sward-edge,

¹ Alternative: "nobles".

MOTHER INDIA

Rest! expose not your hearts to the war-cry of Penthesilea.
Yet if the strength in you thrists for the war-din, if Ares is hungry,
Meet him stark in the mellay surging Deiphobus' coursers,
Guiding Aeneas' spear; recover the souls of your fathers.
Bronze must his heart be who looks in the eyes of the implacable war-god!
But when his Fate has conquered their gods and slaughtered their heroes,
And in this marble Iliion bowed¹ to the tread of her foemen
Watched by the ancient domes you stand by the timeless turrets,
Then let no chieftain crowned² for offering lift against Troya,
Counselled of Ate, torch of the burning, hand of the plunder
Groping for gold but finding death in her opulent chambers.
For he shall moan in the night regretting the earth and her greenness,
Spurred by the spear in his arrogant breast like a steed to the gorges:
Fast he shall fleet to the flowerless meadows, the sorrowful pastures.
Touch not the city Apollo built, where Poseidon laboured,
Slay not the work of the gods and the glory the ages have lived for.
Mute of the voice of her children, void of the roll of her war-cars
Timeless Troy leave solitary dreaming by ancient Scamander
Sacred and still, a city of memory spared by the Grecians³.
So Talthybius spoke and anger silenced the Argives.
Mute was the warlike assembly, silent Achaia's princes.
Wrath and counsel strove in the hush for the voice of the speakers.

¹ Alternative: "forced".

² Alternative: "garbed".

³ Alternative: "Pthian".

INDIA AND THE WORLD-SITUATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER ON OCTOBER 10, 1954

QUESTIONER: In Calcutta a small group of men hold that, as the threat still stands of Communist domination of South-east Asia, it would be in consonance with Sri Aurobindo's views that India should support America.

THE MOTHER: Why?

QUESTIONER: They refer to Sri Aurobindo's message on the Korean War, in which he gave support to America's intervention.

THE MOTHER: That is a very old issue.

QUESTIONER: I have told them as much. I also emphasised that Sri Aurobindo's moves were always dynamic, global and far-reaching. The world-situation, I said, is not static and the Mother is there to keep up the vast and integral character of Sri Aurobindo's work.

Mother, let me place before you some of our difficulties. Whenever we go out at the call of the local people to speak on Sri Aurobindo and show them the film of the Ashram activities, some people follow us and slowly introduce some political literature. They take it to be associated with the Ashram and they are confused.

THE MOTHER: Each one has his own idea and finds out suitable sentences from Sri Aurobindo's writings to support his views. Those who oppose such views can also find suitable sentences from his writings. That is the way mutual opposition works. Nothing can be truly done until Sri Aurobindo's total view of things is taken.

QUESTIONER: Then, Mother, could we declare that we have no connection whatsoever with those who are in the political muddle?

THE MOTHER: Yes. Have you got my declaration on politics?

QUESTIONER: I have it.

THE MOTHER: I have spoken about the 1957 crisis to Chamanlal and he has published my views. The politicians were reported to be vexed about it. Some asked why I had said nothing about the political trouble in Pondicherry over the question of merger of the French settlements with India. I took up

MOTHER INDIA

my pen and made a declaration of my views on politics and the present politicians. You may show it to any one who asks about my views on politics.

QUESTIONER: Mother, we think that India shall rise alone...
Here the Mother interposed with emphasis: OUGHT TO RISE...

QUESTIONER: ...to show a new way of material as well as spiritual life to the world with no support to any particular country.

THE MOTHER: Yes, with no support to any particular country.

QUESTIONER: Mother, our inference from Chamanlal's interview with you and from your declaration on politics is that, as India is going to manifest the Divine and establish the Truth on earth, all the Asuric hostile forces are active and trying to find suitable instruments to destroy her spiritual endeavour. And that is why the crisis is coming in 1957—the possibility of a Russo-American war over India. It is our conviction that no man-built power can avoid this crisis. Only the Divine, only you, Mother, can save the world and humanity.

To this came the serene reply of the Mother: YES.

QUESTIONER: Then is it not our work, who want to take the country ahead, to build a faith and a cohesion of the people in you, since you alone can save the world? Should we not distribute copies of Chamanlal's interview with you together with copies of Sri Aurobindo's message of August 15, 1947? The Divine alone can save the world—and since you are here, if India has faith in you, you can raise her, make her a suitable instrument and take the world one step forward in Evolution.

THE MOTHER: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Should we not then declare that we have no connection with those who think political propaganda can do any good?

THE MOTHER: Yes, you can say that you have no connection with them so far as their politics is concerned.

QUESTIONER: Mother, are you not saving and guiding us?

THE MOTHER: I am.

GOPAL CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA
(*Sri Aurobindo Study Society*
and *Srinwantu, Calcutta*)

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER VII

AGNI AND THE TRUTH

THE Rig-Veda is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language. They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or there are risings and fallings in the same hymn; it proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulæ. In the deep and mystic style of Dirghatamas Auchathya as in the melodious lucidity of Medhatithi Kanwa, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Viswamitra as in Vasishta's even harmonies we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the Initiates.

From this peculiarity of the Vedic compositions it results that the method of interpretation which I have described can be equally well illustrated from a number of scattered Suktas selected from the ten Mandalas or from any small block of hymns by a single Rishi. If my purpose were to establish beyond all possibility of objection the interpretation which I am now offering, a much more detailed and considerable work would be necessary. A critical scrutiny covering the whole of the ten Mandalas would be indispensable. To justify for instance the idea I attach to the Vedic term Ritam, the Truth, or my explanation of the symbol of the Cow of Light, I should have to cite all passages of any importance in which the idea of the Truth or the image of the Cow are intro-

duced and establish my thesis by an examination of their sense and context. Or if I wish to prove that Indra in the Veda is really in his psychological functions the master of luminous mind typified by Dyaus, or Heaven, with its three shining realms, Rochana, I should have to examine similarly the hymns addressed to Indra and the passages in which there is a clear mention of the Vedic system of worlds. Nor could this be sufficient, so intertwined and interdependent are the notions of the Veda, without some scrutiny of the other Gods and of other important psychological terms connected with the idea of the Truth and of the mental illumination through which man arrives at it. I recognise the necessity of such a work of justification and hope to follow it out in other studies on the Vedic Truth, on the Gods of the Veda and on Vedic symbols. But a labour of this scope would be beyond the range of the present work, which is confined merely to an illustration of my method and to a brief statement of the results of my theory.

In order to illustrate the method I propose to take the first eleven suktas of the first Mandala and to show how some of the central ideas of a psychological interpretation arise out of certain important passages or single hymns and how the surrounding context of the passages and the general thought of the hymns assume an entirely new appearance in the light of this profounder thinking.

The Sanhita of the Rig-Veda, as we possess it, is arranged in ten books or Mandalas. A double principle is observed in the arrangement. Six of the Mandalas are given each to the hymns of a single Rishi or family of Rishis. Thus the second is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third and the seventh similarly to the great names of Visvamitra and Vasishtha respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, the sixth to Bharadwaja. The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the house of Atri. In each of these Mandalas the suktas addressed to Agni are first collected together and followed by those of which Indra is the deity; the invocations of other gods, Brihaspati, Surya, the Ribhus, Usha etc. close the Mandala. A whole book, the ninth, is given to a single god, Soma. The first, eighth and tenth Mandalas are collections of Suktas by various Rishis, but the hymns of each seer are ordinarily placed together in the order of their deities, Agni leading, Indra following, the other gods succeeding. Thus the first Mandala opens with ten hymns of the seer Madhuchchandas, son of Visvamitra, and an eleventh ascribed to Jetri, son of Madhuchchandas. This last Sukta, however, is identical in style, manner and spirit with the ten that precede it and they can all be taken together as a single block of hymns one in intention and diction.

A certain principle of thought-development also has not been absent from the arrangement of these Vedic hymns. The opening Mandala seems to have been so designed that the general thought of the Veda in its various ele-

ments should gradually unroll itself under the cover of the established symbols by the voices of a certain number of Rishis who almost all rank high as thinkers and sacred singers and are, some of them, among the most famous names of Vedic tradition. Nor can it be by accident that the tenth or closing Mandala gives us, with an even greater miscellaneity of authors, the last developments of the thought of the Veda and some of the most modern in language of its Suktas. It is here that we find the Sacrifice of the Purusha and the great Hymn of the Creation. It is here also that modern scholars think they discover the first origins of the Vedantic philosophy, the Brahnavada.

In any case, the hymns of the son and grandson of Visvamitra with which the Rîgveda opens strike admirably the first essential notes of the Vedic harmony. The first hymn, addressed to Agni, suggests the central conception of the Truth which is confirmed in the second and third Suktas invoking Indra in company with other gods. In the remaining eight hymns with Indra as the sole deity, except for one which he shares with the Maruts, we find the symbols of the Soma and the Cow, the obstructor Vritra and the great role played by Indra in leading man to the Light and overthrowing the barriers to his progress. These hymns are therefore of crucial importance to the psychological interpretation of the Veda.

There are four verses in the Hymn to Agni, the fifth to the ninth, in which the psychological sense comes out with a great force and clearness, escaping from the veil of the symbol.

Agnir hota kavikratuh, satyaç chitraçravastamah,
devo devebhir âgamat.

Yad anga dâçushe twam, agne bhadram karishyasi,
tavet tat satyam angirah.

Upa twâgne dive dive, doshâvastar dhiyâ vayam,
namo bharanta emasi.

Rajantam adhwarân'âm, gopam r'itasya dîdivim,
vardhamânam swe dame.¹

¹ The limitations under which the Review labours at Pondicherry compel me to give the citations from the Sanskrit in Roman characters, nor is it possible to adhere to the exact transliteration demanded by a scrupulous scholarship. Long letters are represented by a superimposed accent, palatal *s* by *c* as in the French system, the cerebral *n* and the vowel *ri* by inserting an apostrophe after the *n* and *r*.

(The Review spoken of by Sri Aurobindo is, of course, the "Arya" in which "The Secret of the Veda" originally appeared.—Editor)

In this passage we have a series of terms plainly bearing or obviously capable of a psychological sense and giving their colour to the whole context. Sayana, however, insists on a purely ritual interpretation and it is interesting to see how he arrives at it. In the first phrase we have the word *kavi* meaning a seer and, even if we take *kratu* to mean work of the sacrifice, we shall have as a result, "Agni, the priest whose work or rite is that of the seer", a turn which at once gives a symbolic character to the sacrifice and is in itself sufficient to serve as the seed of a deeper understanding of the Veda. Sayana feels that he has to turn the difficulty at any cost and therefore he gets rid of the sense of seer for *kavi* and gives it another and unusual significance. He then explains that Agni is *satya*, true, because he brings about the true fruit of the sacrifice. Çravas Sayana renders "fame", Agni has an exceedingly various renown. It would have been surely better to take the word in the sense of wealth so as to avoid the incoherency of this last rendering. We shall then have this result for the fifth verse, "Agni the priest, active in the ritual, who is true (in its fruit)—for his is the most varied wealth,—let him come, a god with the gods."

To the sixth Rik the commentator gives a very awkward and abrupt construction and trivial turn of thought which breaks entirely the flow of the verse. "That good (in the shape of varied wealth) which thou shalt effect for the giver, thine is that. This is true, O Angiras," that is to say, there can be no doubt about this fact, for if Agni does good to the giver by providing him with wealth, he in turn will perform fresh sacrifices to Agni, and thus the good of the sacrificer becomes the good of the god. Here again it would be better to render, "The good that thou wilt do for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Angiras," for we thus get at once a simpler sense and construction and an explanation of the epithet, *satya*, true, as applied to the god of the sacrificial fire. This is the truth of Agni that to the giver of the sacrifice he surely gives good in return.

The seventh verse offers no difficulty to the ritualistic interpretation except the curious phrase, "we come bearing the prostration." Sayana explains that bearing here means simply doing and he renders, "To thee day by day we, by night and by day, come with the thought performing the prostration." In the eighth verse he takes *r'itasya* in the sense of truth and explains it as the true fruit of the ritual. "To thee shining, the protector of the sacrifices, manifesting always their truth (that is their inevitable fruit), increasing in thy own house." Again, it would be simpler and better to take *ritam* in the sense of sacrifice and to render "To thee shining out in the sacrifices, protector of the rite, ever luminous, increasing in thy own house". The "own house" of Agni, says the commentator, is the place of sacrifice and this is indeed called frequently enough in Sanskrit, "the house of Agni."

We see, therefore, that with a little managing we can work out a purely ritual sense quite empty of thought even for a passage which at first sight offers a considerable wealth of psychological significance. Nevertheless, however ingeniously it is effected, flaws and cracks remain which betray the artificiality of the work. We have had to throw overboard the plain sense of *kavi* which adheres to it throughout the Veda and foist in an unreal rendering. We have either to divorce the two words *satya* and *rita* which are closely associated in the Veda or to give a forced sense to *rita*. And throughout we have avoided the natural suggestions pressed on us by the language of the Rishi.

Let us now follow instead the opposite principle and give their full psychological value to the words of the inspired text. *Kratu* means in Sanskrit work or action and especially work in the sense of the sacrifice; but it means also power or strength (the Greek *kratos*) effective of action. Psychologically this power effective of action is the will. The word may also mean mind or intellect and Sayana admits thought or knowledge as a possible sense for *kratu*. *Çravas* means literally hearing and from this primary significance is derived its secondary sense, "fame". But, psychologically, the idea of hearing leads up in Sanskrit to another sense which we find in *çravana*, *çruti*, *çruta*,—revealed knowledge, the knowledge which comes by inspiration. *Drishti* and *çruti*, sight and hearing, revelation and inspiration are the two chief powers of that supra-mental faculty which belongs to the old Vedic idea of the Truth, the Ritam. The word *cravas* is not recognised by the lexicographers in this sense, but it is accepted in the sense of a hymn,—the inspired word of the Veda. This indicates clearly that at one time it conveyed the idea of inspiration or of something inspired, whether word or knowledge. This significance, then we are entitled to give it, provisionally at least, in the present passage; for the other sense of fame is entirely incoherent and meaningless in the context. Again the word *namas* is also capable of a psychological sense; for it means literally "bending down" and is applied to the act of adoring submission to the deity rendered physically by the prostration of the body. When therefore the Rishi speaks of "bearing obeisance to Agni by the thought" we can hardly doubt that he gives to *namas* the psychological sense of the inward prostration, the act of submission or surrender to the deity.

We get then this rendering of the four verses:—

"May Agni, priest of the offering whose will towards action is that of the seer, who is true, most rich in varied inspiration, come, a god with the gods.

"The good that thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee,
O Angiras.

"To thee day by day, O Agni, in the night and in the light we by the thought come bearing our submission,—

“To thee who shinest out from the sacrifices (or, who governest the sacrifices), guardian of the Truth and its illumination, increasing in thy own home.”

The defect of the translation is that we have had to employ one and the same word for *satyam* and *ritam* whereas, as we see in the formula *satyam ritam brihat*, there was a distinction in the Vedic mind between the precise significances of the two words.

Who, then is this god Agni to whom language of so mystic a fervour is addressed, to whom functions so vast and profound are ascribed? Who is this guardian of the Truth, who is in his act its illumination, whose will in the act is the will of a seer possessed of a divine wisdom governing his richly varied inspiration? What is the Truth that he guards? And what is this good that he creates for the giver who comes always to him in thought day and night bearing as his sacrifice submission and self-surrender? Is it gold and horses and cattle that he brings or is it some diviner riches?

It is not the sacrificial Fire that is capable of these functions, nor can it be any material flame or principle of physical heat and light. Yet throughout the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. It is evident that we are in the presence of a mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching and yet figures which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front.

In the early Vedantic teaching of the Upanishads we come across a conception of the Truth which is often expressed by formulas taken from the hymns of the Veda, such as the expression already quoted, *satyam ritam brihat*,—the truth, the right, the vast. This Truth is spoken of in the Veda as a path leading to felicity, leading to immortality. In the Upanishads also it is by the path of the Truth that the sage or seer, Rishi or Kavi, passes beyond. He passes out of the falsehood, out of the mortal state into an immortal existence. We have the right therefore to assume that the same conception is in question in both Veda and Vedanta.

This psychological conception is that of a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is *satyam*, truth of being; it is in its action *Ritam*, right,—truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *brihat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *brihat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as *bhuma*, the large, the other as *alpa*, the little. Another name for this supramental or truth consciousness is Mahas which also means the great, the vast. And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehoods (*anritam*, not-truth

or wrong application of the *satyam* in mental and bodily activity), we have for instruments the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence, so for the truth-consciousness there are corresponding faculties,—*drishti*, *cruti*, *vveka*, the direct vision of the truth, the direct hearing of its word, the direct discrimination of the right. Whoever is in possession of this truth-consciousness or open to the action of these faculties, is the Rishi or *kavi*, sage or seer. It is these conceptions of the truth, *satyam* and *ritam*, that we have to apply in this opening hymn of the Veda.

Agni in the Veda is always presented in the double aspect of force and light. He is the divine power that builds up the worlds, a power which acts always with a perfect knowledge, for it is *jātavedas*, knower of all births, *visvāni vayunāni vidvān*,—it knows all manifestations or phenomena or it possesses all forms and activities of the divine wisdom. Moreover it is repeatedly said that the gods have established Agni as the immortal in mortals, the divine power in man, the energy of fulfilment through which they do their work in him. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifice.

Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavikratuh*, he whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer,—works, that is to say, with the knowledge which comes by the truth-consciousness and in which there is no misapplication or error. The epithets that follow confirm this interpretation. Agni is *satya*, true in his being; perfect possession of his own truth and the essential truth of things gives him the power to apply it perfectly in all act and movement of force. He has both the *satyam* and the *ritam*. Moreover, he is *chitraçravastamah*; from the *Ritam* there proceeds a fullness of richly luminous and varied inspirations which give the capacity for doing the perfect work. For all these are epithets of Agni as the *hotri*, the priest of the sacrifice, he who performs the offering. Therefore it is the power of Agni to apply the Truth in the work (*karma* or *apas*) symbolised by the sacrifice, that makes him the object of human invocation. The importance of the sacrificial fire in the outward ritual corresponds to the importance of this inward force of unified Light and Power in the inward rite by which there is communication and interchange between the mortal and the Immortal. Agni is elsewhere frequently described as the envoy, *duta*, the medium of that communication and interchange.

We see, then, in what capacity Agni is called to the sacrifice. "Let him come, a god with the gods." The emphasis given to the idea of divinity by this repetition, *devo devebhir*, becomes intelligible when we recall the standing description of Agni as the god in human beings, the immortal in mortals, the

divine guest. We may give the full psychological sense by translating, "Let him come, a divine power with the divine powers." For in the external sense of the Veda the Gods are universal powers of physical Nature personified; in any inner sense they must be universal powers of Nature in her subjective activities, Will, Mind, etc. But in the Veda there is always a distinction between the ordinary human or mental action of these puissances, *manushvat*, and the divine. It is supposed that man by the right use of their mental action in the inner sacrifice to the gods can convert them into their true or divine nature, the mortal can become immortal. Thus the Ribhus, who were at first human beings or represented human faculties, became divine and immortal powers by perfection in the work, *sukrityayā*, *svapasyayā*. It is a continual self-offering of the human to the divine and a continual descent of the divine into the human which seems to be symbolised in the sacrifice.

The state of immortality thus attained is conceived as a state of felicity or bliss founded on a perfect Truth and Right, *satyam ritam*. We must, I think, understand in this sense the verse that follows. "The good (happiness) which thou wilt create for the giver, that is that truth of thee, O Agni." In other words, the essence of this truth, which is the nature of Agni, is the freedom from evil, the state of perfect good and happiness which the Ritam carries in itself and which is sure to be created in the mortal when he offers the sacrifice by the action of Agni as the divine priest. *Bhadram* means anything good, auspicious, happy and by itself need not carry any deep significance. But we find it in the Veda used, like *ritam*, in a special sense. It is described in one of the hymns (V-82) as the opposite of the evil dream (*duhswapnyam*), the false consciousness of that which is not the Ritam, and of *duritam*, false going, which means all evil and suffering. *Bhadram* is therefore equivalent to *suvitam*, right going, which means all good and felicity belonging to the state of the Truth, the Ritam. It is *Mayas*, the felicity, and the gods who represent the Truth-consciousness are described as *mayobhuvah*, those who bring or carry in their being the felicity. Thus every part of the Veda, if properly understood, throws light upon every other part. It is only when we are misled by its veils that we find in it an incoherence.

In the next verse there seems to be stated the condition of the effective sacrifice. It is the continual resort day by day, in the night and in the light, of the thought in the human being with submission, adoration, self-surrender, to the divine Will and Wisdom represented by Agni. Night and Day, *Nakto-shasa*, are also symbolical, like all the other gods in the Veda, and the sense seems to be that in all states of consciousness, whether illumined or obscure, there must be a constant submission and reference of all activities to the divine control.

For whether by day or night Agni shines out in the sacrifices; he is the guardian of the Truth, of the Ritam in man and defends it from the powers of darkness; he is its constant illumination burning up even in obscure and besieged states of the mind. The ideas thus briefly indicated in the eighth verse are constantly found throughout the hymns to Agni in the Rig Veda.

Agni is finally described as increasing in his own home. We can no longer be satisfied with the explanation of the own home of Agni as the "fire-room" of the Vedic house-holder. We must seek in the Veda itself for another interpretation and we find in the 75th hymn of the first Mandala.

*Yajā no mitrāvarun, au, yajā devān ritam brihat
agne yakshī ivam damam*

"Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods, to the Truth, the Vast; O Agni, sacrifice to thy own home."

Here *ritam brihat* and *svam damam* seem to express the goal of the sacrifice and this is perfectly in consonance with the imagery of the Veda which frequently describes the sacrifice as travelling towards the gods and man himself as a traveller moving towards the truth, the light or the felicity. It is evident, therefore that, the Truth, the Vast and Agni's own home are identical. Agni and other gods are frequently spoken of as being born in the truth, dwelling in the wide or vast. The sense, then, will be in our passage that Agni the divine will and power in man increases in the truth-consciousness, its proper sphere, where false limitations are broken down, *urāv anibādhe*, in the wide and the limitless.

