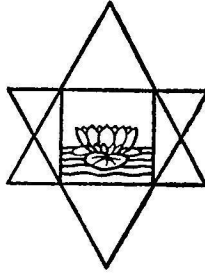


MOTHER INDIA

MARCH, 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 FUTURE OF INDIA AND THE WORLD

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER

I. The year 1957 will be as significant for India as the years 1757 and 1857 in Indian History.¹

II. Complete dissolution of Pakistan.

III. Serious possibility of a Russo-American war over India.

These were the highlights of an interview which the Mother granted me at Pondicherry. The Mother who is well known for her divine powers and supernatural visions is positive that India has a great future and will play the role of World Teacher.

Q. "What do you think of India's future?"

A. "The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating the spiritual knowledge in the world. The Government of India ought to recognise this significance of India and plan their actions accordingly."

Q. "Don't you think India is facing a grave crisis in the near future and a Russo-American war is inevitable?"

A. "Yes, I feel there is a serious possibility of a Russo-American war and if the war does come in spite of our efforts to stop it, our spiritual work will be finished. Unfortunately the Americans are convinced that Pandit Nehru's sympathies are with the communists and therefore America has resolved to befriend Pakistan in her own interest. As you know, Moscow is nearer to Peshawar."

¹ 1757 is the date of the decisive Battle of Plassey which brought India into British hands and 1857 is that of the military uprising against British rule, which has been called the Indian Mutiny—Editor.

MOTHER INDIA

Q. "But don't you think Pakistan is making a mistake in being used as a bomber-base and will thus invite trouble for herself?"

A. "When India was partitioned I asked Sri Aurobindo what he thought of the future of Pakistan. I asked him how long it will last. Without hesitation Sri Aurobindo said, 'Ten years'."

The Mother laid special emphasis on the words 'without hesitation'. She is sure of Sri Aurobindo's prophecy. She went on, "The year 1957 will be a very important year in Indian history, like 1757 and 1857. It will see the end of Pakistan and there are serious possibilities of a Russo-American war over India. Many politicians expected war in March 1950 and they came to Sri Aurobindo and told him about it. But Sri Aurobindo did not believe. Once when I asked him he definitely said, 'The crisis will only come in 1957'." The Mother was certain that something would happen in 1957.

Q. "What do you think of the threatened war between Russia and America?"

A. "If there is a war it will be over India and it will be a very critical time for India. I want to avoid that war. India must be saved for the good of the world since India alone can lead the world to peace and a new world order."

Q. "How will the dissolution of Pakistan come about if there is no war?"

A. "It may be by inner dislocation."

Here the Mother added, "Occult forces must not speak about how the things will happen". The Mother told me at length how she saw visions of the first Chinese revolution, the first Great War, the second World War and the Korean war as well as the freedom of India. She told Sri Aurobindo about the freedom of India as far back as 1914. She also told Sri Aurobindo, three months ahead, of the war in Korea.

Q. "How do you think we should prepare India to withstand the coming crisis?"

A. "You believe in divine power,—divine power alone can help India. If you can build faith and cohesion in the country it is much more powerful than any man-made power."

THE FUTURE OF INDIA AND THE WORLD

(It is not a mere coincidence that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has been recently laying stress on cohesion and internal unity).

Q. "How to bring about the much needed cohesion and faith in the country?"

A. "By following Sri Aurobindo's teachings. His Independence Day Message¹ issued on August 15th, 1947, needs to be read and re-read and its significance explained to millions of his compatriots. India needs the conviction and faith of Sri Aurobindo."

The Mother was much perturbed over the serious possibilities of a war. She repeatedly said, "It must not come." And she added that only by goodwill and understanding the world could be saved.

Q. "Is there any danger to India this year?"

The Mother emphatically replied, "I don't see it."

I said, "Does that mean the cold war will continue?"

A. "Something like that."

She added that there was nothing to be vexed about and India's future was decidedly very clear.

She concluded, "According to a very old tradition, if twelve honest persons unite to incarnate the divine Will, they can compel the Divine to manifest."

Q. "But Mother, you have nearly a thousand souls in the Ashram."

A. "Yes, as children."

The Mother added, "There must be a group forming a strong body of cohesive will with the spiritual knowledge to save India and the world. It is India that can bring truth in the world. By manifestation of the divine Will and Power alone India can preach her message to the world and not by imitating the materialism of the West. By following the divine Will India shall shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of truth and organise world unity."

CHAMAN LAL

¹ This Message is given on the next page—Editor.

SRI AUROBINDO'S INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE

THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST 1947

AUGUST 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coincidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an

SRI AUROBINDO'S INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE

overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go,—it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action, even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or are at this moment being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which

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is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far or how soon this connection will be fulfilled, depends upon this new and free India.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SIGN

(After a vision seen by the Mother on February 21 on the wall of the Ashram playground, where stands in relief a map of undivided India.)

LIFT up your eyes! there on the wall
Is manifest a sign!
A sign that echoes to the call
Of a mighty voice divine.

From shore to shore the temples shake,
The oceans raise the cry;
"The soul of India is awake!"
Rings loud across the sky.

From shore to shore Her lion's roar
Stirs hearts to live again,
In men made nobler, worthier, more
Than deeds of toil and pain.

New hearts aflame with brilliant youth,
New bodies brave and bright,
New limbs that lean to radiant Truth
From higher worlds of Light.

New drums with ancient thunder roll,
New warrior-souls arise
To meet the Dawn of India's soul
Emblazoned in the skies.

Her myriad children rise as one
Like heads of ripening corn—
They lift their faces to the Sun
To greet Her Golden Dawn.

NORMAN DOWSETT

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the January issue)

- (1) THE SOUL AND THE EVOLUTION
- (2) BUDDHA
- (3) REALISATIONS IN THE ASHRAM

MYSELF: It seems to me that the soul is searching, experimenting, analysing, and thus proceeding by steps and stages. It will move towards Light and retrace its steps again and by a series of ups and downs will arrive at its Home. And so the revolts are only steps and stages on the way. This is how I look at it. Is that all rot? No grain of truth in it?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are describing the action of the ordinary existence, not the Yoga. Yoga is a seeking (not a mental searching), it is not an experimenting in contraries and contradictories. It is the mind that does that and the mind that analyses. The soul does not search, analyse, experiment—it seeks, feels, experiences.

Logical rot! The only grain of truth is that the Yoga is very usually a series of ups and downs till you get to a certain height. But there is a quite different reason for that—not the vagaries of the soul. On the contrary when the psychic being gets in front and becomes master, there comes in a fundamentally smooth action and although there are difficulties and undulations of movement, these are no longer of an abrupt or dramatic character.

MYSELF: You say that when the soul no more wants the Ignorance, it will turn to the Light. Till then it can't. This is very significant, because if so, I should say that the Soul is the Master of the House and if it says categorically—"No more of Ignorance, vitals and mentals have no go," it can refuse to go further. Because the soul wants more 'fun' in the mud of Ignorance, people follow their 'round of pleasure and pain', and their lack of faith etc. is due to their soul still wanting Ignorance, more fun, I suppose!

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps the better phrase would be "consents to" the Ignorance. The soul is the witness, upholder, experiencer, but it is the master only in theory, in fact it is not-master, *amsh*, so long as it consents to the Ignorance. For that is a general consent which implies that the Prakriti gambols

about with the Purusha and does pretty well what she darn well likes with it. When he wants to get back his mastery, make the theoretical practical, he needs a lot of tapasya to do it.

That is contrary to experience. The psychic has always been veiled, consenting to the play of mind, physical and vital, experiencing everything through them in the ignorant mental, vital and physical way. How then can it be that they are bound to change at once when it just takes the trouble to whisper or say "Let there be Light"? They have a tremendous go and can refuse and do refuse point blank. The mind resists with an obstinate persistency in argument and a constant confusion of ideas, the vital with a fury of bad will aided by the mind's obliging reasonings on its side, the physical resists with an obstinate inertia and crass fidelity to old habit, and when they have done, the general Nature comes in and says "What, you are going to get free from me so easily? Not if I know it," and it besieges and throws back the old nature on you again and again as long as it can. Yet you say it is the soul that wants all this "fun" and goes off laughing and prancing to get some more. You are funny. If the poor soul heard you, I think it would say "Sir, methinks you are a jester", and look about for a hammer and break your head with it.

Due to the soul's sense of fun? It seems to me more probably that it is due to the obstinacy of mental and vital sanskaras. Perhaps that is why the Buddhists insisted on breaking all sanskaras as the seeker of liberation's first duty?

MYSELF: But if you ask me, as you do, "Why then is there so much struggle and sorrow?" well, I am floundered, unless one can say that though the soul has given the last kick, still a longing, lingering look is bound to be there.

SRI AUROBINDO: You call that a mere look! I suppose that if you saw an Irish row or a Nazi mob in action, you would say "These people are making slight perceptible gestures and I think I hear faint sounds in the air".

My dear Sir, be less narrowly logical (with a very deficient logic even as logic), take a wider sweep; swim out of your bathing pool into the open sea and waltz round the horizons! For anything that happens, there are a hundred factors at work and not only the one just under your nose; but to perceive that you have to become cosmic and intuitive or overmental and what not. So, alas!

19-9-1935

MYSELF: In your Yoga the main issue seems to be to bring out the psychic to the front after which everything becomes an easy walk-over.

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SRI AUROBINDO: Not quite that. The psychic is the first of two transformations necessary—if you have the psychic transformation it facilitates immensely the other, i.e. the transformation of the ordinary human into the higher spiritual consciousness—otherwise one is likely to have either a slow and dull or exciting but perilous journey.

MYSELF: I am not very clear about the transformation of the psychic.

SRI AUROBINDO: I never said anything about a “transformation of the psychic”. I have always written about a “psychic transformation” of the nature which is a very different matter. I have sometimes written of it as a psychicisation of the nature. The psychic is in the evolution, part of human being, its divine part—so a psychicisation will not carry one beyond the present evolution but will make the being ready to respond to all that comes from the Divine or Higher Nature and unwilling to respond to the Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha or Animal in the being or to any resistance of the lower nature which stands in the way of the divine change.

MYSELF: You have said that the psychic being is at this stage a flame, not a spark. Does it apply to the human species as a whole?

SRI AUROBINDO: I simply meant that there was a psychic being there and not merely a psychic principle as at the beginning of the evolution. The difference between one and the other is one of evolution. The psychic being is more developed in some but the soul-principle is the same in all.

MYSELF: The psychic takes thousands of lives to evolve and turn towards the Divine. Is the involution also a similar process, or is it one single descent into the Inconscient at a sweep?

SRI AUROBINDO: But, hang it all, the psychic is part of the human nature or of ordinary nature—it has been there even before the human began.

No, certainly not. The involution is of the Divine in the Inconscience and it is done by the interposition of intermediate planes (Overmind etc., mind, vital—then the plunge into the Inconscient which is the origin of matter). But all that is not a process answering to the evolution in the inverse sense—for there is no need for that, but a gradation of consciousness which is intended to make the evolution upwards possible.

MYSELF: What is the first experience that the soul had in its descent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Partial separation from the Divine and the Truth—these

things at the back and no longer in front and everywhere; division; diminished sense of unity with all, stress growing on separate existence, separate viewpoint, separate initiation, aim, action.

MYSELF: Some say that the Supermind will establish a direct connection with the psychic and give it a spur, so that it comes to the front quicker.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it can do that but it is not bound to do that only and take no other way.

(2) BUDDHA

MYSELF: You say that if the soul goes on with Karma, it does not get liberation. But isn't liberation a consummation of the result of Karma, at least according to Buddhism as I understand it? Buddhism seems to say that we are bound to the chain of Karma and so past Karma is always guiding our present and future. In that case would not Buddha's very attainment of Nirvana be due to his past Karma?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not that I know of, in the ordinary theory. Karma always produces fresh Karma; it is only the cut from Karma that produces liberation....

The only truth of that is that by the use of compassion and acts of compassion one is helped to become a Bodhisattwa—just as sattwic deeds and feelings help to become less murky with the Ignorance. But it is knowledge that liberates according to both Buddhism and Vedanta, not Karma.

MYSELF: Isn't it curious that Buddha recognised no play of forces? He seemed to have gone in for one's own efforts and struggles?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should he? It was the play of sanskaras that interested him, the binding play of wrong ideas, and his whole aim was to get rid of that.

Yes, because individual liberation was his aim and for him 'God and Shakti did not exist—only the Permanent above and a mechanical chain of Karma below. To undo the chain of sanskaras that create the individual is the point; the individual is a knot that must undo itself by disowning all that constitutes itself. The individual must undo it, because who else is going to do it for him? There isn't anybody. All else including the Gods are only other knots of sanskaras and no knot can undo another knot—each knot must undo itself. Comprenez?

MOTHER INDIA

Buddhist Yoga is an uphill business, like the Advaita Vedanta. You have to do the whole thing off your own bat, and even Tota Puri, Ramakrishna's teacher in Advaita, was after thirty years of sadhana far from his goal, so much so that he went off to the Ganges to drown himself there—only Ramakrishna and Kali interfered in a miraculous way; that at least is the story.

The Buddhist Church, however, as distinguished from the uncompromising theory of the thing, proved weak and admitted *sharanam* [refuge] in Buddha as well as in the Dharma and the Sangha.

MYSELF: Did he not 'pump' his force into his disciples as you do into us?

SRI AUROBINDO: Surely not. He would have considered it a wrong thing altogether—even if he had any idea about pumping force, which he probably never had. At least I never heard of his doing this operation. He might have given enlightenment, but I think only through *upadesh*—not certainly by pumping light into them. An individual knot of sanskaras can tell another how to dissolve itself, but where is the ground for a more direct interference? All that of course is only the conscious theory of Buddha's action. I won't swear that without meaning it he did not influence his disciples in more secret and subtle ways.

(3) REALISATIONS IN THE ASHRAM

MYSELF: I am really amazed to hear that Mother told a child,—X, I think—that only 5 or 6 here will realise the Divine. Then, Sir, are the rest of us to be thrown into the dust-bin, or have we to be content with a little joy and peace only? Do we not have a genuine aspiration, and do we not try to conquer desire and ego? Tell us something—a word of hope, or even of despair; but only be fair.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Blessed be they who believe all that they hear! for they have become like little children. (Pseudo-sayings of Christ.)"

What is this joke? You will tell me next that the Mother has confided to D that the supramental now reigns upon the earth or declared the secrets of the ineffable Brahman to K's baby. Are you by chance under the impression that X is 77 years old instead of her apparent age? Who has invented this supreme jest?

There are already more than 5 or 6 in the Ashram who have had some realisation at least of the Divine—so take comfort.

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AND AESTHETICS

(Continued from the January issue)

Author's Note

In an exposition of this kind of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics, it would have been presumptuous to state in my own language the findings which come so naturally in the large utterance of Sri Aurobindo. I have, therefore, endeavoured to state Sri Aurobindo's thought in his own words, especially in sections which are concerned with his distinctive contribution to aesthetics. Quotation marks would be superfluous in sections which are all quotation. I have, therefore, reserved quotation marks only for statements which because of their importance, are reproduced in their precise form. My own additions are mainly expository and interpretative.

(9) THE DYNAMIC AESTHESIS, THE OVERHEAD CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE READER

THE essence of the object is received into the poet's consciousness. It is turned there into *Bhoga*, vital enjoyment. The memory of the poet's soul takes in this enjoyment,—the thought, feeling and experience,—and turns it into Ananda. This is the common way by which we get at something that stands behind, the being that has the secret of the universal delight and the eternal beauty of existence. It is the poet's soul, the evolving psyche within him, that completes this process of absorption and transmutation.

