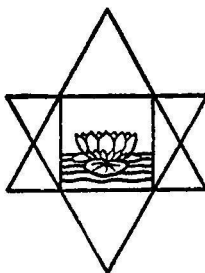


MOTHER INDIA

JUNE, 1954

Price: Re. 1.



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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE DIVINE MOTHER*

THE Mother is to-day the presiding spirit of the Ashram at Pondicherry even in a fuller sense than was the case when Sri Aurobindo was in his physical frame. But to say this is only to express the truth of her existence and the role she plays in a way that is commonly intelligible; for, in fact, her role to-day is the same as it was before and as it has always been. As the Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother would show, even Sri Aurobindo looked upon her as the Divine Mother who came to the Ashram to fill a void without which the ideal of divine life could not be fulfilled. It was she who formed the nexus between the transcendent and immanent 'Parabrahma' and the material world which is a mere manifestation of that Supreme Spirit. It was she who took up the management of the Ashram which began to grow in magnitude and required careful organisation and control for its smooth running as spiritual aspirants in larger numbers flocked in to know, understand and benefit by the life at this great spiritual centre.

We have gathered this day to celebrate the birthday of the Divine Mother. The Mother attaches no significance to the details dear to biographers and so we do not know much about her career. A few facts, however, which are fairly well-known are that she is a French national by birth, and was the daughter of a banker. She visited the Ashram for the first time near about the beginning of the first World War, and left Pondicherry for France when that country of her birth was under the stress of the death and devastation of that ordeal. She went from there to Japan and came back again to the Ashram in 1920 and has continued since then in the Ashram devoted to the great ideal of the establishment of the divine order on the face of this earth. We know also that the Mother was powerfully impressed by her visit to the place of the future Ashram and her talks with Sri Aurobindo as if two kindred spirits had come together.

It is not, however, that the Mother had no premonition or pre-vision of what her task in life was, as it appears that, even as a child, she was highly sensitive to spiritual ideals and was very unlike the average child. But it must be said that before she came into contact with Sri Aurobindo she had not thought out any particular plan of work. It seems that when she had a talk with the

* An Address by the Hon. Justice S.C. Mishra of Patna High Court on February 21, 1954.

MOTHER INDIA

Mahayogi at Pondicherry, the latent spiritual forces within her were released and she at once realised that in Sri Aurobindo was centred the hope of humanity that was torn and afflicted by the shafts of mere materialism masquerading as progressive modern civilisation. The Mother was acutely and painfully aware of its inadequacies and the wrong direction that the goal of self, power and comfort gave to modern man. But she was not able to find or was not aware of a practical solution of the problem. Her meeting with Sri Aurobindo supplied her the clue and she was full of rapture at the discovery and she said that mankind had no need to despair when a spirit like Sri Aurobindo had descended and was present on this planet. From that time she took up her responsibility as the great 'Mother', the eternal Mother who comes from the Supreme Spirit for earthly manifestation, the Mother who bears, nourishes and shapes all creatures and whose function it is to guide and control and to remould them. The erring children who have lost their path can be brought back again to the right way to their goal only through her love, labour and solicitude

It is in view of this function that Sri Aurobindo directed all his disciples or the Sadhaks who were interested in their spiritual upliftment to seek the Mother's help. It was she before whom they had to lay all their troubles and requirements whether spiritual or temporal and from whom they had to seek guidance and solace which she has always provided. The ideal of surrender which is an essential part of the system of 'Integral Yoga' thought out with precision to perfection by Sri Aurobindo has the Mother as the base. Sri Aurobindo asked the Sadhaks over and over again to surrender to her all their thoughts and motives of action without reserve so that she might carry their burden and lighten their spirit and properly equip them to realise the presence of the divinity inhering in the core of the matter that constitutes the human physique

And how is the Mother doing that today? If one were to go to the Ashram one can easily see that even the exterior of Ashram management bears the impress of the great ideal the Mother stands for. 'Integral Yoga' is the very antithesis of the form of life we are accustomed to in the name of 'Yoga' which is mainly to subject the body to all kinds of privations so as to conquer the demon of undivine instincts within. 'Integral Yoga' stands for the divinisation of matter which is also regarded as an expression of the Supreme Spirit which is Sachchidananda. 'The Golconde', the spacious and artistically planned guest-house of the Ashram, is a model of excellence and replete with all arrangements to answer to one's needs. The building has been planned according to an inspiration that came from the Mother who is no architect and who has no training of any sort in architectural matters and yet has produced a structure

THE DIVINE MOTHER

which has elicited the highest encomiums from masters of this branch of art. The booklet which is supplied to every visitor who is accommodated in that guest-house contains a prominent statement that the occupant has to bear in mind that even matter has Spirit behind it. The building has therefore to be used with due regard to this fact. The articles of furniture are not to be soiled, nor to be removed from their proper places. The floor is kept scrupulously clean. The directions contained in the booklet would show that the Mother looks upon the house itself as having the Spirit behind it which is to be respected in the same manner as when behind an animate being. She believes that art is comprehended in spiritual culture and that artistic feeling and expression are a natural part of it, and an aspirant for spiritual realisation is expected to cultivate them in his approach to matter, with the result that every little detail of the outward life of the Ashram is impressed with the artist's sensitiveness.

The Mother's serene presence and beatific smile, when she appears at the balcony to bless the Sadhaks in the forenoon every day, suffuse the whole atmosphere with a grace which even a casual visitor cannot fail to notice or feel. The Mother's presence on the tennis-ground in the evening when she plays several sets even at her present age of 78 is an inspiration to all Sadhaks who would not think of physical exertion at their age. When the Mother stands with the map of India at her back at the evening drill and parade preparatory to the period of concentration her presence lends a higher intensity to the ten minutes for which concentration lasts. One has only to visit the Ashram to appreciate what the spiritual consciousness of the Mother does for the Sadhaks when they send their thoughts upwards or—to be more accurate—feel in the most intense form their oneness with the divine presence.* The child inmates of the Ashram who are the particular concern of the Mother have some of their classes taken by her: she finds time to do this in spite of her preoccupation with the problems of Ashram management. She has set apart certain days in the week for giving her blessings to the Sadhaks and other spiritual aspirants, and there are especial days of blessings, such as the Vijaya Dashami day, the Lakshmi Puja day and others. She presents particular flowers which are symbolic of particular attributes and her inner perception enables her to choose the flower which would suit the genius of the devotee.

The Pondicherry Ashram which sets out to cultivate and develop the principles of Integral Yoga is a practical demonstration of the technique of this synthetic form of Yoga. The outer life of the Ashram goes on like the rest of the world minus the *vikara* which sullies the pursuit of our avocations on account of greed, anxiety and other forms of evil passions. The Sadhaks work

MOTHER INDIA

with zeal and produce the articles of food, wear and shelter, but there is no personal *asakti*. Work is worship. The Mother does not believe in pure theories. She has said more than once that an ounce of practice is worth more than a ton of theory. Men, women and children not only from all parts of India but from other countries of the world have congregated in the Ashram and are living like members of one family. There is no East and West. The co-operative effort of Sri Aurobindo, himself the quintessence of the highest ideals and spiritual attainments of the East as well as the West, and that of the Mother with the mystic vision of a Joan of Arc and the wisdom of a Maitreyi symbolises the dawn of the new era when humanity in both hemispheres would respond in equal measure to the call of the Divine. The disinterested and dedicated Ashram activities for answering to the material requirements of the inmates are the Karma Yoga, the calm inner movement towards spiritual illumination and wideness is Jnana Yoga and the happy intense surrender to the Mother is Bhakti Yoga, all of which are combined in Integral Yoga even as they are combined in the Gita. The conquest over matter, the love of art and literature in their nobler aspects, all illustrate the additional element of Integral Yoga which does not seek an escape of any sort whatsoever, but accepts matter as a fact and seeks to divinise it and hence to comprehend it. The Sri Aurobindo International University whose foundations are laid bids fair under the inspiring guidance and organising ability of the Mother to be a unique institution.