Thus in these four verses of the opening hymn of the Veda we get the first indications of the principal ideas of the Vedic Rishis,—the conception of a Truth-consciousness supramental and divine, the invocation of the gods as powers of the Truth to raise man out of the falsehoods of the mortal mind, the attainment in and by this Truth of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity and the inner sacrifice and offering of what one has and is by the mortal to the Immortal as the means of the divine consummation. All the rest of Vedic thought in its spiritual aspects is grouped around these central conceptions.

DIVINE REALISATION AND MANIFESTATION

A PAPER BASED ON THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND TEACHING OF
SRI AUROBINDO

An International Congress of Philosophy was held at Sau Paulo, Brazil, from August 9 to August 16, to celebrate the 4th centennial of the City. The Paper published here served as the basis of a lecture given there on August 14.

At the final session of the Congress on August 15, when the President wound up the proceedings the lecturer was asked to represent India and say a few words.

THERE are distinct signs in the world today of a reawakening of the spiritual impulse in man; his highest aspiration once again seems to point towards the verities in which he has always believed in his more exalted moments—God, Light and Immortality. Terms like spiritual experience and religious experience, Being, Atman, Brahman, quite foreign to the literature of the earlier part of the century, occur frequently in the works of different types of writers from novelists and poets to men of science, from mystics and philosophers to sociologists.

It is generally admitted that the world is passing through a transition, but it is not quite realised, except by a few, how fundamental that transition is in its inner significance; for what outwardly seems to be a socio-cultural and political phenomenon is basically a psychological and spiritual one. Man's consciousness, engrossed for years in the surface utilities of life, has received a shock from the two World Wars, with the result that many men with a feeling of inner frustration have now begun to wonder if there is something permanent and abiding behind the anomalies of life which they can reach—a Reality immutable and secure which can give existence a meaning and value, and satisfy the deeper urges of the soul. According to Sri Aurobindo, the problems of men cannot satisfactorily be solved on the present level of human consciousness; he looks upon man as a transitional being who has not yet reached the limits of his psycho-spiritual development, and believes that the time has now come for him to take the next step in his evolution, and change from a mental into a "supramental being". The spiritual experiences that made him come to this conclusion will be examined as the argument proceeds.

The first experience that he had was of an impersonal Reality, featureless,

DIVINE REALISATION AND MANIFESTATION

relationless, absolute; later, this experience was heightened and enriched by the Personal and creative aspect of God—his entire self being filled from above by the Divine Presence. He describes these experiences in some letters to his disciples.—“To reach Nirvana was the first radical result of my own Yoga. It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world—only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above,—no abstraction,—it was positive, the only positive reality....What it brought was an inexpressible Peace, a stupendous silence, an infinity of release and freedom. I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater super-consciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusionary world gave place to one in which illusion¹ is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow....Now, that is the whole trouble in my approach to Mayavada. Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale....How then could I accept Mayavada or persuade myself to pit against the Truth imposed on me from above the logic of Shankara?”

A letter dictated by him in reply to a disciple's query explains another development: “At the same time an experience intervened: something else than himself took up his dynamic activity and spoke and acted through him but without any personal thought or initiative.” What this was he came to know when he realised the dynamic side of the Divine, and felt himself moved by that in all his actions. Another letter follows: “The personal realisation of the Divine may be sometimes with Form, sometimes without Form. Without Form, it is the presence of the living Divine Person, felt in everything. With Form, it comes with the image of the One to whom worship is offered....How

¹ In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence

it manifests depends on many things and it is too various to be reduced to a single rule. Sometimes it is in the heart that the Presence with the form is seen, sometimes in any of the other centres, sometimes above and guiding from there; sometimes it is seen outside and in front as if an embodied Person."

It is generally recognised that the ultimate Reality is One, and that by whatever path one reaches Him or It, one attains to the same Reality. This is the fundamental truth of spiritual experience. But one should not lose sight of the fact that the Divine Reality is infinite and can have several aspects and statuses of Being, different planes of Power and Light, and that His revelation to men can have many variations on a ground of identity. All seekers will attain to the same Reality, but they may not all realise the same aspect, or have the revelation on the same plane; the experience depends on many factors, the two most important being the approach of the seeker and his spiritual tendencies, and the inner soul relation he has with his Creator. Sri Aurobindo says, "There are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine and each way has its own experiences which have their own truth and stand really on a basis one in essence but complex in aspects, common to all but not expressed in the same way." All this, however, is not the limit of realisation. According to him, an all-encompassing integral experience can be had, in which God in all his totality is revealed and the truth behind creation seen. It is an experience in which all the different aspects are apprehended together in a reconciling vision, and seen together as Faces of the same Reality. It is not possible to have this integral experience on the normal human level,—not even on the spiritual-mental, where experiences are usually had. The consciousness has to be drawn inward, as is usually done; but instead of having the experience of the Divine within, or widening into the expanse of the universal Self, it has to rise to the summit of being till the Transcendent is reached, and there is an awareness of His Truth-consciousness. This Truth Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind; it has always governed his life and work, and revealed to him a movement of the Spirit which may well be of momentous consequences to the world, for it is a movement that links the Transcendent with human existence. He writes: "The passionate aspiration of man upward to the Divine has not been sufficiently related to the descending movement of the Divine leaning downward to embrace eternally Its manifestation. Its meaning in Matter has not been so well understood as Its truth in the Spirit." This is the reason behind what he calls "the denial of the ascetic". We see in the world two great denials; the first is the denial of the materialist, who embraces God's creation, but refuses to recognise the reality of God; the other is that of the ascetic, who embraces God but denies His creation, regarding it as an illusion or a phenomenal reality from which one has to escape as soon

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as possible into a transcendent Nirvana or Heaven beyond. An integral spiritual realisation, not an intellectual synthesis, that can reconcile God and human life is needed for a right understanding of the Divine intention in earth existence; and this realisation, Sri Aurobindo points out, is that of the Supramental Truth-consciousness.

When he had the experience, he found that this Transcendent Power was not directly acting upon the earth and men, but only through a series of intermediate planes—each plane having a more controlled power than the preceding one; if the Supermind could be somehow brought within the orbit of terrestrial existence and made to act directly, it would be an immense gain. The human dream of perfectibility would no longer be a dream, but an actuality—the divinisation of human life, a thing that could be realised here and now, for this Divine Power would certainly be able to transmute life from a blundering growth into an expression of Truth and Light and Harmony. He saw that the only way in which the Supermind could be established upon the earth as an operative power was for him to attain to it himself—not only in inner experience, as he had already done, for that would be a gain for him alone,—but to make it normal to his outer being, an acquisition of his nature, comprising his mind, life-force and body; and as his own nature was connected with the rest of Nature through a field of forces, its transmutation would affect the outer world. He wrote about his intention to do this: “I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. 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.”—“If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. (1935)” Once this new Power would get established in him, its influence would radiate to others. Consequently, to bring down the supramental Light and Power of God into human existence, to make the divine natural to life, became the object of the spiritual discipline advocated by him. Evidently, it is not an identity in essence between God and Nature that is meant here, but an overt manifestation of God in Nature. To appreciate his position, one must understand the imperativeness of the experience he had—its divine compulsion on his being. It is not, therefore, surprising that he says, “How then could I accept Mayavada or persuade myself to pit against *the Truth imposed on me from above* the logic of Shankara?” It is not a theory worked

out by him after a spiritual illumination that he puts forward; what he says was to him a revelation, a progressive unfolding within his consciousness of the Divine Truth. When he was criticised by the orthodox for holding a view of existence which differed from the traditional one, he wrote to a disciple: "If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, there is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision....It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that (the Supramental) down or open the way for its descent...."

These considerations made Sri Aurobindo develop a particular type of spiritual discipline, the Integral Yoga¹, and induced him to start an Ashram where the possibilities of such a divine realisation could be worked out. Just before it was started, a lady from France, having similar experiences and inspired by the same ideal, came to Pondicherry, and became the joint head of his spiritual Centre. Sri Aurobindo laid down before his disciples the cardinal tenets of his Yoga:

"By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life."

"To find the Divine is indeed the first reason for seeking the spiritual Truth and the spiritual life; it is the one thing indispensable and all the rest is nothing without it. The Divine once found, to manifest Him,—that is, first of all to transform one's own limited consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, to live in the infinite Peace, Light, Love, Strength, Bliss, to become that in one's essential nature and, as a consequence, to be its vessel, channel, instrument in one's active nature....Only when the Divine Presence is there in us always and the consciousness transformed, can we have the right to say that we are ready to manifest the Divine on the material plane."

Here a verbal confusion should be avoided, it may be said that all spiritual men, all who have had some experience, manifest the Divine. This is, no doubt, true to a certain extent, especially with regard to those who have had the higher experiences, for they act in the world from the illumination, peace and power they receive, and try to diffuse them into the world. Secondly, just as there is a spiritual tradition of withdrawing from the world, so also there is a tradition of remaining in the world even after the realisation to help others to attain to the same—the Amitabha Buddha tradition. Evidently, this is not what Sri Aurobindo has in mind, for he maintains that only in a transformed consciousness can the Divine be fully manifested; if man's nature has to hold the Divine Light, Force, Peace and Love, and transmit them to the

¹ This term has here a spiritual connotation; it means "union" (with the Divine Reality).

world, his mind, life-force, and body must first be transformed,—at least they must pass through an initial modification, for in their present state they are by no means in a position to manifest the Divine, except in a very crude and perfunctory way. For example, the mind has to change into what Sri Aurobindo calls the “Mind of Light” and become an instrument of the Supermind, before it can hope to hold this great Power in its entirety. This implies that its mode of cognition itself must change, entailing a widening of its range of vision; it must develop faculties and powers through which the supramental knowledge can be expressed. Similarly, the life-force and body have to be purified, subtilised, and strengthened in order that they may be able to handle the higher spiritual energies that flow through them, and effectuate them in the world. Prophets and saints come and go, but the world does not change; if in the Divine dispensation the world too has ultimately a value, then it must change and reveal overtly what it essentially is—a manifestation of God.

This in brief is the nature of the spiritual realisation advocated by Sri Aurobindo and his associate, the lady known to the disciples as the Mother. The important question now is: How far has this work progressed—how far have they succeeded in establishing in the world the Supramental Light and Force, and, if an appreciable amount of work has already been done, how can men outside this particular group benefit? Such a question is quite pertinent, because Sri Aurobindo himself refers to the Supermind as a terrestrial gain. It can be said that a formation of the Supermind has been created upon the earth, a nucleus from which forces can radiate outwards. The necessary connection in Nature between the Transcendent Power and the human vehicles has been definitely made, for without such a connection, the Transcendent would always remain, as we have seen, a supra-cosmic Reality acting upon the world indirectly through a series of planes. For those who are sufficiently prepared spiritually to receive the direct power of the Supermind, it will mean the beginning of a divine life. From his personal experience Sri Aurobindo describes what such a consummation will mean for one who receives this great Light: “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 .. 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.” It is worth noting that a similar experience is recorded in her

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diary¹ by his associate, the Mother.—“O Thou whom I can call my God, Thou who art the personal form of the eternal Transcendent, cause, source and reality of my individual being, who throughout the centuries and the millenniums hast slowly and subtly kneaded this Matter that one day it might consciously be identified with Thee and no longer aught else than Thou; O Thou who hast appeared to me in all Thy divine splendour—this individual being in all its complexity offers itself to Thee in an act of supreme adoration; it aspires in its entirety to be identified with Thee, eternally Thou, merged forever in Thy reality.”... “Canst Thou at last take definitive possession of it and, in the most sublime, the most integral transformation, extricate it for ever from the world of ignorance and make it live in the world of Truth? Or rather, Thou art myself divested of all error and limitation. Have I become integrally this true self in every atom of my being? Wilt Thou bring about an overwhelming transformation, or will it still be a slow action in which cell after cell must be torn out from its darkness and its limits?” No doubt, this realisation will be immediately possible for a very few only, but whoever will come under the influence of the Supermind will begin giving form to what he receives according to his spiritual temperament and capacity; he will reach the perfection of which he was immediately capable. Sri Aurobindo says that besides the supramental transformation, there will also be a minor or secondary transformation of the mental being within a freed and perfected scope of the mental nature; it would “bring a radical and transforming change in the principles and forms of his living, his ways of action and the whole build and tenor of his life.”

For those seeking this Truth Sri Aurobindo has explained the central movement of his Yoga.—“There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.” This descending Grace is the key-stone of Sri Aurobindo’s life work. In this connection one thing still remains to be said—that he associates the Divine Grace with the Mother aspect of God, the aspect of creative, redemptive and transforming Power. He says: “There is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother.”

This in bare outline is the scope and significance given by Sri Aurobindo to the terms divine realisation and manifestation; anything short of a divinisa-

¹ Published under the title “*Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.*”

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tion of the entire being would be for him a partial realisation. For those unacquainted with his writings, all this may seem rather out of the general run of spiritual realisations; but it must be conceded that each great spiritual figure teaches according to his own experience of God; the truths he inculcates can be known and experienced by following his teaching. For those who remain outside the pale of his influence, the teaching can be judged by its effects, the results it produces in those who follow it. At Sri Aurobindo's spiritual Centre there are visible signs of the new divine manifestation; as time goes by and the minds of men turn more and more towards the Spirit, the beginnings of the Mind of Light will be clearly seen even outside this Centre; as a matter of fact, the descending Supermind will itself compel this change in the world's outlook. If there is a Divine intention in existence as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, then the very pressure of the great spiritual Force made to bear upon the earth will effectuate whatever has to be effectuated. When the Light is there, it will reveal Itself—otherwise it is not the Light of God.

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THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME INTRODUCTORY NOTES

YEATS, Rilke, Valéry, Bloc: these are the indisputable peaks of poetry the West has thrown up in our times. One may extend the roll by adding Jiménez who has been outshone in the public eye so far by that more picturesque, romantic and tragic-fated countryman of his, Lorca. Several others of a little later generation, with whom Lorca connects at some points, have had a more sensational success by their revolt against all tradition and their seizing mostly in contorted or bizarre image, in complicated and intellectualised idiom, in free semi-prose versification, what they regard as the characteristic chaos of modern life. But, though we may grant them a certain liberative utility at a particular stage of poetic history, their work, even when it has a keen newness and not just oddity or perversity, falls short of the revelation of both the intense and the immense which the older masters of poetic speech bring us in various styles.

Too much of the ingenious intellect, too frequent a prose-turn and too large a preoccupation with that layer of contemporary existence on which the chaotic is luridly real, cut across the subtle seeing and hearing which is the soul of the art of poetry. They seem to clip again and again in even the most serious, most symbol-charged compositions the wings of what Bloc calls the Spirit of Music throbbing not in calendar time but in an inner dimension of Nature's life and what Rilke figures as the Angelic Order in which, at once terrifying and enrapturing, resides the absolute of earthly song and towards which man should move by opening out of physical "World" into psychological "Space".

Valéry, whose thinking mind is analytic, agnostic, doubtful of norms and reluctant to subscribe to his teacher Mallarmé's aesthetic mysticism, is yet at one with Rilke and Bloc in the personality he unfolds in his poetry. He becomes a penetrating sorter of delicate psychological depths, a poised visionary of the secret founts of his own poetic self ecstatically emerging from a strange nothingness—"Harmonieuse Moi...Mystérieuse Moi." He never forgets that imaginative exaltation and sustained vibrant form are indispensable if great poetry is to be born. We may sacrifice rhetoric as well as fixity of structure and break down the fences erected by the old schools in regard to theme, but poetry

must always be something that not merely puts into a different key what can be said in prose but also says what prose is not sufficiently tuned up to articulate.

Perhaps Jiménez in his disclosures of "the animal of the depth of air with wings that cannot fly in the air"—stringent, rarefied, evanescent disclosures depending so much on minute impetuosities and hesitations and shiftings of cadence and tone—illustrates this special function of poetry most quintessentially in certain aspects. It is illustrated too in another manner by the best product of a poet whom the so-called "modernists" often set at the centre of their cult in opposition to the bulk of verse in the past—passages of Eliot's *Four Quartets*: a fact rather curious, for, if we may judge by it, the less typically modernist a poem the more genuinely poetic it would appear to become. The finest utterances in *Four Quartets*, like the lines about "being still and still moving" or those about "the moment in and out of time", are not only broadly traditional—at the same time that they are personal—in their religious insight and urgency and akin to Rilke's during some of his tensions of passionate prophetic loneliness: they are also embodied in a flexible verse which is not at all amorphous, haphazard and prosaic but very rhythmically patterned, often directly metrical though not many lines have the same number of feet and though there is a lot of modulation in those whose feet are equal. Among the poets of contemporary England, however, Yeats, while hardly so profound a seer as his friend AE, is the articulator *par excellence* of the suggestion and the feeling beyond prose. Even when in his later work he goes outside the wizard circle of the Celtic Twilight with its "sweet everlasting voices" and puts his hand on life as lived by flesh and blood among concrete challenges, takes for use words commonly spoken and finds room for many sides of his mind, he rarely loses the magical mood, the inspired no less than measured intonation.

In the East two names have stood high in our own day, one in Urdu and Persian by a dynamic colourful passion of religious thought, the other in Bengali by a deeply and exquisitely imaged devotionism and both by an intonation inspired and measured: Iqbal and Tagore. But there is a third which is coming more and more to the front—the sole Indian poet whom, as Francis Watson reported in a radio talk from England in 1951, Yeats had singled out as writing creatively in English. And this name is likely to be found, in a final assessment, to be in a class apart. Not that the purely poetic quality of those two or of the others we have listed is less, but profundities and amplitudes and heights of experience greater than any they command are compassed and there is a royal quantity of quality in excess of anything done by them. Face to face with a multi-aspected spiritual epic like *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*, with its nearly twenty-four thousand lines, we cannot help feeling the enormous stature of Sri Aurobindo. But, even outside this performance, we have before us an abundance

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of poetic creation which is out of the ordinary in merit and convinces us that he who was famous at one time as a leader of Indian Nationalism and later made his mark as a philosopher and a master of Yoga deserves to be as well known for his poetic inspiration as for his political idealism, intellectual power and spiritual attainment.

To get him into proper focus we should mention also that his life covers a period of seventy-eight years: 1872-1950. Hence his contemporaneity is bound to be many-shaded. But here we must be free of several confusions. To be contemporary, a poet must not be expected to be, as some of the Victorians thought, the expressive channel of popular currents or, like the modernists, the mouthpiece of the exaggerations of his age. Fundamentally, to be contemporary can mean nothing more than to be, in every period of one's life, aware of the experience that is offered to one in ways never quite the same before. How much one stresses or does not stress the peculiar ways, how far one works within their terms or ranges outside them affects nowise one's contemporaneity. Again, a poet's momentousness for his age (or for all history) is not determined by any of these factors. It depends on the meaning with which his attitude is fraught and, inasmuch as the meaning is integral part of his poetry, on the art by which his matter and manner fuse and kindle up. Sri Aurobindo the poet has undoubtedly been contemporary in the fundamental sense and, in a good deal of his output, momentous. In certain respects, as we shall gather later, he is in the best sense a "futurist". Otherwise too, there is nothing to expose him, just because he is not a strict modernist nor exactly in the popular stream, to the charge of being tradition-bound, old-fashioned or remote from life. He would be vulnerable only if he were flabbily imitative or derivative, or immured in cloud-cuckoo fantasy, not if he took past forms and bent them to his own uses, chose past themes and infused them with a new significant vitality driving towards things to come, least of all if he plunged to bedrock spiritual purposes and problems instead of getting mazed in superficial or else merely fashionable perplexities.

To overlook or underrate his poetic quality would be a misfortune for the lover of literature who is not confined by specific cults.

I

Born in India on August 15, 1872, but educated from his early boyhood in England and speaking the English language as if a mother-tongue, Sri Aurobindo was already at nineteen an unmistakable poet. His juvenilia has at the same time a freshness and a finish, proving that from the beginning the artist went hand in hand with the visionary. Of course, the visioning is done by the heart of a youth and it is coloured by the temper of Romanticism which was inevitable in

the eighties. But the blending of the rich with the graceful and shapely is an effect of the Greek Muse in close contact with whom this young Indian lived at Cambridge. Echoes are not absent, but the individual note is often struck, as in the kissing of "bright Cymothea's lips"

Whose laughter dances like a gleam
Of sunlight on a hidden stream
That through a wooded way
Runs suddenly into the perfect day,

or in the hearing of the footsteps of invisible things,

When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,

or in the unexpected crossing of youthful ardensities by the shadow of an in-drawn pensiveness:

Love, a moment drop thy hands;
Night within my soul expands.
Veil thy beauties milk-rose-fair
In that dark and showering hair...

Nor is only the personal note of inspiration found in such lines: a seizure, however lightly made, of the depth of a scene, situation or mood surprises us.

Felicitous insight is the recurring mark of Sri Aurobindo's poetry from the start and it grows increasingly keener with the opening of his Europeanised mind, familiar with French, German and Italian no less than Greek and Latin, to the manifold opulence of his country's culture and life. The first result, before the nineteenth century is out, is the composition of two narratives in blank verse, that most difficult of mediums in languages that have no very prominent formal support of "quantity" in their numbers. To Sri Aurobindo blank verse came with an inspired naturalness which some critics have compared with Milton's born hand for it. His style too has been called Miltonic. But if we accept this term it must be with no thought-saving looseness. For, Milton who produced *Paradise Lost* in his old age produced also *Comus* in his twenty-seventh year: the styles of the two are not exactly the same. Indeed *Paradise Lost* is one of the world's greatest poetic achievements, yet *Comus* has a flexibility and a richness that are often missing in the huge high thunders of the epic chant. What, however, Sri Aurobindo wrote at the same age as Milton wrote *Comus*—namely, *Love and Death*, the finest among his early works in blank verse—holds in its short span of about a thousand lines a snatch of the power and amplitude found in the colossus of Milton's old age and also a subtle plastic

splendour reminiscent of *Comus*. The fusion of the early Milton with the late: this may be taken in general to characterise at its best the blank verse of Sri Aurobindo's twenties. But, while some actual influence from Milton must be admitted, there is seldom a mere repetition of style or structure: what the fusion mainly displays, besides the assured movement of line after moulded line, is just the interweaving of qualities that mostly fall apart in Milton's life. Within the fusion is a diversity of effects that cannot even remotely be always called Miltonic and, whatever the effect, a striking individuality makes itself felt.