This is how the poet is able to offer us in his poetry *Rasa*,—a concentrated taste. If he is a great poet, he offers us a *Rasa* which is a spiritual essence of emotion, "the soul's pleasure in the pure and perfect sources of feeling." (p 6. *Arya March*, 1920). But how does he create? How is he able to convey his aesthesis in words which, to minds properly attuned, are able to impart it in all its freshness and entirety? How does he make his aesthesis *dynamic*?

Just as the poet's soul completes the static or passive aspect of the process, it is his genius or creative energy which comes out from something deep within that "calls down the word, the vision, the light and the power from a level above the normal mind and it is the sense of the inrush from above which makes the rapture and the enthusiasm of illumination and inspiration. That source, when we know better the secrets of our being, turns out to be the spiritual self with its diviner consciousness and knowledge, happier fountains of power, inalienable

delight of existence.” (pp. 5, 6, 7, *Arya*, March, 1920). The spiritual self is the foothold of the overhead consciousness in the normal mind. It helps to give a powerful and lasting expression to the delight of the soul into which the essence of the object has been finally transmuted. This creative consciousness in the poet works on different levels. It turns into things of beauty its experiences of the physical mind and being. This we call Sensuous Beauty. It does the same with the experiences of the life-soul or the desire-soul. This is Imaginative Beauty. It also takes up all life and form into the reflective thought-mind and changes them into new values of soul and existence. This we call Intellectual Beauty. When this higher consciousness gets out into full play and attains its supreme level, we come nearer to the most potent sources of universal and eternal delight and beauty. Poetry written from this level of vision contains Spiritual Beauty, which is the highest type of beauty expressed in poetry or art. Sri Aurobindo’s recognition of the vital role of these four types of beauty in poetry and art is one of his most significant contributions to aesthetics.

We have seen that ecstasy is a sign of a return towards the original or supreme Ananda. That art or poetry is supreme which can bring us something of the supreme tone of ecstasy. This is what poetry produced by the overmind consciousness does. Even in form itself, apart from the significance, the overmind consciousness sees the object with a totality which changes its effect on the percipient even while it remains the same thing. It sees lines and masses and an underlying design which the physical eye does not see and which escape even the keenest mental vision. On an inferior level overmind may use the language of the intellect to convey, as far as that language can do it, its own greater meaning and message. But on its summits overmind uses its own native language and gives to its truths their own supreme utterance, and no intellectual speech, no mentalised poetry can equal or even come near to that power and beauty. There dwells and from there springs the mystery of the inevitable word, the supreme immortal rhythm, the absolute significance and the absolute utterance.

A limited aesthetical artistic aim is not the purpose of the overmind. It can take up and uplift any or every style. All overhead poetry has something of this character. It can take up the bare and even the bald and raise it to greatness.

In what manner does the dynamic aesthesis manifest itself in overhead, as distinguished from mental, poetry? What are its special aims, methods and achievements?

The truth behind a poetic creation is generally there on some supraphysical plane or the other. From there the suggestion of the image too originally comes.

Poetic imagination is very usually satisfied with beauty of idea and image only. But there is something behind it which supplies the truth in its images and to get the transcription also direct from that something or somewhere should be the aim of mystic or spiritual poetry. Its greatest work will be to express adequately and constantly what is now only occasionally and inadequately expressed, some kind of utterance of the things above, the things beyond, the things behind the apparent world. If this could be done by one possessed at least of a sufficiently high and wide poetic genius, something new could be added to the domain of poetry. Instead of the power of poetry then beginning to fade, it might show us revealing images which bring us near to the Reality secret within us. It would open up new ranges of vision, experience and feeling, a new rhythm, a new intensity of language.

Overhead poetry should aim at an increasing clarity of expression. The concreteness of intellectual imaged description is one thing and spiritual concreteness is another. "Two birds, companions, seated on one tree, but one eats the fruit, the other eats not but watches his fellow" (*Mundaka Upanishad*); this has an illuminating clarity to one who has had the experience, but intellectually it might mean anything or nothing. Poetry uttered with the spiritual clarity may be compared to sunlight, poetry uttered with the mystic veil to moonlight. There are two kinds of mysticism,—one in which the realisation of experience is vague, though inspiringly vague, the other in which the experience is revelatory and intimate, but the utterance it finds is veiled by the image, not thoroughly revealed by it. Blake's poetry is of the latter kind. Revelation is greater than inspiration, for it brings the direct knowledge and seeing. Inspiration gives the expression. Blake had the revelation, without a corresponding measure of inspiration. Yeats had the inspiration, without the same measure of revelation. In the original Upanishadic description of the two birds, the revelation is equal to the inspiration. There is even an inspiration without revelation, when one gets the word but the thing remains behind the veil. This kind of poetry too has often a great light and power in it. But it is better to get the sight of the thing itself than merely express it by an inspiration which comes from behind the veil.

If the complete overmind power or even that of the lower overhead plane could come down into the mind and entirely transform its action, then no doubt there might be greater poetry written than any that man has yet achieved. But what happens at present is that something comes down and accepts to work under the law of the mind and with a mixture of the mind and it must be judged by the laws and standards of the mind. It brings in new tones, new

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colours, new elements, but it does not change radically as yet the stuff of the consciousness with which we labour. Whether it produces great poetry or not depends on the extent to which it manifests its power and overrides rather than serves the mentality which it is helping. At present it does not do that sufficiently to raise the work to the full greatness of the worker.

It is true that the sense of the Infinite and the One which is pervasive can be expressed by overhead poetry as no other can express it. But this need not explicitly be there in the expression or in the substance of any given line. This poetry can deal with quite other things. Shakespeare's "Absent thee from felicity awhile", etc. has the overhead touch in the substance, the rhythm and the feeling; but Shakespeare is not giving us here the sense of the One and the Infinite. It is not any strict adhesion to a transcendental view of things that constitutes this kind of poetry, but something behind not belonging to the mind or the vital and physical consciousness and with that a certain quality or power in the language and the rhythm which helps to bring out that deeper something.

The Overhead has two ways of functioning: in one it touches the ordinary modes of mind and deepens, heightens, intensifies or exquisitely refines their action but without changing its modes or transforming its normal character. In the other, it brings down into these normal modes something of itself, something supernormal, something which one at once feels to be extraordinary and suggestive of a superhuman level. These two ways of action, when working in poetry, may produce things equally exquisite and beautiful. The greater bulk of the existing highest poetry belongs to the first of these two orders. In the second order there are, again, two or three levels,—an unusually felicitous turn of language or pace of rhythm as in

*Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides,*

a fuller language of intuitive inspiration, illumination or the higher thinking and feeling as in the most powerful passages in Valmiki, Virgil or Shakespeare, and the coming down of the supreme voice and music of the overmind in lines and passages which rank among the greatest and most admired in all poetic literature.

How can we say that one line has the overhead note or another misses it?
In the lines—

*I spoke as one who ne'er would speak again
And as a dying man to dying men,*

the psychological door through which the overhead touch comes is some intense passion and sincerity. But the passion and sincerity do not themselves constitute the overhead touch, nor could they of themselves bring it in. One has an intuitive feeling, a recognition of something familiar to one's experience or one's deeper perception in the substance and the rhythm, or in one or the other, which rings out and cannot be gainsaid. Similarly, the overmind touch consists in the undertones or overtones of the rhythmic cry and a language which carries in it a great depth or height or width of spiritual vision, feeling or experience. All this has to be felt. It is not analysable. "Or else there must be a conspiracy between the solar plexus and the thousand-petalled lotus which makes one feel, if not know, the suggestion of these things through the words and rhythm." (pp. 93. 94. L 3rd series). "I am afraid," remarks Sri Aurobindo, "I have to say what Arnold said about the grand style; it has to be felt and cannot be explained or accounted for." (p. 108. L. 3rd series.).

In order to understand this higher level of experience and its expression in poetry, the reader himself has to be something of a yogi, a *sadhak*. In all poetry a poetical aesthesis of some kind there must be in the writer and the recipient. But the ordinary kind of aesthesis is not sufficient for appreciating the overhead element in poetry. A fundamental and universal aesthesis is needed, something also more intense that listens, sees and feels from deep within and answers to what is far behind the surface,—a greater, wider and deeper aesthesis which can answer even to the transcendent and feel too whatever of the transcendent or spiritual enters into the things of life, mind and sense. The mere critical intellect untouched by a rarer sight can do little here. It is likely to feel a distaste or an incomprehension with regard to mystical poetry even if that poetry is quite coherent in its ideas and well-appointed in its language. But just as the overhead poetry brings some touch of a deeper power of vision and creation into the mind without belonging itself wholly to the higher reaches, so also the full appreciation of all its burden needs at least some touch of a deeper response of the mind. Until that becomes general, the overhead or at least the overmind is not likely to pour into our utterance its own complete power and absolute value.

One feels the presence of the godheads that Sri Aurobindo describes, in his own poetry. It invites us to experience the compulsion of a new rhythm, a new sovereign power of language, a world of catholic and deeply significant imagery and the magic touch of all the overhead planes that Sri Aurobindo has striven to indicate. He has shown a pathway which younger spirits are ardently treading today.

(To be continued)

V. K. GOKAK

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN

A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

(Continued from the January issue)

By studying Mrs. Knight's significant acceptances and clearing up the little doubts she entertains, we have shown that in ESP (extra-sensory perception) there is spectacularly irrefutable evidence of mind being not only a *vera causa* but also an independent existent in its own rights with an extension beyond the individual organism and with operations that are outside the body and brain, outside even physical space and time, though capable of contact with them all. For this extension we have allowed the label introduced and discussed by Mrs. Knight herself—Jung's "common (or collective) unconscious".

Now we have to make some corrections about this extra-individual extension of mind. The first concerns what Mrs. Knight says of it at almost the close of her article. Her passage runs: "The hypothesis is consistent with the view which is now widely held on other grounds, that ESP does not, as was originally supposed, mark the beginning of a new stage of evolution, but that it is a relic of a more primitive function. In his address to the Zoological Section of the British Association in 1949, Professor A. C. Hardy suggested that telepathic communication may be most evident among gregarious animals and social insects; and if this were so, it would certainly help to solve some of the main theoretical problems of animal instinct. Observations made by Soal in his current experiments confirm, up to a point, the view that telepathy is a primitive function since he finds that the majority of successful subjects are of the emotional, illogical, 'intuitive' type, and that rigorous intellectual training seems, on the whole, inimical to success. Women, on the whole, make better percipients than men, and children than adults. University students (from whom the majority of experimental subjects have so far been drawn) are possibly among the most unsuitable types of all, and it would seem well worth while to experiment with psychopathic and mentally defective subjects, or with patients who have undergone prefrontal lobotomy."¹

This passage has the appearance of a queer Parthian shot. It seems to sink

¹ A brain operation which puts some of the higher centres out of action.

the status of ESP when ESP is found scientifically undeniable and when the odds against its being compatible with a materialistic philosophy are astronomical. Does Mrs. Knight forget that in her book of selections from William James she has stated that ESP very strongly recommends to us James's theory of a cosmic consciousness of varying kinds or a collection of several cosmic consciousnesses? Does she seriously mean to urge that such a consciousness or such a collection of consciousnesses is something altogether inferior to the human stage in evolution? To be able to work without the limited and fallible senses, to triumph mentally over physical space and have the possibility of exceeding the prison-house of the ego-mentality—do these implications of telepathy look like implications of “a relic of a more primitive function” than human mind? And, remember, ESP is not confined to telepathy: there is precognition which mentally triumphs over physical time over and above including telepathic transcendence of matter and the space-relations of the material world. If possibilities are opened to us of being Plato's “spectator of all time and all existence”, are we confronting a sub-human relic or the promise of a super-human development?

No doubt, the facts themselves of ESP are very primitive—reading of Zenner cards and suchlike trivialities; but they are chinks in a wall beyond which lie gigantic vistas that are, in Mrs. Knight's own words, “most disturbing” and “incredible”. Even “straight” telepathy, particularly if it be not due to physical causes, has, in her view, theoretical implications “far-reaching indeed”. Precognition she regards as a more colossal wonder, whether it be physically or mentally caused, since “with its apparent implication that causation can work backward in time it seems to violate one of the essential presuppositions of science.” And yet phenomena so magnificently revolutionary in significance are sought to be made typical of emotional, illogical, femininely “intuitive”, infantile, psychopathic and cretinish subjects or of animal herds and insect communities!

We may grant that in a “common unconscious” there could be primitive or else chaotic or even demonic elements, since many layers of the subliminal are covered by that phrase. But surely this does not primitivise the whole of the subliminal. Surely, too, we may note in sub-human or non-intellectual stages an easier operation of telepathy and still avoid the howler of refusing to see in it and all the more in precognition a sign of the next stage in evolution. If rigorous intellectual training is, on the whole, inimical to success in ESP, then there is something wrong with intellectuality—a defect which, for all the glorious things intellect can do, is an obstacle in evolutionary progress. It is a commonplace that intellectual activity of the abstract kind is not the whole of human culture—the romantic temperament, the artistic imagination, the social

sense, the ethical emotion, the religious aspiration are some of the things that have to fill the gaps left by abstract thinking. The abstract thinker himself carries, implicit in his specific role, artistic and ethical and even religious attitudes: the feel of "form", the devotion to "truth", the faith in the "reason" and "harmony" embodied in the universe and the thrill to its vast "comprehensibility". Then there is the part played by what Einstein does not hesitate to characterise as "intuition". Would it be right to say that the master thinkers in physics are being "primitive" in a derogatory sense when, by being intuitive and making difficult theoretical leaps sheer beyond any possible inductive suggestion from empirical data, they light upon mathematical constructions like those of relativity theory? There are levels of intuition—and just because the word "intuitive" has been debased by popular novelists who mostly apply it to feminine "hunches" we should not consider it unfit for distinguishing an evolutionary stage higher than our present one in which the abstract intellect has much to say.

Besides, what is the essence of the "logical necessity" by which the abstract thinker guides himself, determining one step to be correct and another incorrect, choosing his course and arriving at conclusions? It is certainly not something which can itself be argued out. To argue out anything, we already take for granted that there is logical necessity. Arguments are justified by the presence of logical necessity: the presence of logical necessity cannot be justified by arguments. We cannot use logic to prove logic. Logical necessity is beyond proof. Its basis lies in self-evidence, in intuitive perception by us. The logical operation of the intellect is intuitive through and through, though the intellect in its general functioning is not a directly intuitive agent and has laboriously to construct tentative and uncertain knowledge by various means unlike the authentically intuitive consciousness of an ultra-mental sort which would carry the seal of its own knowledge by an inner identity with its object. Intuitiveness is not necessarily sub-intellectual, and in its authentic form it is something which intellectuality would impede by its lower mode of working. Not that intellectuals cannot be authentically intuitive as much as any other type: they can, but by quieting the usual activity of the intellect, going within themselves, becoming receptive to some sort of inspiration or revelation, most often by surrendering their problems to the subliminal and suddenly finding them solved or at least greatly simplified and elucidated.