Let us all sanctify ourselves and endeavour to imbibe the spirit of the Ashram life in our daily activities so as to help in the descent of the supramental power by associating ourselves with functions like this. To celebrate the birthday of the Mother is to get closer to the divinity that pervades the universe and to have a clearer and more intimate sense of this supreme reality.

ILION

BOOK VII

THE BOOK OF THE GODS

(We are now continuing from where the poem broke off in the issue of April, after the second speech of Apollo and his descent to the battle-scene outside Troy.)

BUT in the courts of Heaven Zeus to his brother immortal
Turned like a menaced king on his counsellor smiling augustly:
"Seest thou, Poseidon, this sign that great gods revolting have left us,
Follow their hearts and strive with Ananke? Yet though they struggle,
Thou and I will do our will with the world, O earth-shaker."

Answered to Zeus the bsieger of earth, the voice of the waters;
"This is our strength and our right, for we are the kings and the masters.
Too much pity has been and yielding of Heaven to mortals.
I will go down with my chariot drawn by my thunder-maned coursers
Into the battle and thrust down Troy with my hand to the silence,
Even though she cling round the snowy knees of our child Aphrodite
Or with Apollo's sun take refuge from Night and her shadows.
I will not pity her pain, who am ruthless even as my surges.
Brother, thou knowest, O Zeus, that I am a king and a trader;
For on my paths I receive earth's skill and her merchandise gather,
Traffic richly in pearls and bear the swift ships on my bosom.
Blue are my waves and they call men's hearts to wealth and adventure.
Lured by¹ the shifting surges they launch their delight and their treasures
Trusting the toil of years to the perilous moments of Ocean.
Huge man's soul² in its petty frame goes wrestling with Nature
Over her vasts and his fragile ships between my horizons
Buffeting death in his solitudes labour through swell and through storm-blast
Bound for each land with her sons and watched for by eyes in each haven.
I from Tyre up to Gades trace on my billows their trade-routes

¹ "On" seems to have been left in as an alternative to "by".

² Alternative: "mund".

MOTHER INDIA

And on my vast and spuming Atlantic suffer their rudders.
Carthage and Greece are my children, the marts of the world are my term-
posts.

Who then deserves the earth if not he who enriches and fosters?
But thou hast favoured thy sons, O Zeus; O Hera, earth's sceptres
Still were denied me and kept for strong Ares and brilliant Apollo.
Now all your will shall be done, so you give me the earth for my nations.
Gold shall make men like gods and bind their thoughts into oneness;
Peace I will build with gold and heaven with the pearls of my caverns."
Smiling replied to his brother's craft the mighty Cronion;
"Lord of the boundless seas, Poseidon, soul of the surges,
Well thou knowest that earth shall be seized as a booth for the trader.
Rome nor Greece nor France can drive back Carthage for ever.
Always each birth of the silence attaining the field and the movement
Takes from Time its reign; for it came for its throne and its godhead.
So too shall Mammon take and his sons their hour from the ages.
Yet is the flame and the dust last end of the silk and the iron,
And at their end the king and the prophet shall govern the nations.
Even as Troy, so shall Babylon flame up to heaven for the spoiler
Wailed by the merchant afar as he sees the red glow from the ocean."
Up from the seats of the Mighty the Earth-shaker rose; His raiment
Round him purple and dominant rippled¹ and murmured and whispered,
Whispered of argosies sunk and the pearls and the Nereids playing,
Murmured of azure solitudes, sounded of storm and the death-wail.
Even as the march of his waters so was the pace of the sea-god
Flowing on endless through Time; with the glittering symbol² of empire
Crowned were his fatal brows; in his grasp was the wrath of the trident,
Tripled forces, life-shattering, brutal, imperial, sombre.
Resonant, surging, vast in the pomp of his clamorous greatness
Proud and victorious he came to his home in the far-spuming waters.
Even as a soul from the heights of thought plunges back into living,
So he plunged like a rock through the foam; for it falls from a mountain
Overpeering the waves in some silence of desolate waters
Left to the wind and the sea-gull where Ocean alone with the ages
Dreams of the calm of the skies or tosses its spray to the wind-gods,
Tosses for ever its foam in the solitude huge of its longings
Far from the homes and the noises of men. So the dark-browed Poseidon

¹ Originally the word here was "sounded."

² Alternative: "shadow."

ILION

Came to his coral halls and the sapphire stables of Nereus
Ever where champ their bits the harnessed steeds of the Ocean
Watched by foam-white girls in the caverns of still Amphitrite.
There was his chariot yoked by the Tritons, drawn by his coursers
Born of the fleeing sea-spray and shod with the north-wind who journey
Black like the front of the storm and clothed with their manes as with thunder.
This now rose from its depths to the upper tumults of Ocean
Bearing the awful brows and the mighty form of the sea-god
And from the roar of the surges fast o'er the giant margin
Came remembering the storm and the swiftness wide¹ towards the Troad.
So among men he arrived to the clamorous labours of Ares,
Close by the stern Diomedes stood and frowned o'er the battle.
He for the Trojan slaughter chose for his mace and his sword-edge
Iron Tydeus' son and the adamant heart of young Pyrrhus.

But in the courts divine the Father high of the immortals
Turned in his heart to the brilliant offspring born of his musings,
She who tranquil observes and judges her father and all things.
"What shall I say to the thought that is calm in thy breasts, O Athene?
Have I not given thee earth for thy portion, throned thee and armoured,
Darkened Cypris' smile, dimmed Hera's son and Latona's?
Swift in thy silent ambition, proud in thy radiant sternness,
Girl, thou shalt rule with the Greek and the Saxon, the Frank and the Roman.
Worker and fighter and bulder and thinker, light of the reason,
Men shall leave all temples to crowd in thy courts, O Athene.
Go then and do my will, prepare man's tribes for their fullness."

But with her high clear smile on him answered the mighty Athene,—
Wisely and soberly, tenderly smiled she chiding her father
Even as a mother might rail at her child when he hides and dissembles:
"Zeus, I see and I am not deceived by thy words in my spirit.
We but build forms for thy thought while thou smilest down high o'er our
toiling;
Even as men are we tools for thee, who are thy children and dear ones.
All this life is thy sport and thou workst like a boy at his engines
Making a toil of the game and a play of the serious labour.
Then to that play thou callest us wearing a sombre visage,
This consulting, that to our wills confiding, O Ruler;
Choosing thy helpers, hastened by those whom thou lurest to oppose thee
Guile thou usest with gods as with mortals, scheming, deceiving,

¹ Alternative: "straight."