Only in one special respect this diversity can be called invariably Miltonic. Milton, more impressively than any other eminent poet, carried the soul of past music mingled with a spirit that makes all things new. In fact, he had the avowed ambition to gather up in his *Paradise Lost* Aeschylus and Sophocles, Virgil, Lucretius and Dante into a mature mastery of style animated by his own genius and character. A consummate scholar in various literatures, deeply saturated with the great traditions of poetry, Sri Aurobindo too exhibits—particularly in the blank verse of *Love and Death*—a phenomenon of many colours from the past, the voice of diverse ages. Yet there is hardly a trace of slavish derivativeness, not a sign of the *pastiche*: only a versatile mode of expression is the outcome. Originality is almost rampant and with a technique to match of skilful consonance and metrical modulation and change of pace. Two passages may be picked out nearly at random to illustrate the individual organic nature of the poetry. One is psychologically imaginative:

...He heard

Through the great silence that was now his soul,
 The forest sounds, a squirrel's leap through leaves,
 The cheeping of a bird just overhead,
 A peacock with his melancholy cry
 Complaining far away, and tossings dim
 And slight unnoticeable stir of trees.
 But all these were to him like distant things
 And he alone in his heart's void. And yet
 No thought he had of her so lately lost.
 Rather far pictures, trivial incidents
 Of that old life before her delicate face
 Had lived for him, dumbly distinct like thoughts
 Of men that die, kept with long pomps his mind
 Excluding the dead girl. So still he was,
 The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,
 Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous

Memory through all his body shuddering
Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,
And recognised greenness immutable,
And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.
He felt the bright indifference of earth
And all the lonely uselessness of pain.

The other passage is imaginative with a weird phantasmal motif:

Hopeless Patala, the immutable
Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,
Nor happy labour of the human plough
Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns
That into silent blackness huge recede,
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues
Coiling in a half darkness.

This style which is simultaneously linked with the past and inseparable from the personality of the poet is already a vital factor—though perhaps not always free from a slight immaturity—in the narrative of nearly a thousand and five hundred lines which Sri Aurobindo wrote some years earlier than *Love and Death* and which, in view of its teeming excellences and the poet's young age (barely twenty-three), may be considered with Keats's *Hyperion* the most remarkable production in blank verse in the English tongue. *Urvasis*—the story of King Pururavas, a mortal hero, who took a nymph of heaven, an *Apsara*, for bride—is shot with an impetuous beauty and steeped in love's countless moods. A passage, capturing various phases of the tumult of desire with an alert kaleidoscopic art which casts back to the sensuous mobility of the Elizabethans and strains forward to the nervous subtlety of the moderns, may be instanced:

He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf
Before a gust among the nearing trees,
Cowered. But, all a sea of mighty joy
Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,
With a great cry and glad Pururavus
Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,
Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair
Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming
Over the shoulder of Pururavus

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And on his cheek a softness. She o'erborne,
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,
He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire.
So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.
Then strong Pururavus, with godlike eyes
Mastering hers, cried tremulous: "O beloved,
O miser of thy rich and happy voice,
One word, one word to tell me that thou lovest."
And Urvasie, all broken on his bosom,
Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out
From her imprisoned breasts, "My lord, my love!"

Nor is Sri Aurobindo in his early twenties an expert only at giving us love's leaping and engulfing joy; he has an equally skilful hand in depicting love's large desolation. When Pururavus lost Urvasie he went searching for her across woods and streams to the mountains that had framed their first meeting. He did not linger on the inferior heights,

But plunged o'er difficult gorge and prone ravine
And rivers thundering between dim walls,
Driven by immense desire, until he came
To dreadful silence of the peaks and trod
Regions as vast and lonely as his love.

The second and fifth verses here are rare triumphs of inward and outward grandeur. Those mysterious rivers that are like Pururavus's heart and those regions of silent snow that are like his mind are imaginative figurations worded and rhythmized with a strange spiritual and scriptural power that is a magnificent presage of Sri Aurobindo's later performance as a poet of Yoga. The presage is, of course, indirect since the inspiring motive is a hunger of a secular kind, high-toned though this hunger is and clear of the crude and the cramped which ordinarily go with secular impulses. But something in the visionary suggestion and in the large deep-thrilling vibrancy throws on that hunger the aspect of a veiled quest of the Infinite.

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Love and Death, too, contains a similar indirect presage in several places, as in those lines of majestic pathos:

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.

We are reminded of that high-water mark of the Miltonic "grand style severe":

Who would lose
Though full of pain this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity?

And this half-mystical accent rings out also in lines which anticipate the philosophical note soon to be developed by Sri Aurobindo and which can bear comparison with some of the best English snatches of imaginative reflection:

Not as a tedious evil nor to be
Lightly rejected gave the Gods old age,
But tranquil, but august, but making easy
The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time
Still batter down the glory and form of youth
And animal magnificent strong ease,
To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends
Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,
But called unborn into the unborn skies.

Something of the same accent mingles with a Virgilian wistfulness as well as a Dantesque puissance of emotion-charged yet controlled splendour when Ruru, seeking his beloved, moans at the sight of the untimely dead drifting on the "penal waters" of Hades:

O miserable race of men,
With violent and passionate souls you come
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror
Descend into this night, and here too soon
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.
O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads

MOTHER INDIA

Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
The naked spirit here. O my sweet flower,
Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?
Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge
Into its hopeless pools and either bring
Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,
Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom
And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.
Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;
Then we shall triumph glad of agony.

It would be difficult to find a match for so richly composite a texture with so many tones striking across it of pathos and passion. One's memory cannot help going back to that most wonderful of farewells in the presence of death, Romeo's last soliloquy, the top poetic reach of Shakespeare's youth:

Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe
That insubstantial Death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorrèd monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be thy paramour?
For fear of that, I still will stay with thee;
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again; here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids; O here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain with engrossing death!

What, however, is most noteworthy about *Love and Death* is not only its many-sided insight into the passionate heart—as in the lines just cited and in the speech of Madan, the Indian Eros, early in the poem and in several other passages—or its sense of the tears of things and, at the same time, of the indomitable smile within man's soul which wrestles with fate and triumphs over mortality, but also its intense imagination of worlds beyond earth, an occult background of strange forces and beings. This imagination is mythic rather than mystic, but typically Indian in that the unearthly is as if directly felt and seen and not just conceived vividly by the curious thought. *Urvashi* does not lack in exquisite unearthly glimpses, yet the long account—too long

to be quoted in full— of Ruru's descent into the Underworld in search of the prematurely lost Priyumvada may well be adjudged a sort of *ne plus ultra* in this genre right from its beginning,

...Horizon on horizon moved
 Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound
 All ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
 Curving with monstrous menace over him.
 He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
 Descending, saw with floating hair arise
 The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
 And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
 A mute stupendous march of waters race
 To reach some viewless pit beneath the world....

The blank verse of both *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* is surprisingly supple for the late Victorian era when liberties were not very usual. We may glance at a few of these early manifestations of Sri Aurobindo's sensitive technique. The dangerous second foot is inverted in

The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings

and followed by what is nearly a trochee, a light one which at the same time seems to keep up the suddenness suggested by the first and join up with the run of slack syllables between "flashed" and the three stressed ones at the end. This run suggests the brevity of the flashing and, we may add, the concluding trio of stresses in which only one stress falls on an intrinsically long vowel conveys too the quick though unmistakable passage and the diminutive though definite disturbance. In

Giant precipices black-hewn and bold

there is a strong double trochee at the start making a clear counterpoint to the iambic beat, a counterpoint which resolves into regularity only at the close after passing through a pair of peculiar knots of the two movements: a doubly slack third foot and a doubly accented fourth. A very effective combination of unexpected feet, commencing with a dactyl, is:

Lingering, while the wind smote him with her hair.

But perhaps the most memorable is:

Mad the boy thrilled upwards, then spent ebbed back.

MOTHER INDIA

The rhythm starting with a trochee, followed by a spondee, again a trochee, a semi-spondee and a full spondaic foot, renders the technique keenly expressive of the sudden access of emotion becoming strong and sustained enough to create a break in the normal movement of life and cause a vertical leap, as it were, and, by that extraordinary effort, exhausting itself and making the leaper drop into the old posture, with a slow weight at first and afterwards heavily all a heap

Some instances of originality in the word-technique of these early narratives may also be marked. In the lines from *Urvashi*,

Suddenly
From motionless battalions as outride
A speed disperse of horsemen,

there is not only a Miltonic syntax but the word “disperse” is a verbal adjective making a new successful Miltonism. A creative touch of the Latin scholar in Sri Aurobindo is present too in the phrase from *Love and Death*:

But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears
Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve
Or pay with anguish through the centuries.

The word “absolve” is used not in its English sense of releasing from sins or from debts, but in its Latin connotation of paying off a debt and then too with a stretched sense, for instead of saying “I will pay off with tears” Ruru says “I will pay off tears” as the price of the absolution—a deliberate incorrectness, a purposive violence to the language for the sake of poetic tension. Apropos Latinisation, a piquantly imaginative term may be pointed out in

As a bright bird comes flying
From airy extravagance to his own home,

where “extravagance” is employed with its Latin connotation of “wandering outside” striking through the English sense of excess or immoderation. A word-originality achieved by a small stroke of colloquial, in preference to academic, grammar is in:

...but behind me, older than me,
He comes with night and cold tremendous shade.

We have, in the second “me” with its cumulative power, an example where to be ungrammatical is better than being ineffective in sense or intolerable in rhythm with the more correct and literary “I”. Shelley too knew this when

in his *Ode to the West Wind* he said: "Be thou me...." Finally, we may cite as word-originality of another type the suggestive effect of consonantal sounds in the line mentioning one of the Snake-lords of the Underworld—

Magic Carcotaka all flecked with fire—

a line of splendid art in both visual and rhythmical impact from that mythic imagination which is among the most noteworthy features of *Love and Death*.

2

The mythic imagination passes more and more into the mystic as Sri Aurobindo penetrates to the very centre of the Indian consciousness and begins to practise Yoga. But this mysticism is not only free from a mere cloudy hugeness: it is also not restricted to a fiery teeming with ethereal populations: the earthly and the human are mostly filled out by it to a divinity of their own in a vibrant continuity with the supra-terrestrial, the ultra-human. And this bent towards synthesis but transposes to a new plane what was already an effective element in his Romanticist work. For, that work, as we have remarked, combines something Elizabethan and something modern with the nineteenth-century Romanticism. The combination is chiefly evident in a voluptuous directness—nothing vulgar or lascivious yet a sharp frank awareness of the impassioned body and its enamoured rhythms. This combination affines *Urvasie* and *Love and Death* to the poetry of Kalidasa's, as perhaps might be guessed from the fact that the former treats in essence the same theme as a play of Kalidasa's which Sri Aurobindo translated soon after. And the fine this-worldly energy shown thus in the Romanticist make-up persists in many forms, with a bright eye on the immediately tangible, in all of Sri Aurobindo's subsequent creation.

It is inevitably evident in the dramatic pieces he began composing. They take up some psychological movement, either a general phase of the development of man's mind or the persistent trait of a nation and personalise it in a well-knit scheme of vividly interplaying characters. Out of these dramatic pieces—mostly in the Romanticist tradition though without the crude piling on of externally daubed effects or the tearing of the passion into garish tatters, that often disfigure this tradition—only one has been published: *Perseus the Deliverer*. This play is on the Elizabethan model and is Elizabethan too in its blank verse, but at places the semi-mythic semi-mystic manner comes in or else a barer more intellectualised style. Of the vehement vein a sample is the piquant simile about a shipwreck—

MOTHER INDIA

From all sides
The men are shaken out, as rattling peas
Leap from a long and bursting sheath,
or that sadistic phrase about wrenching and distorting the body
till each inch of flesh
Gives out its separate shriek,
or the exaggeration—

The sea
Is tossed upon itself and its huge bottoms
Catch chinks of unaccustomed day.

The semi-mythic semi-mystic manner vibrates in lines like

If thou hadst lived as I,
Daily devoted to the temple dimness,
And seen the awful shapes that live at night,
And heard the awful sounds that move at will
When Ocean with the midnight is alone,
Thou wouldst not doubt.

The quieter and more idea-limpid style meets us in

The people's love
Is a glimmer of quicksands in a gliding sea:
Today they are with thee, tomorrow turn elsewhere.
Wisdom, strength, policy alone are sure,

or in

Then let the shrine
That looked out from earth's breast into the sunlight
Be cleansed of its red memory of blood,
And the Dread Form that lived within its precincts
Transfigure into a bright compassionate God.

But the more typical mode of expression has the Elizabethan colour. Elizabethan to the marrow are also the prose passages in the play, racy and even verging wittily on the improper—passages that seem not really intrusions from another medium but integrally woven into the play as well as into the verse-portions in their respective scenes. And both the poetry and the prose, however Romanticist in texture, are orientated towards flesh-and-blood actualities and, in some shape or other, the sense of the tangible runs almost everywhere.

THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

This sense and that orientation take an extreme and martial shape during the dawn of the mystic in Sri Aurobindo. For, at first, the mysticism is part of a movement towards a novel nationalist resurgence against foreign rule, in which the country of birth is viewed and worshipped as a mighty Mother Spirit that is a face and front of the supreme Power creative of the universe. A virile offspring of this political mysticism is the narrative *Baji Prabhou*, founded on the historical incident of the self-sacrifice made by Baji Prabhou who to cover Shivaji's retreat held the fort of Rangana for over two hours with a small company against twelve thousand Moghuls. It is a blank verse no longer packed with colour and sorcery, passion and fantasy, but there is no dearth of expressive intensity. It is vibrant with the warrior's enthusiasm:

His fierce heart hungered for the rear, where Death
Was singing mid the laughter of the swords...

And there is a sweep of battalions in the poem, changing at times to the staccato rapidity of close combat, with a pressing of many shades of meaning into a few forceful phrases. It is Sri Aurobindo's greatest contribution to patriotic literature, but it is more than patriotism, for its principal merit is the satisfying manner in which is disclosed the spiritual core of the Mahratta insurgence under Shivaji. The key-passage, therefore, is the one in which Baji has been summoned and is being commissioned by Shivaji to defend a "tiger-throated gorge" until his return with reinforcements. While Baji stands thoughtful before the Chief, Tanaji Malsure speaks out:

"Not for this little purpose was there need
To call the Prabhou from his toil. Enough,
Give me five hundred men; I hold the pass
Till thy return." But Shivaji kept still
His great and tranquil look upon the face
Of Baji Prabhou. Then, all black with wrath,
Wrinkling his fierce hard eyes, the Malsure:
"What ponders then the hero? Such a man
Of men, he needs not like us petty swords
A force behind him, but alone will hold
All Rajasthan and Agra and Cabool
From rise to set." And Baji answered him:
"Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
Is a man's manhood seated. God within
Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog

Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
 By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
 Or Malsure is but a name, a robe
 And covers One alone. We but employ
 Bhavani's strength, who in an arm of flesh
 Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.
 I ask for fifty swords." And Malsure:
 "Well, Baji, I will build thee such a pyre
 As man had never yet, when we return;
 For all the Deccan brightening shall cry out,
 Baji the Prabhou burns!" And with a smile
 The Prabhou answered: "Me thou shalt not burn.
 For this five feet or more of bone and flesh,
 Whether pure flame or jackals of the hills
 Be fattened with its rags, may well concern
 Others, not Baji Prabhou." And the Chief
 With a high calmness in his shining look,
 "We part, O friend, but meet again we must,
 When from our tasks released we both shall run
 Like children to our Mother's clasp."...

Round about the time the vigorous and down-to-earth and yet extremely idealistic poem on the feat of Baji Prabhou was written, Sri Aurobindo produced many other pieces and we note not only the heroic fusing with the mystic but also the philosopher unfolding within the Yogi. A miniature marvel of this philosophic Muse—despite a couple of well-worn rhymes—are the eight lines entitled *God*:

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
 Yet sitst above,
 Master of all who work and rule and know,
 Servant of Love.

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
 Nor even the clod,
 Therefore we know by that humility
 That thou art God.

The thought-element cannot but be marked, even the argumentative turn is there, and yet the speech is direct and concretely suggestive of the Transcendent who is also the Cosmic and the Immanent: the brief crystallised ex-

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pression points home some of the paradoxes of the Divine Presence in relation to the created world.

Most of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical poetry is precise without either abstractness on the one hand or on the other a too-superficial clarity. Here and there a dry touch, a pursuit of the idea rather than the metaphysical reality behind it are perceptible, but, by and large, the philosopher and the poet suffer no divorce—and, when the full Yogi suffuses and absorbs both the poet and the philosopher, truth and beauty become identical and grow one body of something deeper: sheer spiritual Light. But before this transformation occurs we have a large utterance of the animated intellect, blending the simple with the subtle as in *God*, energetically pointed and deliberate as in *A Vision of Science*, swiftly and sweepingly powerful as in *To the Sea*, massive and majestic as in *The Rishi*. The intellect succeeds in Sri Aurobindo not only because its perceptions and discriminations are Spirit-touched but also because he puts behind them a vigorous "vital" being. *To the Sea* brings this *élan vital* effectively forward into the play of ideas pitting the aspiring infinite in man against the perilous infinite of world-circumstance:

O grey wild sea,
Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
Their huge wide backs
Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks
Dug deep between.
One pale boat flutters over them hardly seen.
I hear thy roar
Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore
With fearful eyes
Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?
This trivial boat
Dares my vast battering billows and can float.
Death if it find,
Are there not many thousands left behind?
Dare my wide roar,
Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.
Come down and know,
What rapture lives in danger and o'erthrow."
Yes, thou great sea,
I am more mighty and outbillow thee.
On thy tops I rise;
'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.
I sink below

MOTHER INDIA

The bottom of the clamorous world to know.
On the safe land
To linger is to lose what God has planned
For man's wide soul,
Who set eternal godhead for its goal.
Therefore He arrayed
Danger and difficulty like seas and made
Pain and defeat,
And put His giant snares around our feet.
The cloud He informs
With thunder and assails us with His storms,
That man may grow
King over pain and victor of o'erthrow
Matching his great
Unconquerable soul with adverse Fate.
Take me, be
My way to climb the heavens, thou rude great sea.
I will seize thy mane,
O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;
Or else below
Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,
Receive thy weight
Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate.
I come, O sea,
To measure my enormous self with thee.

The Rishi has a more contained tone which lets the ideative element stand out in subtler colours. Among Sri Aurobindo's compositions of this period it is especially notable because of the original form it achieves by its pairs of rhymed pentameters interwoven with a *terza rima* of two-foot lines, and its poetry sustained at considerable length, and its weighty thought-content. That thought-content, for all its initial stress on the search for a remote and absolute One—

The many's voices throng the listening ear,
Distract the head:
The One is silence; on the snows we hear
Silence tread—

is in its polyphonous progression and final resolution a forerunner of the comprehensive message of the Aurobindonian Yoga. This Yoga does not seek

to be lost in a far-off Immutable to the entire forgetfulness of earth-existence: it sees the fundamental unity as the possessor of an innumerable potentiality and as a Creative Being who actualises that potentiality in some perfect plane of divine archetypes and towards whom our souls must rise and through whom we must strive for an evolutionary expression of these archetypes in our entire nature and for a harmony of the One and the many in a new collective life.

Sri Aurobindo's feeling of divine concreteness behind the philosophical intellect's graspings of significance on high significance within the passing pageant of time-born figures

Like transient shapes that sweep with half-guessed truth
A luminous wall,

we may conjecture from the poetic flashes of pure vision that during this period intersperse now and then the rhythmic unrolling of lofty and difficult conceptions. The most gemlike flash is *Revelation*:

Someone leaping from the rocks
Past me ran with wind-blown locks
Like a startled bright surmise
Visible to mortal eyes,—
Just a cheek of frightened rose
That with sudden beauty glows,
Just a footstep like the wind
And a hurried glance behind,
And then nothing,—as a thought
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
Someone of the heavenly rout
From behind the veil ran out.

The seer in Sri Aurobindo was keeping pace, though not always openly, with the sage in him in the march towards what we have termed "sheer spiritual Light."

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

THE MENTAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE BODY

SADHAKA: There is a doubt in the physical mind whether, when the mental proper and the vital are not totally quieted, the purification of the physical can begin.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does it imagine that everything is done by sections? All the parts of the being react upon each other. The purification of the physical being is long but the mind and the vital are thoroughly and permanently cleaned. (31-5-1934)

SADHAKA: There is a feeling of the Mother's Force having entered into my physical nature and now working there. Is it correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a pressure on the physical nature to admit the Force. (7-6-1934)

SADHAKA: When the tamas and rajas are driven out, one is in a sattwic state. But if the tamas enters again into this state how can an utter quietness be maintained?

SRI AUROBINDO: You cannot drive out rajas and tamas, you can only convert them and give the predominance to sattwa. Tamas and rajas disappear only when the higher consciousness not only comes down but controls everything down to the cells of the body. They then change into the divine rest and peace and the divine energy or Tapas,—finally sattwa also changes into the divine Light. As for remaining quiet when tamas is there, there can also be a tamasic quiet. (3-7-1934)

SADHAKA: During the general morning concentration, my human consciousness went deep into the inner being and began to aspire. There it felt the working of the Mother's Force which slowly became more and more intense. My body could not bear its pressure for a long time. So I brought my consciousness out for a rest and again took it inward; like this it went on for some time.

SRI AUROBINDO: When the body cannot bear, one has to go slowly, doing as much as possible without disturbing it. (4-7-1934)

SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SADHAKA: You have said, "When the body cannot bear one has to go slowly". At present the body is not accustomed to the action of the Force. Would it not be gradually habituated by the Force itself? Is it necessary to make the action slow?

SRI AUROBINDO: I said "if it *cannot* bear." If it can bear even with difficulty, it is all right.

SADHAKA: Almost for the whole day the previous experience of the mind's liberation was going on. During the physical activities it was not felt so vividly and exclusively. What I fail to grasp is, however, this: since it is a (purely) mental liberation, how is it that my flesh too feels some experience?

SRI AUROBINDO: The flesh has a consciousness as well as the mind—all the consciousness is connected together so if the mind is freed, there is no reason why there should not be an effect on the physical also. (17-8-1934)

SADHAKA: Let me tell you what happened during my noon nap. I was on the lap of the Mother. She had put her transforming palm on my head. With her thumb she was pressing or rather opening the Brahmic centre of my head. I began to feel as if something were received from there. Then all on a sudden there was a shifting of the consciousness into some other world. A supraphysical light was experienced in the cells of the body which was already flooded with the light. The physical itself was taken up. Will you please explain this phenomenon?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nothing to explain. It was what you describe: At once the raising of the consciousness to a higher plane and the descent of that into the physical. (5-9-1934)

SADHAKA: The pressures on the head are just normal. But today's special working seems to be on the eyes. Something definitely is going on there.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is when the Force is preparing the body. (17-9-1934)

SADHAKA: It would really be interesting to know what is going on in the parts between my head and neck?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a preparation of the body for the mental transformation.