As with intuition, so with telepathy and precognition, acute intellectuality would interfere with the working of a higher mode of mentality which acts without both sense-observation and logical inference. Non-intellectuals may more easily prove transmitters of a cosmic consciousness's hidden powers. This does

not mean that these powers are sub-intellectual: it only means that intellectuality is to be surpassed and not clung to as the *grand finale* of psychological evolution. The intellect may be a fine instrument for formulating and expressing truth: it may not be the best instrument for discovering truth. An intellectual who is not too proud of his own activity and too attached to its analytic operations but can open himself to deeper and higher ranges of awareness by a certain in-drawn passivity would undoubtedly be as telepathic and precognitive as one who is less "cerebrotonic". ESP tests show that a relatively passive state is what is most helpful. To quote Mrs. Knight: "Thouless found that the best results were obtained when the subject was not greatly concerned about the results of the experiment, and was not consciously trying to make a high score." Besides, ESP is acknowledged to be a subliminal affair signalled to the surface mind. Mrs. Knight says that telepathic communication is generally held to take place at the subconscious level, and the subconscious character of precognition is indicated by her comment: "Though the term 'extra-sensory perception' is convenient and widely used, it must be realised that the subject's experience differed in many ways from what is ordinarily called perception. Usually, he had no idea whether or not he was guessing right—a right guess 'felt' no different from a wrong one: and furthermore, and more surprisingly, the recording of the guess, whether in speech or writing, seemed to be accompanied by a minimum of conscious ideation." Now, intellectuality is the most sharply awake of the psychological workings that take place this side of the threshold of consciousness; so, naturally, it would tend to render openness to the other side rather difficult. This difficulty is no sign that what is on the other side is inferior to intellectuality. Just because receptiveness to that side is easier to the non-intellectual we do not prove the "primitiveness" of what happens there or comes from there. And just because anthropology brings evidence of ESP as a far more frequent occurrence among primitives the source that is tapped does not grow aboriginal. And just because gregarious animals and social insects may be communicating on a larger scale by telepathy the power employed does not get stamped as a sub-human function surviving in us like the operation of a not quite atrophied vestigial organ. The same more-than-intellectual power can be contacted on a low level and a high one: its manifestation in civilised man can have results quite different from those obtained among cattle and ants or among savages.

The mentally developed state may be somewhat of a stumbling-block to its manifestation, but this state has come about from an evolutionary necessity and represents a transcendence of the animal level, a new perceptive and conceptive orientation in the surface consciousness, without which whatever

more-than-intellectual power exists cannot operate in its largest or profoundest or most luminous mode as a surface presence. The obstruction this state may offer to that power has been accepted as a price for keener surface evolution: this state is not meant to be discarded, it has to be made compatible with that power. A problem of accordance and adjustment is here because both the elements are desirable, and the fact that sub-human creatures may have more facile ESP than humans, and primitives than civilised men, and non-intellectuals than those with "rigorous intellectual training", merely underlines the toughness of the problem to be solved and does not indicate that ESP fails to mark the beginnings of a new stage of evolution. Perhaps Mrs. Knight and others who share her view are under the wrong impression that the development of ESP must involve the loss of mind in general and intellect in particular, the loss of man's proper *differentiae* as the highest evolute so far, and therefore conclude that it would signify a regression rather than a progression.

In any case, one good service our author's mistake does to the thesis we have been unfolding. By drawing attention to the biological antiquity, so to speak, of ESP and to the likelihood suggested by Dr. Hardy of ESP's prevalence among animals and insects she helps the whole evolutionary process to stand out in a more than materialistic light and the once-fashionable theory of chance and of blind forces to look far less plausible than the hypothesis of a universal subliminal which transcends material structure, is independent of it and possesses diverse ranges ("several cosmic consciousnesses", in James's phraseology) pushing through matter, overcoming difficulties of function across millennia and slowly moulding forms for its manifestation in a scale of higher and higher organisation corresponding to its own order of levels. The interaction between it and matter would explain the most striking phenomenon in evolutionary history—the paradox of, at the same time, "crass casualty" and subtle purpose.

But to get our thesis into proper focus we must go behind the Jungian choice of the word "unconscious" which we have allowed so far. It is clear that a universal subliminal such as we have been led inexorably to assume on the available scientific evidence cannot be any real unconsciousness through and through. The Jungian designation is a misnomer and has arisen from an inaccuracy in the logic of psycho-analytic observation. The only direct observation the psycho-analyst makes of the subliminal is *via* dreams. And Jung's comment apropos this observation is: "It seems to us as if the collective unconscious, which appears to us in dreams, had no consciousness of its contents—though, of course, we cannot be sure of this." Indeed all the

less sure can we be in face of what Jung, like all other psycho-analysts who treat of the subliminal, admits: "The unconscious perceives, has purposes and intuitions, feels and thinks, as does the conscious mind....It is a fact that the unconscious contains subliminal perceptions whose scope is nothing less than astounding....Today we know for certain that the unconscious contains contents which would mean an immeasurable increase of knowledge if they could only be made conscious." What actually happens in dreams is that the "capsulated ego" is not able to retain its usual consciousness and begins to drift on some unplumbed tide of being into which it frequently sinks or which often washes away its clear lines of self-existence. It is from the capsulated ego's experience that we transfer unconsciousness to the subliminal. The unconscious should be defined as a consciousness of which we are not the possessors rather than as something which is itself inherently unconscious.

But what then becomes of Jung's characterisation in one place: "Exclusiveness, selection and discrimination are the root and essence of all that claim the name of consciousness"? According to him, the deeper we go into the subliminal the less of individual insularity and of exclusiveness, selection and discrimination do we come across and at last we touch a level where exist a number of patterns, called "archetypes" by him, which are common to the whole of humanity, and then we have the collective unconscious which, says he in vivid evocative phrases, "is anything but a capsulated personal system; it is the wide world, and objectively as open as the world...a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is the world of water, where everything living floats in suspension; where everything living begins, where I am inseparably this and that, and this and that are I; where I experience the other person as myself, and the other, as myself, experiences me." No doubt, the subliminal impresses the psycho-analyst as being very unlike the tight and bounded and differentiated field of our awareness. But Jung's characterisation, in one place, of what is and what is not conscious is rather arbitrary: it generalises too much from a certain organisation of consciousness. And it seems to overlook two important points. Surely the subliminal is not all an amorphous mass—there are persistent rhythms and recurrent patterns in it, without which no sense would attach to a term like "archetypes" and Jung would not be able to speak, as he does, of a structure or morphology of the unconscious. Surely, again, even within the particular psychological organisation to which alone he concedes the description "conscious" we have signs of an expansive, comprehensive and interfusing mode in the poet's "esemplastic" imagination and the synthesising

and unifying sweep within the philosopher's progressive abstraction towards a "world-view", not to mention the mystic's rapturous vision and experience of oneness-in-manyness and diversity-in-identity. To call such states of consciousness a welling up of the unconscious is merely to quibble over terms. "Consciousness" need not be confined to our ordinary state: it can be various in organisation and pitch, it can be sub-mental and it may be supra-mental. To avoid unnecessary confusion and puzzlement we should mean by the established current word "unconscious" simply consciousness other than the surface kind which is usually ours or which we can recognise outside ourselves as in some way resembling it. And the common or collective unconscious is this consciousness at its deepest and widest—an ultra-individual cosmicity of multi-dimensional experience.

Yes, a veritable cosmicity and not only a commonalty behind the human or at most the whole of the organic. Particularly if we accept the principle of developmental and evolutionary continuity it has every mark of being a universal subliminal, some of whose activities in the form of energy-releasing archaic symbolisms and mysterious personality-healing processes have been studied by Jung. In that case, it would be at work even through inorganic nature—but not merely as what Julian Huxley chooses to name "psychoid activities of low intensity" undetectable by us though present. It would be confined to these activities if the psychological were nothing more than a concomitant of the physical, utterly dependent on the latter and corresponding to its complexity of organisation and, in fact, arising as a peculiar subjective aspect of the objective system. When the psychological is seen as being far greater than epiphenomenalism allows, then what this enlarged or extended epiphenomenalist view grants can signify solely that the "psychoid activities of low intensity" *à la* Huxley are just the infinitesimal surface manifestations, the meagre and shadowy out-filtrations of the universal subliminal through matter: the universal subliminal has magnitudes hidden behind its superficial potencies or impotencies in metal and stone, even as behind those in insect and animal and man.

We may suggest that on Jung's own notion of the collective unconscious a universal subliminal may be posited. According to him, the collective unconscious holds the precipitate of all meaningful experience from the beginning of life's and mind's appearance. But in his eyes the appearance of life and mind is itself out of a vast ground of the unconscious which he variously calls "libido", "psychic energy", "total force pulsing through and combining one with another all the forms and activities of the psychic system". The unconscious ground of psychic energy, therefore, is pre-existent to the appearance

of life and mind. What then is the relation between this pre-existent unconscious ground and the patterned contents which are regarded as the collective sediment of all human and animal experience—the sediment which keeps dynamically rising into the personal consciousness in diverse significant forms that are Jung's special study? Are they merely the precipitated result of life's and mind's experience during human and pre-human history? The fact that they keep dynamically rising suggests that they may not be just the product of life's and mind's experience but what was originally hidden in the unconscious and rose into that experience from a pre-existent store and sank back as sediment with whatever novelty was realised by the rise into consciousness. The suggestion of a pre-existent store is reinforced by Jung's view that the chief dynamisms of the collective unconscious represent typical fundamental experiences of all human and even animal energy—the *a priori* modes of activity, as it were, within life and mind, whose effect on the consciousness is determined on the one hand by the psychological history through which life and mind have passed and on the other by potentialities immanent in the unconscious. Jung compares these potentialities to the "axial system of a crystal, which predetermines the crystalline formation in the saturated solution" without itself having a particular form: the axial system controls merely the stereometric structure, not the concrete shape of the individual crystal: the concrete shape comes from the solution in which the precipitate occurs, the experience of all life and mind: the solution creates the images that crystallise on the potential axial system. Jung thus grants something immanent and potential which pre-exists as a determining principle in the unconscious before life and mind started their history as manifest forces on earth. The collective unconscious is not only the "womb" and the "unfathomable ground" from which life and mind appeared but also far from being a mere void. So it could very well be a universal subliminal such as we have supposed on the score of evidence outside the psycho-analyst's clinic.

Here we are likely to be pulled up and told: "Whatever the evidence on which you have proceeded to your supposition, you cannot drag Jung in to add any plausibility to it. Has he not in an important context talked of the collective unconscious in association with terms of 'inherited brain structure', thus fitting it to individual physiology and binding it down to a particular material organisation?" Our reply can be easily formulated. Dr. Jacobi whose authorised book we have already quoted in an earlier article explains: "The term brain structure, which is used by Jung where one would perhaps expect psychic structure, must be properly understood. It is meant to point to the biological connection. For the psyche as it presents itself to us—i.e. as it is

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understood by us—is connected with our bodily being. That does not by any means, however, imply biological ‘dependence.’” And Dr. Jacobi cites Jung’s own statements: “The psychic deserves to be taken as a phenomenon in itself, for there are no grounds for regarding it as a mere epiphenomenon, even though it is associated with the function of the brain; just as little as one can conceive of life as an epiphenomenon of the chemistry of carbon.” —“We can very well determine with sufficient certainty that an individual consciousness with reference to ourselves has come to an end in death. Whether, however, the continuity of the psychic processes is thereby broken remains doubtful, for we can today assert with much less assurance than fifty years ago that the psyche is chained to the brain.” Jung will not support the epiphenomenalist. There is no scientific evidence for saying that the collective unconscious has any corresponding neural events in the individual body. Even the individual unconscious on its intuitive and inspirational side has not been shown by anything to be bound up with brain-tracks: its continuity with the collective goes all against such a bondage. The fact that even that part of the individual which is not subliminal has no real discontinuity with it but is in some way its surface manifestation goes in favour of its having also some transcendence of neural events. Jungian psychology, understood in its true position and attitude, does not contradict at all our thesis but contributes to it and rounds off the non-materialistic and pro-interactionist conclusions, applicable on even a cosmic scale, to which we have arrived by our manifold scrutiny of scientific opinions on consciousness and the brain.

Several lines of enquiry spring from these conclusions, directed towards the trends of organic evolution, the issue between dualism and monism, the problem of the individual’s destiny, the method of conscious development in relation to the paranormal powers proved by ESP. We may pursue these lines in future articles. The question we proposed at the beginning of the present series can be regarded as settled now. The one immediately relevant matter remaining to be dealt with is the short reply Mrs Knight has given to a brief criticism of ours published in *Science News* 30 of her essay on this question. We shall, by way of a postscript, consider in a final instalment the merits of her reply.

K. D. SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO: HIS PHILOSOPHY & YOGA

(This is the first of the talks given by A.B.Purani at two successive meetings held under the auspices of the Calcutta University. Dr. S. C. Chatterjee, M.A., Ph.D., Lecturer in Philosophy, Calcutta University, presided.)

I AM obliged to the authorities of the Calcutta University for the kindness they have extended to me to lay before you what little I can convey of the great message which it is easy to mistranslate and misunderstand and difficult for even an inmate of the Ashram who has lived there for a generation to expound clearly. Another difficulty is: when you have a personal contact with a great Light, you are so near it, you are so much a part of it that to make an intellectual exposition seems to you something rather artificial in the first place and, secondly, memories crowd upon you—the source of memory going back to 40 years ago—and it is natural that one is overcome by not merely the flood of Light but the flood of emotion that naturally invades the heart when you try to speak of somebody who to you is a Light of Lights, who to you is the creator of future humanity. I accepted this request not because I thought that I was fit to make an exposition of so great a Light. I accepted it because Calcutta to me, in a sense, is a sacred place. I know, when secularism is in the air, it would be said that these ideas of sacredness and so-called religiosity have now become foreign to the country,—that God and belief in God are things far, far off. So long as personalities of the calibre of Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Sri Aurobindo continue to be born and create resurgent Spirituality, there will remain the Spirit of India, eternal—the same that is in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. I accepted the invitation because, in all humility, I thought that Calcutta is a sacred place of pilgrimage—it is not only the birthplace of my Master but also the place which happened to be the field of his political activity which decided the trend of political thought and action for us. And even secularism will agree that, in that sense, Calcutta is a sacred place where the great lights of the past worked and created the possibility of freedom. It was in those days, when the people had not been disillusioned by the attainment of freedom that there was the attraction and charm of it; and there was rivalry—not the rivalry to convince others how much one has sacrificed for the country and then to square up the account so as to get back the fruits of freedom. The

only fruits that were available in those days were jail, the gallows, the persecution of the foreign Government. There were people—and some of them are sitting here—who entered the competition not for dividing the fruits of freedom but for the sacrifices for the sake of the country. There was a healthy rivalry as to who could sacrifice more. It was that fire and that healthy competition to sacrifice oneself, to do actions for sacrifice and not for gain, that has secured our freedom. Those were the days when the calculations of the secular moderate school had reasonable doubts about the possibility of attaining freedom. It was against the calculated, calm logic and want of idealism of the moderate school that the religious spirit of Indian freedom was put and it was Sri Aurobindo who said, “Nationalism is God and Nationalism cannot be killed because God cannot be killed”. It was then, when he was in the Alipore Jail, that a greater vision of the future of the world dawned upon him. It was there where they have now put a marble plaque to commemorate his incarceration, that he got the vision of future humanity. He got there the realisation of the Divine and the Divine gave him the vision of the perfect humanity of the future. It was during his political activity that he combined intensity of emotional fervour and capacity to suffer with an intellectual power which overcame the matter-of-fact outlook of the moderates. I should be very happy if I could be of some use to you in carrying to you something of the message of so great a Light and it is a great fortune to come to your city which is the place of his birth and activity and the place where the seed of his future spiritual growth was sown.