MOTHER INDIA

And at the wrath and the love thou hast prompted laughest in secret.
So we too who are sisters and enemies, lovers and rivals,
Fondled and baffled in turn obey thy will and thy cunning,
I, thy girl of war, and the rosy-white Aphrodite.
Always we served but thy pleasure since our immortal beginnings,
Always each other we helped by our play and our wrestlings and quarrels.
This too I know that I pass preparing the paths of Apollo
And at the end as his sister and slave and bride I must sojourn
Rapt to his courts of mystic light and unbearable brilliance.
Was I not ever condemned—since my birth from the toil of thy musings
Seized like a lyre in my body to sob and to laugh out his music,
Shake as a leaf in his fierceness and leap as a flame in his splendours!
So must I dwell overpowered and so must I labour subjected
Robbed of my loneliness pure and coerced in my radiant freedom,
Now whose clearness and pride are the sovereign joy of thy creatures.
Such the reward that thou keepst for my labour obedient always.
Yet I work and I do thy will, for 'tis mine, O my father.”
Proud of her ruthless lust of thought and action and battle,—
Swift-footed rose the daughter of Zeus from her sessions immortal:
Breasts of the morning unveiled in a purity awful and candid,
Head of the mighty Dawn, the goddess Pallas Athene!
Strong and rapacious she swooped on the world as her prey and her booty
Down from the courts of the Mighty descending, darting on Ida.
Dire she descended, a god in her reason, a child in her longings,
Joy and woe to the world that is given to the whims of the child-god
Greedy for rule and play and the minds of men and their doings!
So with her aegis scattering light o'er the heads of the nations
Shining-eyed in her boyish beauty severe and attractive
Came to the fields of the Troad, came to the fateful warfare,
Veiled, the goddess calm and pure in her luminous raiment
Zoned with beauty and strength. Rejoicing, spurring the fighters
Close o'er Odysseus she stood and clear-eyed governed the battle.
Zeus to Hephaestus next, the Cyclopean toiler
Turned, Hephaestus the strong-souled, priest and king and a bond-slave,
Servant of men in their homes and their workshops, servant of Nature,
He who has built these worlds and kindles the fire for a mortal.
“Thou, my son, art obedient always. Wisdom is with thee,
Therefore thou know'st and obeyest. Submission is wisdom and knowledge;
He who is blind revolts and he who is limited struggles:
Strife is not for the infinite; wisdom observes to accomplish.

ILION

Troy and her sons and her works are thy food today, O Hephaestus.”

And to his father the Toiler answered, the silent Seer;

“Yes, I obey thee, my Father, and That which than thou is more mighty;
Even as thou obeyest by rule, so I by my labour.

Now must I heep the furnace, now must I toil at the smithy,

I who have flamed on the altar of sacrifice helping the sages.

I am the Cyclops, the lamester, who once was pure and a high-priest.

Holy the pomp of my flames ascendent from pyre and from altar

Robed men’s souls for their heavens and my smoke was a pillar to Nature.

Though I have burned in the sight of the sage and the heart of the hero,

Now is no nobler hymn for my ear than the clanging of metal,

Breath of human greed and the dolorous pant of the engines.

Still I repine not, but toil; for to toil was I yoked by my Maker.

I am your servant, O Gods, and his of whom you are servants.”

But to the toiler Zeus replied, to the servant of creatures;

“What is the thought thou hast uttered betrayed by thy speech, O Hephaestus?

True is it earth shall grow as a smithy, the smoke of the furnace

Fill men’s eyes and their souls shall be stunned with the clang of the hammers,

Yet in the end there is rest on the peak of a labour accomplished.

Nor shall the might of the thinker be quelled by that iron oppression,

Nor shall the soul of the warrior despair in the darkness triumphant,

For when the night shall be deepest, dawn shall increase on the mountains

And in the heart of the worst the best shall be born by my wisdom.

Pallas thy sister shall guard man’s knowledge fighting the earth-smoke.

Thou too art mighty to live through the clamour even as Apollo.

Work then, endure; expect from the Silence an end and thy wages.”

So King Hephaestus arose and passed from the courts of his father;

Down upon earth he came with his lame omnipotent motion;

And with uneven steps absorbed and silent the Master

Worked employed mid the wheels of the cars as a smith in his smithy,

But it was death and bale that he forged, not the bronze and the iron.

Stark, like a fire obscured by its smoke, through the spear-casts he laboured

Helping Ajax’ war and the Theban and Phocian fighters.

Zeus to his grandiose helper next, who proved and unmoving,

Calm in her greatness waited the mighty command of her husband;

“Hera, sister and spouse, what my will is thou knowest, O consort.

One are our blood and our hearts, nor the thought for the words of the speaker

Waits, but each other we know and ourselves and the Vast and the heavens,

Life and all between and all beyond and the ages.

That which Space not knows nor Time, we have known, O my sister.

MOTHER INDIA

Therefore our souls are one soul and our minds become mirrors of oneness.
Go then and do my will, O thou mighty one, burning down Troya.”

Silent she rose from the seats of the Blissful Hera majestic
And with her flowing garment and mystical zone through the spaces
Haloed came like the moon on an evening of luminous silence
Down upon Ida descending, a snow-white swan on the greenness,
Down upon Ida the mystic haunted by footsteps immortal
Ever since out of the Ocean it rose and lived gazing towards heaven.
There on a peak of the mountains alone with the sea and the azure
Voiceless and mighty she paused¹ like a thought on the summits of being
Clasped by all heaven; the winds at play in her gust-scattered raiment
Sported insulting her gracious strength with their turbulent sweetness,
Played with their mother and queen; but she stood absorbed and unheeding,
Mute, with her sandalled foot for a moment thrilling the grasses,
Dumbly adored by a soul in the mountains, a thought in the rivers,
Roared to loud by her lions. The voice of the cataracts falling
Entered her soul profound and it heard eternity's rumour.
Silent its gaze immense contained the wheeling of aeons.
Huge-winged through Time flew her thought and its grandiose vast revolutions
Turned and returned, So musing her timeless creative spirit,
Master of Time its instrument, grieflessly hastening forward
Parted with greatnesses dead and summoned new strengths from their stables;
Maned they came to her call and filled with their pacings the future.
Calm, with the vision satisfied, thrilled by the grandeurs within her,
Down in a billow of whiteness and gold and delicate raiment
Gliding the daughter of Heaven came to the earth that received her
Glad of the tread divine and bright with her more than with sunbeams.
King Agamemnon she found and smiling on Sparta's levies
Mixed unseen with the far-glinting spears of the haughty Mycenae.

Then to the Mighty who tranquil abode and august in his regions
Zeus, while his gaze over many forms and high-seated godheads
Passed like a swift-fleeing eagle over the peaks and the glaciers
When to his eyrie he flies alone through the vastness and silence:
“Artemis, child of my loins and you, O legioned immortals,
All you have heard. Descend, O ye gods, to your sovereign stations,
Labour rejoicing whose task is joy and your bliss is creation;
Shrink from no act that Necessity asks from your luminous natures.
Thee I have given no part in the years that come, O my daughter,

¹ Alternative: “stood”.

ILION

Huntress swift of the worlds who with purity all things pursuest.
Yet not less is thy portion intended than theirs who o'erpass thee:
Helped are the souls that wait more than strengths soon fulfilled and exhausted.
Archeress, brilliance, wait thine hour from the speed of the ages."

So they departed, Artemis leading lightning-tasselled.

Ancient Themis remained and awful Dis and Ananke.

Then mid these last of the gods who shall stand when all others have
perished,

Zeus to the Silence obscure under iron brows of that goddess,—
Griefless, unveiled was her visage, dire and unmoved and eternal;

"Thou and I, O Dis, remain and our sister Ananke.

That which the joyous hearts of our children, radiant heaven-moths
Flitting mid flowers of sense for the honey of thought have not captured,

That which Poseidon forgets mid the pomp and the roar of his waters
We three keep in our hearts. By the Light that I watch for unsleeping,

By thy tremendous consent to the silence and darkness, O Hades,

By her delight renounced and the prayers and the worship of mortals

Making herself as an engine of God without bowels or vision,—

Yet in that engine are only heart-beats, yet is her riddle

Only Love that is veiled and pity that suffers and slaughters,

We three are free from ourselves, O Dis, and free from each other.

Do then, O King of the Night, observe then with Time for thy servant

Not my behest, but What she and thou and I are for ever."