SADHAKA: My body-consciousness does not resist as before, and allows itself to be used by me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Evidently there has been much progress there. (1-10-1934)

MOTHER INDIA

SADHAKA: An atmosphere of growing dullness is felt all the time. A complete absence of any inner movement. What on earth is the matter?

SRI AUROBINDO: The dullness must be thrown off—Probably something of the physical must have come up with this inertia. (2-10-1934)

SADHAKA: Was not yesterday's dullness more of a general than individual kind? My friend H also says, "As though the very air had suddenly grown colourless and dull and sorrowful like an unanswered prayer." Of course I do not quite agree with his image of "unanswered prayer". For, when our prayers are not responded to, it does not create dullness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably it was not altogether individual—it was in the air.

Possibly, the turmoil in the atmosphere created by these things [the coming of a famous dancer in the Ashram and the diversion of some persons' attention to this event] may have disturbed a little the outer consciousness. This kind of disturbance can be got rid of by a renewed concentration. (3-10-1934)

SADHAKA: When the Mother's Force tackles the physical, cannot the body allow it to work quietly as the mind and vital do?

SRI AUROBINDO: The law of the physical is inertia, dullness, obstruction to whatever is new or not yet established. (13-10-1934)

SADHAKA: Even when the physical throws up inertia, is it not possible to cast off dullness and sorrow brought in by the inertia and continue maintaining our normal state of happiness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but it needs a strong poise and great vigilance. Normally it is only after one has had a taste of dullness and inertia that one recovers. (3-10-1934)

SADHAKA: After the general evening meditation the whole of my head (down to the neck) became as if unreal to my consciousness.—No substance was felt there.

SRI AUROBINDO: That happens when the consciousness is liberated from the body sense. (6-10-1934)

SADHAKA: At present, since the descent of the Mother's Force is the only movement prominent, why do I feel an increasing weakness in the body?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably the material is not yet open enough to receive the Force. (9-10-1934)

SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SADHAKA: During the state of self-realisation very little sense remains of my body. I do not know what it does or holds or even where it lies.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is usual. I was in that way unconscious of the body for many years. (15-10-1934)

SADHAKA: The daily life shows that my vital is yet in a state of indifference. That is, though it may not be resisting the Divine to a great degree it does not join in the sadhana actively. If it were strong enough the frequent lapses into the mental inertia could have been avoided.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I suppose the difficulty is more in the physical than the vital. (16-10-1934)

SADHAKA: Sometimes the outer being feels unhappy because it finds nothing substantial in the passivity of the emptiness. I hope this difficulty will disappear when the bliss is poured into this voidness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the (external) lower vital and physical which feel like that sometimes.

SADHAKA: There seems to be some fundamental difficulty in my physical. During the working hours it comes up so powerfully that I fail to resist its action.

SRI AUROBINDO: The physical consciousness has a force of inertia which makes it always go on with its old conditions, movements, responses, habits even without sanction or any true utility in them. (17-10-1934)

SADHAKA: The Mother appears to have thrown out of me the inertia which was hanging so heavily on me. Now could I be sure of a relief for some time at least?

SRI AUROBINDO: One cannot be sure—so long as there is any support for it anywhere, it can return. (18-10-1934)

SADHAKA: The activities of the subconscious and mechanical mind are the only prominent factor at present. There is none to govern or control them. So my general consciousness is in a state of oscillation finding no place to stick on for the concentration. It is a pity that such a lapse should occur when the November Darshan is approaching.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the physical resistance which came up in you (the vital dissatisfaction with the emptiness giving it a chance) and in the physical resistance there is an obstinate inertia. Its note is "stay where you are." Probably you will have to resort to an active aspiration to get rid of the obstructive inertia.

It got its way this time, so it is encouraged to persevere. (10-11-1934)

MOTHER INDIA

SADHAKA: In the evening I felt something descending and reaching down to the chest. Probably it was the Mother's Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably—You should establish the Force now in the form of a strong peace.

SADHAKA: Many a time my mind (specially the physical mind) has mistaken the inertia to be emptiness or voidness. It needs to be properly enlightened about both of these modes.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the tendency of the physical to substitute its own inertia for the emptiness. The true emptiness is the beginning of what I call in the Arya "shama"—the rest, calm, peace of the eternal Self—which has finally to replace *tamas*, the physical inertia. *Tamas* is the degradation of *shama*, as *rajas* is the degradation of *Tapas*, the Divine Force. The physical consciousness is always trying to substitute its own inertia for the calm, peace or rest of the true consciousness, just as the vital is always trying to substitute its *rajas* for the true action of the Force.

SADHAKA: For the last three Darshans it has been noticed that the physical consciousness rises up and disturbs the free play of my consciousness just during these days.

SRI AUROBINDO: The obstacles still in the Nature very often rise up at these times. That means that they offer themselves to be overcome,—that is how you must take it. (12-11-1934)

SADHAKA: Since my self has separated from the nature, I don't understand why it does not keep the physical under its control as it has done with the mind and the vital.

SRI AUROBINDO: The physical is more difficult to get permanently under the control—it takes time. (10-12-1934)

SADHAKA: It is interesting to watch this phenomenon: on one side the physical is striving its best to pull down my heightened consciousness while on the other the self persists in spreading it out everywhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what has to be done; to bring peace and silence fully into the physical.

SADHAKA: The difficulty in understanding this blessed *tamas* is that I do not usually feel its presence in my body. It rather predominates in the lower ranges of the mind.

SĀDHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably the tamas is not so much in the body consciousness as in the subconscious or the environmental physical consciousness. (11-12-1934)

SADHAKA: I fail to understand why and how the physical rises up somewhat at a definite time. If this could be known, I thought, its inertia could be checked before it entered.

SRI AUROBINDO: It has no particular cause for rising at that time—it is a sort of rhythm it has taken—The rhythm has to be broken, i.e. it must not be allowed to return at that time. (12-12-1934)

SADHAKA: It was just yesterday that I wrote to you about the regular returning of the inertia; here is the result of the Mother's work. She made my consciousness not only separate itself from the inertia but also throw the inertia out of the being by its will-force this evening.

SRI AUROBINDO: That also is very good. The physical when it wants to obscure the consciousness, must not be allowed to have its way. On the contrary, it must accept whatever comes from above. (13-12-1934)

SADHAKA: On one side my consciousness feels as if the physical were tending to be quiet and peaceful while on the other as if it were trying to resist everything with its inertia. How do you reconcile these opposite tendencies?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is either different parts of the physical or else different states of the physical. In the former case the two opposite tendencies can go together, in the latter they alternate. (14-12-1934)

SADHAKA: Some say that it is not possible to fix peace in the outer physical till the Supramental descent, and that there is only one man in the world who has done it up to now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who says that? Peace can be brought down into the physical—to its very cells. It is the active transformation of the physical that cannot be *completely* done without the supramental descent. (11-12-1934)

NAGIN DOSHI

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XIX

THE INTEGRAL PERFECTION

“A DIVINE perfection of the human being is our aim.” It is not only the perfection of the soul—the soul is, indeed, eternally perfect in itself—but the harmonious perfection of the whole being, inner and outer, that is sought in the Integral Yoga. In the last chapter we have traced the long, meandering course of the triple transformation. We can now say that the victorious consummation of that transformation is the perfection and fulfilment we aim at in this Yoga. “To be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect” is not an idle dream of the religious visionary, but the deepest, ineradicable urge of the human consciousness and its most irrepressible aspiration; and the spiritual endeavour of man cannot cease till this integral perfection is attained and expressed in his life. Life is expression, and a complete perfection in expression is the ultimate object of human living. Any spiritual discipline that draws us away from this rightful expression of our evolving soul defeats the very purpose of the soul’s descent here and disturbs the balance of individual and social economy. And since man is a complex being, multiple in his aspects and attributes, his perfection must needs be a manifold perfection, fully expressive of the infinite potentialities of his nature. His spiritual, mental, emotional, volitional and physical parts must all attain to their utmost perfection if they are meant to be instruments of the divine manifestation in the material world.

Perfection really means a growth into the nature of the Divine Being. It is to be one with the Divine in His divine Nature, sarupya or sadharmya. Oneness in consciousness with the Divine, sayujya, or closeness to the divine Presence, samipya, has always been the usual object of spiritual seeking; but oneness in nature, the assumption of the dynamic divine nature, Para-Prakriti, is an achievement rarely aspired for and never yet fully realised. And if some such kind of perfection has been at all aimed at, it was confined to the mind, the heart and the vital being; the body’s divine potentialities were not fully explored, the traditional contempt for its grossness and inertia standing in the

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way of such an exploration. In the Integral Yoga the body is considered as important as any other instrument, and its divine perfection is sought with a most thorough and scrupulous care. A divine being in a divine body is the formula of perfection in the Integral Yoga.

There are four prerequisites for the work of perfection: shakti, virya, daivi prakriti and shraddha. Shakti means the fully developed powers of the members of the instrumental nature; virya, the perfected dynamis of the soul-nature; daivi prakriti, the assumption of these powers into the working of the divine Power; and shraddha, a perfect faith in all the parts of our being to invoke and sustain the action of the divine Power. A fundamental active equality supporting the play of the gnosis or the supramental Light-Force in the human nature is the best condition for the divine perfection we seek. "The gnosis once effectively called into action will progressively take up all the terms of intelligence, will, sense-mind, heart, the vital and sensational being, and translate them by a luminous and harmonising conversion into a unity of the truth, power and delight of a divine existence. It will lift into that light and force and convert into their own highest sense our whole intellectual, volitional, dynamic, ethical, aesthetic, sensational, vital and physical being."¹

THE HEIGHTENING OF THE CAPACITIES OF THE INSTRUMENTS

Let us take the body first. We do not know, we do not even care to inquire what incalculable powers slumber in the depths of our physical being and what potentialities are involved in its relation with the subtle and the causal body. All spiritual experience testifies to the existence of a subtle body behind our gross physical frame, and a causal body behind the subtle. This causal body is made of the very substance of light and bliss and contains all the principles of perfection which our earthly body is destined to embody and express. Our mortal form is not cut off from its causal prototype, it is, on the contrary, intimately connected with it; and if the centres that link our gross body with the subtle and the causal could be opened up, there would be no end to the perfection of the physical body—the infinite potentialities of the karana or causal sheath would be automatically actualised in the gross. Hathayoga, Rajayoga, Tantra etc. opened up some of these centres, but the highest ones still remained sealed, and the supreme principles of a dynamic divine perfection could not be brought down and established here in Matter for a general realisation in humanity. All that could be achieved, all that was intended to be

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

achieved, was the realisation of some of the marvellous possibilities of the subtle physical in the gross body; and the ultimate aim of these yogas being the renunciation of the material life, no further perfection of the body was thought either necessary or possible. But the Integral Yoga makes the bringing down of these dynamic principles of perfection its chief objective. The opening up of the gnostic sheath, the vijnanamaya kosha, in us and the canalising of its powers and potentialities into the gross body is the secret of the physical perfection promised by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Gnosis or Vijnana spontaneously opens into the Bliss-Self or the Anandamaya Purusha. The Bliss of the Divine has a dual aspect in regard to the worlds and beings it creates—it is at once Love and Beauty, upheld by delight and instinct with Power. When we awake in the Bliss-sheath and its powers of transfiguring love and creative harmony descend into our whole being, it will be the bursting out of the splendour of a divine spring, a carnival of apocalyptic revelation. Ananda is the supreme creative Force, and its direct and unhindered action in the human nature is the guarantee of the highest divine perfection.

The preliminary fourfold perfection of the body is the development of the qualities of mahattwa, bala, laghuta and dharana-samarthya. This development will make the body an apt instrument of the Spirit. Mahattwa is “the presence of a greatness of sustaining force”, bala is “an abounding strength, energy and puissance of outgoing and managing force”, laghuta, “a lightness, swiftness and adaptability of the nervous and physical being”, and dharana-samarthya, “a holding and responsive power in the whole physical machine and its driving spirings.” The body will be filled with the majesty and might of the spiritual force, and this force is the conscious transcendental and universal Shakti accomplishing Her Will and Purpose in the individual frame by a perennial supply of strength and executive energy. The body will shed all its impeding heaviness and sloth and slowness of movement and become wonderfully light and agile and readily responsive and adaptable in its cells and nerves and tissues to all the demands of the Spirit. It will develop an unlimited capacity to hold without spilling all the torrents of power and energy that will pour into it from above, and respond with a glad freedom and flexibility to the impulsion of the divine Will in it.

There are many other possible achievements of the body which the human mind in its inveterate bondage to the so-called laws of Nature is hardly capable of considering as within the province of concrete reality. There is a tradition of spiritual culture that testifies to the development of the subtle senses and the assumption of an ethereal body, supple and radiant, by the initiates of some special types of yoga. But what distinguishes the Integral Yoga from the other

yogas in its ideal of the physical perfection is its absolute insistence on the invulnerability of the gross physical body to all attacks of the forces of disruption and disintegration in the material world. It is not any kind of dematerialisation that is held up as the ideal, or the assumption of a bright, etheric body, but the divinisation of the physical body itself in all its cells and nerves and constituting elements and energies. It is rendering the body immune to decay and death and perfectly plastic to the touch of the Spirit—a conscious vessel of the self-manifesting Truth-Light.

The fourfold perfection of the prana or the vital being will be purnata, prasannata, samata and bhogasamarthya. Purnata is fullness. The prana must be full of strength and agility and a tireless drive of radiant energies. It is for the fullness and brimming wealth of the vital that the Vedic Rishis invoked the aid of the Aswins, “the twin divine powers whose special function is to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and enjoyment.” The sacrifice of Ashwamedha¹ was also a symbolic offering of the life-energy to the Divine, so that He could pour His riches into it and perfect it for the fulfilment of His Will in the world. A full prana is the most important condition for divine action and manifestation. Nothing great can be achieved in life except by the force and fervour of prana. Prasannata is a crystal purity and gladness. The prana must not be a restless, passionate force spilling or frittering itself on unworthy pursuits, or discouraged and depressed by any ascetic severity. It must be full of joy and buoyancy and a profound, inviolable placidity. Samata is equality. The prana must not be swayed by the fickle likes and dislikes of the surface nature, but remain serene and unperturbed in the face of all experiences. Freedom from all desire is the surest means of establishing samata in the prana. An equal prana will accept whatever comes to it from the Divine, without any of the disturbing reactions that accompany the normal vital movements of desires and preferences. And it must develop the power of an illimitable possession and enjoyment, sarvabhogasamarthya, which is, indeed, its main function. The prana is not meant to be a “slain or mortified thing, dull in its receptive power, dreary, suppressed, maimed, inert or null. It must have a full power of possession, a glad power of enjoyment, an exultant power of pure and divine passion and rapture.” It must feel a spiritual rapture in all the movements of the nature and all the experiences, relations and contacts of its existence.

The fourfold perfection of the heart is saumyatwa, tejas, kalyan, -shraddha and prema-samarthya. Saumyatwa is a large and limpid sweetness, a beaming and benign gentleness, and a winning grace and lovable candour. A smiling heart

¹ The horse is a symbol of life-energy.

of illimitable love and tenderness and sweetness is a fit temple for Mahalakshmi, as we have already seen. But there must not go with this sweetness and grace any emotional weakness or limpness, any flaccid or florid sentimentality. There must be an abounding Rudra-power in the heart, a high strength and force "capable of supporting without shrinking an insistent, an outwardly austere, or even where need is, a violent action." This is Tejas. It is the flaming force of Ishan or Mahakali that strikes out of love and compassion and beats into suppleness and symmetry the elements of nature that rebel against the action of Light. But both saumyatwa and tejas must be broad-based on an untrembling equality of the soul. Kalyan-shradha is "a faith in the heart, a belief in and will to the universal good, an openness to the universal ananda." This faith and will must be founded upon the inner perception that the Divine is everywhere, not only in passive immanence but as an active, all-ordaining and all-achieving Presence, as a supreme, unfailing, guiding Power. All processes of the yoga, all experiences, inner and outer, all contacts and dealings of the world must be viewed in the light of the truth that the Divine is the sole omnipotent Master of the whole universe, and that nothing can happen, within us and without, without His Will and sanction. One has to see even in the worst of calamities and dangers the sustaining and succouring hand of the Supreme and His dispensation of infinite love and compassion. Grief, suffering, disgrace, defeat—everything is so decreed and so arranged by the divine Love that it cannot but conduce to the spiritual progress of the sadhaka, if he can remain unwavering in this kalyana-shraddha. Prema-samarthya is a limitless capacity for love. The main function of the heart being love, it is through the heart alone that we can enter into a dynamic oneness with the Divine and with all beings. This capacity for love has to be developed to such an extent that nothing in the world and beyond the world should remain outside its embrace. The Divine has to be loved in Himself and in all His myriad forms and representations, irrespective of their phenomenal differences. Friend and foe, saint and sinner, the high and the low, the ugly and the beautiful—all have to be loved as oneself, as selves of the one Self, as the many self-figurations of the eternal Identical. This is the highest perfection of the heart of the human being before it is supramentalised, this unlimited capacity for widest and closest and most intense rapturous love.

The fourfold perfection of the buddhi is vishuddhi, prakash, vichitra-bodha and sarva-jnana-samarthya. The intelligence must become pure and wide and crystal-clear. It must be washed clean of all pranic desire mixing with its search for truth. It must remain constantly open to Truth, and nothing but Truth, undeflected by the insistences of the vital. It must likewise be kept absolutely free from the riot of the emotions, which distort, falsify and darken Truth. It must also be liberated from its own defects, "inertia of the thought-

power, obstructive narrowness and unwillingness to open to knowledge, intellectual unscrupulousness in thinking, prepossession and preference, self-will in the reason and false determinations of the will to knowledge.”¹ “Its sole will must be to make itself an unsullied mirror of the truth, its essence and its forms and measures and relations; a clear mirror, a just measure, a fine and subtle instrument of harmony, an integral intelligence.”² If it becomes calm and vast and clear, it will be able to reflect the higher light without deflecting or distorting it. It will then become “a serene thing of light, a pure and strong radiance emanating from the sun of Truth.” “But, again, it must become not merely a thing of concentrated dry or white light, but capable of all variety of understanding (vichitra-bodha), supple, rich, flexible, brilliant with all the flame and various with all the colours of the manifestation of the Truth, open to all its forms.”³ This is vichitra-bodha—a various and many-sided capacity of the buddhi. Sarva-jnana-samarthyā is the comprehensive, many-aspected capacity for acquiring and assimilating all forms of knowledge, unobstructed by any habitual or normal bias. A wide catholicity and coordinating power of the intelligence will abolish the narrow moulds and rigid formulas which stand in the way of the expansion of our mental horizons and hold us captives of our own limited thoughts. The buddhi must become large and luminous, and freely open to all revelations, intuitions and inspirations that stream down from the heights of the Spirit.

The perfection described above is the preliminary perfection of the instruments which has to be linked to the manifest power of the soul and lit up and exalted by it. The soul-force, pouring into the instruments, will raise the perfection from the normal levels of the nature to the spiritual, and galvanise it with its native dynamis. All the powers of the instruments will undergo a soul-change and develop towards universality and impersonality. They will no longer remain and function as mind-powers, life-powers and powers of the physical constitution of the individual, but work as overt powers of the liberated soul, instinct with its fire and revealing its pure light and bliss.

The final perfection will come when the Divine and His Shakti will be revealed behind the action of the soul-force and raise all the working of the instruments into the fullness and glory of the supramental Power. Earth has not seen, man has not yet conceived of this supramental perfection—it is unimaginably vast and glorious, it is the infinite perfection of the Divine Himself. All parts of the sadhaka’s nature with all their-functioning will be taken up by-

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

the Supreme and His Shakti. There are three stages of this perfection, at the last of which, when our union with Him is integral, the Divine manifests Himself in all our being and action. "He is felt in us as the possessor of our being and above us as the ruler of all its workings and they become to us nothing but a manifestation of Him in the existence of the Jiva. All our consciousness is His consciousness, all our knowledge is His knowledge, all our thought is His thought, all our will is His Will, all our feeling is His Ananda and form of His delight in being, all our action is His action. The distinction between the Shakti and the Ishwara begins to disappear; there is only the conscious activity in us of the Divine with the great self of the Divine behind and around and possessing it; all the world and nature is seen to be only that, but here it has become fully conscious, the Maya of the ego removed, and the Jiva is there only as an eternal portion of His being, ansha sanatana, put forth to support a divine individualisation and living now fulfilled in the complete presence and power of the Divine, the complete joy of the Spirit manifested in the being. This is the highest realisation of the perfection and delight of the active oneness; for beyond it there could only be the consciousness of the Avatara, the Ishwara Himself assuming a human name and form for action in the Lila."¹

Before we conclude this chapter, let us attempt a brief outline of the supramental perfection as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The first characteristic of this perfection will be its transcendence of all human achievements and a secure sovereignty over Nature; the second, its harmonious comprehensiveness, its inviolable integrality; and the third, its all-accomplishing divinity.