I am speaking therefore to you not merely of one who has been a creator of modern Bengal, one who has contributed powerfully to the making of modern India, but also of one who is a maker of future humanity. Our President expects me to speak about his philosophy,—I don't think that we can divide life and philosophy. I have fallen into a reminiscent mood which has carried me to the past; from there let us try to understand the setting of his life and its relation to Calcutta,—his activities, both political and yogic. We can roughly put it this way: It was *Bande Mataram*, then the *Karmayogin* leading straight to the *Arya* and lastly *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*.

I have been told by some friends that Philosophy to be interesting must be original. And they hold that there is nothing new in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. There are philosophers and philosophers: one may find that there are professional philosophers who teach any text-book that is in the syllabus. There are philosophers who are interested in ideas—they like to have new thoughts—arrangement of thought-structures that explain the nature of being, of the cosmos, and of the Divine. There is a third category who are

careerist philosophers—who seek to make out a career—it may be in politics, it may be in society and even in a University. Then, there is the fourth type, who are wedded to wisdom and seek the Truth, who are capable of an intellectual perception and realisation of the Truth. They are the real philosophers. But my Master, Sri Aurobindo, was none of these. His philosophy was not the result of his seeking but a result of his finding and discovery. I may mention here that once Dilip Kumar Roy requested Sri Aurobindo to write something for a philosophic symposium, but Sri Aurobindo excused himself. To the repeated request from Dilip Kumar Roy, Sri Aurobindo replied—“I never, never, never was a philosopher, though I have written philosophy which is another story altogether. How I managed to do it?—There was Z who asked my help in conducting the ‘Arya’ and as I thought that a Yogi could turn his hand to anything, I accepted. Then Z left for France during the first World War, leaving me alone to fill up the sixty pages of the magazine every month by myself. It was not difficult—I had to write down and put in a rational, intellectual form what I had experienced in my practice of yoga. But that is not being a philosopher.” But when we see not from the point of view of pure thought but from the point of view of vision of life that he has given to the present intellectual world, I think that there are at least three or four items of originality in the philosophy which he has expounded to the world: (1) his exposition of the process of Evolution; (2) his explanation of the origin of Ignorance; (3) his contribution to actual and potential psychology of man. These three, I think, can very easily lay claim to be his original contribution to the thought-structure of the world today.

So far as the actual process of evolution is concerned, there is not merely the evolution of forms but also the evolution of consciousness; evolution of forms has been going on keeping pace with the evolution of consciousness. The forms have gone on developing and the instrumentations of knowledge have gone on being added to these forms so as to make it possible for the creature, or the organism, to become more and more conscious. At first, there is *Jada* or the *Acht* which is apparently unconscious. Then we come gradually to a phase where from the amorphous, undistinguished, undertermined matter,—the condition which in Christian religion is called “chaos”,—we find there is a little determination of things which appears as organised matter. This was called in the Upanishads “Annam Brahma”. Matter is the first evolute out of the amorphous, undistinguished and indeterminate Nescience. There is involved in this Nescience something that is pushing the evolution upward and, as a result of the upward push and a pressure from above, the first result is organised Matter.

The second evolute is Life. It is not an evolution in a straight line. It is an

emergent evolution in the sense that the old basis on which the evolution has been going on is overpassed and another rung in the staircase is added. It does not destroy or reject the old basis but takes cognisance of what it has overpassed, assimilates what it has overcome and adds to its new features, new powers which are not possessed by what it has overpassed. When Matter was overpassed and Life came into existence, Life had the capacity to assimilate Matter. Life embodied it and was supported on the basis of Matter. Life overpassed all the limitations of Matter, its inertia etc. and brought in sensation, perception, feeling of pleasure and pain. It did not reject Matter.

The third evolute was Mind, which became in man the intellectual or mental consciousness. It overpasses Life and accepts both Life and Matter as its supports. So, a new emergent comes into play. Today it governs Matter and Life; to that extent they have become useful resources of power. Up to Mind, the evolution has come and here we stand today. It is an emergent evolution and every new term overpasses and governs the one that is overpassed but does not reject it and stands on it as its support.

Then, fourthly, there is an effort of Nature to create from the amorphous, indeterminate condition an individuality. Nature has been also moving from an undistinguishable indeterminate mass of material into the formation of a personality which becomes more and more defined, more and more cognisant till it becomes an ego-centric consciousness capable of acting as an independent unit.

These are the results of the process of evolution in the past for millions of years back. But what of the future? There comes the great contribution of my Master. He showed that this evolution of consciousness from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind cannot stop with Mind—it is not going to stop with Mind. It must ultimately result in some other greater emergence and greater power of consciousness. You may call it Supermind, Truth-Consciousness, God-Consciousness or Dynamic Divine. But it is a fact of the human evolution, of the human history that man has been trying to push further and further beyond the bounds of his mentality. He has been always trying to overcome the movements of desire and ego—both individual and collective; he has been trying to contact a Higher Consciousness in some form or other from the beginning of his history. As a result of the double pressure from below and above, the process of evolution has been going on. The great thing that he established for this process was the possibility, the rationality, the inevitability of the future emergent evolution of man. Not only to prove this inevitability, but to achieve it,

he dedicated his life to the opening out of a way, like a pioneer, for the whole of humanity. As sure as I am speaking to you today, a day must come in the history of humanity when the path that he has chalked out will be followed by humanity. The power that is going to mould and move the future of humanity today or after a century, is the truth for which he laboured and sacrificed the precious years of his life with full consciousness from second to second. It was not to something airy,—an airy thought-process, abstract, impersonal and impracticable—but a dynamic Reality to which he cut the path out of the forest of human ignorance not for himself but for humanity. It was this which he meant when he wrote: “The Yoga that we practise is not for ourselves but for humanity.”¹

He said that this work of bringing the new Truth was the only thing worth attempting. It will not only be attained one day but will mould the individual and the collective life of humanity. The present mind of man has not even an idea of it. But the Truth is eternal and in eternity time does not count. One day will come as sure as the rising of the sun when the message of one of our countrymen will be listened to by humanity as the message which alone can solve not merely individual but also collective problems. For the problem of man is not social, intellectual, economic or political. The problem of man is psychological. It is not the wrong distribution of wealth and production that is man’s trouble today. The problem of problems is Man; it is necessary that man should set right his psychology and all the problems of man will be set right. Tackle the problem where it should be tackled and you will see that the solution which is suggested is the only solution and no other solution is possible. So long as man is ego-centric and driven by his desires and passions into action, he will not be able to set right his problems.

This is the process of evolution of the three evolutes—Matter, Life and Mind, and now beyond Mind there is the inevitable Reality which is going to be realised by man and which will remould his individual and collective life.

(To be continued)

A. B. PURANI

¹ As many people misunderstood it and gave it the colour of merely a higher Humanism he changed it into: “The Yoga that we practise is not for ourselves but for the Divine.”

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

(Continued from the October issue)

IN the next three essays—"The Supreme Divine", "The Secret of Secrets" and "The Divine Truth and Way"—Sri Aurobindo continues his presentation of the seventh chapter and goes on to chapters VIII and IX. The starting point of the new and fuller position has been found. We are to change from an earthly imperfection to a divine perfection, but "by a higher, a spiritual fulfilment of all that we now essentially are." Ignorance and egoism are to be discarded and in their stead has to come the rule of the Spirit, made dynamic and active. This is the characteristic teaching of the Gita, there is to be no self-annulment of Nature but a self-fulfilment in divine Nature. Devotion has come in definitely as a path of Sadhana though it is not as yet fully developed. That will come in a later essay, "The Way and the Bhakta." Sri Aurobindo says here, "The passion of love in our self-giving carries us up to him and opens the mystery of his deepest heart of being. Love completes the triple cord of the sacrifice, perfects the true key of the highest secret."

We have to know the Purusha integrally in all his three aspects; the word used in the text is *tattwatah*, "in its true principle." It is the knowledge of the Supreme Purusha which constitutes the true and complete knowledge. Certain metaphysical terms like *adhibhuta*, *adhidaiva*, *adhyatma*, *adhiyajna* and *Visargah* have been introduced and defined in chapter VIII. They sum up briefly the "essential truths of the manifestation of the Supreme Divine in the cosmos." *Adhyatma* is the principle of the self in Nature; *adhibhuta* and *adhidaiva* are the outward and inward phenomena of being; *Visargah* is the creative impulse and energy; *adhiyajna* is the secret of Karma and Yajna in the world. "By *Adhiyajna*, the Lord of Works and Sacrifice, I mean myself, the Divine, the Godhead, the Purushottama here secret in the body of all these embodied creatures", says Krishna in the Gita. Within this formula falls all that is existent. We need not dwell on these terms any more here; *Adhibhuta* the Kshara Bhava, *Adhidaiva* the Akshara Bhava and *Adhiyajna* the Purushottama, the three aspects of the Purusha, are clearly indicated here. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with them more exclusively in a special essay. We shall come to it later on, Now we shall content ourselves with citing one important verse from

chapter VIII: "A man can attain to the Supreme Purusha only by one-pointed devotion. All becomings are in him and he is in all of them." Sri Aurobindo's words relating to them are, "But in the form and body of the mutable being inhabits the Supreme Godhead. Possessing at once the calm of the immutable existence and the enjoyment of the mutable action there dwells in man the Purushottama." In chapter VIII of the Gita there are certain verses relating to a man's soul passing out of the body under different circumstances. In the limited space at our disposal it is best not to go into them. They refer to certain ideas prevalent at the time. We quote only one passage from the text: "Therefore at all times remember Me and fight; for if thy mind and thy understanding are always fixed on and given up to Me, to Me thou shalt surely come. For it is by thinking always of him with a consciousness united with him in the undeviating Yoga of constant practice that one comes to the Divine and Supreme Purusha." It shows that the more or less technical ideas, referred to above, are after all of secondary or even tertiary importance to the Yogi. The essential condition is the constant memory of God in every action in life, even in battle, thus turning the entire life into an uninterrupted Yoga. For the soul that has reached this state, there is no coming back after death. Exhortations like "Therefore, at all times, be a Yogi" or "Remember me and fight" are of the highest importance. The one essential thing is to make the whole being one with the Divine.

A foundation has now been laid on which Sri Krishna is proceeding to open Arjuna's mind to the knowledge and sight of the integral Divinity and to prepare him for the World-vision of chapter II. The knowledge of Purushottama, who is speaking to Arjuna, will now be unveiled to his eyes in such a manner that he cannot but see it. The vision does what it was expected to do. It removes the last vestige of doubt. Arjuna realises clearly that he has to rise out of the ignorance of the ego into the self-knowledge of a divine being. Thus fortified and enlightened he resumes the action from which he has shrunk. But, before he finally undertakes to do Krishna's bidding, the secret of secrets has been imparted to him. The last six chapters of the Gita constitute a recitation by the Teacher in another form of the enlightenment that he has already imparted to his disciple. The knowledge conveyed is the same, "but details and relations are now made prominent and assigned their entire significance." Clearly and prominently and definitely is the relationship between the Supreme Purusha, the Immutable Akshara Purusha, the Jiva and Prakriti brought out. Some rash speculators have in the past attempted to brush aside the six last chapters (at least the major portion) as an interpolation. Sri Aurobindo's exposition of the Gita leaves no room for such speculations. Each block of chapters

exercises a definite function in developing the teaching of the scripture and leading it on to its apex in the last few verses of the closing chapter—the disclosure of the Supreme Truth and the complete surrender of Arjuna.

This revelation of the secret of himself, Nature's profoundest mystery, the teacher has been preparing from the beginning. Throughout the preliminary portion, the note has been sounding of an immanent godhead—a Supreme Ishwara seated in the heart of man and Nature. Sri Aurobindo puts this note in words thus, "I who am within thee, I who am here in this human body, I for whom all exists, acts, strives, am at once the secret of the self-existent spirit and of the cosmic action. This I is the greater I of whom the largest human personality is only a partial and fragmentary manifestation, Nature itself only an inferior working. This Godhead is not only the highest truth of self and spirit but also of Nature, the secret at once of the individual and the universe. All the works of the Jiva are the works of Prakriti, and behind all her works there is always the Purusha whose power she is. Thus all acts which seem to be of the individual belong really to the Ishwara who is seated in the heart of all beings and all things. Therefore it is that the individual has to offer up all his works and sacrifice to the Divine." All this has been gone over already and will be repeated later on; but what is emphasized in this part of the text is "All knowledge then becomes an adoration and aspiration, but all works too become an adoration and aspiration.... The final release, a passing away from the lower nature to the source of the higher spiritual becoming, is not an extinction of the soul,—only its forms of ego become extinct,—but a departure of our whole self of knowledge, will and love to dwell no longer in the universal, but in his supracosmic reality, a fulfilment, not an annulation."

In order to make this knowledge clear to Arjuna's understanding the Teacher starts out to explain how God is at once impersonal and personal, how his impersonality presents itself to our thought as a timeless Sat, Chit and Ananda—Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—and His personality as a "conscious centre of knowledge and work and the joy of multiple self-manifestation." But all this is the Brahman—*Vasudevah sarvam*, says the Gita. God and Nature and Jiva, they are the three aspects of the one being. To understand this, Arjuna has to realise the whole Godhead—*Samagram-Mam*, says Krishna in the Gita. This is, as set forth in chapter IX, the Supreme mystery—the wisdom of all wisdoms, the secret of all secrets—*Raja-vidya Rajaguhyam Pavitram idam uttamam*. It is a pure and supreme knowledge which one can verify by direct spiritual experience, and which is easy to practise when one grasps it. But, for that, faith is necessary. If faith is absent, man lapses into the defect of the

lower nature—*asubham*. A belief in the Divine, secret within us is, needed to enable us to grow into the divine Nature. The last verse of this chapter is a clear call to the disciple to be *man-manā mad-bhaktah, mad-yāji, mat-parāyanah*, and assures him that he will thereby attain to God and be one with him. In this same chapter there are certain verses with a metaphysical flavour. Sri Aurobindo discusses them, but says that they do not really rest on intellectual speculation, but on spiritual experience. We cannot go into that discussion at any length, for want of space, but shall merely indicate its nature. All this mass of becomings always changing and in motion, all these creatures, existences, things breathing and living forms, cannot contain him either in their sum or in their separate existence....It is they that are in him, it is they that live and move in him, and draw their truth from him, they are his becomings, he is their being. Again, the Divine upholds his becomings, he is not in them. "He pervades it all as its self; there is a luminous uninvolved presence of the self-being of God, *mama ātmā*, which is in constant relation with the becoming and brings all its existences into manifestation by his simple presence." These two extracts are really a free translation of the original quoted in the essay.

Sri Aurobindo gives a vivid picture of those who dwell in the divine consciousness. The great-souled who are open to their immanent Divinity "become aware of the highest status of him in which he is master and lord of all existences and yet see that in each existence he is still the supreme Deity and the indwelling Godhead.... They see too that as it is his Nature which has become all that is in the universe, everything here is in its inner fact nothing but the one Divine, all is Vasudeva, and they worship him not only as the supreme Godhead beyond, but here in this world, in his oneness and in every separate being. They see the truth and in this truth they live and act. Him they adore, and serve."