Mute the Darkness sat like a soul unmoved through the aeons,

Then came a voice from the silence of Dis, from the night there came
wisdom.

"Yes, I have chosen and that which I chose I endure, O Cronion,—

Though to the courts of the gods I come as a threat and a shadow,

Even though none to their counsels call me, none to their pastime,

None companions me willingly; even thy daughter, my consort,

Trembling whom once from our sister Demeter I plucked like a blossom¹

Torn from Sicilian² fields, while Fate reluctant, consenting,

Bowed her head, lives but by her gasps of the sun and the azure;

Stretched are her hands to the light and she seeks for the clasp of her
mother.

I, I am Night and her reign and that of which Night is a symbol.

All to me comes, even thou shalt come to me, brilliant Cronion.

¹ Alternative: "flower".

² Alternative: "Enna's."

MOTHER INDIA

All here exists by me whom all walk fearing and shunning;
He who shuns not, He am I and thou and Ananke.
All things I take to my bosom that Life may be swift in her voyage;
For out of death is Life and not by birth and her motions
And behind Night is light and not in the sun and his splendours.
Troy to the Night I will gather a wreath for my shadows, O grower.”
So in his arrogance dire the vast invincible Death-god
Triumphing passed out of heaven with Themis and silent Ananke.
Zeus alone in the spheres of his bliss, in his kingdom of brilliance
Sat divine and alarmed; for even the gods in their heavens
Scarce shall live who have gazed on the unveiled face of Ananke,
Heard the accents dire of the Darkness that waits for the ages.
Awful and dull grew his eyes and mighty and still grew his members
Back from his nature he drew to the passionless peaks of the spirit,
Throned where it dwells for ever uplifted and silent and changeless
Far beyond living and death, beyond Nature and ending of Nature.
There for a while he dwelt veiled, protected from Dis and his greatness;
Then to the works of the world he returned and the joy of his musings.
Life and the blaze of the mighty soul that he was of God’s making
Dawned again in the heavenly eyes and the majestied semblance.
Comforted heaven he beheld, to the green of the earth was attracted.

But through this Space unreal, but through these worlds that are shadows
Went the awful Three. None saw them pass, none felt them.
Only in the heavens was a tread as of death, in the air was a winter,
Earth oppressed moaned long like a woman striving with anguish.
Ida saw them not, but her grim lions cowered in their caverns,
Ceased for a while on her slopes the eternal laughter of fountains.
Over the ancient ramparts of Dardanus’ high-roofed city
Darkening her victor domes and her gardens of life and its sweetness
Silent they came. Unseen and unheard was the dreadful arrival.
Troy and her gods dreamed secure in the moment flattered by sunlight.
Dim to the citadel high they arrived and their silence invaded
Pallas’ marble shrine where stern and white in her beauty,
Armed on her pedestal, trampling the prostrate image of darkness
Mighty Athene’s statue guarded imperial Troya.
Dim and vast they entered in. Then through all the great city
Huge a rushing sound was heard from her gardens and places
And in their musings her seers as they strove with night and with error
And in the fane of Apollo Laocoon torn by his visions
Heard aghast the voice of Troy’s deities fleeing from Troya,

ILION

Saw the flaming lords of her households drive in a death-rout
Forth from her ancient halls and their noble familiar sessions.
Ghosts of her splendid centuries wailed on the wings of the doom-blast.
Moaning the Dryads fled and his Naiads passed from Scamander
Leaving the world to deities dumb of the clod and the earth-smoke,
And from their tombs and their shrines the shadowy Ancestors faded.
Filled was the air with their troops and the sound of a vast lamentation.
Wailing they went, lamenting mortality's ages of greatness,
Ruthless Ananke's deeds and the mortal conquests of Hades.
Then in the fane Palladian the shuddering priests of Athene
Entered the darkened shrine and saw on the suffering marble
Shattered Athene's mighty statue prostrate as conquered,
But on its pedestal rose o'er the unhurt image of darkness
Awful shapes, a Trinity dim and dire unto mortals.
Dumb they fell down on the earth and the life-breath was slain in their
bosoms.
And in the noon there was night. And Apollo passed out of Troya.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The manuscript ends here.)

ON HUMAN AFFECTION

(From Sri Aurobindo's Correspondence with Nirodbaran)

HUMAN affection is obviously unreliable because it is so much based upon selfishness and desire; it is a flame of the ego sometimes turbid and misty, sometimes more clear and brightly coloured—sometimes tamasic based on instinct and habit, sometimes rajasic and fed by passion or the cry for vital interchange, sometimes more sattwic and trying to be or look to itself disinterested. But fundamentally it depends on a personal need or a return of some kind inward or outward and when the need is not satisfied or the return ceases or is not given, it most often diminishes or dies or exists only as a tepid or troubled remnant of habit from the past or else turns for satisfaction elsewhere. The more intense it is, the more it is apt to be troubled by tumults, clashes, quarrels, egoistic disturbances of all kinds, selfishness, exactions, lapses even to rage and hatred, ruptures. It is not that these affections cannot last—tamasic instinctive affections last because of habit in spite of everything dividing the persons, e.g. certain family affections; tamasic affections can last sometimes in spite of all disturbances and incompatibilities and furious ruptures because one has a vital need of the other and clings because of that or because both have that need and are constantly separating to return and returning to separate or proceeding from quarrel to reconciliation and from reconciliation to quarrel; sattwic affections last very often from duty to the ideal or with some other support though they may lose their keenness or intensity or brightness. But the true reliability is there only when the psychic element in human affections becomes strong enough to colour or dominate the rest. For that reason friendship is or rather can oftenest be most durable of the human affections because there there is less interference of the vital and even though a flame of the ego it can be a quiet and pure fire giving always its warmth and light. Nevertheless reliable friendship is almost always with a very few; to have a horde of loving, unselfishly faithful friends is a phenomenon so rare that it can be safely taken as an illusion.... In any case human affection whatever its value has its place, because through it the psychic being gets the emotional experiences it needs until it is ready to prefer the true to the apparent, the perfect to the imperfect, the divine to the human. As the consciousness has to rise to the higher level so the activities of the heart

ON HUMAN AFFECTION

also have to rise to that higher level and change their basis and character. Yoga is the founding of all life and consciousness in the Divine, so also love and affection must be rooted in the Divine and a spiritual and psychic oneness in the Divine must be their foundation—to reach the Divine first leaving other things aside or to seek the Divine alone is the straight road towards that change. That means no attachment—it need not mean turning affection into disaffection or chill indifference. But X seems to want to take his vital emotions just as they are—tels quels—into the Divine—let him try and don't bother him with criticisms and lectures; if it can't be done he will have to find it out for himself.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATURE

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

(Continued from the previous issue)

WHAT you have said about the difficulty describes very well the nature of the trouble created by the physical consciousness. As for those who feel nothing within, they cannot rise out of the grip of this exterior physical nature until they do feel. It is by the dawning of the psychic consciousness within the physical, its action on the physical that the change of the latter comes. It is this growth of the inner consciousness that makes one feel and at the same —¹ opens the means of escape from the physical darkness. They must aspire for that and be ready to accept its action when it comes.

10-7-1937

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What has happened is that the psychic in you which had formerly been constantly in action in the mind and vital was for a time clouded or covered over by the ignorance of the physical consciousness. It is the psychic that connects you with the Mother and turns all the movements of your being towards her or drew them from her or made them united with and dependent on her. It had so done with all your mental and vital being and its movements and it had guarded you against all wrong mental and vital suggestions and attacks, showing you what was true and what was false. Now it is this psychic being which has manifested again in your physical consciousness also. You have only to live in that and your whole being will be turned towards the Mother, remain in union with her and be protected from doubt and error and false suggestion—and you can once more progress as you did before towards the full realisation of the sadhana.