The buddhi in its supramental perfection will not only be wide and luminous and capable of all knowledge, but it will undergo a radical conversion in the very way and method of its operation. Its truth will be the direct Truth-idea and not a symbol or representation of truth as seen in the rushlight of the human mind. It will realise Truth and its various forms by an inmost revealing identity with them. The gnostic intuition, inspiration, discrimination and revelation are the fourfold process of the perfected thought called respectively Sarama, Saraswati, Dakshina and Ila by the Vedic Rishis. "The range of knowledge covered by the supramental thought, experience and vision will be commensurate with all that is open to the human consciousness, not only on the earth but on all planes."² The supramental thought will embrace from a dominating altitude of consciousness the entire stream of Time, past, present and future. Its vision will be what was known to the ancient mystics as trikaladrishti. All its operations will proceed on the basis of unity and harmony. It will take

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid*

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all the incalculable multiplicities of existence in its sweep, but never lose for a moment the perception of their essential oneness. Its knowledge will be a comprehensive knowledge which sees every object as an aspect and attribute of the indivisible One. It regards not only the essential unity but also the developing diversities of that unity in a single, immediate vision and experience. The supramental will in the sadhaka will be the Will of the Supreme, unified and irresistible, fulfilling itself through whatever conditions it has itself decreed. There will be no hesitations, no falterings, none of the confusions and conflicts that beset our human will, and no paralysing weaknesses in the face of resistance or opposition. The supramental will will be like a flame-shaft of the gnostic Force shooting straight at its target. The supramental feelings and emotions will be currents and waves and ripples of the unebbing divine love and delight; and even in their most intense and impetuous movements they will preserve their inherent rhythm, and play in perfect tune with all the movements of the nature. They will impart a throb and a thrill to the light of knowledge and the force of the will. The supramental perfection of the senses will be a seeing and hearing and touching of the Divine everywhere and in all beings and objects. Our senses are the external material means of contacting the objects of the world, but, as yogic experience shows, they are not indispensable; our mind can see and hear and touch the objects even without the help of the outer senses. It is for this reason that the mind is called the sixth sense—it is, in fact, the only sense in the present economy of our nature and the outer senses are only its instruments and conveniences. It can contact the objects without using the senses as the media, and it can also contact and know the inner relations, forces and vibrations of the objects, which are not at all accessible to the outer senses. It is only habit that has made the mind dependent upon the physical senses and circumscribed by their natural limitations. But the mind also, as a higher yogic experience reveals, is not the supreme and original sense; it too is an instrument and a habitual convenience. The real and original sense is beyond the mind which it uses as a medium, it is “a direct and original activity of the infinite power” of the spiritual consciousness. “The pure action of sense is a spiritual action and pure sense itself is a power of the Spirit.”¹ This pure and original sense is called sanjnana. Sanjnana makes us see, hear, touch, smell and taste the Divine Being, Sachchidananda, as concretely as we sense the material objects. Its action is direct, immediate and intimate. It makes us contact the substance of the divine Existence, the substance of the divine Consciousness, the substance of the divine Force and the substance of the divine Delight.” “The supermind acting through sense feels all as God

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

and in God, all as the manifest touch, sight, hearing, taste, perfume, all the felt, seen, directly experienced substance and power and energy and movement, play, penetration, vibration, form, nearness, pressure, substantial interchange of the Infinite.”¹ The supramental sense sees no object as an isolated unit, cut off from others; it sees the All, the One, in all objects—it embraces the Infinite in each finite thing. It can know all things by a direct sensation, all things in this or any other world; and its sensation is a luminous, revealing sensation of the essential being and the phenomenal becoming of the Divine. It makes us drink the soma of the divine bliss, which is the eternal sap of everything in the universe.

The sanjnana acts not only in itself, but it profoundly changes even the physical senses. “As soon as the sight, for example, becomes altered under the influence of the supramental seeing, the eye gets a new and transfigured vision of things and of the world around us....It is as if the eye of the poet and artist had replaced the vague or trivial unseeing normal vision, but singularly spiritualised and glorified,—as if indeed it were the sight of the supreme divine Poet and Artist in which we were participating and there were given to us the full seeing of his truth and intention in his design of the universe and of each thing in the universe. There is an unlimited intensity which makes all that is seen a revelation of the glory of quality and idea and form and colour. The physical eye seems then to carry in itself a spirit and a consciousness which sees not only the physical aspect of the object but the soul of quality in it, the vibration of energy, the light and force and spiritual substance of which it is made. Thus there comes through the physical sense to the total sense consciousness within and behind the vision a revelation of the soul of the thing seen and of the universal spirit that is expressing itself in this objective form of its conscious being.”² It is, in short, an infusion of the supramental sense, the sanjnana, into the physical sense, resulting in the latter’s total transformation and perfection.

The opening of the Vijnana and the Ananda sheath in us will make for a complete transfiguration of the substance of the body. It will bring about, in effect, a trans-substantiation, a radical conversion of the very stuff and texture of the physical organism. The atoms that go to the making of the body will become conscious and radiant particles of matter, centres of a luminous force expressing itself in the scheme of material existence. And this direct working of the Truth-Force will eliminate from the body all causes of decay and wasting away, and establish in it a serene stability of health and power.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid*

“The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind as supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity.”¹ There may even take place many unforeseen fundamental changes in the structure and functioning of the organs themselves as a result of the unfettered action of the supreme Will-Force in the human body, and a falling into disuse of some of the physiological processes which, however indispensable they may appear today, will have outlived their utility and been replaced by those of a far greater, because supramental, effectivity. The body, filled with the gnostic light and the gnostic force, Vijnana-jyoti and Vijnana-shakti, its cells illumined and electrified, and its consciousness fully developed to respond even to the least call of the Spirit, may acquire “new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess and disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body’s cognisance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame.”² But all these powers and perfections of the body, let me repeat, will be a supramental evolution from within it, a manifold flowering of its divine possibilities, and not an imposition of the potencies of the etheric body or intermittent fireworks of the pranic energies. The body will develop its spiritual powers by the opening up of the gnostic and bliss sheaths and its transfiguration into their luminous substance.

Radiant with a creative consciousness, vibrant with an inexhaustible force, poised in a fathomless peace, steeped in happiness and harmony, the supramentalised body will reveal the beauty and glory of the Divine in the material world, wiping away its immemorial stigma of grossness. For many a long century the body has been a pathetic object of the yogi’s contempt, spurned as the greatest obstacle to the freedom and progress of his soul. Its supramental perfection will negate that contempt and prove that it has been made of the same substance as the Spirit (Sat) and meant to serve here as a transparent form of the Formless.

RISHABHCHAND

¹ *The Supramental Manifestation* by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid*

FAREWELL

A TIME was when I knew not the shores of the sea,
The borders of space were beyond the reach of my pigmy mind.
The world appeared a play of effort and unvisionable consequence.
I tossed in the midst of engulfing eddies;
I rattled amidst the rounds of the whirlwind.
When I first opened my eyes that did not see,
The pomp of the world dazzled my defenceless innocence;
My mind freely gave way to the floating charm.
Unaware my gaze was led to the masked show,
The glazed surface danced before my blind sight.
My hands played with filth and mire unfelt;
My feet trod on the unmargin'd fluency of mud;
My steps walked on the torrents of water and wind.
A pseudo-god had gripped my life and soul,
A snare unimpeded took me ever and ever within.
I stood on the sharp edge of a quivering sword.
But there lay a white magic of the unseen God;
A hidden eye followed my visionless shade;
A parallel strategy conspired unparalleled behind the scene,
A patient manoeuvring watched for its hour.
Secret hands were busy pulling the mystic strings.
A master manipulator set himself on the miraculous job
To unleash an all-out attack of his compassion-force
And free the fallen, the earth-bound.
Thus was turned a new page in the mystery of my life
And one bright morn
When the first rays of the arousing sun were not yet born
A boat sailed on the calm waters of the sea,
A plane crossed the bounded space,
A lustrous figure waved its farewell hands...

HAR KISHAN SINGH

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

(Continued)

IN the next essay Sri Aurobindo goes on to set forth the Gita's solution of the question: How is our Nature, bound as it is, to effect its evolution from the lower to the higher being, from the law of its present action to the immortal *Dharma*? This solution has been hinted at before, but it is brought out more fully and clearly in the last four chapters of the text. A new sense and level for our action is set forth; Krishna's teaching does not now relate so much to freedom from action as to the action in the world of the spiritually liberated man. The compatibility of Moksha with Karma in the text is thus summed up by Sri Aurobindo: "To live inwardly calm, detached, silent in the silence of the impersonal and universal Self and yet do dynamically the works of dynamic Nature, and more largely to be one with the eternal within us and to do all the will of the Eternal in the world...the personal nature, made one with God-Nature,—this is the Gita's solution."

The bearing of this philosophy on Arjuna's initial difficulty is explained by his teacher. It is obvious that a simple appeal to the royal warrior's sense of duty is not enough, for there is a dire conflict. Arjuna must be made to realise that the terrible crisis before him has been brought about by a higher Will, to which he has to submit and as whose instrument he has to learn to act. But in order to be able to see all this the disciple must rise above his ego; he must "shake the wings of the soul free from desire and passion". When a man attains the poise of impersonal wideness, ego and desire and passion cease to sway him. He attains the requisite spiritual freedom. The duality of the immobile Self and the active Nature affects him not, for he is poised in the Purushottama, in whom the Immutable and the mutable find a reconciliation. The Purushottama is the supreme mystery of the Gita. Seated in the heart of every creature, he guides by his presence the turnings of the great wheel of Nature. He is present in all and all dwell in him. Therefore, at the outset, man has to work impersonally and without desire, for the sake of the Divine. But, later, more is demanded of him; he must make a surrender, a loving surrender, of all action to the divinity within him. The motive power of his Karma will then be seen by him as something supra-personal and universal. It is knowledge—right knowledge of self, of God and of the world that would make him *Sarvavid*, all-knowing. But the *Sarvavid* does not abandon work. The perfected Yogi

lives and acts, but he lives and acts in God. It is the secret of this perfection that the Gita proceeds to unravel.

How is the ignorant and shackled human nature going to be transmuted to the dynamic freedom of a divine nature? The transmutation is indispensable. Otherwise man would go round and round in the groove of ignorance and desire. Whatever the appearances may be, the world is, in fact, moved by a divine spiritual Will and not by the modes of the lower Nature. But we must not forget that these modes are derived from the higher Will. Something there must be in the essential power of the spirit from which the sattwic light, the rajasic movement and the tamasic inertia are derived,—of which they are the lesser forms. In order to effect the necessary transformation and to rise above the gunas, we must get hold of some leverage in the action of the gunas themselves. The Gita finds this *point d'appui* in the full development of the sattwic guna, till that in its potent expansion reaches a point at which it can go beyond itself and disappear into its source. The rajasic guna cannot be changed into the Divine Will or the tamasic into the Divine repose and calm without the aid of the Sattwic power in Nature. The domination of this latter power is thus indispensable for the uplift of the lower nature into the higher. Without this domination the Rajas will remain a troubled restlessness and the Tamas an ignorant inertia. Therefore to develop the sattwic in us till it is full of light and calm is our first concern.

The distinction between the Deva and the Asura is an old one. The Gita makes use of it, develops it, in the sixteenth chapter for its own purpose. The God is a creature of Light, the Titan is a child of Darkness. The God is capable of a "high self-transforming sattwic action", the Titan is not. The teacher tells Arjuna that he is of Daivic nature, and assures him that by his acceptance of battle and slaughter he runs no risk of yielding to Asuric impulse; he has developed in himself the sattwic being and has arrived at a stage where he can go beyond the three modes and transcend the lower Prakriti. Obviously this cannot apply to other natures; it is applicable to Arjuna as there is a predominance of sattwic habits and qualities in him. Sri Aurobindo sums up the difference between the two natures, Daivic and Asuric, thus. In the former, "The whole being, the whole temperament is integrally pure; there is a seeking for Knowledge and a calm and fixed abiding in Knowledge. This is the wealth, the plenitude of the man born into the Deva Nature". On the contrary, the "Asuric nature has too its wealth, its plenitude of force, but it is of a very different, a powerful and evil kind. Asuric men have no true knowledge of the way of action or the way of abstention, the fulfilling or the holding in of the nature. Truth is not in them, nor clean doing, nor faithful observance". The Gita's description of the Asuric men is vivid: bound by a hundred bonds,

devoured by wrath and lust, unweariedly occupied in amassing unjust gains for enjoyment and satisfaction they think, "Today I have gained this object of desire, tomorrow I shall have that other; today I have so much wealth, more I will get tomorrow. I have killed this my enemy, the rest too I will kill. I am a lord and king of men, I am perfect, accomplished, strong, happy, fortunate, a privileged enjoyer of the world; I am wealthy, I am of high birth; who is there like unto me? I will sacrifice, I will give, I will enjoy."

But this description, brilliant as it is, must not be taken to mean more than it does. The Deva and the Asura have not been so created from the beginning by God. All souls, Daivic as well as Asuric, are eternal portions of the Divine; all can come to salvation, the grossest Asura can turn to the Divine. But the evolution of the individual soul in Nature is determined by its *Swabhāva* and its action controlled by that *Swabhāva*. During the play one or the other of the modes may become predominant and on this predominance depends the Daivic or Asuric nature of the individual. He may turn away from the path of Light and Truth, and sink into the lowest and darkest state or he may turn towards the Law of Enlightenment and gradually rise to the highest development of the Divine Nature. Here comes the utility of the Shastra which is the embodiment of Law and Dharma. The highest Shastra is that which sets forth the service and art of spiritual living. But all Shastra seeks to regulate human life in its various phases.

By a question put at the commencement of Chapter XVII Arjuna seeks elucidation with regard to its binding authority. Krishna explains that human action is dictated either by desire or by Shastric injunction. The action of desire pertains to the unregenerate state of man's nature. As a first step towards transformation man has obviously to grow out of rajasic control to a condition where his conduct is guided by Shastra which is an outcome of intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, social and religious culture. The individual is called upon to give his assent or acceptance to the general law of human social development. The word used in the text for assent is *Sraddha* or faith. In fact, it is much safer to pursue the path laid down by the highest sattwic thinkers than to follow the dictates of our unregulated desire. Of course the injunctions of the Shastra change with the environment, but that relates to the outer trappings—the customs and manners, the rituals and ceremonies. The core of the Law, the higher Truth, the eternal *Dharma* endures. The change that comes about from time to time is preceded by the dissatisfaction of the individual who finds that certain injunctions of the Shastra are no longer consistent with "his idea and largest or intensest experience of himself and existence and therefore he can no longer bring to it the will to believe and practise." The individual then announces his deviation from certain existing practices observed by the

majority. This departure may sometimes be prompted by a purely egoistic urge, as has often happened in the past. But it can also be prompted by a higher mandate inside—a mandate very largely sattwic at the core. The Gita clearly differentiates the three kinds of faith or *Sraddha*—sattwic, rajasic and tamasic—that lead a man to deviate from the path indicated by the Law. Man in his upward seeking must shake off the guidance both of desire and of the normal law. He must go beyond the three modes, but his path lies through the highest of them.

Sri Aurobindo calls this a new movement and says that it is “of the nature of a powerful adventure into the unknown or partly known, a daring development and a new conquest.... This movement is man’s appeal to himself or to something potent and compelling in himself or in universal existence for the discovery of his truth, his law of living, his way to fullness and perfection.” Its guiding light is to be found in man’s *Sraddha*. Every urge less than the highest faith is unsafe and may lure man back to the bondage of desire, into by-paths that may end in a tamasic morass or the edge of a sheer precipice. If, on the other hand, a man has the sattwic nature and a sattwic faith he will arrive within sight of an as yet unachieved ideal rule, which may even guide him towards a highest divine light. These are the various possibilities of man’s spiritual advance. Arjuna’s question is categorical—“When men abandon the guidance of the Shastra and with *Sraddha* (faith) perform sacrifices to the gods, what is their *Nistha* (concentrated will of devotion) which gives them the faith and action, sattwic, rajasic or tamasic?” The Gita states the principle to be this: “The faith in us is of a triple kind like all things in Nature and varies according to the dominating quality of our nature.”

The faith of each man is in accordance with the stuff of his being. “The soul in man,” says the text, “is made of *Sraddha* and whatever is that *Sraddha*, he is that and that is he.” That is to say, we create our own actions, we are our own makers. But this is only one aspect of the truth, for the source of all action is the consciousness of the One and proceeds by a faith, a will to be, in the original conscious Force. What we are concerned with here is the relation of this will or “faith in our being to our possibility of growth into the perfection of the divine nature”. In any case, the *Sraddha* is our basis. When we live and act according to our desire the *Sraddha* is of the two lower modes; when we try to live according to the divine nature, the faith is sattwic seeking to exceed itself. The work to be done by man, his *Kartavya Karma*, falls under three heads—sacrifice, giving and Askesis or *Yajna*, *dāna* and *tapas*. But each one of these, the Gita shows, can be either sattwic or rajasic or tamasic, according to the quality predominant in the individual. In fact, everything here, including physical things like food, partakes of a triple character. The text

explains this at some length. Sri Aurobindo, after summing up what Krishna says about the three kinds of food, remarks: "All-pervading is the principle of the three gunas. The gunas apply at the other end in the same way to the things of the mind and spirit, to sacrifice, giving and askesis, and the Gita distinguishes under each of these three heads between the three kinds in the customary terms of these things as they were formulated by the symbolism of the old Indian culture." Sri Aurobindo then proceeds to enlarge the surface meaning of the Gita's hints. There is no room here to go into the more elaborate exposition. The sattwic sacrifice comes very near to the ideal, it leads to the kind of action demanded by Krishna, but is distinctly short of the perfect divine action. We have already gone over the various grades of sacrifice leading up to the highest in a previous portion of our essay, and need not say anything more here. Likewise with giving and askesis, the sattwic form may lead towards the highest form that transcends the three modes but by itself it does not amount to the divine action demanded by the scripture.

Towards the close of this chapter, the Gita brings in the mystic formula, "Om Tat Sat" and connects it with its conception of divine action. Om Tat Sat, it says, is the triple definition of Brahman, by whom the Brahmanas, the Vedas and the sacrifices were created of old and in it resides all their significance. Tat means the Absolute, Sat indicates the principle of good and the principle of reality and Om signifies the triple Brahman. All good works are Sat—whether they be sacrifice or giving or askesis—for they prepare the individual soul for the higher truth of its being. The text also says that, since faith is the central principle of our existence, works of all the three kinds mentioned are a falsity without faith.

This brings us to the last great chapter of the scripture. Before proceeding to its grand finale, it analyses summarily the action of the mental powers as leading to works of the highest kind. Faith and the will to be are essential factors in the growth of the soul to its full height by works. But the part played by the powers of the mind is no less important, as Sri Aurobindo shows in his elaborate exposition of the verses bearing on the subject. We shall not be able to attempt anything more than a cursory review of that exposition.

The chapter begins with Arjuna's question regarding the difference between the two principles of *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa*. He is told that the renunciation (*tyāga*) enjoined in the Gita is renunciation of desire, not of works. Action with a renunciation of desire is true *Tyāga* and that too is true *Sannyāsa*. Sri Aurobindo's precise words are, "*Tyāga*...is the name given by the wise to a mental and spiritual renunciation, an entire abandonment of all attached clinging to the fruit of our works, to the action itself or to its personal initiation or rajasic impulse.... The spiritual transference of all our works to the Master

and his Shakti is the real sannyasa in the teaching of the Gita." Sattwic renunciation is not withdrawal from action but from the personal demand, the ego element behind it. Abstention from works is branded as a tamasic attitude—there should be no attachment to inaction. Such expressions as *muktasya karma*, acts of the liberated—*Swabhāva niyatam karma*, action controlled by one's Swabhava—*Niyatasya tu sannyāsah karmano nopapadyate*, abandonment of controlled action is not proper—show the whole trend of the Gita's teaching of Karma, the essence of true *tyāga* according to this scripture is a disinterested soul, a selfless mind. This spirit is the first mental condition of the highest sattwic discipline. The important thing to remember is what has been repeated often enough, that the liberated man does his appointed work as the living instrument, one in spirit with the Universal Divine. The real thing is the knowledge in which works are done. There are three things, says the Gita, which go to constitute the mental impulsion to works, and they are the knowledge in our will, the object of knowledge and the knower; and into the knowledge there comes always the working of the three gunas. The gunas determine the faith and the will with which the individual acts, and consequently the nature of his action.

Again, it should be noted that action is held together and made possible by three things—the doer, the instrument and the work done. And the nature of each of these elements is determined by the predominant guna. For instance, it makes all the difference whether the instrument is right harmony and right knowledge or it is an egoistic will of desire or an ignorant instinct. The highest instrument is spiritual Light and Power, higher than the sattwic intelligence. The three kinds of the doer are sketched in brilliant language by Sri Aurobindo. We give a few extracts here which will enable the reader to form an idea thereof.

"The tamasic doer of action is one who does not put himself really into the work but acts with the mechanical mind, or obeys the most vulgar thought of the herd...or is wedded to a blind error and prejudice. He is obstinate in stupidity, stubborn in error and takes a foolish pride in his ignorant doing; ...he has a stupid and insolent contempt for those with whom he has to deal, especially for wiser men and his betters. The rajasic doer on the other hand is urged by violent attachment, desire and passion, while the sattwic doer is characterised by "a calm rectitude of zeal or a high and pure and selfless enthusiasm in the work that has to be done"; he is free from all attachment, as much from violent strength as from passionate weakness. Intellectual understanding (*Buddhi*) and persistent will (*Dhriti*) are likewise different for the three kinds of doers. In any case, happiness is the one thing, Sri Aurobindo says, which is openly or indirectly the universal pursuit of our human nature. For

the sattwic mind this happiness takes the form of a calm content and an inner peace. The rajasic mind drinks of a more fiery cup—the keen active pleasure of the senses and sense-entangled kinetic will and intelligence. Still, as the Gita warns, this joy is nectar to the lips at the first touch but there is secret poison in the bottom of the cup. The tamasic mind can remain quite happy in its inertia and stupor, its ignorance and error. At the highest point of sattwic discipline—a surpassing happiness descends on the individual and he exceeds the three gunas. Sri Aurobindo says, “Only then can it (Ananda) be possessed when the liberated man, free from ego and its desires, lives at last one with all beings and one with God in an absolute bliss of the spirit.”

So far, it has been made abundantly clear that man in his ascent has first to attain a state of the highest sattwic quality and then to surpass the limitation of the three gunas and arrive at spiritual perfection and freedom. This work has, however, to be harmonised with man's individual rule of nature—his *swabhāva* and *swadharmā*. Krishna has already said in an earlier chapter that every man has his own *dharma* and that “death in one's own law of nature is better for a man than victory in an alien movement”. To follow the law of another's nature is dangerous to the individual soul and contrary to the natural way of its evolution. A man's *swadharmā* depends on his place in the system of four castes. Action, it is laid down in the Gita, must be rightly regulated, that is to say, regulated by a man's essential character, it must be *swabhāva niyatam karma*.