In the next essay, Sri Aurobindo shows how the Gita brings about a clear synthesis of Works, Devotion and Knowledge. Many verses from chapter IX are interpreted in the spirit of this reconciliation. Works and Knowledge have been already synthesised. Here the stress is laid mainly on bhakti and on a loving self-surrender. Love of the Supreme and a total self-giving constitute the straightest and the quickest way to oneness with the Divine. The voice of the divine Teacher calls out to the disciple in unmistakable terms. "This is my word of promise that he who loves me shall not perish." This love of the Supreme is such a wonderful thing that even if a man of very evil conduct turns to God with a sole and entire love, he must be regarded as a saint, for the settled will of endeavour is a right and complete will. Swiftly he becomes a soul of righteousness and obtains eternal peace. By his devotion all his works are turned into an

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offering to the Highest. The injunction of Sri Krishna is "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou enjoyest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever energy of tapasya, of the soul's will, thou puttest forth, make it an offering unto Me." Love and devotion turn the smallest action, the tiniest fact of life, into an acceptable offering, all distinctions due to ego and desire vanish. Man and woman appear equal in the eyes of the Divine lover. The sage priest, the mighty king, the opulent Vaishya, the faithful Sudra, the Pariah, the Chandala, all find the gate of God opening before them when they approach it with a heart of Love.

(To be continued)

C. C. DUTT

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XVI

KNOWLEDGE—THE LIGHT THAT FULFILLS

PART II

MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE

WE have said that a turning of the mind's eye inwards is the first indispensable means of attaining knowledge, but it is not a mere introspection or a superficial introversion as practised by the modern psychologist that we mean—it is a plunge into the very depths of our being. The mind, the heart, the will, all must seek to know and unite with the Divine who dwells within us and to whom we eternally belong. It is not a mere intellectual curiosity that should be the motive power behind our seeking for knowledge, but the irrepressible urge, the spontaneous *élan* of our consciousness towards Him without whom life has no meaning and the world appears but a dreary wilderness. It should be a conscious and deliberate plunge from the appearances of things to their Reality, a resolute exploration of the kingdom of Truth.

This urge or *élan* is not foreign to earthly life. In fact, it is the mainspring of all its evolutionary progress. Bergson was inspired only by the vital aspect of it, but it has other deeper and subtler aspects, an intuitive contemplation of which reveals to us the ultimate meaning and destiny of life itself. It can be called a thirst or a veiled aspiration for light. In the plants we observe this thirst as a biological impulse and necessity—a subconscious straining towards light. In the animals the love of light, the keen sensuous delight in the freshness and warmth of the sun, or in the soft clinging radiance of the moon, is a natural instinct and an outstanding characteristic of evolutionary life. The higher the grade of life the greater the yearning for light. In man it is a constantly attested fact. Darkness stifles and depresses him, whereas light always gives him new life and energy and confidence. That is why in the Upanishads the sun is hailed as *prānah prajānām*, the life of all creatures. But in man this yearning for light tends to transcend its sensuous aspect and become an aspiration and a seeking for the inner light, the illumination of knowledge. The more he evolves in

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consciousness, the more he feels a gravitational pull towards the centre of light within him. Knowledge becomes an object of his devoted pursuit, not so much for the material benefits it may confer, as for itself, for the light that it kindles within him. A retreat or plunge into the core of his being becomes then a necessity of his existence, an irresistible evolutionary urge within him. "He is the secret Self in all existences and does not manifest Himself to the vision: yet is He seen by the seers of the subtle by a subtle and perfect understanding", says the Kathopanishad; and the way to realise the secret Self is indicated as follows: "Let the wise man restrain speech in his mind and mind in Self, and knowledge in the Great Self, and that again let him restrain in the Self that is at peace." It is this going deeper and deeper in oneself that is the first indispensable means of knowledge. It has afterwards to be supplemented by an upward movement, an ascent, which consummates the soul's quest for knowledge.

PURIFICATION

But the plunge is not possible so long as our being is unpurified. Our desires and attachments and passions and habitual interests absorb us to such an extent that we find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to turn our gaze within and dive into our depths. Purification is, therefore, of the utmost importance as a preliminary to the inner plunge. Rajayoga rightly lays stress on Yama and Niyama, the purificatory self-discipline, as an essential preliminary to *dhâranâ*, *dhyâna* and *samâdhi*. But, whereas in the Rajayoga purification is directed towards the stilling of the active being of man so that his consciousness, undistracted by the outer movements, may flow into the depths and realise there the Self or the Divine, in the Integral Yoga it is meant to serve a dual purpose: 1) helping the inner plunge in a comprehensive concentration, and 2) paving the way for a total and radical transformation of nature.

"Along with purity and as a help to bring it about, concentration. Purity and concentration are indeed two aspects, feminine and masculine, passive and active, of the same status of being; purity is the condition in which concentration becomes entire, rightly effective, omnipotent; by concentration purity does its works and without it would only lead to a state of peaceful quiescence and eternal repose."¹

Purity in its initial stages means freedom from all desire and attachment. But as purification proceeds, its negative aspect of renunciation² is replaced by a

¹ "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

² Renunciation in the sense in which it is used in the Gita—tyaga or inner abandonment of desire and attachment and egoism.

positive method of cleansing, quickening, coordinating and harmonising the inner instruments (antahkaran) on which we have dwelt at some length in chapter IX on "The purification of Nature". Our object in the Integral Yoga being not a renunciation or rejection of Nature but its transformation and utilisation for the divine manifestation, purification is necessarily a long and elaborate process which steadily merges into the eventual process of transformation. The greater the growth of purity in the being, the greater the steadfastness in concentration.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration is a very important means in the Integral Yoga and bears a much wider sense in it than in any other yoga. We should, therefore, try to understand what it actually means and how it can be employed for the attainment of the object we have in view. "...In the path of knowledge as it is practised in India concentration is used in a special and more limited sense. It means that removal of the thought from all distracting activities of the mind and that concentration of it on the idea of the One by which the soul rises out of the phenomenal into the one Reality. It is by the thought that we dissipate ourselves in the phenomenal; it is by the gathering back of the thought into itself that we must draw ourselves back into the real. Concentration has three powers by which this aim can be effected. By concentration on anything whatsoever we are able to know that thing, to make it deliver up its concealed secrets; we must use this power to know not things, but the one Thing-in-itself. By concentration again the whole will can be gathered up for the acquisition of that which is still ungrasped, still beyond us; this power, if it is sufficiently sincere, sure of itself, faithful to itself alone, absolute in faith, we can use for the acquisition of any object whatsoever; but we ought to use it not for the acquisition of the many objects which the world offers to us, but to grasp spiritually that one object worthy of pursuit which is also the one subject worthy of knowledge. By concentration of our whole being on one status of itself, we can become whatever we choose; we can become, for instance, even if we were before a mass of weaknesses and fears, a mass instead of strength and courage, we can become all a great purity, holiness and peace or a single universal soul of love; but we ought, it is said, to use this power to become not even these things, high as they may be in comparison with what we now are, but rather to become that which is above all things and free from all action and attributes, the pure and absolute Being."¹

But the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo does not make such an exclusive use of concentration, for, its object is not only the transcendent status of the

¹ "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

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Divine, but the integral Divine in all His statures and in all His aspects and modes of manifestation. The concentration it makes use of is an all-inclusive, waking concentration which does not leave out of its ambit the worlds of beings and their multifarious activities. It embraces the universal immanence as well as the supracosmic transcendence of the Divine, His multiplicity as well as His unity, the principles and powers that govern and develop creation as well as the ineffable Truth from which these principles and powers derive. It comprehends the manifold play of the qualities of the Divine as well as the unqualified status of the Absolute, Nirguna. "We must aim indeed at the Highest, the Source of all, the Transcendent, but not to the exclusion of that which it transcends, rather as the source of an established experience and supreme state of the soul which shall transform all other states and remould our consciousness of the world into the form of its secret Truth. We do not seek to excise from our being all consciousness of the universe, but to realise God, Truth and Self in the universe as well as transcendent of it. We shall seek therefore not only the Ineffable, but also His manifestation as infinite being, consciousness and bliss embracing the universe and at play in it."¹

SAMADHI

It is clear that when we speak of the plunge or purification or concentration, we attach to each of these terms a sense which is not its current accepted sense. We have seen what purification means in the Integral Yoga. We have understood also the object, nature and scope of concentration as practised in it. When concentration deepens and widens to its utmost, we reach an all-embracing state of consciousness which includes at once the essential truth of the Spirit and the dynamic truth of Its universal manifestation. We can call this state samadhi, but we must be careful to remember that it is not the Rajayogic samadhi, in which the Yogi passes out of all consciousness of the world into the absorbed peace or bliss of the universal Immutable or the supracosmic Undifferentiated. The Gita gives to the word 'samadhi' a much wider connotation than the traditional one. "It is this calm, desireless, griefless fixity of the buddhi in self-poise and self-knowledge to which the Gita gives the name of samadhi. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attraction and repulsions, the alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things: it is directed wholly to the Divine even when

¹ "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo.

to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world.”¹

In the Integral Yoga samadhi bears a somewhat similar meaning. Describing it, Sri Aurobindo says, “Not merely a state withdrawn from all consciousness of the outward, withdrawn even from all consciousness of the inward into that which exists beyond both whether as seed of both or transcendent even of their seed-state; but a settled existence in the One and Infinite, united and identified with it, and this status to remain whether we abide in the waking condition in which we are conscious of the forms of things or we withdraw into the inward activity which dwells in the play of the principles of things, the play of their names and typical forms or we soar to the condition of static inwardness where we arrive at the principles themselves and at the principle of all principles, the seed of name and form. For the soul that has arrived at the essential samadhi and is settled in it (samadhista) in the sense the Gita attaches to the word, has that which is fundamental to all experience and cannot fall from it by any experience however distracting to one who has not yet ascended the summit. It can embrace all in the scope of its being without being bound by any or deluded or limited.”²

A unified state of consciousness which remains permanently poised in the integral Divine, embracing all His statuses and modes of universal working as well as His ineffable transcendence, is, then, the perfection of concentration or samadhi, according to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. No doubt it is a difficult achievement, but nothing short of it can lead us to the perfect realisation of the aim we have set before us. The Divine is not only One, but also manifold and multiple in His self-expression; He is not only static, but also dynamic; He is not only transcendent, but also immanent in the universe of His own creation; He is not only the unthinkable Absolute, but also all these contingents and relativities of which we are constantly conscious. We have to know all these and reconcile all these apparent contraries in an all-harmonising experience, if we want to unite with Him in all His ways, sarvabhavena. The Divine does not forfeit His nameless unity when He assumes the multiple names and forms of the universe; He does not lose His eternal silence when He engages in the resounding whirl of cosmic activity. He does not fall from His timeless eternity when He plunges into the flux of Time. How can we, then, unite with Him in all these modes and ways of His being, unless we attain to that supreme consciousness which is capable of multiple concentration? The traditional method

¹ “The Synthesis of Yoga” by Sri Aurobindo.

² *ibid.*

of samadhi or trance may be needed sometimes to effect a first entry into some remote or recondite region of the being, or for some specific work on a particular plane of consciousness by a momentarily exclusive concentration, but the consummating achievement is the power of multiple concentration normalised in the waking consciousness and commanding a total and simultaneous knowledge of God and soul and Nature and life. It is this total knowledge that Sri Krishna means when he speaks of the rare yogi—one among a thousand of those who have realised the Self—who attains to the knowledge of Him in all the principles of His existence, tattwatah. It is an all-inclusive concentration that alone can lead to this knowledge and union.

The movement that starts as an inner plunge culminates as samadhi or multiple concentration. The inner plunge may be in the beginning a headlong intensive absorption, but it gradually becomes an expansive movement, spreading inwards and upwards and downwards and all around, resulting in a greater and greater depth and extension of knowledge. The eye of knowledge scans always the inner skies from the heart of all things and beings; and even when it looks at the appearances of things, it looks from within outwards, and so knows both the seed and the tree at the same time. Nothing can be hidden from it, for nothing is outside its illimitable range. It sees all, because it sees the One in all, and the One as all.

How can this all-comprehending samadhi or multiple concentration be achieved? Along with the inner plunge and the inner poise one has to practise constant concentration on the Divine—at all hours of the day and night (one has to learn to maintain it even in sleep) and in all that one does. In the Integral Yoga it is not enough that one concentrates or meditates on the Divine at some particular hours, and lets the mind and heart remain occupied with their habitual pursuits, however high and idealistic they may be, for the rest of the day. The consciousness of the sadhaka must learn how to remain constantly concentrated on the Divine—see Him, feel Him, think of Him, touch Him, love Him, and serve Him, at every moment of his life. This constant concentration need not be so very difficult as it appears to be. The secret of success in it lies in love. What does one do in regard to the person one loves? One has not to adopt strenuous means in order to concentrate on that person, rather it becomes difficult not to concentrate. A similar loving concentration on the Divine with the heart desiring Him, the mind thinking of Him, the will seeking to obey His guidance at every moment, and the body eager to serve Him as a faithful instrument, is the best way of uniting with Him and knowing Him by identity. But this concentration must be an active or dynamic concentration, and not passive or quietistic. A passive concentration can lead only to the silence of the Immutable, but not to

the integral being of the Divine. A concentration of the mind, heart, will and the physical being of the sadhaka, fired by the psychic love¹ for the Divine and maintained unflagging even in the midst of the full flood of life's activities, is the indispensable pre-requisite in the initial stages of the Integral Yoga. It is, in fact, nothing short of a synthesis of knowledge, love and action—every action done as a conscious and deliberate offering—brought to bear upon a global and irrevocable orientation to the Divine and a moved seeking for an integral union with Him. Concentration, which is exclusively an affair of the mental consciousness in the path of Jnana yoga—though it is doubtful how far it can be fully achieved without the aid of the heart and the life-will—becomes, if we can say so, an organic, harmonic gravitation of the whole human being towards the Divine, and culminates in a settled, dynamic poise in Him.

A word may not be out of place here in regard to the difference between meditation and concentration. Sri Aurobindo brings it out in the following words: "Concentration is a gathering together of the consciousness and either centralising at one point or turning on a single object, e.g., the Divine: there can also be a gathered condition throughout the whole being, not at a point. In meditation it is not indispensable to gather like this, one can simply remain with a quiet mind thinking on one subject for observing what comes in the consciousness and dealing with it."²

Another thing which is very helpful in concentration is calm and peace. According to Sri Aurobindo, "The best help for concentration is to receive the Mother's calm and peace in your mind. It is there above you—only the mind and its centres have to open to it."³

A constant, loving concentration, fortified by a thorough-going purification of nature and based on an unshakable peace and calm, is sure to open the closed doors and lead the sadhaka to that completeness of knowledge which not only liberates but perfects and fulfils.

In the next article we shall consider the grades and object of knowledge and the fulfilment it is meant to bestow upon the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga.

¹ The coming of the psychic to the front and its guidance of the nature makes for the greatest spontaneity in loving concentration.

² "Letters of Sri Aurobindo", Vol. II.

³ *ibid.*

CULTURAL FELLOWSHIP IN MEDIAEVAL INDIA

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE contribution of Muslim rulers and, under their patronage, the contribution of Hindus and Muslims generally towards the development of Bengali literature has been acknowledged as immense and inestimable. The Afghan rulers of Bengal had the Hindu epics and Puranas translated into Bengali. Many Vaishnava lyrics were composed by Muslim poets such as Garib Khan, Shah Akbar, Aliraj. Recorded instances are there of Muslim writers starting their works with an invocation to Hindu gods and goddesses for their blessings. An attempt to identify Hindu gods and saints with Islamic ones is noticed in the writings of Muslims like Aliraj and Saiyad Muhammad Akbar.