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...These forces have the power to get a place in the physical consciousness of man, because this physical consciousness has always been obscure and therefore

¹ A word seems to be missing here; perhaps it is "time".

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATURE

under these obscure influences. You will certainly have our constant help to push them aside and take the permanent plunge.

20-7-1937

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It is good. When the pressure comes down like that, the process of the change enters into a stage which makes it more rapid and the working more frequent and constant.

It is also a very good sign of the awakening of the physical that the consciousness of the Mother's force doing the work has come back. That is the true condition of work, silence in the self, action of the Divine Force doing the work.

22-7-1937

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What must have happened was that as the physical consciousness is now being worked upon, all the past impressions (which usually remain in the subconscious and rise up from time to time and meanwhile influence the thought and action and feelings without being noticed) rose up in a mass and threw themselves on the consciousness. This usually happens in order that the sadhak may see and reject them and get liberated entirely (in the subconscious as well as the conscious parts) from his physical past. That is why you felt afterwards the sense of release. The throat is the centre of the externalising mind (physical mind).

1935

This review of the past is a very good sign, for it usually comes when there is a preparation of the physical consciousness and subconscient for change. One has not to regret the stumbles of the past but look with a quiet eye and understand, for all came—the stumbles included—as part of the necessary experience by which the being learns and advances through error to the Light and through the imperfections of Nature towards the divine perfection.

7-6-1937

SRI AUROBINDO AND AESTHETICS

(Continued from the previous issue)

Author's Note

In an exposition of this kind of Sri Aurobindo's æsthetics, it would have been presumptuous to state in my own language the findings which came 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 æsthetics. 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.

(II) THE TECHNIQUE OF POETRY AND ART:

THE SURREALIST, THE MODERNIST AND THE INTUITIVE POET

POETRY widens, deepens and heightens human consciousness. It appeals to the whole man. Proceeding as it does from an integral consciousness, it works towards an integral transformation of human consciousness. Thought and emotion, fact and dream:—all have their place in poetry. The only limiting condition is that they have to be subordinated to vision, to knowledge by identity. To exclude any one of the constituents of poetry from its composition is to make the expression halting and lame. To insist on the undue predominance of any one of them is to disturb the delicate adjustment and balance through which alone poetic vision can attain its sovereign expression.

But the romanticist tends to indulge in excessive emotionalism when his vision is intermittent. The classicist is inclined to rely on the solid support of thought when he has lost his hold on his intuitive perceptions. The surrealist, that explorer of subliminal depths, wants to reject the intellect altogether. The modernist, on the other hand, seems to believe that poetry is intellectual quintessence and an exaggerated expression of the lower vital. We have to examine these deviations in some detail in order to perceive the norm.

Some romanticists would seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. They forget that philosophy can take a place, even a leading place, in poetry along with psychological experience, if the poet can express the beauty, the light and the power of thought. The theory which discourages the poet from thinking proceeds from an extreme romanticist temper. It reaches its acme on one side in the question of the surrealist, "Why do you want poetry to mean anything?" and on the other in Housman's exalta-

tion of 'pure' poetry. Surrealism is part of an increasing attempt of the European mind to escape from the surface consciousness and grope after a deeper truth of things which is not on the surface. The subliminal or the dream-consciousness offers the first road of escape and the surrealists seem to be trying to force it. But often it is certain obscure (sub-conscious) and not always very safe layers that are tapped. That accounts for the note of diabolism that comes in in Baudelaire and in certain ugly elements in English surrealist poetry. Obscurity and unintelligibility are not the essence of any poetry and cannot be its aim or principle. True dream-poetry has and must always have a meaning and a coherence. But it may very well be obscure and seem meaningless to those who take their stand on the surface or 'waking' mind and accept only its links and logic. The deeper sense and sequence of such poetry can only be apprehended by an inner sense. There is a sequence, a logic, a design in such poetry, but not one that can satisfy the more rigid law of the logical intelligence. Again, it is only the subconscious belt that is chaotic in its dream-sequences. Most of its transcriptions are fragments,—as if a gramophone record were to be made up of snatches of different songs all jumbled together. But the vital dreams are coherent. They seem incoherent because the logic and law of their sequences is different. Dreams recording the experience of the inner vital and inner mental planes are perfectly coherent. There are also true psychic dreams which are usually of great beauty. But many of these are symbolic and can only be understood if one gets the clue to the symbols. If the dreams are of the right kind, they need no aid of imagination to be converted into poetry. By going into the subliminal consciousness, one not originally a poet can sometimes awake to poetic inspiration and power. But, generally, it is not enough to be a dreamer in order to be a poet. One must have the poetic faculty and some training.

It would be clear from what has been stated above that the ideas, images and symbols in surrealist poetry do not follow the line of the intellect, its logic or its intuitive connections. They are pushed out on the mind from some obscure subliminal depth or mist-hung shallow. They have connections of their own which are not those of the surface intelligence. "One has to read them not with the intellect but with the solar plexus, try not to understand but feel the meaning." (p. 232. Letters 3.). Very great poetry can be written in that way from the subliminal depths, e.g. Mallarmé, but it needs a supreme power of expression, like Blake's or Mallarmé's, to make it truly powerful and convincing. There must also be sincerity of experience and significant rhythm. (p. 232. L. 3.). But an attempt of this kind to transform fundamentally the language made by mind, though as glorious as Mallarmé's, incurs the danger of being beautifully and splendidly unintelligible. Where the attempt is me-

diocre, we are faced with obscurity and unintelligibility and little else. This is what happens when one surrenders wholly to the subliminal consciousness and shuns the intellect and the aids to poetic expression which it affords.

Housman, who exalts 'pure' poetry, should not be interpreted as positing an appeal to emotion as the test of pure poetry. He does not unduly glorify emotion. But he rejects intellectual meaning and deliberately says that pure poetry does not bother about it at all. His lecture on the name and nature of poetry sets forth his views in detail. He believes that 'pure' poetry is, to the intellect, nonsense. He describes pure poetry paradoxically as a sort of sublime nonsense which does not appeal at all to the mental intelligence but knocks at the solar plexus and awakes a vital and physical rather than intellectual sensation and response. He says that the interpretations of Blake's famous poems rather spoil them—they appeal better without being dissected that way.

Sri Aurobindo thinks that Housman is perhaps wrong in speaking of pure and impure poetry. What this type of poetry (subliminal) stands for is a vividness of imagination and feeling which disregards the mind's positive view of things and its logical sequences. The centre or centres it knocks at are not the brain-mind, not even the poetic intelligence, but the subtle-physical, the nervous, the vital or the psychic centre. Housman is also wrong in using the word 'nonsense'. 'Pure' poetry expresses things which are true and real,—not 'nonsense', but a deeper sense which we feel powerfully with a great stirring of some inner emotion, but any attempt at exact intellectual statement of them sterilises their sense and spoils their appeal. It is not the mere sensation to which what Housman calls 'pure' poetry appeals but to a deeper inner life or life-soul within us which has profounder depths than the thinking mind and responds with a certain kind of soul-excitement or ecstasy. The physical vibrations on which Housman lays stress are merely a very outward result of this sudden stir within the occult folds of the being. Housman's rejection of the intellectual standard is quite applicable to Blake and to writers of the dream-consciousness. It is quite another matter, however, as to whether, in order to produce such a kind of soul-excitement or ecstasy, poetry has necessarily to reject intellectual meaning. Mystic poetry can strike still deeper than this 'pure' poetry,—it can stir the inmost and subtlest recesses of the life-soul and the secret inner mind at the same time; it can even, if it is of the right kind, go beyond these also to the pure inmost psychic. But it does not and need not eschew thought in order to achieve this effect. On the other hand, the highest spiritual poetry aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or enter into a field of occult experience; it is not because there is any attempt at a dark or vague profundity or at an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual

but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity. Even the greater romantic poets did not shun thought. They thought abundantly, almost endlessly. They have their world-view and they express it. Spiritual philosophic poetry is different from theirs in some ways. Like romantic, or any other successful, poetry, it admits thought in so far as it is a part of the harmony of the five eternal powers,—Spirit, Life, Delight, Beauty and Truth. But it also expresses or tries to express “a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Whatever language, whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience it uses without scruple, not admitting any mental rule of what is or is not poetic. It does not hesitate to employ terms which might be considered as technical when these can be turned to express something direct, vivid and powerful.... There is a ‘poeticism’ which establishes a sanitary cordon against words and ideas which it considers as prosaic but which properly used can strengthen poetry and extend its range. That limitation I do not admit as legitimate.” (p. 43 *Letters* 3rd series). Sri Aurobindo thus breaks through the exclusiveness of ‘pure’ poetry and its preference for a ‘purely poetic’ substance and style. His *Savitri* is a shining example of the extension of the substance and style of poetry in this direction. Sri Aurobindo approves of the revolt of modernists against the romanticist’s insistence on emotionalism and against his objection to thinking and philosophical reflection in poetry.

But the modernist goes too far in his revolt. Several contemporary poets, says Sri Aurobindo, “write their poetry from the cultured striving mind, not from the elemental soul-power within.” (p. 229. L. 3). Sri Aurobindo does not approve of the “extraordinary verbal jazz that is now-a-days put forward as poetry” or of the craze for intellectual quintessence or sensations of life. As for the modernist, Sri Aurobindo thinks that, in trying to avoid ‘poeticism’, he ceased to be poetic “Wishing to escape from rhetorical writing, rhetorical pretension to greatness and beauty of style, he threw out true poetic greatness and beauty, turned from a deliberately poetic style to a colloquial tone and even to very flat writing; especially he turned away from poetic rhythm to a prose or half-prose rhythm or to no rhythm at all. Also he has weighted too much on thought and has lost the habit of intuitive sight; by turning emotion out of its intimate chamber in the house of Poetry, he has had to bring in to relieve the dryness of much of his thought too much exaggeration of the lower vital and sensational reactions untransformed or else transformed only by exaggeration”. (p. 41. L. 3.). In trying to arrive at something very direct, recording either the thing exactly as it is or some intimate essential truth of the thing without wrapping it up in ideas and sentiments, superfluous images and epithets, modernist poetry

tends often to end in "mere flat objectivity or, what is worse, an exaggerated emphatic objectivity; emotion seems often to be replaced by an intensified vital-physical sensation of the object." (p. 230. L. 3.). "Red pieces of day, hills made of blue and green paper, satanic and blasé, a black goat lookingly wanders",—images like these express vividly an impression made on the nerves through the sight of the described objects.

Sri Aurobindo is inclined rather to admit that the modernist's way is a new way of looking at things in poetry, —at least when pushed to such a degree as described above. But he holds that this way need not be regarded as essentially superior to the impressions created on the heart and the mental imagination by the objects. All the same, there would seem to be behind the modernist experiments, but still not successfully achieved, the possibility of a real advance,— "an attempt to get away from ornate mental constructions about things to the expression of the intimate truth of the things themselves as directly seen by a deeper sight within us." (p. 231. L. 3.). But to believe that this aim can be achieved by only one kind of technique—and that the modernist's—is surely a mistake. Overhead poetry, in its own and more inclusive way, endeavours to achieve this very aim.

Again, the modernist has "perhaps restored to the poet the freedom to think as well as to adopt a certain straightforwardness and directness of style." (p. 44. L. 3.). The poet of the intuitive mind is now more free to invent his own technique and style and to give to thought its legitimate place in poetry, but without losing that soul-excitement or ecstasy which is the heart of the matter. The conventional objection to undignified and therefore presumably unpoetic words and images is not valid. It has value only when the effect is uncouth or trivial. It would, for instance, be difficult to bring in 'bobbing' in an epic or other 'high' style. Sri Aurobindo, who has picked up this fascinating instance, suggests a possible redemption even for 'bobbing'. Remembering possibly Milton's 'din', 'hubbub' and other similar adventures, he hints that Milton could have 'managed' it. In poetry of a mystic kind, the aim is to bring up a vivid suggestion of the thing seen and some significance of the form or movement. "A familiar adjective here can serve its purpose very well as a touch in the picture and there are occasions when no other could be as true and living or give so well the precise movement needed." (p. 106-7. L. 3.). Nor can we object to the recurrence, at short intervals, of words like 'immensity' in mystical poetry. The conventions of a past order cannot apply to a new poetry dealing with spiritual things. A new art of words written from a new consciousness demands a new technique.

V. K. GOKAK

(*To be continued*)

THE SEA

The day floated for the last time on the sea.
Twilight's blur, washing the horizon's edge,
Made the immense waters loom infinite.
Two lonelinesses linked by one far love,
We came, earth-empty, but our small eyes sank
In the grey distance flowing evermore.
Our arms stretched toward the eternal shore beyond,
Which seemed divided by Time endlessly.
You, with lips quivering on the Great Name
Borne by the deep to this side of the unknown,
Murmured of the human heart's poor faltering strength.
But a faint touch of random spray on my brow
Moved me to breathe suddenly of fathomless Grace
That calls for nought save the surrendering cry
And gives all to the dwarf soul given entire.
"How shall we cross the sea?"... "The sea shall cross us!"

K.D.SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO: HIS PHILOSOPHY AND YOGA

(Continued from the previous issue)

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

YESTERDAY I referred casually to Bergson's 'Élan Vital' and to the creative evolution not progressing by something which is intellectual but proceeding on a basis of vital soul which intuitively decides and dictates the course of evolution of the organism. But the intuitive consciousness of which Sri Aurobindo speaks is much more than the 'Élan Vital'—the vital Spirit. It is an independent and an altogether new level of consciousness above the mind. It is capable of an independent action of its own. It can act upon the intellectual being, it can act upon the emotional. It can also act on the vital being by functioning as vital intuition and upon the nervous energy by creating nervous intuition, and can act even upon the physical as physical intuition. In the Psychology of Sri Aurobindo you will find that man rises from the physical, vital and mental consciousness to intuitive, inspirational and overmental and at last to the supramental consciousness, the Truth-consciousness. This is a vast subject and I can only give you a bare outline, within the short time at our disposal, of the vast regions of which the Master has given the clearest rational exposition by expounding the functions of the mind, of the intellect, the intuitive consciousness, the revelatory consciousness and Overmind. Overmind is the highest limit of mind and the lower limit of Supermind which is the dynamis of the Truth-consciousness of the Divine. It is this Truth-consciousness which is responsible for the maintenance of the whole cosmos—physical, vital and mental