But what does this scripture want to say about the caste system? Does it accept the hereditary basis thereof? It does not say so. The most important verse bearing on the point is, “The fourfold order was created by me according to the divisions of quality and active function”. The ancient social ideal of the four *varnas* was quite a different thing from the cast-iron division of more recent times. Krishna found the old ideal in existence and in possession of the mind at the time, and gave it his recognition. He accepted the system and its religious sanction. The fourfold order had a triple aspect—social and economic, cultural and spiritual. Not only in India but in many other lands there was in the old days an attempt to found a stable society on the basis of a more or less stable system of four castes. Sri Aurobindo has in his *The Human Cycle* shown how the system developed from the Ideal into the Typal, from the Typal into the Conventional and lastly from the Conventional with the Rational. The Gita appears to have accepted the first two stages of evolution, but does not seem to have gone so far as to recognise the third or the conventional stage; the reason is easy enough to follow; a water-tight caste division did not exist in that age and Krishna was not called upon to make any strict pronouncement with regard to it. But with the setting in of a more rigid strati-

fication a man's work and position in society came to be determined almost entirely by both. This development was inevitable, for "birth was the most handy and manageable in an increasingly mechanised, complex and conventional social order". The change however took time and in the transitional period, when inborn character still asserted itself successfully against the accident of birth, there were people like Junaka, Parashuram, Vyasa, Drona-acharya and Buddha along with a whole host of men, born Vaishyas and Sudras, who by their high spiritual qualities attained a position of pre-eminence even over Brahmins. The Gita when it speaks of *Sahajam karma* does not necessarily acknowledge a hereditary basis for the fourfold order of caste; it lays down definitely that Karma is determined by *guna* and indicates in phrases like *swabhājam karma* and *swabhāva nyatam karma* that the word *Sahajam* in the phrase above quoted is equivalent to *Swabhāvajam*. Krishna's injunction regarding the pursuit of *Swadharmā* is based on the stress laid by him on the inner truth. In fact, this scripture attaches very little importance to the external rule. The following passage from Sri Aurobindo's essays is significant: "In fact, it lays very little stress on the external rule and a very great stress on the internal law which the Varna system attempted to put into regulated outward practice. And it is on the individual and spiritual value of this law and not on the communal and economic or other social and cultural importance that the eye of the thought is fixed." It is in this spirit that the Gita describes the work of the Brahmin or the Kshatriya, not in terms of external function, not defined as learning, priest-work and letters or government, war and politics, but entirely in terms of internal character. Qualities like calm self-control, askesis, purity, are cited to define the Brahmin, while in defining the Kshatriya it is laid down that "his real work is the development, the expression in conduct, the power to cast into form and dynamic rhythm of movement the law of the active battling royal or warrior spirit". This mode of approach is equally applicable to the wealth-producing Vaishya and the hardy toiling Sudra. Not only to them, but also "to the woman with her narrow, circumscribed and subject life, the very outcast born from a womb of sin can by this road rise at once towards the highest inner greatness and spiritual freedom, towards perfection, towards the liberation and fulfilment of the divine element in the human being".

The following words of Sri Aurobindo aptly sum up the Gita's teaching of action in consonance with *Swabhāva* and *Swadharmā*: "To worship him with our inner and outer activities, to make our whole life a sacrifice of works to the Highest is to prepare ourselves to become one with him in all our will and substance and nature. Our work should be according to the truth within us, it should not be an accommodation with outward and artificial standards;

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

it must be a living and sincere expression of the soul and its inborn powers. Along with this passage we have to read the verse in the text: "All is a veiled manifestation of the Godhead." This leads us towards a correct understanding of the great mystery unfolded a little later: "A Godhead is seated in the heart of every man and is the Lord of this mysterious action of Nature." From his very first words, "Look at the Kurus assembled before you," Krishna leads his disciple forward, step by step to the supreme realisation that he has to abandon all Dharmas and take shelter in the Lord alone. The verse says "Me alone". Swadharma is one thing in the lower nature, it is another in the higher. Arjuna has to rise from the former to the latter.

(To be continued)

C. C. Dutt

BIRD OF FIRE.

BREAK, break the slumber of night,
Fly up in spaces azure,
On pinions strong soar to the height
There lies thy dream lucent and pure.

A vision not within time confined
Calls to the rose of the boundless lawn;
Let thy heart sunnier hopes to bind
Plunge where days eternal dawn.

Listen, over the starry sky,
Over the roll of distant waves
Echoes and echoes a call "Fly"—
A path for thee the Sun supernal paves.

In the depth the beckoning lights are lit,
Behold, ended thy weary way;
Over realms that merge in the Infinite
Hold, my soul, hold perfect sway.

Morn stepping on the stars nears,
Putting out the lamps in the blue;
Into the dark the rays burning pierce,
The clouds glow with fiery hue.

High above in the air immune
Dwells immortal thy desire,
Pours into the sphere a mystic tune:
"Unfurl thy wings, O bird of fire."

End this darksome slumbering night,
Tear up into the vast azure,
On pinions strong soar to the height,
Thy rainbow-ringed home secure.

ROBI GUPTA

MATTER AND LIFE

A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

IV

(1)

MATERIALISM, either with a mechanistic theory or with an "organismic conception", has been found by us incapable of accounting for the integratively co-organized self-differentiated unity that is the organic whole, a whole that has to be considered as in some genuine sense pre-existent to the parts each of which acts in varying degrees as if it were the whole itself in a particular aspect and function. A fundamental principle of life—or life-force, to use a popular expression—is required by biological phenomena: life can never be rendered completely explicable in physico-chemical terms.

Further, whatever physico-chemical terms are present—necessarily present since biology studies embodied life—are not merely extrapolated into a more complex medium from the physics and chemistry we have developed in our laboratories. The organization of a new physico-chemical process called by von Bertalanffy "an open system in a steady state" and so far elucidated in the main by only a theoretical model is the bodily basis of vitality. This organization whose mathematics cannot, under the present physical postulates, be derived from the mathematics of matter experimentally known to us but calls for a broadening of those postulates constitutes the "immanent" whole supporting the action of the "transcendent" whole that vitality really is.

But matter and life are not to be regarded as two opposed or entirely distinct principles. Life is indeed more fundamental and has a characteristic action of its own, yet it cannot be something quite other than matter: if it is something quite other no ground is provided for the interaction which undeniably takes place between the two and for the close-knit system which they form in the phenomena studied by the biologist. Consequently, when matter with its typical characteristics cannot be looked upon as fundamental and as sufficiently explicative of life, it must be viewed as life itself in a concealed shape, in an "immanent" condition admitting of diverse levels, life's self-involution in a mode apparently the very opposite of its own nature and serving as a starting-point for that nature's slow difficult evolution to the surface and graded developing disclosure of typical supra-material characteristics.

Finally, if the organisms constructed by life are each a self-differentiated unity, an organic whole that is everywhere individual in different shades and measures, the one life manifesting in space and time through such unities and wholes is likely to be itself a unity that is self-differentiated, a whole whose individuality does not preclude a manifoldness of subordinate individualities or individual "souls", as it were, numerously expressive within it of a single universal essence and emerging more and more to the surface of embodied life in the course of evolutionary history.

This, scientifically and philosophically, is the general picture to which we have arrived by our scrutiny of the phenomena pertaining to the organism. What we propose to do now is to cast a brief glance at the phenomena of organic evolution and see whether the scientific facts of evolutionary history bear out our central notion of life.

Evolution has been considered by scientists from one of two standpoints: naturalism and finalism. Naturalism holds that the course of evolution has run blindly, as a chapter of accidents, a movement without any aim, producing by sheer operation of unconscious physical and chemical agents through a long series of changing animals the self-aware and goal-seeking creature named man. Finalism implies a supra-material reality operating with an aim, a reality equated in most cases with a life-force governing matter under certain limitations. Even if a clear aim is not implied, at least some sort of direction is. A directional life-force may not render evolution strictly finalistic and Bergson who believes in just an *élan vital*, a vital impetus without a clear aim, disclaims the title of finalist; but inasmuch as his *élan vital* is not quite indiscriminately creative but pushes towards an ever greater efficiency and ever keener consciousness it has a vague kind of goalful striving, an undefined aim of higher and higher and is therefore still finalistic though in a broad and unspecific sense.

Some finalists take up the peculiar position that there are no *élan vital*, no mind-force, no individual "souls" apart from the body, nothing except matter, but God, while not cancelling the brute "say" of matter in particulars, makes it evolve according to His own plan and manifest vital and mental modes dominating its usual physico-chemical ones. Lecomte du Noüy calls himself a "tele-finalist", meaning that the ultimate aim of evolution—namely, man striving to be a perfect spiritual being—has been fixed by God and certain crucial transitions depend on Him but what he works upon is a movement of matter whose details develop by purely natural means and are ruled by "chance". He offers the simile of a number of streams issuing from a mountain lake and set going by the distant force of gravitation and executing various turns and twists, delays and rushes, stoppages and break-throughs determined by the brute lay-out and contour of the land down which they flow, until the far-off valley, which is

MATTER AND LIFE

the goal, is reached by what is uniquely destined to overcome somehow all the intervening conditions. In the course of the telefinalistic evolution, however, several phenomena of "anti-chance" (to quote a term of Eddington's) occur because God has willed them: these cannot be explained by the natural trend of things according to the laws of probability and elude scientific analysis. The two most outstanding among them are the properties of life which cannot be linked to those of inanimate matter and the properties of mind which cannot be linked to those of matter animate. But even prior to life's arrival there are, in the scheme of du Noüy, puzzles like the chemical characteristics of molecules in relation to the qualities possessed by atoms. Du Noüy, in *Human Destiny*, has many penetrating observations on problems biological and some intuitions of great cultural and spiritual value, yet both philosophically and scientifically his supernaturalism paired with materialism is torn by an immense hiatus between two extremes and resorts to a kind of miracle-mongering and affords no abiding significance to the individualisation that is the constant factor in biological history and is of the widest import in human destiny. Also, it is exposed in part to the same objections that apply to the theory, at once materialistic and theistic, advocated by Lloyd Morgan: Emergent Evolution.

In Lloyd Morgan's theory of emergence material components are credited with forming by their interrelation a series of wholes whose properties are novel and, from a consideration of the parts, unpredictable: these properties are described as emergent rather than resultant. Emergents are said to arise widely in the domain of matter: on the level of the atom, the level of the molecule, the level of a collection of molecules. Lloyd Morgan claims, for instance, that the liquid or solid condition of a substance cannot be predicted from a complete knowledge of the molecules of that substance in a vaporous condition. C. D. Broad, an enthusiast for emergence, asserts that experiment alone and never any calculation from the components can teach us the chemical behaviour of any elementary substance. According to him, nothing that we know about hydrogen itself or in its combination with anything but oxygen would give us the least reason to expect that it would combine with oxygen at all, much less that two atoms of it would combine with one of oxygen. On the analogy of such physical "emergents", life is deemed an emergent from physico-chemical events related among themselves in a particular way and mind an emergent from vital events in a particular interrelation.

But Lloyd Morgan adds that he is no stark materialist. He realises that emergentism has to avoid two errors: on the one hand, the higher must not be read down into the lower without any difference and, on the other, the lower must not be supposed to explain the higher without possessing in it something akin to what emerges. Lloyd Morgan, while refusing to accept a distinct life or

mind, tries to comply with these conditions by postulating that all physico-chemical events have vital-mental correlates of their own which are imperceptible except when these events join together in a special manner as in organisms. He also seems to suggest that in perceptibly emergent life no less than in perceptibly emergent mind there is released an impulse which becomes free in some measure to control and direct what has hitherto bound it. Lastly, to explain what makes emergents emerge in a progressive direction, as they seem to do, in the total computation of evolutionary history, he posits the Activity of Divine Power, an Activity omnipresent throughout emergent evolution and expressive of Divine Purpose.

Like Lecomte du Noüy, Lloyd Morgan strains at the gnat of a distinct life or mind governing matter under certain limitations and swallows the camel of Divine Activity and Purpose. There need be no quarrel with this camel: in fact it has to be brought in sooner or later, but to go straight to it without taking first the gnat in one's stride is not very convincing, scientifically or philosophically. Even apart from this, the theory of emergent evolution as presented by Lloyd Morgan is internally unsound. The suggestion of an impulse which becomes free in some measure to control and direct what has hitherto bound it is flagrantly contradictory of the idea of correlation between the material and the vital-mental. Life correlated to a system of physico-chemical events may be manifested as a property not to be found directly in the parts of the system but it cannot be anything else than a version in perceptibly vital terms of what exists in physico-chemical terms: there can be no turning of life upon matter to regulate and adjust. Similarly, mind cannot turn upon what has hitherto bound it to exercise a new power of orientation and selection, design and valuation. A new controlling and directing impulse can be released only if life or mind is no mere correlate of matter, no mere vital or mental aspect of it, helplessly attendant on physico-chemical interrelatedness, but an existent in its own rights, however concealed and suppressed it may be before the emergence and, moreover, only if matter is not intrinsically different from life or mind and prohibitive of interaction with it but just an involved form of it from which the vital or mental evolves its own characteristic action.

In the second place, Lloyd Morgan's claim, as also Broad's and that of every other adherent of Lloyd Morgan's theory, about unpredictable physical emergents is faulty. It is made with the intention of "naturalising" the emergence of life and mind and doing away with distinct vital and mental entities. To thinkers who do not feel bound, as Lloyd Morgan does, to acknowledge a progressive direction in evolution and to explain it by Divine Activity and Purpose, this naturalising of all emergence has been a prop to materialism. But, as McDougall acutely reminded us long ago in *Modern Materialism and Emergent Evolution*

and as Reginald A. Kapp brilliantly drives home in *Science versus Materialism*, the emergence of life or mind is not on a par with that of physical properties. The simple reason for the disparity is: the latter are not really unpredictable at all. Physical chemists have successfully predicted the properties of atoms and molecules and collections of molecules, which they have never observed. No limits can be set to the physical chemist's power of prediction, for all the properties can be related either to the shapes and arrangements of the molecules or to the number and position and movement of the electrons associated with atomic nuclei. Even if the fallibility of the physical chemist prevents prediction at times, the emergent properties, after they have come, grow intelligible and explicable in terms of their antecedents and are therefore predictable in at least principle.

A capital example of the prediction of all the chemical properties of an atom from a knowledge of the atomic nucleus is given by Kapp. "Substances had been discovered," he writes, "of which the atomic nuclei carried nearly all the numbers of positive unit charge from 1 to 92. These corresponded to all the known chemical elements. But there were a few gaps. For instance, no nucleus had been found with 72 charges. Physicists knew that such nuclei must exist and that they would represent an undiscovered element. Though no one had ever met it, its properties were predicted. Eventually nuclei carrying 72 charges were found. They belonged to the atoms of a new element which has received the name Hafnium. This exhibits the predicted properties."

Apropos Lloyd Morgan's claim that a complete knowledge of the molecules of a substance in a vaporous condition would not enable the liquid or solid condition of that substance to be predicted, Kapp writes: "The physical properties of liquids and solids depend on the way in which the molecules are packed when they shake down, and this is known if the shape of the molecules is known. The molecules of oil, for instance, are long and cling firmly to each other, side by side, so that a collection of them tends to be grouped in layers like the stalks in a cornfield. But the ends cling less firmly and easily lose their hold. Consequently one layer slides easily over another. This explains why oil spreads over the surface of water and why it is a good lubricant. A physicist who discovered a vapour consisting of long molecules with the appropriate distribution of clinging power at the sides and ends could predict the lubricating properties of that substance in the liquid state."

Broad's assertion that the power of hydrogen to combine with oxygen and much more its power to combine in the proportion of two atoms to one could not be predicted is also false. To quote Kapp again: "Electrons are kept in the vicinity of the atomic nucleus by electrostatic attraction. They are not prevented from falling into it by centrifugal force only. Their mutual electrostatic repulsion keeps them at a distance from each other and, therefore, also

from any single spot such as the nucleus. A compromise is reached between the pulls towards the nucleus and the pushes between the electrons when the system settles down to a condition in which the electrons are not very crowded. In the oxygen atom stability exists when two of the eight electrons describe orbits comparatively near the nucleus in what is called an inner shell, or K-ring, and the remaining six describe orbits in an outer shell, or L-ring. These six are not very crowded. The electrons are said to shield the nucleus. This means that at a little distance from the atom the negative charges on the electrons completely cancel the positive charges on the nucleus. The atom behaves as if it carried no charges. It is electrically neutral and can neither attract nor repel other particles. But the wide spacing of the electrons in the oxygen atom causes the shielding to be imperfect at very short distances. Some of the electrical field of the nucleus gets through the mesh as it were, so that there are regions where a positive electrostatic field occurs. There are other regions very close to the atom where the negative field of the electrons preponderates. Consequently the atom can both attract and repel particles which come sufficiently close. It has some electrostatic activity. The hydrogen atom consists of a nucleus carrying a single unit positive charge called a proton and one negatively charged electron. Each sometimes comes into a region where it is attracted. The hydrogen atom is then captured. The proton allies itself with the oxygen nucleus and the electron which was associated with this proton in the hydrogen atom enters the outer shell. As I said already, the six electrons in the outer shell of the oxygen atom are not very crowded. As many as eight can be accommodated in this shell before their mutual electrostatic repulsions become pronounced. But more than eight are not possible. If a ninth tried to enter, it would be too strongly repelled, even though the requisite attractive force existed at the nucleus. The ninth would have to stay outside in a third shell. Hence we say that the second shell is complete when it contains eight electrons. This number is provided when one atom of oxygen has combined with two of hydrogen."

A physical emergent is actually no genuine emergent since it has no genuine novelty so far as any property is concerned which scientists count as objectively connected with it or even as having an objective basis in it of stimulus to our subjectivity. Thus, all the properties that science studies of the molecule produced by the combination of two atoms of hydrogen with one of oxygen are actually non-emergents, but a property unpredictable either in practice or in principle is, for instance, the name by which we know the combination: "water"! Scientifically, this property depends entirely on the observer and not on the observed. A genuine novelty, traceable in the observed itself and yet not only unpredictable but also inexplicable after its arrival, can never arise unless the emergent is the manifestation of a principle exceeding matter and having

matter as its involved condition instead of itself being a condition of matter evolved.

The immediate desideratum in biology is a vital principle of this sort. That principle may—indeed, must—be an index to others of the same sort with, at the top, Divinity. But to jump straight to them would be illogical. Much more illogical would it be to jump straight to the God of Lloyd Morgan and du Noüy who supply no ground for interaction between Him and matter. Lloyd Morgan, however, appears to feel in general an inadmissible hiatus between matter and God: else he would not see the necessity to talk of psychological correlates or aspects of matter from the very bottom up to man. What he fails to see is the utter inadequacy of such correlates or aspects to account for the partially free domination which he acknowledges of the vital and mental over the physical and which we have established in biological terms by our study of organic unity.

So, finalism without vitalism of the type we have outlined is defective when dealing with evolutionary history no less than when treating an individual organism's career. What, in the biological sphere, we have to pit against the materialistic hypothesis is a vitalistic finalism. But, in the above considerations, we have pitted it against that hypothesis with regard only to the two crucial turning points in evolutionary history, the development of life in matter and that of mind in life. What about the particular course and the specific process? Do they support our vitalistic finalism or do they allow a materialistic picture?

Let us look at the picture painted by materialism. The old Darwinian version is well-known: minute variations somehow occurring as between individuals and gradually piling up to radical changes, a struggle for existence among the bearers of these changes as well as of those variations, the survival of the fittest and the continuation of their characteristics by heredity. The phrase "natural selection" covered the process by which the unfit were eliminated in the actual struggle and through environmental conditions. Today the Darwinian theme of "Nature red in tooth and claw" has given place to a more subtle and complex understanding of natural selection: indeed, according to Julian Huxley, sanguinary competition is now held to be mostly an anti-evolutionary force, the main part assigned to natural selection being an effect on what is designated as "differential fertility" among populations geographically distributed in several ways—a peaceful process sifting and reinforcing and accumulating, through the unequal reproductive capacities of differently distributed groups, a series of mutations (both small variations and radical changes) which are known to be due to a shuffling in the pattern of chromosomes and genes in the germ-plasm. This peaceful working has been elucidated with a manifold mathematical analysis in a number of studies by a host of recent researchers, especially R. A.

Fisher, J. B. S. Haldane and Sewall Wright. But, whatever the new understanding of natural selection, the blind nature of evolution affirmed by Darwinism is "confirmed" by Neo-Darwinism.

In fact it has been further emphasised, since characters and adaptations desired and acquired by individual organisms are no longer considered inheritable and as the mutational pattern-shuffling in the chromosomes and genes seems to be following no purposive factor and even to be observing no formulable law. Both spontaneous mutations and those induced by artificial agents like heat are seen to be "accidental" with respect to external conditions: they show no adaptive character to the conditions under which they arise. For instance, the mutations that arise at increased temperature do not represent adaptations to that higher temperature: there is only an increase in the rate at which mutations appear. Even if, with von Bertalanffy, we hold that the uncontrolled character of mutations and their lack of adaptiveness and direction with respect to external influences do not necessarily mean that nothing in the nature of the organism itself determines them systematically on the whole, the Bertalanffian view does not do away with the essentially naturalistic and non-finalistic standpoint, since this view is not at all tantamount to vitalism.

The most purposive-looking feature of evolution—the manner in which organisms are marvellously suited for efficient functioning within their environment as if a life-force had made a calculated adjustment of organ and form to the demands of the surround—materialism explains, on the strength of observations, by saying that the general absence of anything except what is closely adapted to the calls of life's milieu is the result of nature's eliminating all that was not best adapted out of a vast number of accidental differences of detail among individual organisms. Moreover, the old idea that an intricate structure is useful only after it is complete and that therefore the production of it must have taken place by a purposive miracle of all-at-once or else that the slow production of it was not affected by the non-purposive and blind play of natural selection but was a teleological preparation in advance of actual use, is discredited by materialism: at all stages of development most structures are, according to it, useful in their own ways. Not that non-adaptive (of no particular advantage or disadvantage) or inadaptive (disadvantageous) or even pre-adaptive (non-adaptive or inadaptive for the ancestral way of life but adaptive for some other way which happens to be available) features escaping the pressure of natural selection are denied, but their rarity is pointed out and they are regarded as simultaneous with adaptive ones and not overbalancing the advantage of the latter or as secondary results of these. Even if they persist for a longer or shorter time without connection with adaptive ones they are shown to be exceptions rather than the rule. And though the

extremely rare pre-adaptive features are admitted to be of great importance as mechanisms for the rise of radically new types of organisms, they are not taken to be the usual modes of transition from type to type. If they were the usual modes, some sort of teleology would be suggested. The usual modes are seen to be those not incompatible with a play of blind forces.