It is well-known that the Afghan and Pathan rulers had their armies mainly formed by the natives who fought the Mughuls when they invaded Bengal. Sanatan Goswami was the Chief Minister of Sultan Hussain Shah. Later, Nawab Sarfaraj Khan of Dacca had in Yasawanta Rao of the same place a trusted friend and adviser. Nawab Alivardi's Chief Minister was the Hindu Durlabhram who revolted against Sirajuddowla when the latter began to ignore him and preferred in important matters of State the advice of Mohanlal, a Hindu young man well-versed in the arts of peace and war. History will never forget the exemplary courage and devotion to duty with which Mohanlal fought for Siraj, for his country, in the battle of Plassey.

In the architecture of medieval Bengal, as in that of other parts of northern India, Hindu and Buddhist styles combined with the Saracenic to produce a new form of the building art. The craftsmen of the mosques and tombs of Gauda, Pandua and Malda were most of them Hindus who almost invariably adapted their own technique to the needs of their Muslim masters. The designs on the brick-built *iwān* of the famous Sona Masjid (15th century) at Gauda, its door-ways, arches and their frames of curved architraves, are adaptations from Hindu shrines. Its stone-pillars are distinctly Hindu, and its curved cornices and the vaulted side aisles are imitative of the ancient bamboo roofing of Bengal. The domes of the Jami Masjid (14th century) retain their Hindu finials. The Saracenic influence on them is the exquisite calligraphic work done by the Arabic and Persian artists. The beautiful *mihrab*

of the Adina mosque (14th century) at Gauda is too obviously Hindu in design to require any comment. The outer arch of it looks like the trefoil arched canopy of the image of Vishnu, found in the Manbhum district, but the inscriptions and arabesque ornament in it are contributions of Saracenic art. These Muslim buildings influenced the construction of many Hindu temples, an example of which is the temple (18th century) at Kantanagar in the Dinajpur district.

The number was not small of the Muslims in medieval Bengal, who erected temples for Hindu deities, made liberal grants for their maintenance and the celebration of necessary festivities, and of Hindus who spent money lavishly on the construction of mosques and tombs of the Muslims. Husain Shah restored many Hindu temples of Navadwip. The Shahshuja Mosque in Comilla, built by the Hindu Maharaja Govinda Manikya of Tripura, and the temples of Kali in Narayanpur, erected by Mirza Hosen Ali, are by no means solitary instances.

In the building up of this cultural fellowship in Bengal the cult of Sahajiya and the neo-Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya played a very important part. Sri Chaitanya in his ecstatic sense of oneness of all, made no distinction of race and religion and freely admitted Muslims into the loving arms of Vaishnavism. Haridas, a Muslim, belonged to his inner circle.

Sri Chaitanya's influence, however, was not confined to Bengal alone. His victorious campaigns in the west as far as Gujarat and in the south as far as Rameshwaram wrote a glorious chapter in the history of cultural fellowship in India. Fired with a heavenly zeal which only the God-possessed can feel, Chaitanya set out on his holy mission of disseminating the sacred name of Sri Krishna, and conquered by his consummate wisdom and matchless devotion the heart of Prakashananda Saraswati of Kashi, the then greatest authority on Vedanta and head of the Dandi Sannyasins; of Prataprudra, the king of Orissa; of Vasudeva Sarvabhauma of Puri, the foremost scholar of the time; of Chanduram Tirtha, the eminent scholar of the Deccan; of Rudrapati, the king of Travancore. The Vaishnava communities today in Deragazi Khan, Sindh, Gujarat, Vrindaban, Orissa and the Deccan, proclaim the widespread influence of Sri Chaitanya, through which was built up a unique spiritual fellowship in India. Nor was this fellowship a one-way movement. Sri Chaitanya would never fail to appreciate what was of devotional value in the culture of the places he visited. Mention may be made of two instances. In the temple of Tiruvattar in^s South India he heard the recital of a portion of the *Brahma Samhita*, a

Sanskrit treatise on Bhakti, and was so much impressed that he prostrated himself before the book. He was filled with ecstatic joy. He had the book copied out and popularised it wherever he went. Another book of a great sage of south India (probably Kerala) the *Krishna-Karamrita* of Bilvamangala was also introduced into Bengal by Chaitanya who regarded these two books as the most valuable of the treasures he secured in his wanderings in south India.

In the South which was less disturbed by the political turmoils of the North, this bhakti movement, though slow, showed signs of steady progress as was evident from its results in a later period when happy relations between the two communities were almost an established fact. The Vijayanagara kings had a large number of Muslim cavalymen and archers in their armies. The kings showed scrupulous regard for their religious feelings and, according to Hindu custom, rewarded them with grants of land. These Muslims lived in a quarter of the city, where the State erected a splendid mosque for them. The Kuran was brought into the royal court when Muslim officers came to swear loyalty to the king. The king Ramaraja of Vijayanagara had many Muslims even in the royal body-guard.

Compelled by defeat in a battle with the Bahmani Sultan Tajuddin Firoz, the Vijayanagara king Deva Raya (early 15th century) gave his daughter in marriage to Firoz. This is the first matrimonial relationship between a Muslim Sultan and a Hindu princess in the Deccan, with which, it is said, began a new era of friendship between the two kingdoms. The Sultan also married his eldest son, Hasan Khan, to Parthal, the pretty daughter of a Hindu goldsmith. These two marriages as also his appointment of Narsingh of Kherla as an Amir of his kingdom were really instances of the policy the Sultan set before himself, that of befriending the Hindu elements of the population. Brahmanas who were then probably the only learned men among the Hindus were taken into the services of the State in large numbers and rose to positions of power and responsibility. The Sultan also maintained friendly relations with the Hindu chiefs of Telingana, some of whom like the Velamas of Nalgunda actually allied themselves with Firoz against their enemies, the Vemas of Rajamundry. Firoz was a linguist and he knew the languages of the country so much that he could speak them fluently. The conciliatory attitude of the Bahmani Sultans towards the Hindus reflected itself in the architecture of the period. Thus the Perso-Bahmani arch of the great tomb of Firoz himself at Gulbarga rests gracefully on purely Hindu jambs; and the brackets supporting the Chhajja of the fine tomb of Gesu Daraz, the patron saint of the Deccan, remind one of the brackets in some of the well-known Hindu temples of the Deccan.

When Ibrahim became the Sultan of Bijapur, he introduced certain changes into the administration, one of which was to keep the revenue accounts in Marathi instead of in Persian, in consequence of which the brahmana accountants began to acquire considerable influence in the government of Bijapur. Ibrahim was truly a great king. He took upon himself the title of *Jagatguru* (world-teacher), and brought into being a new language. We find several State documents of his time beginning with an invocation to Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning. In one of the palaces of Bijapur there is a temple dedicated to the Hindu saint Narasimhasaraswati by a Sultan who is said to have received spiritual boons from the saint. The Muslim court of Ahmadnagar had a brahmana minister who even acted as a confidential adviser to Amir Berid, a professed champion of the Sunni sect.

In the thirteenth century Syed Jamaluddin, an Arab refugee, who got many favours from the Pandya king Sundara Pandya Thevan, became the latter's Prime Minister and ultimately, on his death, the ruler of the land. The golden image of a Muslim princess under the feet of the idol of God Cheluvarayana Pillai in Melkote, a famous Vaishnavite centre of South India, reminds one of the story of Ramanuja's quest for the same idol taken away by a Muslim king of the North, the father of the same princess. Ramanuja got back the idol through the miracle of its walking straight to him when, after reaching the palace of the emperor, he was earnestly pleading for its return. The princess who had been most devoutly worshipping the idol followed it to Melkote all alone, and when on her arrival found Cheluvarayana in the shrine, 'she was seen no more, having been absorbed into the god whom she loved with the love of a perfect devotee.' The image of such an ideal devotee has thus come to be installed along with the god of her heart.

The munificence of the Muslims for Hindu temples in the South deserves mention. Gulam Ali Khan Saheb, a viceroy of Bijapur, made a grant to the Venkataramanaswami temple at Alangiri. This grant, it is said, was continued during the Mughul rule. Mention may be made here of a letter from another general of Bijapur named Ranadulla Khan, to the Guru of the Sringeri Math, in which he prayed for the latter's blessings. There is also documentary evidence that Ranadulla made a grant of some villages to the monastery of Shankaracharya at Sankeshwar. He was on very friendly terms with the Sardesai of Vantmuri in the Belgaun district. The many ways in which Hyder Ali and his son Tippu Sultan showed their interest in the Sringeri Math are proof of the great influence the Guru of this Math exercised over these Muslim rulers. Tippu actually sought the help of its Guru when he was hemmed in with danger.

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In several states in the Deccan, participation by Hindus in Muslim festivals and by Muslims in Hindu ones have from early medieval times been a common feature. And this mutual participation has always been encouraged by the Hindu rulers of these States. The Muharrum is one such festival in which the Hindus used freely to take part, and the Ganapati is another which the Muslims used to attend in large numbers. Occasions were not rare when Hindus and Muslims carried shoulder to shoulder the *tazia*, the model tomb of Hasan and Husain in Muharrum processions. It is believed that in early days when the Hindus forgot their feuds with the Muslims they used to associate themselves with the Muslim religious festivals out of a genuine religious feeling.

There are in the South many shrines and tombs of Muslim saints which are visited as places of pilgrimage both by Hindus and Muslims. The *dargah* of a Muslim saint known as Sayyasaheb at Mudhol, a small state in the Deccan, attracts Muslims and Hindus including orthodox brahmanas. Many Hindu families name their children after the saint. The Raja pays his homage to the saint on the eve of any important function in the family. The tombs of the Muslim saint Miran Saheb in Nagore and of another in Mysore City are visited by large numbers of Hindu worshippers. On a little hill in Madura there is a temple dedicated to God Subrahmanya and a shrine of Fakir Sikander, a Muslim saint. Devotees of both the communities, whenever they visit the hill, pray at both the places of worship and it is a common sight to see a Hindu in the Sikander shrine and a Muslim in the Subrahmanya temple.

These are only a few instances of how in different parts of medieval India Hindus and Muslims were cooperating in common corporate endeavours and how through them they were beginning to understand each other, reconcile their differences and grow towards a common cultural outlook. These efforts bore abundant fruit during the heyday of the Mughuls whose amazing success was principally due to three factors. The first was the pioneer work, but very valuable from a political standpoint, done by the Turks; the second was that the Mughuls had a clearer vision of an empire in India than the Turks; and the third, but the most important of all, was the new spiritual outlook of the people created by the lives and teachings of the saints who opened up, and to a considerable extent fulfilled, the possibilities of a wonderful religious synthesis broadbased on direct spiritual experiences.

It is well known how by freeing the country from various social hindrances Buddhism had prepared the way for the Mauryas to build up the largest empire

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in ancient India. It was also a similar, if not a more difficult, situation that the religious reformers of medieval India had to face; and the bold stand they took on their direct perception of spiritual truths cleared the country of much of its social and religious debris. Men of all sects and communities, especially those who had been so long kept down by iniquitous social laws, began to flock to these inspired God-lovers whose simple but moving words instilled new hopes into them and showed them the universal Path of Love which every man had the right to tread and by treading which he would realise in the depth of his soul the truth and light of the One Reality which unites all existence into the peace and harmony of heaven. Thus Hindus and Muslims became united by their adherence to this common spiritual idealism: and when the Mughuls came into India, they found that in various parts both the communities had been already tending towards a happy reconciliation in every walk of life, not excluding that of religion. This obviated many of their difficulties in establishing themselves as a paramount political power in this country.

(Concluded)

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

TALKS WITH THE MOTHER

PRAYER AND ASPIRATION

THERE are many kinds of prayers. There is one external and physical, that is to say, simply words learnt by rote and repeated mechanically. It does not mean much. It has usually one result, however, making you quiet. If you go on repeating a few words or sounds for some time, it puts you into a state of calmness in the end. There is another kind which is the natural expression of a wish; you want a particular thing and you express it clearly. You can pray for an object or for a circumstance, you can pray also for a person or for yourself. There is still another kind in which the prayer borders on aspiration and the two meet: it is the spontaneous formulation of a living experience; it shoots out of the depth of your being, it is the utterance of something lived within: it wants to express gratitude for the experience, asks for its continuation or seeks an explanation. It is then what I said almost an aspiration. Aspiration, however, does not necessarily formulate itself in words; if it uses words at all, it makes of them a kind of invocation. Thus, you wish to be in a certain condition. You have, for example, found in you something which is not in harmony with your ideal, a movement of obscurity or ignorance or even bad will. You wish to see it changed. You do not express the thing in so many words, but it rises up in you like a flame, an ardent offering of the experience itself which seeks increase and greatening, to be made more clear and precise. It is true all this is capable of being expressed in words, if one tries to recall and note down the experience. But the experience, the aspiration itself is, as I say, like a flame shooting up and contains within it the very thing it asks for. I say "asks for", but the movement is not at all that of a desire; it is truly a flame, the flame of purifying will carrying at its centre the very object which it wished to be realised. The discovery of a fault in you impels you to make it an occasion for more progress, for greater self-discipline, for further ascension towards the Divine. It opens out a door upon your future, which you wish to be clearer, truer, intenser; all that gathers in you like a concentrated force and hurls you up in a movement of ascension. It needs no expression in words. It is indeed a flame that leaps up. Such is true aspiration. Prayer usually is something much more external; it is about a very precise object. It is always formulated; for the formulation itself makes what a prayer is. You may have an aspiration

and you can transcribe it into a prayer, but the aspiration itself exceeds the prayer. It is something much more intimate, much more self-forgetful, living only in the object it wishes to be or to do, almost identified with it. A prayer can be of a very high quality. Instead of being a request for a fulfilment of your particular desire, it may express your thankfulness and gratefulness for what the Divine has done and is doing for you. You are not busy with your little self and its egoistic interests, you ask for the Divine's ways in you and in the world. This leads you to the border of aspiration. For aspiration too has many degrees and it is expressed on many levels. But the core of aspiration is in the psychic being, it is there at its purest, for there is its origin and source. Prayers come from the other, the lower or secondary levels of being. That is to say, there are physical or material prayers, asking for physical or material things, vital prayers, mental prayers: there are psychic prayers and spiritual prayers too. Each has its own character and its own value. I say again there is a certain type of prayer which is so spontaneous and so disinterested, more like an appeal or a call, generally not for one's own sake, but acting sometimes like an intercession with the Divine on behalf of others. Such a prayer is extremely powerful. I have seen innumerable cases where such a prayer had brought about its immediate fulfilment. It means a great faith, a great fervour, a great sincerity and also a great simplicity of heart, something which does not calculate, which does not bargain or barter, does not give with the idea of receiving. The majority of prayers are precisely made with the idea of giving so that one may receive. But I was speaking of the rarer variety which also does exist, which is a kind of thanksgiving, a canticle or a hymn.

To sum up then it can be said that a prayer is always formed of words. Words have different values, according to the state of consciousness of the person when he formulates it. But always prayer is a formulated thing. But one can aspire without formulating. And then, prayer needs a person to whom one prays. There is, of course, a certain class of people whose conception of the universe is such that there is no room in it for the Divine (the famous French scientist Laplace, for example). Such people are not likely to favour the existence of any being superior to themselves to whom they can appeal or look up for guidance and help. There is no question of prayer for them. But even they, though they may not pray, may aspire. They may not believe in God, but they may believe, for example, in progress. They may conceive of the world as a progressive movement, that it is becoming better and better, rising higher and higher, growing constantly to a nobler fulfilment. They can ask for, will for, aspire for such progress; they need not look for the Divine. Aspiration requires faith, certainly, but not faith necessarily in a personal God.