The general charge made against the supra-intellectual of Sri Aurobindo is that it is something uncommon, out of the way and, if real at all, meant only for the rare few exceptional beings. Sri Aurobindo showed that far from this being true its opposite was the truth. Man's consciousness has been trying to open out to something beyond his mind and the supra-rational has been acting upon man's consciousness from the very beginning. Let us take our cultural

development. You will see streaks of Light from above trying to penetrate into the semi-darkness of human mind and life. In people who are sympathetic and have a responsive heart, these flashes and revelations come from heights of consciousness and break into their emotional being. Take poetry. It is very intimately connected with life; very often it is a creation of the intellectual imagination. When you say someone is a great poet or when you read great poetry you will find, if you try, that it is not always rational but the inspired and the revelatory 'word' coming to the poet from the heights or depths of being to which the poet gives an expression through his consciousness. That poetry which is a creation of reasoning mind has less of poetic fervour and fire. So, in other arts like painting, and in the realm of religion, mysticism, philosophy and even in science, you will find that the supra-rational has been acting constantly. You will see that visions of some Truth received inspirationally came from heights of consciousness. Discoveries of Science are not all results of mere rational or intellectual search. Some of the epoch-making researches in Science are due to a sudden flash of an intuition rushing into the mind of the scientist from the heights or from the depths. It is as if the powers that are behind the cosmos threw in some flash into his consciousness almost as a reward for his sincere search which brought about an intense concentration of his faculties. The case of Kékulé is famous in Organic Chemistry. He was very much puzzled about the structure of Benzene, an aromatic compound. Analysis revealed the composition as $C^6 H^6$. He wanted to find out the arrangement of these atoms,— $C^6 H^6$,—in the Benzene molecule. His mind was concentrated on this problem for a long time. Then suddenly, one day when he was away from the laboratory,—in fact walking on the road,—he saw the vision of a 'hexagon' carrying on each of its points a CH. Now this discovery came to him not as a result of mere rational search but as a flash thrown from somewhere—perhaps by some God. It suddenly broke into his consciousness and was found correct by the mind.

Take the leader of a great movement or a General who has fought a decisive battle. You will find that sometimes at a crucial moment they received and followed some intuitive flash which cannot be accounted for rationally. I am just trying to show that when Sri Aurobindo explained to the world that a level of Consciousness beyond mind is the next step in the evolution of man he was talking of something very practical, very dynamic, of something that has been working on man from the very dawn of history. All along, humanity in the course of its many cultural activities has been driving towards it and trying to mount to the higher regions of consciousness. An intuitive and inspirational consciousness and a revelatory consciousness are not unknown to man. These are facts of life which any one who is in earnest could test and find out. Beyond these is the Overmind Consciousness which has a wide and

massive and many-sided action upon humanity. Sri Aurobindo has spoken at length about these higher levels.

It will be said perhaps that such a supra-intellectual condition may be possible and may even act on man from time to time, but is it possible to indicate the steps by which the transition from the mental to the higher level of consciousness can be gradually effected? How to connect in a permanent and dynamic way this higher Consciousness with man's present consciousness? Now I will try to point out the practical steps by which transformation from the present psychology of man to the Overmind psychology has to be effected. If man wants to solve his individual and collective problems it will not merely be done by a miracle without a contact with the Higher Consciousness, without an ascent above. At present man is ego-centric and the dynamis of his movement is supplied by desire; he is moved by emotions, the dualities of life and the three *Gunas*. This keeps the whole structure of Ignorance in movement. Unless this psychology is changed and completely transformed it will not be possible for the human being to permanently bring about a change in his present state, in the structure of his individual or collective life.

This change will have to proceed in three steps by the practical application of the psychology of the Super-conscious indicated by Sri Aurobindo. The first is the psychicisation of the whole being. But how and when will it come? It will not happen by itself except by an indirect pressure exercised by cosmic forces upon the process of evolution—a slow movement. It will come to those who aspire, who have felt the Call,—those who have felt that the Infinite is calling them.

Very often the question is asked: "Suppose man does not aspire. What would be the use of somebody attaining to those Superconscious heights? In what way would it help or even influence mankind?" I shall try to answer it by an analogy. Suppose a scientist has found the process of manufacturing clouds and directing them to areas where there is draught. You might as well ask: Is there any good to humanity in this kind of search? The scientist is satisfied if he can send down the cloud and relieve the people. So immense a Light, so great a cosmic Power as the Master has brought to the world, do you think it could go in vain? Is it not possible that something very powerful can be produced on human psychology as such? Beings like him are incarnations that work for mankind without any need for recognition. "The world unknowing, for the world they work".

It will be asked: "What is meant by psychicisation?—psychicisation of intellect?" There are cases in which we see a clear, subtle, comprehensive and rational intellect in a man; but there is no soul-element in his mind. This intellect is entirely ego-centric and is often turned towards satisfaction

of ambition. Whereas in the case of the man whose intellect is either influenced, touched or governed by the soul, we find that he turns towards and seeks the Truth, and his intellect not only formulates the Truth for him and others but influences his whole nature—emotions, vital being etc.—to express the soul and seek the delight of self-expression,— not that of ego or ambition. When the greater part of the mind's movements are governed by the soul then the mind can be said to be psychicised. In emotional people there is obstructive attachment or indifference or callousness. It is the vital ego and desire that decide the nature of the emotion. When the Psychic in man comes into play, then his emotions become of quite a different nature. You know the story of Valmiki and the origin of the great epic—the *Ramayana*. A hunter killed a bird playing with its mate. It was a very small thing in one corner of the cosmos. But the emotional being of Valmiki did not perceive it as an isolated, insignificant event. He saw in it something that broke the rhythm of the cosmos. That is psychicised emotion.

After psychicisation of the intellect and the vital being and the physical being, the next step is the spiritualisation of the being. What is spiritualisation? Nature has been trying to evolve from the undistinguished amorphous inconscient an individual, an ego personality capable of independent action, decision, mental and physical movement. An individual who has become psychicised can attain to his own salvation and true action by going back to his deepest soul i.e. his Psychic Being. But if he has to express and fulfil it in his life and bring about a perfection of life, especially collective life, then spiritualisation of the being is indispensable. You will find many Yogis, Sadhus and Saints who have nearly completely psychicised their being, but they have not been able to bring a divine perfection to the world because they have not got into the secret of cosmic manifestation.

But how does this spiritualisation take place? The Power that descended into the Nescience and created the possibility of evolution of Matter, Life and Mind has also provided the means for reaching the Cosmic Consciousness. This Power works out its purpose first in Ignorance and then in Knowledge. How does it work in Ignorance? Even the most selfish and egoistic nature is somehow obliged to break the limits of its ego by the pressure of the cosmic Nature working towards its purpose. Side by side with man's egoistic life, there is an outbreak of collective consciousness which attempts to limit and break up his ego and works for his growth towards what is more than ego. Spiritualisation is an inner process by which man connects his nature with the cosmic workings, a plane of Consciousness above his egoistic being, his consciousness widens out to infinite horizons and meets the cosmos and brings to his own psychology the vast cosmic forces, powers and energies. Thus, spiritualisation is the process

by which the nature of the individual gradually gets connected with the cosmic workings. The common man while all the time unconsciously receiving the stuff of his nature from outside,—ideas from books, from people he comes in contact with, and from his surroundings—can consciously open himself to the cosmic and receive the currents of cosmic energy, as directed by the Divine.

Above this is the third step—the *Supramentalisation* of the being, which is the highest height of man's attainment. I shall not dwell upon it here. It is a work that is being attempted and is not the work of a mere human being to be attempted with the help of his mental consciousness; the help of the Divine is indispensable. The Master brought to us rationally the integral aspect of Divinity and has restored to Divinity its dynamic aspects and showed us that the Divine is not merely an impersonal Status which is indifferent to mankind. There are schools of thought that believe the ultimate Reality to be an Absolute in which there can be no action, i.e. no power, no creativity, no content. To inflict these limitations on the Absolute would, in Sri Aurobindo's view, reduce it to the Relative. When you say that the Absolute is such that it would lose its absoluteness if it allowed action to itself, are you not making it limited? The Absolute, according to Sri Aurobindo, is full of an infinite content of consciousness, of power, of energy. That is to say, it is an Absolute which can manifest infinite relatives of form, of energy, of substance from itself and yet not be bound by any or all of them. No powers, no forms, no cosmoses can exhaust the Absolute. It can manifest itself in infinite forms in infinite ways and still it will remain the Absolute. If that is not the nature of the Absolute, what kind of Absolute have you got? That is why Silence which is the attribute of the Absolute is full of the Power of creativity from which the world is projected. There is therefore the dynamic aspect of the Divine responsible for this creation and thus the Divine is intimately connected with this creation

If the whole cosmos is a manifestation of the Divine, then Life cannot be anything else but the manifestation of the Divine. And as Life is a projection of the dynamic Divine Consciousness, one day it has got to realise the Truth that it is the Divine that is manifesting himself in Life. Life is intimately connected with the dynamic Divine. Therefore the whole rational purpose of Life here is to reach out from its ignorance to that dynamic aspect of the Divine. The Divine from above is pressing here to manifest himself and, as a result of the double pressure—the pressure of the Truth-Consciousness from above and that of aspiration of Life from below—the fulfilment of human life will come.