A minor concession is, however, granted to the part played by the individual organism's acquired changes: such changes are not hereditary and therefore are unrelated to evolution directly but, as G.G. Simpson puts it, "any individual change not itself hereditary may nevertheless strongly influence the individual's ability or opportunity to reproduce and in this indirect way will affect the course of evolution of the group as a whole". Far more important than these changes acquired consciously or unconsciously are others that have little to do with the individual organism's initiative or its newly developed response to environment. The adaptations that really count, according to the materialistic hypothesis, are fortuitous mutations favoured by natural selection and getting integrated into the genetic system and leading from type to type by a long-range extension of the synthetic process sketched by Fisher, Haldane and Wright.

The picture painted by materialism of "blind forces" cannot be arbitrarily shoved aside. Of course it is not an absolutely verified picture. Although plausible, it contains bold extrapolations. Thus, during nearly fifty years of genetical research on some dozens of animals and plants, a lot of mutations have been observed but except for some cases occurring in polyploid plants no transgression of the limits of the species has been accomplished by chance mutations, let alone "macro-evolutionary" changes needed for differences between fundamental groups (phyla). From this we cannot assert that nothing else could have occurred in a billion years of evolution; yet to say that something else has occurred is to extend universally a principle we have experimentally demonstrated to a rather limited extent. When we turn to the record of fossils, we do find a multitude of transitional types between species, many between genera, a few between classes, but none at all between phyla—and these last would be the most important and convincing. Probably early geological conditions are responsible for the lack. As to adaptive mutations, there seems some contradiction between the fact observed in the laboratory that mutations occur without reference to advantage within the environment acting upon the organism and the fact that in nature we find mutational features integrated with extraordinary adaptiveness into the environment. Even if minute advantageous mutations occur, the highly complex precision of adapted structures appears a far cry from them and not all the processes elucidated in the Fisher-Haldane-Wright synthesis strike one as quite convincingly ex-

plaining the almost expert skill of these structures and the countless convergences of mutational features that go to render them coherent co-operative wholes. Again, to take the "accidental usefulness" of a character as the supreme deciding force in evolution is too sweeping a generalisation. In order to survive at all, an organ or trait has to be somehow useful or related to useful features, but, as Goebel, the celebrated botanist, has emphasised, the manifoldness of organic forms is much greater than the manifoldness of environmental conditions. For instance, as von Bertalanffy notes, in a uniform marine environment, foraminifera or radiolaria develop hundreds of species, whose fantastic diversities of shape are "natural art-forms" far removed from the need to be merely useful. Also, how is it that life not only expands horizontally but climbs vertically as if there were a *nisus* to create a qualitative hierarchy? Within the usefulness (supposedly accidental) of organic things a lot of other motifs richer or deeper or at least more dramatic and in any case not easily to be explained away as accidental seem to be at work. Lastly, as von Bertalanffy reminds us, we have no more than one or two dozen experiments in which the "accidental usefulness" of a character is demonstrated, as when, for example, those individuals of a species of insect which have a colour identical with the background are less eaten by birds than those with contrasting colours. But there is no way to verify or falsify experimentally the extrapolation that evolution was controlled by "accidental usefulness".

Yes, the materialistic picture is not an absolutely verified one. Huxley and Simpson, two of its best exhibitors, are also aware of this, but they feel that, while here an extended hypothetical application of causes concretely tested in a limited field is made, causes like inherent tendencies, vital urges or cosmic goals are vague and not equally demonstrable by experimental technique. So they deem the materialistic picture well-founded and plausible and not illegitimately generalised. Though we may not quite agree we must concede a certain cogency to it. Only, we have to ask whether it is the sole truth and whether it is a truth which we should not expect on our vitalistic and finalistic theory. Our theory makes matter a state of concealed vitality, in which at the start vitality is, to all seeming, completely contradicted: the elements of dispersion, accident, undirectedness and waste are at their maximum. Evolutionary life's matrix, therefore, is such as to sustain in many passages of life's history and in many phases of its activity the forces of blindness—at least a strong surface appearance of them in many details, just as in the details of an individual organism numerous non-vitalistic and non-finalistic features meet a superficial survey. Anything else than this would run counter to our theory. So the argument for a materialistic interpretation of evolution is itself an important point in favour of our vitalistic finalism!

But, of course, if our theory is correct, the materialistic picture would not be the sole truth. An opposite suggestion would offer itself—and more and more in the onward course of evolutionary history. This is exactly what we find. Let us mark what materialism is obliged to admit of an overall impression of, in the first place, insurgent abundant all-spreading creativity and, in the second, directed and purposive process. Of course it attempts to explain away that impression by stressing as basic the play of apparently blind forces already mentioned and exhibiting prominently the fumbblings, the dead-ends, the deteriorations, the extinctions and the maze as of a vast randomness and opportunism. But life as creative artist cannot be gainsaid. “For naive and unbiased contemplation”, writes von Bertalanffy, “nature does not look like a calculating merchant; rather she looks like a whimsical artist, creative out of an exuberant fantasy and destroying her own work in romantic irony. The principles of ‘economy’ and of ‘fitness’ are true only in a Pickwickian sense. On the one hand, nature is a niggard when she insists on abolishing, say, an already minute rudimentary organ; this little economy having, as maintained by the theory of selection, enough advantage to be decisive in the struggle for existence. On the other hand, she produces a wealth of colour, form, and other creations, which, as far as we can see, is completely useless. Consider, for example, the exquisite artistry of butterflies’ wings, which has nothing to do with function, and cannot even be appreciated by their bearers with their imperfect eyes. This productivity of creation seems to be expressed in the ‘horizontal’ multiplicity of forms on the same level of organization as well as in the ‘vertical’ progress of organization, which can, but need not necessarily, be considered as ‘useful’.... So, evolution appears to be more than the mere product of chance governed by profit. It seems a cornucopia of *evolution créatrice*, a drama full of suspense, of dynamics and tragic complications. Life spirals laboriously upwards to higher and ever higher levels, paying for every step. It develops from the unicellular to the multicellular, and puts death into the world at the same time. It passes into levels of higher differentiation and centralization, and pays for this by the loss of regulability after disturbances. It invents a highly developed nervous system and therewith pain. It adds to the primeval parts of this nervous system a brain which allows consciousness that by means of a world of symbols grants foresight and control of the future; at the same time it is compelled to add anxiety about the future unknown to brutes; finally, it will perhaps have to pay for this development with self-destruction. The meaning of this play is unknown, unless it is what the mystics have called God’s attaining to awareness of Himself.”

Profoundly suggestive eloquence, this. But the materialist that von Bertalanffy believes he has to be in the interests of science makes him conclude

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that though the theory of natural selection of the advantageous among the products of random gene distribution of indifferent mutations is not satisfactory, "this does not imply mysterious controlling forces that in an anthropomorphic way strive towards progressive adaptation, fitness, or perfection." Rather, he searches, according to his "organismic" approach, for materialistic laws inherent in the organism's activity as a specific biological whole instead of accepting unreservedly the formulas of Neo-Darwinism.

Such a *dénouement* to the "crisis" suggested by him is indeed disappointing and ultimately as inadequate as the Neo-Darwinian formulas. A life-force with a godhead hidden in its depths, exploding through the obscurative and obstructive covering put on its energy by itself, displaying in numberless roles its imaginative zest, its will of self-figuration and self-diversification and self-transformation, weaving a tense symphony out of its own motifs of unity and wholeness and "excelsior" and matter's motifs of division and break-up and degrading, shooting up yet through this tangle of notes towards the *grand finale* of a consciousness which not only rises to the surface from subliminal depths and gets more and more intense but also visions and works out through all dangers and conflicts and setbacks some ideal perfection in both the inner and the outer being—this reading alone of the multi-coloured prolificity and productiveness revealed by evolutionary history can do justice to the facts.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

Students' Section

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

(To the Children of the Ashram)

I

Are the usual images of gods and goddesses true to reality?

Well, when a little child draws a picture of an object, is there any likeness? It is about the same or even worse here. For the child is simple and sincere, while the image-maker is full of prejudices and preconceived ideas, stuffed with things he has heard or read. And he is tied to his constructions. But at times, here and there, very rarely indeed, artists appear with an inner vision, with a great aspiration and a great purity of soul; they do things that are acceptable. But they are exceptions, the contrary is the rule.

I have seen some of these forms in the vital world and also in the mental world; they are truly creations of man. There is a Power from beyond that manifests, but in this triple world of Ignorance man creates God in his own image, and beings that appear there are more or less the outcome of the creative human thought. So at times we do have things that are truly frightful. I have seen formations that are so obscure, so ununderstandable, so inexpressive! There are some divine beings that are treated worse than the others. Take, for example, this poor Mahakali. What has man made of her, wildly terrible, a nightmare beyond imagination! Such creations however live in a very inferior world, in the lowest vital world; and if there is anything there of the original being, it is such a far reflection that it is hardly recognisable. And yet it is that which is pulled by the human consciousness. When, for example, an image is made and installed and the priest calls down into it a form, an emanation of a god, through an inner invocation—there is usually a whole ceremony in this connection—if the priest is someone having the power of evocation, then the thing succeeds (what Ramkrishna did in the Kali temple). But generally priests are people with the commonest ideas and most traditional training and education; when they think of the gods they give them attributes and appearances which are popular, which belong normally to entities of the

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vital world, at best to mental formations but which do not represent in any way the truth of the beings behind. All the idols in temples or the household gods worshipped by the many are inhabited by beings who know only how to lead you to unhappiness and disaster. They are so far away from the divinity that one means to worship. There are certain family Kalis that are real monsters. I have even advised some to throw such an image into the Ganges to get rid of the evil influence emanating from it. But of course it is always the fault of man and not of the divinity. For man wishes so much to make his gods in his own image.

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II

Why do people receive force from the Divine even when He knows that they are not sincere?

. You must understand once for all that the Divine, when he acts, is not moved by human notions. Possibly he does things even without what we call reason. In any case the reasons are not of the human kind; above all, the Divine has not that sense of justice which man has. For example, when you see a man full of greed for money, trying to cheat people just for the sake of getting a few rupees, your idea of justice cries out that such a man should be deprived of all money, he must be reduced to poverty. Actually you find things happening to the contrary. But that is only the appearance of the situation; behind there is an altogether different picture. The greedy gets the object of his greed, but he has to make an exchange, give up some other possibilities. He gets money but he loses in his consciousness. And then it also happens very often that when he does get what he desired so much, he finds himself not so happy, generally he is even less happy than before: he is tormented by the wealth he has gained. You must not judge things by apparent success or by apparent failure. One can say, on the whole, that the Divine gives what one asks for and that is the best way in which one gets his lesson. If your desire is ignorant, unconscious, obscure, selfish, you increase in yourself ignorance, unconsciousness, obscurity and selfishness, that is to say, you move away more and more from truth and consciousness and happiness, in other words, away from the Divine. For the Divine, however, there is only one thing which is true, the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Union. Each time you put material things in front of you, you become more and more material, you push

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behind more and more the Divine. To the eye of the ignorant, you may have all the appearance of wonderful success, but this success, from the standpoint of truth, is a terrible defeat, you have bartered truth for falsehood.

To judge by appearances, by apparent success is an act of complete ignorance. Even in the case of a person hardened to the core, who has apparently the utmost success, there is a counterpart: exactly this hardening, this veil that is put up thicker and thicker between the outer consciousness and the inner truth becomes also more and more unbearable. The outer success has to be paid for very dearly. One must be very great, very pure, one must have a very high, very unselfish spiritual consciousness to be able to succeed and yet not be affected. There is nothing so difficult to bear than success. That is the true test in life. When you are not successful, you turn very naturally to yourself, go within you, seek there comfort for the outer failure. And they who have the Flame within them and the Divine helping them truly, that is to say, if they are mature enough to get the help, if they are ready to follow the path, must expect blows coming upon them one after another, because that helps. Indeed that is the most powerful, most direct and most effective help. But if you have success, take care! Ask yourself, at what price you have had it. What is the thing you have paid for the success? Of course there are people of a different kind. They who have gone beyond, who are conscious of their soul, who are entirely surrendered, they can succeed and success does not touch them. But one has to rise very high to be able to shoulder the burden of success. It is perhaps the last and final test that the Divine puts to anyone. He says: "Now that you are noble and high and unselfish, you belong to Me alone. I shall make you triumph. We shall see if you can bear the blow!"

To the Asuras too the Divine gives what they ask for. Generally it is in that way that their end comes all the sooner. An Asura is a conscious being. He knows that he has an end. He knows that the attitude he has taken in this universe will necessarily destroy him after a time. Of course the Asura's time is much longer than human time. Even then he knows that there will come an end for him, for he has cut himself from Eternity. What he seeks is to carry out his desires to the utmost extent possible till the day of his doom, the final defeat comes. And very possibly if he is allowed his way, the defeat will be hastened. That is why exactly when great things are about to happen, at that moment the adverse forces become the most active, most violently active and apparently the most successful. They are given a free field as it were to rush to their doom.

21-7-1954

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

GOD'S WHITE HOUSE

(A STORY)

GOD lives in a white house. The way to it is long and steep, and the way to find the way is mysterious indeed. It takes power, a power greater than that of any man-made engine, and different: a power inside oneself. Where this power comes from and how one cultivates it and acquires it cannot very well be said. The truth is it comes from God, but when we have it we feel it is our very own.

Now this power carries us first up through a great wide golden plain. There are no trees, there is no grass. There is only an endless stretch, to both sides and ahead of us, of burning consciousness. There are no details in this landscape, only golden livingness scintillating from the ground, everywhere mounting. Through it all one goes quite easily, propelled by this tremendous power coming from inside oneself, ever climbing, until the road, if it can be called a road, enters a kind of new territory where everything becomes even more still than before, more concentrated, the way becomes steeper and the power within correspondingly greater. The wide vista seems to have narrowed to a greater intensity of seeing and there is over the steeply rising land a pregnant hush, an expectancy: everything—the whitened ground, the meaningful air—breathes the something wonderful that is coming.

Suddenly the road turns sharp right, and you on it. You go round a 45 degree curve as easily as if on ball bearings, as if it had always been intended that you should, when lo!...

The whole scene has once again changed. You are now on a broad and very beautiful drive or highway, still mounting ever so slightly a white ribbon of perfectly paved road lined by rows of the most magnificent trees. They seem to be palms, but like no palm trees on earth, for they are so tall that they stretch to the very sky, and their trunks are so straight and marvelously moulded as if of a heavenly cement. They are altogether perfect. They are royal palms.

As you progress up the boulevard, soon a great white house looms into view, and you realize for the first time that this impressive approach belongs to this house.

The house is ahead of you and also on the right. It must be L-shaped. It has white columns running along the two lengths of its face, an uncountable repetition of them, tall, tapering, symmetrically pure white handsome pillars.

Soon you are on the portico of the house, under the colonnade, behind it, and you are seated by someone, silently, at one end of a long banquet table. There you are served a very simple dish of light food, which you proceed to eat without question. You discover that it is just right: nourishing, but not too

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filling. And you are not allowed to finish it (a detail which troubles you not at all), because when you are about three-quarters of the way through eating it, a hand taps you from behind on the left shoulder and ever so gently says, Come. It is as if the sound of the word is implied in the gesture. So you rise from your seat, and quick, quicker than anything that has ever happened to you before, you are drawn through a door, a door that was behind you and so you did not even know that it was there; and then the door closes, soundlessly, leaving you in the fifth phase of this continuous progression of unusual experiences. You are—yes—now inside the house.

Slowly you enter a rather large room. There are people, many of them. They seem to belong there, to live there. They smile, they move about with an unusual grace, much the way swans move on the surface of a lake. They are most gracious to you, a newcomer, taking you about, introducing you, but soundlessly, making you feel at home.

And who do you think is there? The Mother! Looking oh so young and pretty, and very gay and knowing, as if She had at last let you in on some enormous secret. She smiles at you and then She seems to disappear behind your right shoulder, leaving somehow the impression, though none tells you, that She is the Mistress of this house, that in some subtle way not yet quite understood, it is thanks to Her Sanction, Her Invitation that you have been permitted to come here.

As you progress into the great room, the great fifth station of the whole chain of experiences, chimes suddenly ring from somewhere in a series of most enchanting silvery tones and you understand without being told that they announce another new arrival. (They must have rung for you, flashes across your mind.) And immediately after the ringing of the pure sweet tones a word is loosed upon the air, without anybody seemingly having said it. The word is "DETACH". It is a gentle general command, and so you do not even look back to see who the new arrival might be but go on moving through the room and the sea of pleasant smiling faces, as it is apparently destined that you shall do.

Presently you come to a far corner of the room at the left, from which leads a passageway to somewhere else—a sixth somewhere. Seated at the opening of the passageway is a lady who rises as you approach. You are introduced with almost no words, but you assure her that you have met before. Her name is quite familiar to you, even her look and the look of her.

With a polite and oh so smooth gesture she ushers you into the passageway she seems to guard. Unlike the big bright airy room you are leaving, it is a bit dark and narrow, confining and low, and you bend your head a little to enter it. It is only large enough for one person to pass at a time, and you are sure it has a deep significance, but you wonder what.

So you go through alone. It is not long, the passageway, and when you reach the other end of it, you are in—oh but it is very difficult to describe—a most marvelously novel room, but you cannot call it just a room, and already, moreover, your notion of the “house” you have come to has changed. It is more a palace, it is a temple: it is both of these and more. Perhaps it is the threshold of “heaven. At least, you think, the core of this “house” is most heavily charged with a holy livingness. It must be very near to God.

You move, you float across a white jade floor. The air is as if jewelled, so sparkingly alive that you have never known anything like it before. Everything is beautiful. Even, you feel, that beauty grows on you. You seem to elongate, grow very tall, rise to new sights, and there before your heightened eyes is something so marvelous! It is a door, a huge pair of doors, of at once the most beautiful thick lustrous white marble or alabaster or jade, you cannot be quite sure which, for they are altogether transparent, yet solid, white, yet full of subtle colour. It is strange—yet not...?

You have hardly had time to admire the great doors when—what happens? They swing softly open. And you are permitted to pass through, to glide through effortlessly, as if in a wingless flight.

Outdoors, as you find you are now, (the words “seventh” and “heaven” lightly cross your mind) you are free to mount the fiery path before you. It seems to be made of dense and endless, pure concentrated bright sunlight, a deep-piled parcept of luminous gold. Up you go as if you have been rocketed from some invisible projectile. Up, up! until three-quarters of the way up the marvelous path of sun, what do you think happens? The path parts above, the flames lap open, and what do you see? A very beautiful golden-white foot of a man cushioned deep in the sunlight. You think you recognize it. Yes! it is true: it is His; for hands, then arms appear and reach out and down toward you from the fiery Above, and then for one shining instant you glimpse His Face, His gloriously adorable Face, you see His Smile, feel His compassionate taking of you in. For one instant you are in the arms of Sri Aurobindo, and then it is over. The marvelous Fire closes round Him again and He is gone, yet not, for now you know. For ever and ever will you know now that He is there, waiting, timelessly waiting, though unseen, and that some day, somehow, you will find the way to HIM again.

You back lightly down the Sunlight Path, happily satisfied, grateful for the cool balm of the fiery Sun’s kind warmth, and as your gaze goes out to the right—just like that of a royal sight-seer in an invisible golden car—it is as if the mere seeing transports the bodiless you to the place seen.

Suddenly you are off the Path, to the right, floating. It is still sunny, and the sunlight is a very substance on the air. That substance parts and under-

GOD'S WHITE HOUSE

neath you see a garden, a large garden. You dip down into it, enter among the most enchanting living things you have ever seen, of a quality like nothing on earth. There are bumblebees and butterflies and snakes and toads and lizards and lovely leaves and vines and flowers, all pretty much like what we see on earth of these things, but different in quality. First, they are more beautiful, oh far more beautiful, incredibly so, and secondly, each one has the perfection of a living moving gem. Some are minutely complex, delicately but strikingly contoured and coloured, speckled and striped, mottled and burnished—oh but it is impossible to describe them. You only know that you could easily spend the rest of your life right here in this fabulous garden studying and playing with these delightful creatures, when something deep within you says in a clear and definite voice, soft but positively urgent,

“No. Do not become too involved, for if you do, you may never escape. It is God’s Garden, true, but it is not for you. In it men become drugged with Nature’s beauty, linger forever and forget their own jobs. Do not stay. Come away now while you can, while you still have the strength, before you are overcome with that joy of perfection that does not belong to you. Stay on the Path: the Sunlit Path. This is your way. Remember Above.”

So with mild and momentary regret you rise from the tempting place and back away from it and, you must admit, feel better, more normal, once you are back on the Path, your feet firmly planted in the deep living pile, the cushiony sun-soil, the padded luminosity of the Path, the bottom of which you have now reached, the left hand bottom corner, to be precise, and you look left, and over the edge of the Path you see the golden flames leaping down licking the ice-blue-white abyss of God’s other season. Very far below, you suppose, it is very cold? (In the garden it was forever summer.)

In a flash then you have come down through the Great Doors, you do not know how, and there you stand a bit bewildered on their inside side, at the bottom of them looking up, way up. They are so tall now and they have closed before you—how? you do not know. You even wonder if you ever went through them at all: they are so large, so thick, so firmly and forever shut. Forever?...

But your attention is diverted from their great and mysterious transparent yet opaque beauty, and you move to the right of you effortlessly, swimmingly, when somehow something strangely handsome and provocative moves in from a distance to come to meet you. It is both inanimate and alive. You have the impression that it brings a wise smile.

It is a pink jade tiger foot—or lion’s foot, you cannot be quite sure—more living than the livingest furry animal foot, yet made of a precious and polished, scintillating and jewelled, chaste, chaste stuff. It is undoubtedly a living symbol of something, you wonder what, and in some vague way there

flashes across your mind the power that got you up to this house, but this foot, this most beautiful living jewel of a foot bespeaks, you think, of a far greater power to come. You look up, following the foot with your eye up the leg, the grooved, symmetrical and very straight leg. It goes up and up as if forever, tapering twinkling white marble froth into Infinity. There seems to be no ceiling in this wonderful room. You wonder if the foot is part of the ornament in a fountain, but you do not know. You only know that you have never seen anything like this before, not even remotely like this.