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But prayer is always addressed to a person, a person who hears it and grants it. There lies the great difference between the two. Intellectual people admit aspiration, but prayer they consider as something inferior, fit for unintellectual persons. The mystics say, aspiration is quite all right, but if your aspiration is to be heard and fulfilled, you must also pray, know how to pray and to whom—who else but the Divine? The aspiration need not be towards any person; the aspiration is not for a person, but for a state of consciousness, a knowledge, a realisation. Prayer adds to it the relation to a person. Prayer is a personal thing addressed to a person for a thing which he alone can grant.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo and the Soul Quest of Man by *Nathaniel Pearson*
Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1954

THIS book is a refocus of one portion of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*. Mr. Nathaniel Pearson, a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and a disciple who was for some time in contact through letters with the Master, is its author. The book presents in good relief one of the fundamental tenets of the Aurobindonian gospel,—the discovery and application of the ancient truth,—the three-fold unity of the Individual Divine, the Cosmic Divine and the Transcendental Divine. The Divine Consciousness, which is the ultimate Reality, is three-fold. It is Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss together—*Sachchidananda*. It is further revealed as the Individual Divine, the Self of the individual; the Cosmic Divine or the Self of the Cosmos; and the Transcendent Beyond. The rejection of one or the other of these three aspects of the Divine ended in Materialism on the one hand and Illusionism on the other. The only philosophy that can save the world today is the integral philosophy, one which recognises both Matter and Spirit, the human soul, the Cosmic Self and the Transcendent Divine. The Individual Self presides over the evolution of the individual; but it is represented by the soul, an evolving entity, within the individual himself. Man has to discover his soul, to replace his instrumental self by the psyche and attain, along with self-knowledge, world-knowledge and God-Knowledge, knowledge-by-identity of the three aspects of the Divine. But he will have to attain the level of the Truth-Consciousness, the supramental plane, before he can make this knowledge dynamic in his life and transform himself. The descent of the Supramental is, in the very nature of things, inevitable. The discovery and realisation of Supermind was the central truth of Sri Aurobindo's life and it is a realisation which, as Mr. Pearson points out, is going to revolutionise the earth-life: "It is only through the full recognition of this divine destiny of the individual soul on earth that the persistent conflict and division in human thought and endeavour can eventually be resolved and harmonised" (p. 68). Again, as Mr. Pearson interprets Sri Aurobindo, "the real purpose of man's existence is yet to manifest in the life of the world that Divine Nature which is both immanent and transcendent" (p. 71).

Mr. Pearson has refocussed Sri Aurobindo's observations on the incompleteness of science and art in an interesting manner: "Art endèavours to raise man into the realm of the higher ideals, chiefly of Truth and Beauty....Science, on the other hand, attempts to convert its discoveries into realizable values which can be readily handled by man. Science, therefore, is not so much concerned with the advancement of man himself as with the conversion of Truth into utilizable terms....But, it may be asked, how can science itself advance if man, the very instrument of its searching, remains fixed and static?" (p. 83). Art also evades the primary need of first changing man himself. The integral foundation—the firm basis of a wide unitive knowledge—is possible only with a spirituality which proceeds from the innermost centre of man. It is on this foundation that the whole of man's knowledge—his science, art, religion and philosophy—can find its own true bearings.

Sri Aurobindo stated his philosophy in words of enduring beauty and power. In that sense, *The Life Divine* is as much a work of art as an original contribution to philosophy. There is an individuality about the utterance which, by itself, is capable of stirring the reader to his inmost depths. To summarise it, therefore, might look like an attempt to summarise Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *The Tempest*, even if the summariser were a writer of the calibre of Charles Lamb. Again, an endeavour to disengage Sri Aurobindo's central argument from the intricate maze of paths and bypaths which his universal vision traversed might, more often than not, result in reducing the path itself to a mere straight line. Also, the Master's pronouncements have a direct spiritual light fused with the powerfully expressive artistry and to read his intuitions and revelations on the major problems of philosophy and life is to undergo an intellectual and even a psychological conversion. A summary can hardly do them justice and Mr. Pearson himself is conscious of this limitation.

Even so, a refocus like Mr. Pearson's had to be attempted as an introduction to that great book and it is most welcome. It pitches to those heights a ladder which the average reader needs. This task of exposition Mr. Pearson has carried out admirably. He is absolutely free from the expositor's fallacy of "imposition", for he is innately in love with the Argument. While giving their due importance to the Vedanta texts, from which Sri Aurobindo revived and reinterpreted spiritual truths in the light of his integral Divine realisation, Mr. Pearson presents the Argument without drawing too much on them. This is right because the western reader might be puzzled rather than helped by them in the beginning; and Mr. Pearson has apparently a western reading public in view while writing this book. The most significant thing about the book is the

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fact that Mr. Pearson himself is a westerner who is convinced of the universal significance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and of the imperative need for its application in solving the problems of the modern world. This must be reassuring to the western reading public, even as it would be heartening to the eastern. The book reveals deep sincerity and clarity and it should easily find its way to the libraries in universities and colleges in every part of the world in which English is spoken or understood.

V. K. GOKAK

FAR AND NEAR

THOU shinest like a brilliant star afar...
And yet so near even to the dust of the earth...
Methinks Thou hast deserted me in the stormy tenebrous nights of life—
And yet I hear Thy gentle foot-falls leading me to the golden dawn...
I stumble and suffer and complain—"Thou lovest me not."
And yet I know Thy flaming love flickers eternally in the recess of my heart.
I behold the frantic turbulent ocean frowning at me in a challenging mood—
And yet am I sanguine that thou shalt take me safe to the Harbour.
I am deafened by the din and bustle of the ever-busy-world...
And yet I hear the sweet cadences of thy magic lyre.
In vain the glamour of a merry enchanting world allures me...
For I know that my peaceful refuge is at thy Lotus-Feet.

MANJU GUPTA

Students' Section

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO ASPIRATION—WILL—CONCENTRATION—SURRENDER

(Continued from the last issue)

SELF: What is the "fixed and unfailing aspiration," you spoke of the other day? (5-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspiration that is there always and does not get tired and cease.

SELF: While doing work, when the mind is engrossed in it, how can one aspire? (5-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: One can both aspire and attend to the work and do many other things at the same time when the consciousness is developed by yoga.

SELF: Is it not really difficult to aspire for two things at a time? (10-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is as easy as to aspire for one thing.

SELF: For maintaining a constant aspiration, must not there be only one thing to expect? Or do you mean that at present my only need is to be opening and not aspiring to the Mother's higher forces and nothing else? (20-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: The two include each other. If you feel the forces it means that you are open. If you open, you will soon become conscious of the Mother's Force.

SELF: What is meant by "Burning aspirations?" (6-8-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Very strong and intense, full of the fire of Agni.

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SELF: Sometimes the will comes into play when one is aspiring for a higher thing. For instance, one is praying for purity. In order to receive purity one is shown the impurity lying within oneself. Then there rises a will in one to throw away that impurity. Do you find any truth in this statement? (29-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: The will can go with the aspiration—the will that no impurity should be there.

SELF: Does the consciousness merely tell us and warn that we should do this and not that, we should accept that and reject this? Or has it the power also to prevent us from doing anything against its will? (27-4-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends. If the consciousness is developed on the side of knowledge it will warn only. If on the side of will or power it will help to effectuate.

SELF: If one acquires a will-power can he not remain far from undesirable thoughts and desires? (29-4-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: A strong will can send them away when it wants.

SELF: This evening the lower forces of the nature attempted to put me into anger for an insignificant incident. But my mind simply rebuked them. What is all this? Are they really trying to get me out of the straight path which is guided by the Divine Shakti (The Mother)? (29-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. But if the mind detects them and the will is strong enough to reject them, it is all right.

SELF: A wrong undivine thought entered into me. Some part of my mind found it out and rejected it. It then went away. Which was the part that dismissed it? Is it not a fact that our mind can only disapprove of such things? (27-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a will in the mind and not merely the power of thought.

SELF: You have said, “You should aspire for the true will to be revealed to you”. Is the divine or true will already concealed within us? (3-12-33)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is there above, at any rate.

SELF: I have been aspiring for the Peace and the Higher Consciousness. Should I now turn my concentration on the true will? (3-12-1933)

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: The Peace should come first.

SELF: How are we to put a will in the subconscious when we are not even conscious of this part of our nature? (9-9-1933)

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

SELF: At times it so happens that we need a particular person and he just turns up! (3-10-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Either the man was to come and the mind receives the impression or the idea in the mind or its will creates a force which brings the person.

SELF: You once asked me, “Does your will now always will the right thing?” If I use the will only for calling down the Mother’s Force or for opening to Her and not for satisfying my desires, does it not remain true? (9-9-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: And when other things come do you always see and will the right thing? If you do, you are a perfect sadhak.

SELF: What is equality? (10-8-33)

SRI AUROBINDO: Equality is to remain unmoved within in all conditions.

SELF: On the 20th you wrote to me, “By concentrating in the heart while aspiring...” I do not know how to concentrate. Kindly tell me how it is done. (21-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: When you read or write or do anything in which you take interest, you concentrate on it. Concentration simply means fixing of consciousness on something.

SELF: During the period of concentration I get all sorts of useless thoughts and desires, which I forget afterwards. How am I to remember them and open them to the Mother? (26-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspire at the time—they will of themselves be open to the Mother.

SELF: You have said, “One has to concentrate a little till one gets it (one’s proper state of consciousness) back.” On what is one to concentrate? (1-7-1933)

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

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 remembrance of the Mother till the undiffused state comes back.

SELF: I find it rather difficult to concentrate with my eyes open.
(22-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is so with everybody—unless they have made a habit of concentrating with open eyes.

SELF: How am I to cultivate this habit?
(28-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no special how. You have to concentrate in the same way as you do when you shut your eyes.

SELF: But how to become indifferent to the material world around me?
(28-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: By training yourself not to notice the outward things.

SELF: On the 19th you wrote about a “true and full vital consecration.” How am I to have this consecration in a true and full way?
(20-6-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Consecration of all the vital movements without exception, so that nothing can remain there which is contrary to the Mother’s will.

SELF: How are we to complete our surrender to the Mother?
(12-8-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Go on surrendering till it is complete.

SELF: What attitude should one hold during meditation in order to bring down the higher forces of the Mother, avoiding at the same any interference by the lower forces of the nature?
(19-9-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Quietude, surrender to the Mother, quiet vigilance against other forces.

SELF: What is meant by, “Put your waking consciousness right”?
(3-8-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: Are you not practising Yoga? Have you not to get your consciousness out of the ordinary ignorant movements and put it into touch with the Divine consciousness and its Truth?

NAGIN

“THE ANCIENT MARINER”*

THE poem deals with characters belonging to three distinct but mutually interacting worlds of experience:—this normal world, the occult world, and Heaven. The Mariner, the shipmates, the Hermit, the Pilot with his boy and the creatures of the Sea are of this earth. The South Polar Spirit, Life-in-Death and Death in the Spectreship, the angels, and the two Spirits in Part VI are the denizens of the occult intermediate region. God and the Virgin Mary reign in Heaven beyond this zone. God is the centre of all life and the creatures are but points in the circumference. Every man must love his fellow-creatures only because God has made them and loves them. Love is the sacred law which binds the universe. The essence of Virtue is this Love. Its opposite is Sin. Sin breaks the sacred law of Love and the Sinner makes himself the centre of the universe and reduces all the creatures of God including God Himself to points in the circumstance. Virtue springs from God-centredness, Sin has its roots in Ego-centrism. If the Ego-centrism reaches an extreme form of absolute callousness it is punished with death. If it is attended with or followed by a qualm of conscience which feels the Sin, it can be expiated by repentance, suffering and prayer. Then the Soul can be redeemed.

The Ancient Mariner is a sinner with a conscience. Though he kills the Albatross in a fit of ego-centric impulse, he feels subsequently the enormity of the crime and therefore shows himself fit to be redeemed. God punishes him through Life-in-Death and the South Polar Spirit. When he begins to love the creatures of the sea and prays to God, He rewards him directly by sending gentle sleep and refreshing rain. He rewards him indirectly by making the good angels produce soothing melodious music and steer the ship off the dangerous waters and again by making the Hermit meet him and shrive him. *Per contra*, the Shipmates do not think in terms of Sin at all but only in terms of self-gratification. According to them, the bird must be allowed to live only if it does them good. They are not at all against the killing of the bird as such. Such extreme Ego-centrism which applauds the action of the Ancient Mariner is justly punished with Death. The Ancient Mariner has a moral awakening; but the shipmates are too much engrossed in themselves to think of the moral implications of the act of killing the Albatross. The shipmates are introduced

* This was written as a letter to help a student to understand the inner significance of the poem.

“THE ANCIENT MARINER”

to represent the type of Sinner without conscience and serve as a contrast to the Mariner. The focus is certainly on the Mariner and his experience. The poem may therefore be said to embody the growth or the evolution of an ordinary impulsive sailor into a moral and finally a religious being by his passing through a moral crisis and penance.

It is a tale of crime, punishment, penance, expiation and redemption. The central experience of the Ancient Mariner—penance and purgation—happens in a state when the Supernatural impinges on the natural ordinary world. This blending of the two domains is the most difficult to manage. To make the Supernatural natural, to bring ‘the willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes the essence of poetic faith’—that is the problem which Coleridge squarely faces and he emerges victorious. Let us see how he does it.

Par I is the exposition of the human drama of the poem. We are introduced here to the Ancient Mariner with his strange personality. The word ‘ancient’ is not merely suggestive of the old age of the mariner but also invests him with a halo of antiquity, of the ages of faith when man did not shut himself off from the occult and supernatural. And he is not only ‘ancient’ but strange as well. His very physical features—long grey beard, glittering eye and skinny hand—bear the stamp of one who has moved in a bizarre or weird atmosphere of occult and supernatural vibrations and of one who has passed through an almost soul-shattering psychological crisis in his life. His eyes with their hypnotic power and unearthly glitter mark him out as an authentic seer of strange worlds and stranger soul-stirring experiences. To see him and hear his words—simple, bare but charged with the power of naked truth—is to believe him. Coleridge, by making the Mariner himself tell his story, has solved the problem of credibility by more than half. But he is not content with this. He is bent upon dissolving the least shadow of resistance on the part of the reader. This he does by the introduction of the gallant wedding-guest, who is next of kin to the bridegroom. The wedding-guest is representative of a fashionable modern gentleman (a gallant) in a mood of light-hearted joviality and excitement (about to attend a marriage feast). If this man will listen to the story and believe it, who will not? Part I shows the resistance on the part of the guest slowly diminishing and finally dissolving completely. As the Ancient Mariner warms up and narrates the strange course of the ship taken by a blast to the South Polar Region and the sudden intrusion of the Albatross creating pangs of agony in the narrator, the wedding-guest has forgotten the wedding, entered into the spirit of the story and even begins to sympathise with him and asks: “God save thee, ancient Mariner! From the fiends that plague thee thus! —Why look’st thou so?” Henceforward there is a spontaneous, wholehearted

acceptance of the tale and an active participation in the moods of horror and agony evoked by the words of the Mariner.

Again, the gradual introduction of the Supernatural makes the reader believe in it. In Part I we start from an obscure region in the known world (a village harbour) and, driven by a storm blast, reach a remote or strange region of this world (the south polar region) after passing through the equatorial climate. In that strange region we see a strange bird, the Albatross, behaving in a very unusual manner. Now, the Albatross seems to be half-way housed between this world and the world of the Supernatural. In that desolate region, it has made its mysterious appearance and acted as a kind host, a Christian soul coming at the time of vespers. The bird does not belong to human beings. It belongs to and is the favourite of the strange inhabitants of that region. Its slayer will certainly be avenged by them. The Albatross points beyond itself to the world of the Supernatural and prepares us by its strangeness for the advent of stranger things and creatures.

Further, it is in this part that the crime is committed. The enormity of the crime is increased by the description of the bird as a Christian soul with a sense of charity or love for fellow creatures. For the bird has come only to relieve the sense of loneliness felt by the mariners in that region and to give them a most cordial welcome. The crime, therefore, is so serious that it must move one to the depths if one has a moral conscience.

Part II begins with a description of the attitude of the fellow-mariners to the crime (stanzas 1-5). They first curse the Mariner for having killed the bird. But when the fog cleared they feel happy and congratulate him on having killed it. Not the morality but the utility of a thing or action is their standard in life. If a thing or action is useful to you, if it gratifies you, welcome it. Otherwise, you are perfectly justified in destroying it. This is the most extreme form of Ego-centrism. The shipmates therefore become worse sinners than the Mariner. On the other hand, the Mariner does not justify his action, he feels the sense of loneliness and desperate isolation which every sinner with a conscience feels. The second section of Part II (stanzas 6-14) gives the first stage in the punishment of the sinners. We see first the disharmony of the psychological act of sin reflected in the ugliness, the awful silence of Nature. The ship is becalmed, the sea is dreadfully silent and the crew undergo by day the pain of extreme heat and unquenchable thirst and the sight of ugly slimy things (6-10). Nor are they left in peace at night (11-14). Before sleep they see the dance of death-fires and the waters burning green, blue and white and, during sleep, they

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dream of the South Polar Spirit plaguing them by following them nine fathoms deep. The Mariner feels his isolation and the shipmates symbolically enough hang the Albatross round his neck. Once again note how callous the shipmates are. They conveniently forget their moral ineptitude and throw all the blame on the Mariner by casting evil looks on him. They never for a moment think that the cause of their suffering may be within themselves. Earlier, they traced their suffering to a bird. Now they hold the Mariner responsible for it. They are just incapable of thinking in terms of morality. They represent a different type of sinner from the Mariner. This prepares us for the two different kinds of punishment described in Part III. Again, it prepares us by the suggestion of the strange colours for the advent of the supernatural things and beings in that Part.

The first section in Part III (stanzas 1-13) describes the reactions in the world of the Supernatural to the crime and the sinners, as seen by the vision of the Mariner. Note the dramatic way of description—its gradualness. As the spectre-ship is coming from a great distance towards the scene in which the crew are, it is seen as a speck, a mist, a shape and then the shape of a sail and finally the delicate, ethereal, unearthly sails like restless gossamers. Note also the breathless expectance and horror of the Mariner which replace his first hasty cry of joy.—The queer construction and movement of the ship prepare us for its strange crew: Death and Life-in-Death and their terrible action of Dice play to claim the Ancient Mariner as their victim. Life-in-Death wins the Mariner. Death gets the others. The second section of Part III (stanzas 14-17) describes nightfall and the sudden death of the crew, each with a ghastly pang and curse in his eye and the souls whizzing as they pass by the Mariner. The isolation of the Mariner from the world of human beings is now complete. He is living in the midst of Death. We see the Supernatural in this part as agents for the punishment of sinners. The game of Dice symbolises the hand of the Divine Will.

Life-in-Death in whose grip is the Mariner is called the Nightmare. She is called so, firstly, because her appearance (stanza 11) is of a terrifying female monster; secondly, because of her haunting quality and, thirdly, because of the inescapable and gripping agony she causes. Part IV continues the description of the agony she causes. Part IV continues the description of the agony of the Mariner in the grip of this Nightmare. If in Part III she caused the isolation from the world of human beings, in Part IV she brings about the isolation from the world of Nature. True to her name, she makes him lead a life practically dead to the world around him of Nature and human nature.

MOTHER INDIA

The wedding guest, hearing the horrible death of the shipmates and gazing at the spectral figure of the Mariner, naturally wonders whether the person before him is a visitant from another region, a ghost or a figure in flesh and blood. He is promptly assured (stanzas 1 and 2) of his physical reality by the Mariner who continues to describe in the next section (stanzas 3-9) his severe loneliness and the consequent agony and inner torture. The bodies of the crew are preserved by supernatural force so that the Mariner may feel the curse in the dead men's eyes. He cannot look at the sea because of the ugly creatures exuding mucus from their bodies. He cannot look to heaven and pray because his heart is dry and choked. (Prayer is the opening of the heart in man in loving adoration of the Maker.) Nor can he close his eyes and find peace because then he feels the eye-balls beat like pulses.

In this excruciating pain of his—physical and psychological—he yearns for an escape and likes to share the glorious motion of the Moon and stars in the sky. (stanzas 10 and 11). In this moment of escape there is a feeling of Beauty. With this awakening to beauty, he looks around and sees the panorama of the sea with its Water-Snakes (12-15). Love which is the response of the heart in man to Beauty has its birth for the first time in the Mariner's bosom. This rejuvenation of the heart makes him share the happiness of the creatures and, feeling the gush of love, he blesses them. This movement of the heart the Mariner rightly interprets as due to the intervention of the pity of a saint. That helps him to pray in all sincerity when the spell breaks and the dead Albatross, the symbol of his guilt and crime, drops into the sea from his neck (stanzas 14 and 15). The Saints are illumined souls and true children of God who have vowed to kindle the feeling of aspiration and love in the contrite heart which suffers agony. By the charity of these Saints and the creative suffering or penance of the Mariner the aspiration is born. The rest of the poem deals with the action of the Grace of God answering to the sincere prayers of the aspiring soul.

Part V begins the operation of Grace. The Virgin Mary (Queen of Heaven) sends gentle sleep and rain which remove all the physical sufferings of the Mariner (stanzas 1-4). The Mariner then sees magnificent scenes of violent nature—a storm at a distance with sheet lightning and the Moon nestling in a thick black cloud (5-8). The ship itself is not affected by the wind, which scarcely reaches it. But it is moved by the corpses suddenly coming to life (9-12). The Wedding Guest is horrified at this and he is promptly consoled by the Mariner that the bodies were inspired by angelic spirits (18). Thus the Grace of God works to remove him from the dangerous waters. Then again Grace causes wonderful echoing melodious music of all kinds to be played (14-19).

THE ANCIENT MARINER

This is done obviously to remove the psychological (mental and emotional) disharmony and suffering of the Mariner. The South Polar Spirit follows seeking vengeance still. The ship stops suddenly and then making a sudden bound traverses the waters with electric speed sending the Mariner into a trance (20-22). In his trance he hears two spirits discussing his fate the one claiming revenge still for his crime, the other more enlightened and standing higher in rank in the hierarchy of the spirits says that he has more than half expiated his sin and would continue to do penance and so there is no question of revenge any more (23-26). This suggests that these spirits are ignorant of the will and Grace of God and think they can continue to have their hold on him.

Part VI continues the action of Grace. The Mariner is still in a trance and hears explained to him in the form of a conversation between two voices the calmness of the atmosphere and the supernatural motion of the ship (1-5). He wakes up when the motion is retarded and feels once again the curse of the dead men and the haunting sense of sin (9-10). For what has happened in the Mariner is a rejuvenation only of his mind and heart. Sin has not only a mental and emotional base but also subconscious roots. An emergence of the subconscious is possible at any time and these roots can be pulled out only by recourse to continuous, conscious prayer calling down the Grace of God to purify the being completely. The Mariner must and does continue to perform penance for this final and total purification. This, however, is a life-long process. But Grace acts and a sweet wind takes him to the homely harbour cheering him with the familiar sights (11-17). Now that their commission is fulfilled, the angelic spirits leave the corpses, rewarding the penitent and partially purified and childlike Mariner with a *darshan* of their form of light before vanishing (18-22). But once again, Grace does not leave him in the company of the dead but causes a hermit, a pilot and his boy to row towards his desolate ship.

Part VII opens with a description of the Hermit (1 and 2) with his purity, piety and severely ascetic life of charity and prayer. Only such a religious soul is a fit companion for the Mariner who has now become an aspiring religious soul seeking spiritual communion and Grace to wash his sin completely. The boat approaches the ship and the strangeness of the ship strike the minds of the inmates of the boat (4-7). But the ship of the Mariner with its horrid crew—the last remnant from the supernatural world—drops down like lead. This world cannot certainly receive such a withered ship with its strange commodity. Only the Mariner has been transformed into a religious soul and therefore can be taken in and accepted as a member of the happy minority of aspiring souls. He is saved. And once in the boat, his strange spectral unearthly

appearance drives the pilot's boy mad who mistakes him for the very devil (9-12). Having landed, the first thing he wants—sincere penitent soul that he is—is absolution. He asks the Hermit to shrive him. The agony of his soul and body compels him to confess his crime to the Hermit and this gives him freedom (13-15). But the need for confession is felt by him at odd hours and then he catches hold of a man and begins to narrate his tale with its simple but profound message (16-17). The sound of revelry coming from the bridal party is heard by the Mariner and he refers to his essential loneliness—life-in-death—which makes him seek the company of religious souls and the place of prayer and communion with God—the church. The sight of the children of God—old men, babes, loving friends, youths and gay maidens—recognising their Father in Heaven and with mutual charity turning to Him in loving communion and prayerful adoration is heavenly. To join in their prayer is the height of bliss a man can have in this world. Who that has once tasted in a state of prayer this Divine Grace and Divine Love and the Peace that passeth understanding will leave it for attending the light-hearted excitement of a marriage feast? The Mariner bids farewell to the Wedding Guest, but before leaving him he delivers the message extracted from his own bitter life, “He prayeth well...He made and loveth all” (18-23). The poem ends with the moving description of the reaction of the Wedding Guest to the strange tale. He first turns from the wedding house. His faculties are paralysed and he undergoes a sea-change in his outlook on life. From the light-hearted fashionable gentleman he changes into a thoughtful, serious and wise man. The Mariner's message of charity and prayer has touched the deepest chord of his being (stanzas 24 and 25).

We have seen that the central experience of the poem is essentially moral though the state in which it happens is the supernatural atmosphere. So if at all any poem on earth should embody a moral, this one must. In other words, a moral is an artistic necessity for without it the poem would be incomplete. But the moral must be in tune with the character of the experienter.

The Mariner is ‘the most simple and childlike personality possible’. He is so thoroughly unsophisticated that in him we do not find a disparity between his private life and his social life—between his inner and outer life. This division is the essence of sophistication which often goes by the name of civilisation. The Mariner is unsophisticated and therefore has the power of experience intact. Again, he has the quality of sincerity. It is this sincerity and power of feeling which brings about the transformation of an impulsive sailor into a moral and religious soul.

THE ANCIENT MARINER

The Mariner is childlike in another sense. In him the power of abstract reasoning or reflection is undeveloped. He is not a thinker moving in a realm of thoughts. Imagination, memory and emotion are the faculties he can command and command as powerfully and intensely as a child. He sees every incident in his life as a vivid picture with details of sensation and emotion. As a matter of fact, the whole poem is in the form of a series of pictures. Generally, when the rational faculty comes into its own, it dominates all the other faculties, converts every experience into a thought which is just a label and is often satisfied with the label. The rational man lives in a world of thoughts which are at one remove from experience. The development of reason more often than not stunts the growth and restrains the working of the imagination. The Mariner is delightfully free from this vice of intellection. This explains also the absence of logical connecting thoughts or sentences between one picture and the next. The narration of the Mariner is not the recapitulation, by the reflecting mind, of his experiences. But he seems to relive his past and describe it as the series of experiences it must have been. As in life, so here, it is the person experiencing and not an idea or thought which knits together all his experiences. And his account has a dream-like vividness and inconsequence.

Obviously, the moral of such a man can only be in the nature of an experience and his statement of it must be the plainest, absolutely free from any thought (a logically formulated statement) but coloured by unsophisticated, elemental, primary and, if you like, even primitive emotion. For it is not the thoughts but 'the extraordinary beauty of rhythm and vividness of vision and fidelity to a certain mystic childlike key that makes it such a wonderful and perfect poem.' The tone of 'the unsophisticated ballad simplicity and ballad mentality' of the moral passage is quite in tune with the tone of the rest of the poem. Even the sentimentalism of the 'dear God' is in tune with the character of the Ancient Mariner. The moral is therefore quite appropriate in its context. (Cf. *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*—Third Series, pp. 325-326.)¹

M. V. SEETARAMAN

¹ See quotation on next page.

SRI AUROBINDO ON “THE ANCIENT MARINER”

(A LETTER)

MAY I say a word about the four lines of Coleridge which you criticise?—

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us—
He made and loveth all.

The sentimentalism of the “dear God” is obviously extra childlike and may sound childish even. If it had been written by Coleridge as his own contribution to thought or his personal feeling described in its native language it would have ranked him very low. But Coleridge was a great metaphysician or at any rate an acute and wide-winged thinker, not a sentimental prattling poet of the third order. Mark that the idea in the lines is not essentially poor; otherwise expressed it could rank among great thoughts and stand as the basis of a philosophy and ethics founded on *bhakti*. There are one or two lines of the Gita which are based on a similar thought, though from the Vedantic, not the dualistic point of view. But throughout the “Ancient Mariner” Coleridge is looking at things from the point of view and the state of mind of the most simple and childlike personality possible, the Ancient Mariner who feels and thinks only with the barest ideas and the most elementary and primitive emotions. The lines he writes here record the feeling which such a mind and heart would draw from what he had gone through. Are they not then perfectly in place and just in the right tone for such a purpose? You may say that it lowers the tone of the poem. I don’t know—the tone of the poem is deliberately intended to be that of an unsophisticated ballad simplicity and ballad mentality—it is not the ideas but the extraordinary beauty of rhythm and vividness of vision and fidelity to a certain mystic childlike key that makes it such a wonderful and perfect poem. This is of course only a point of view; but it came to me several times as an answer that could be made to your criticism, so I put it on paper.

(From *Letters of Sri Aurobindo—Third Series*)

THE PHOENIX

The phoenix burns in the golden pyre of twilight glow
On the silver shores of the dreaming skies.
The cedars wave in the wind their fragrant boughs and throw
Blue shadows on the river's tender eyes.

The phoenix is dead. The twilight with the ripples of clouds
Plays no more its ancient game;
The night with its dismal pall of pain and mystery shrouds
The cold corpse of the dead sun-flame.

The phoenix burns. Its ashes are spread on Nature's face.
A sombre sleep hovers in the wind;
A fathomless sad quietude wings the limitless space
But leaves no gloomy trace behind.

Beside the window of the West I pause and see
A long and silent avenue of light;
Like the horizon, the margin of Infinity
It borders the star-strewn field of night.

The sky is dark but still there looms a spark of fire
On the altar of Heaven's golden fane
And when the dawn opens the day, out of the pyre
The phoenix shall be born again.

RANAJIT

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