Then as if the mere thinking it brought to life, so to speak, a fountain, your gaze travels down again and there at your feet (if you had feet) is the great foot again, this time more solid, more fixed on the scintillating air, and yes, it is a pedestal in a fountain. But this is a very special sort of a fountain. Instead of water playing over the elegant and now all white marble foot, there is a pearly steam. You realize quite clearly that somewhere there is fire, perhaps under the white jade or alabaster floor, for something is vapourizing the water.

Suddenly you know it could be the distant influence of that strange heat of that pure Sun. Sun, it seems, is everywhere.

"Water and fire", you muse, as you move away wondering if it will ever all be explained.

You move back and to the left, feeling now that you shall soon be asked to leave. You float, as if through the balmy steam, tingling, traversing the room leftward and moving back, the steam penetrating to your very bones, your marrow—unfindable marrow and bones, for you are really all eyes. No: an eye.

Suddenly you stop to look at two strange and unfamiliar things rolling across the floor in front of your astonished gaze. They roll from upper left to lower right. They are balls or huge round concentrated puffs of this light and fluffy fire-water, twin spheres of the mysterious vapour crossing your path then determinedly going out of sight. What do they mean?

As if the appearance of the question were a reminder somewhere that your time is getting short, you are drawn back and further down and leftward. Over your left shoulder you glimpse the beginning of a dark, in fact blackening and deep steam or purification room, and you realize, not without a certain sadness, that you are headed for there, that you are to be exiled there for a time, that you are not yet altogether ready for this splendid life, that you have been shown it only so that you will know what is in store for the future, that you must serve some time being washed of all that is impure, that you must live in the darkness yet awhile longer, though you have been shown the Light, the Sun, till you are made clean through and through and fit for life forever in God's perfectly wonderful White House.

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SUBCONSCIENT AND SLEEP

SELF: The things already stored in the subconscious will be emptied one day—but what about future impressions? How is one to deal with them in advance so as to prevent them from entering?

SRI AUROBINDO: If the subconscious is emptied, it would mean that you have got beyond the ordinary consciousness and the subconscious itself is prepared to be an instrument of the Truth. (5-6-1933)

SELF: What I meant in the above question was: on one side one goes on emptying the old stuff of the subconscious by a rigorous rejection while on the other new things are getting in almost endlessly!

SRI AUROBINDO: If you are perfectly indifferent about it that is sufficient. The impressions that come up constantly from the subconscious are of things in which the mind (or the vital) was interested—e.g. family, relatives, friends, past surroundings or occupations etc.

SELF: Yesterday when I went to give my grammar book to Z I found her standing in a graceful pose. The subconscious took that scene in and thought too much about it. This is a new occurrence for me. How to deal with such events?

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you say that the subconscious took it in?— you can hardly be aware yet of the movements of the subconscious. What you describe was a quite conscious vital movement. (16-6-1933)

SELF: I am quite unconscious of my nights. I do not remember any dreams even though there is a recollection of having seen something.

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not matter much. The sleep consciousness can be effectively dealt with only when the waking mind has made a certain amount of progress. (18-6-1933)

SELF: In the book, *Words of the Mother*, I came across this passage, "In sleep many people fall into the grip of those subconscious regions and they open and swallow all that they had laboriously built up in their waking hours." If the subconscious swallows up all the achievements of our waking life, done with so much labour, is it not imperative to be conscious of our nights as much as of our days?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: At night when one sinks into the subconscious after being in a good state of consciousness we find that state gone and we have to labour to get it back again. On the other hand, if the sleep is of the better kind one may wake up in a good condition. Of course, it is better to be conscious in sleep, if one can. (25-6-1933)

SELF: How is it I get dreams even during my noon sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: All sleep is full of dreams. Why should night or day make any difference? (26-6-1933)

SELF: Yesterday I had quite a long sleep; and yet when I got up this morning I felt so tired, heavy, and tamasic. It almost seemed as if I had not slept. Could it be due to my having read a novel before going to bed?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously—it threw you into a tamasic consciousness and consequently the sleep was heavy in a gross subconsciousness and the fatigue was the result. (30-6-1933)

SELF: What is actually the connection between the reading and the sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: Simply it lowered your consciousness—and as you slept with a lowered consciousness, you went into the subconscious. (16-7-1933)

SELF: If one reads a thing worth reading just before going to bed, what effect will it produce during the sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the state of consciousness. (16-7-1933)

SELF: In a dream last night I brought to my house some wet mud for the garden. After the work was over there was a little surplus which I put in a basket and left in a corner. Then I went in and lay down in my bed. Suddenly I saw a small thin serpent running out from my head. How do you explain it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably some small vital forces brought in by the uncleanness. (30-6-1933)

SELF: Which uncleanness do you mean here?

SRI AUROBINDO: The uncleanness entered in the dream by the keeping of the basket with mud in it. It was symbolic of some tamas and want of cleanliness in the consciousness. (1-7-1933)

SELF: During the noon nap do we lose our day's gain as we do during the night sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: One may or not—it depends on the nature of the sleep; but it is more easily set right. (29-6-1933)

SELF: How to prevent or set right this kind of loss? Does our consciousness set it right automatically?

SRI AUROBINDO: No—one has to concentrate a little till one gets it back. (1-7-1933)

SELF: Upon what is one to concentrate?

SRI AUROBINDO: To concentrate the consciousness in itself simply,—as you tighten a belt. It has got relaxed and diffused, so you have lost what you gained. Or if you have not the habit of doing that concentrate in the memory of the Mother till the diffused state comes back.

SELF: In what condition should one go to bed in order to prevent at least the outer influences caught during the day from entering into sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: In a state of concentration. But sleep is long and one goes through many changes and passes from one condition to another—so it is not sure. Still it gives the best chance for a conscious sleep. (2-7-1933)

SELF: Does one lose one's gains in every dream or in some particular ones only?

SRI AUROBINDO: Dreams have nothing to do with it. It is the sleep that lowers the consciousness—if it is an ordinary sleep. (3-7-1933)

SELF: Is the time come for me to start becoming conscious of my nights? My normal sleep is filled with unconsciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not matter much at present. Put your waking consciousness right. (2-8-1933)

SELF: The thoughts, desires etc. go down into the subconscious when rejected from the conscious parts. Then they get much force and live there as in their own home. It is very difficult to dismiss them from there. Is that correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not so with all—with some it happens like that, others pass away without getting a hold. (4-8-1933)

SELF: The subconscious is to be emptied in the course of the sadhana and not filled up with new things. But I see that I have been filling it every day! Does it not mean that I have been dealing with them in such a way that they are getting stored there?

SRI AUROBINDO: All that one does and thinks leaves its trace in the subconscious.

SELF: What is the right method of dealing with these things, so that nothing fresh may enter into the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only if the mind is silent that the subconscious can be empty. What has to be done is to get all the old ignorant unyogic stuff out of the subconscious.

SELF: If the subconscious is full of things—good, bad and indifferent—are the so-called good things useful to one's sadhana?

SRI AUROBINDO: To a certain extent. The subconscious is the support of habitual action—it can support good habits as well as bad. (5-8-1933).

SELF: How to recognise the things that come from outside and those from the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can recognise only when you feel conscious with a wider consciousness not limited by the body. You can then feel or inwardly see things coming, just as you feel or see in the physical consciousness. (6-8-1933)

SELF: But how to become conscious in the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to call down a wider consciousness into you. Without that it is not possible. (6-8-1933)

SELF: What is the connection between the memory and the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is forgotten is there in the subconscious as an impression. When it comes up, one says, "I remember".

SELF: Is our subconscious turned particularly towards Ignorance like the lower vital?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is like the rest of the nature, only less conscious—it admits whatever comes into it.

SELF: Is not the subconscious quite unconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is subconscious, not unconscious. (5-8-1933)

SELF: How to put a will even in the subconscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: Just as you put a will anywhere else—in the vital, in the physical—it has only to be imposed on the consciousness and addressed through the consciousness to the subconscious part of the being. (9-9-1933)

NAGIN DOSHI

POEMS

TO SRI AUROBINDO

OUR foil in battle of life
Can never be Thy master Choice.
Our triumph truly is thine,
Creation's King of the adamant Voice!

The pinioned mind of earth
Is wide awake to Thy Decree.
Her breast's unknown abyss
Harbours Thy immortality.

Our living sheaths and souls
Emblem Thy godhead's infinite urge
Of almighty Flame and Love.
Who dares to plumb Thee, O Thaumaturge?

Rapture-fires of bliss and grace
From the earth's buried heaven arise
To climb thy nude noon-peak
And thy Sun-Face beyond surmise.

CHINMOY

VISION

THE opulent throne of an intense diamond-flame
In the midst of matter's play-field who has set?
Its radiance, breaking the placid slumber's face,
Pervades the cells of all life on earth's lap
And floats within each heart as though the moon
Patiently growing 'neath an azure vast
And spreading its snowy spell on every soul
That seeks to plunge itself in rapture's stream.

As a beaming wreath of flawless tranquil stars,
A row of half-enlightened waves in glee
Emerges from the spumy womb of night:
It rolls in front of the splendid argent throne,
Kisses the dust that glows in golden hush
And moves still forward on to a deathless height
Where chords from the Infinite's sacred dulcimer
Ring in an ardent roar from sky to sky....

PRITHWINDRA

'THE NIGHT'

BLESSED is man's abode when the night,
Approaching slowly, quiets the storm—
The struggling pangs of busy life.

Sleep, gentle sleep dropping from above
Along with the fresh and pearly dew
Appeases the weary human soul,
Sweeps over all the wrinkles of nature
And lulls the troubled hearts to peace.

A profound and mysterious silence holds
The world in its wide sovereign grip.

The glistening river gently flows
And no one treads the lonely roads.

Yon thatched roofs echo no sound;
The foliage of the trees keeps still
Under the peaceful spell of the stars.

(Partial rendering of one of Lamartine's French poems)

ROTHIN

WITH THE STUDENTS

SPRING IN ENGLAND

WE have come across many references, in our text books to Spring, and I have noticed that you regard these references as somewhat exaggerated. This is only natural as you are finding it difficult to equate your own understanding of the references with that of the writer who seems to be carried away on an apparently unjustified wave of enthusiasm at the mention of Spring.

In various parts of India, and especially perhaps in the north, in provinces like Bihar and Bengal, you have your own particular experiences of Spring, and your memory is perhaps alive with its many associations.

In England, out of the four seasons, Spring is probably the one most looked forward to. Summer has its joys of settled games, its long quiet evenings when cricket may be played up to 10-30 p.m. on a mid-summer's day, its annual holidays by the sea-side, and week-end picnics in the country. Autumn also has its beauty of falling leaves and soft sunlight. Of huge red sunsets seen through forest trees at eventide. A beauty mellow, as if with wisdom and experience; near to the touch of mortal tears. And Winter in England has a balance of delights which the sportsman and the socialite enjoy. The ground is unfit and the days are now too short for cricket, so football takes the field, rugby football and association football. "Rugby," named after the famous public school, is mostly played by the public and higher secondary schools, association football by the rest.

There are many outdoor games for the sportsman including hunting and shooting, but Winter is also the season for indoor recreation, of which dancing is perhaps the most indulged in and is quite important from the social point of view. It is a means for gathering people together, an opportunity of forming social connections which otherwise would be almost impossible as in India.

All these three seasons have their joys and delights, their sports and amusements, their social pleasures and their prides—but Spring, ah Spring is yet a different thing! The winter has been a long one; the trees are more often than not dripping with rain. And the wind, cold from the north-east, has no mercy on a soul that yearns for the almost forgotten happiness of warm sunshine.

Year in, year out, the forests and the hills know this same experience of cold. Yet each year the trees seem to say: "We cannot stand another year like

WITH THE STUDENTS

this," and the hills echo: "Too cold, too cold, we are blue with cold." Then the March winds come with a frolic and a dance and mock at those who thought the winter gone, with gusts of sleet to sting the face into a remembrance of Winter's cold.

But one bright morning, early in April, you walk as usual down your windy lane, and turn the corner, come upon the rise and suddenly a clump of daffodils are there before your eyes. Stately waving in the morning breeze, their yellow heads uplifted as with pride, as if to say: "See Spring is here to stay!" And at that moment, far off in the woodland valley you might just hear the cuckoo's first lone note, a magic cry that echoes in the hills and brings a silence over woods and sky. As if some goddess first had set her feet upon the new green loveliness around. Then every heart that would in reverence beat knows that Spring the Goddess has been crowned. Well, Spring is something like that. The sight of a clump of daffodils will take your breath away, their yellow heads seem so much part of the new sunlight—sunlight for which all winter-weary souls have been waiting, that it almost seems to have come from another world.

Spring in England is full of flowers, they appear almost overnight. We walked through these woods yesterday, there were no flowers, but look! see! there are primroses! more modest than the daffodil, pressed close to the still wet earth, but yellow sweet, with leaves thick to the touch and pale green, oh so green! They grow here like the violets, scattered about the woodland floor, with short stalks—to beautify the fairies' gardens, not for mortals to touch. Then on the other side of the valley we come upon a coppice of young silver birch, and here the ground is full with crocuses, so sacred did it seem, that reverent earth, that we could only stand and stare; for who could tread upon such flowers divine, such 'light' of heaven flecked upon the earth, for surely they indeed were born from light.

NORMAN DOWSETT

THE MATERIALIST DENIAL

(An essay by a first-year student based on the lectures given by Professor Das Gupta on Sri Aurobindo's "The Life Divine".)

To establish the divine life upon earth or to transform mortal life into immortality we must accept two truths. We should recognise not only the eternal Spirit but also the body human, the most fitting and ever-changing noble material in which He dwells. If we do not accept these two truths the flowering of the life divine cannot take place.

We must not recoil from life in the body, since the Upanishads even declared that "Matter is Brahman." Matter and Spirit, in essence, are identical. This physical universe is described in the Upanishads as the external body of the Divine Being. We must give absolute value to these words. It is extremely difficult to understand that Matter and Spirit are identical in essence unless we accept a series of ascending terms (for example, life, mind, Supermind etc.) in between them.

If we take it for granted that there is only Pure Spirit or God and that His work is being carried out by an unintelligent mechanical energy called Nature then our thought and life would choose one of them as the truth denying the other one. Our thought would either deny Spirit as an illusion of imagination or Matter as an illusion of the senses; consequently, life would forget itself in ecstasy leaving the world as an illusion, even it may run away from itself; or denying God, forgetting its own immortality, turn towards animality.

According to Sankhya, Purusha and Prakriti have nothing in common and the solution of the problem of existence is that Purusha must break away from Prakriti and plunge into immutable repose where she cannot cast her shadow.

Sankara also failed to reconcile his wordless inactive Self with the Prakriti of many names and forms. According to him, this varied illusion of Prakriti must dissolve 'into the sole truth of an eternal silence'.

The materialist has arrived at Monism by denying Spirit or God and accepting Matter as the only reality. But it is impossible for him to stick to his own view for a long time.

The human mind cannot rest satisfied with the contradiction of Spirit and Matter. It seeks a luminous reconciliation. In order to arrive at that reconciliation it must cross the many degrees of our inner consciousness. Whether by the objective method of analysing Life and Mind like Matter or by the subjective method of synthesis and illumination it must acquire the peaceful repose

of the ultimate unity without denying the energy that expresses itself through multiplicity. All contradictions are to be laid at rest by a luminous synthesis. Our thought and life must express in various ways the Supreme Being.

As the two truths appear to be contradictory so man has to test them separately. There is a meaning and justification in accepting for a time one of the two realities and refusing the other. For, however different may be our paths we ultimately arrive at one single truth. We might explain all things in the terms either of Life-Energy or of sensation or of Ideas. But these exclusive solutions are contradictory to the reality. Man's logical reason may rest satisfied with this solution but the practical sense of the mind cannot. For the mind knows instinctively that there is something beyond itself which is not the Idea, something more than the Vital Breath. It is then ready to accept Matter or Spirit as the ultimate reality, but it must follow either of these two extreme courses at some time in history before arriving at one central truth. By nature, the sense can perceive clearly the separate parts of existence. Speech also attains distinctness only when it tries to explain something divided and limited. Human intellect has to proceed with the help of the Speech and the Sense.

When multiplicity appears before it somehow it seeks unity by reducing all to the terms of one. But this is an attempt to avoid multiplicity for the sake of oneness. It must, on the contrary, seek the real source of identity of the many. The mind must go beyond itself in order to arrive at the sole truth that cannot be explained by definition or by description yet is real and attainable. The path may be different for different persons; nevertheless, we shall arrive at this truth if we do not halt on the way.

After making many experiments and arriving at many solutions we face to-day two extreme oppositions, viz. the negation of the materialist and the refusal of the ascetic. The materialist denies Spirit and accepts Matter as the sole truth whereas the ascetic denies Matter and accepts Spirit as the only reality. The two ideals may be said in general to have dominated and shaped the life of Europe and India respectively. But to-day the materialist finds no satisfaction in settling all problems by the single term of Matter. These two contradictory views serve a great purpose. Man must find out the real solution of the problem of Matter and Spirit for the fulfilment of individual and collective life.

The denial of the materialist may be convincing apparently but it is not difficult to refute its arguments. The main reason that stands in favour of the materialist is typified in its Agnosticism. It says first that what lies beyond this visible world is not knowable and then gradually it extends the limits of the unknowable until it comprehends all that is merely unknown. The materialist

denies Spirit or Soul. He asserts that Matter is the only reality and what lies beyond the horizon of human senses is to be annulled outright from his thought and considered non-existent. According to him, the physical senses are our only means of knowledge and Reason is the instrument of knowledge. Owing to fidelity to physical facts only, Reason cannot cross the borderland of this visible material world and therefore fails to unravel the mysteries of the universe. The materialist is not at all prepared to undertake the adventure of investigating Supraphysical phenomena in order to arrive at the truth. He explains away the vast field of experience that contradicts his own conception or conviction.

He denies point-blank the subtle senses that lie latent in all human beings. He refuses to admit that these senses can be used as a bridge in order to arrive at less limited and more powerful faculties, and that with the help of these faculties knowledge can be acquired. But his view does not hold good for long. For, if we investigate the operations of mind and Supermind without any bias, we shall come across a mass of phenomena which is beyond the materialist's conception. Man possesses powers and faculties to know the knowable realities beyond the compass of the senses and which determine, rather than are determined by, the material organs. Thus the materialist's Agnosticism does not stand to reason.

The rationalistic tendency of materialism has rendered mankind a valuable service. If we enter into the vast domain of evidence and experience with our immature mind and untrained intellect as guide the result will be disastrous. In the past, blind superstitions and perverted dogmas cropped up around a nucleus of truth and it was impossible for mankind to proceed further in the pursuit of real knowledge. It was absolutely necessary to sweep them clean away in order to re-establish truth.

We must, therefore, proceed in the quest of Knowledge with a clear, pure and well-disciplined intellect. We shall have to verify the Supraphysical phenomena sometimes by coming back to the concrete realities of the physical world. If we extend our knowledge of the physical world, surely we shall come nearer to even the highest Knowledge.

We must not condemn materialism; rather we should acknowledge its valuable contribution to humanity at large. We cannot ignore the truth that it has laid bare before us. Atheism has done a great work for the Divine; Agnosticism too has played a very conspicuous role in the development of Knowledge. In the world error has always played the part of a "faithful guide and a handmaid of truth." Even sometimes truth comes to us under the disguise of error to lead us to the goal.

Agnosticism is perhaps the final truth of all mental knowledge. We shall find at the end of our journey that the universe is a symbol of an unknowable

reality which is beyond our thought and speech but attainable by a supreme effort of consciousness.

The unknown, however, is not really the unknowable. All knowledge is attainable if we can transcend ignorance and limitation. For man possesses the faculties that are capable of knowing all if properly developed. Nature has implanted in him an irresistible impulse for self-realisation. It is impossible for him to remain confined to a circumscribed area.

If the aim of modern materialism were to cling to material life only, progress would be retarded. Since its very aim is to extend the frontiers of Knowledge, it cannot rely wholly and solely on sense-knowledge. It must move forward in the conquest of what lies beyond the dimensions of the material world.

Divergent streams of Knowledge always merge into one central truth. Modern science has explained and illustrated that—it has said it almost in the same language as the seers of the Upanishads and the Vedanta used. Moreover, modern scientific discoveries have brought to light many hidden truths of the Vedanta. Like the Veda, the trend of modern Science is now towards Monism. Even the dualism of Matter and Force does not stand in the way of Monism. For Science explains that the distinction between them lies only in our thought.

Matter appears to be the expression of some unknown force. Life, however, still remains shrouded in mystery and appears to us to be an obscure energy of sensation imprisoned in the material mould. Our dividing ignorance builds up a wall of difference between Life and Matter. If we demolish this wall we shall see that Mind, Life and Matter are nothing but one Energy triply formulated, like the triple world of the Vedic Seers.

The energy that has created this world is nothing but a Will “and Will is consciousness applying itself to a work and result.”

What is the true nature of this work and result? It is nothing but self-involution and self-evolution of the Supreme Consciousness; and this Consciousness is involved in inert Matter in order to materialise some mighty possibility in the Universe. The will in Consciousness has kindled in man a longing for endless life, boundless knowledge and infinite power.

Time and Space are vanishing and the idea of limitation and impossibility is fading away. It appears that what man constantly wills, ultimately he receives the power to do. For the consciousness in the human race finds out the means. Omnipotence expresses itself in the collective will of mankind and not in the individual who is in one aspect only a mere channel. If we consider deeply, however, we shall see that some “Superconscious Might” expresses itself by means of individual consciousness through the collectivity.

MOTHER INDIA

The modern world, without knowing its aim, is following the vast cosmic impulse subconsciously.

But still there is a hindrance and a limitation. The limit of the material field stands in the way of knowledge and the use of material machinery also is a hindrance to power. But Science is moving forward with tremendous strides and, as a consequence, this limitation and hindrance must dwindle away. We see to-day the instrumental machinery is reduced to a minimum—and in the long run material powers too must take a minor place. When the laws and forces of the Supra-physical are studied the mind will find means to use the physical energy more directly and more effectively.

But still there would be a limitation after the achievement of knowledge and control over the worlds above Matter. We must get rid of ego in order to achieve freedom and liberation. The external has to merge with the internal. Multiplicity and unity are two aspects of the One.

“The oneness is the All, and the oneness is in All....Ultimately the inner must widen to embrace the outer, in order to realise that greater Oneness of the Cosmos.”

MANJU GUPTA