But how shall this transformation take place? There are two major movements which will make it possible. One is the ascent of the human consciousness and, as a direct result of it, the descent of the Divine Consciousness. When the

process of ascent of the human consciousness is completed, the other—the descent—is sure and Life will be fulfilled even in the physical being. It was the Upanishads that addressed men not merely as children of the inconscient, material consciousness, not merely as mortals but as “*Amritasya Putraha*”, “Children of Immortality”. The Master calls him in *Savitri* “a Colonist from Immortality”. This manifestation of divine life upon earth if ever realised—as it is bound to be—would be also a discovery to the Divine,—a discovery of his own Self in terms just the opposite to those that are in his original Status. It would be a new creation carrying with it all the joy of Self-discovery both to man and to the Divine.

(To be continued)

A. B. PURANI

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE UPANISHADS

It is a kind of poetry—word of vision and rhythm of the spirit—that has not been written before or after.

Sri Aurobindo.

THE popularity enjoyed by the Upanishads among the western Orientalists of the last century and the modern scholars of Indian thought and philosophy is something truly phenomenal. Alone among the large number of the sacred texts of Hindu Religion, they have been held aloft as specimens of Indian Thought at its highest¹, records that can stand comparison with the products of the Greek mind which provided the first moulds for the efflorescence of the western civilisation. As a rule, to these scholars who took to the study of the Indian heritage from a dateless past, the Vedas are little more than liturgical texts for use in ceremonial functions of the primitive communities steeped in animistic ignorance, the Brahmanas clever annotations of wily priests to perpetuate their hold on the superstitious masses; the Puranas are mythology, picturesque perhaps, but nothing more, the Tantras fabrications of a degenerate mentality indulging in black magic, necromancy, dissipation and trading on the credulity of an innately religious minded people. The Upanishads alone are entitled to represent the true Indian spirit in the sphere of religion, philosophy and spirituality. They are the natural reactions from the religious hedonism of the Vedic society. In keeping with the pattern of progress of humanity everywhere, the Indian mind gradually releases itself from the holds of the exclusive demands of the physical life of the body, even reacts violently against that excessive Preoccupation, and begins to speculate and soar—in a word, begins the mental life proper. It starts thinking seriously about the nature of the world and its constituents, of God and of the destiny of man. The Upanishads represent this phase of Indian evolution and record the results of these exercises of the mind; the later philosophical systems—the Darshanas—are only metaphysical developments and systematisations of the philosophical ideas and concepts arrived at by the thinkers of the Upanishads.

¹ "On the tree of Indian wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads." *Deussen.*

"The Upanishads are the loftiest utterances of Indian intelligence. Whatever value the reader may assign to the ideas they represent, they are the the highest product of the ancient mind, and almost the only element of interest in Indian literature, which is at every stage replete with them to saturation." *Gough.*

No doubt there is much that baffles the modern reader in these texts. Many of them are made up of 'detached statements'² i.e. disjointed utterances in which it is difficult to trace any thread of connection. There is no such logical arrangement and sequence as we find in their Greek counterparts. "The teaching of the Upanishads is not a homogeneous, self-contained system, but lacks unity and completeness" (A.Schweitzer). From sublime speculations on the nature of the Highest Reality they abruptly pass to the most elementary details of biological reproduction; most glorious descriptions of the being of man in its suprasensuous statures are found side by side with unabashed eulogy and childish exaltations of food. They are so uneven—at times mutually contradictory also—that even the more 'sympathetic' interpreters are obliged to protest: "We are often vexed with their unstable, contradictory and partly foolish statements" (Bloomfield),—"By the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, (they) contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellant" (Max Muller). But all the same, we are assured, the Upanishads are notable departures from the traditional Indian penchant for mysticism and sacerdotalism and are important because of the new orientation in thought and outlook which they denote, the many 'errors of innocence' of their authors notwithstanding, and because of their embryonic store of 'flashing truths and inspired ideas' which base, in one way or other, all the latter Systems in Indian Philosophy including heterodox Buddhism. And historically they are important because they are the expression of a vigorous revolt of the Kshatriya class against the dominance of the Brahmin in the Vedic Age. If there is no consistent philosophy in them, it is because they are works of different authors, at different periods, of men who have not yet attained a sufficient maturity of mind.

This in brief is the position of the occidental Indologists in regard to the Upanishads, generally. And barring a few exceptions, Indian scholars trained in the western tradition have accepted their view viz.

"We find in the Upanishads an advance on the Samhita mythology, Brahmana hair-splitting, and even Aranyaka theology, though all these stages are to be met with. The authors of the Upanishads transform the past they handle, and the changes they effect in the Vedic religion indicate the boldness of the heart that beats only for freedom.... Tentative solutions of metaphysical questions are put forth in the form of dialogues and disputations.... Not being systematic philosophy, or the production of a single author, or even of the same age, they contain much that is inconsistent and unscientific." "The Upanishads are regarded as a class of literature independent of the Vedic hymns and the

² Schopenhauer

Brahmanas....They attempt to moralise the religion of the Vedas without disturbing their form...(they are) a protest against the externalism of the Vedic practices and an indifference to the sacredness of the Veda. The religion of the Vedas certainly was more joyous, but it was a lower form of religion... the attitude of the Upanishads is not favourable to the sacredness of the Vedas.” (Dr.Radhakrishnan)

The tenor of these conclusions, however, is contrary to the spirit of the Indian tradition according to which the Upanishads are not only the natural terminus, the close but also the final word, the crown and summit of the Vedas, *veda-anta*. The Knowledge that is proclaimed to be enshrined in the Revealed Scripture that is the Veda is here brought out to the fuller view; what is in the Upanishads is derived from and rests upon the kernel in the Veda.¹ That is why the Rishis of these texts so frequently invoke the authority of the Vedic seers in confirmation of what they say e.g. *tadetadṛcābhyuktam*, “this is said by the Rik,” *taduktam ṛṣinā*, “that is said by the Rishi” etc., or quote a whole Rik in clinching their pronouncement. The Upanishads are throughout conscious of their Vedic origin and background and freely draw from it. That is why, we find that not only many of the ideas in the Upanishad are to be found in some germ form or other in the Vedas, but at times even the images and similes are the same e.g. fire from tinders, spokes and the wheel, dry coconut and the kernel, boat and the waters, to choose a few at random. The symbols they use are essentially the symbols we find in the Vedas, albeit here with an extended significance viz. birds, waters, swan, the Tree Inverted (with roots above and branches downward) etc. The Vedic spirit pervading the Upanishads is unmistakable and not a few of the unbiassed minds have been slow to recognise it. Both the Vedas and the Upanishads are of the same origin—SRUTI, the Revealed Word.

Sri Aurobindo accepts and upholds this ancient tradition.

II

Who verily knows and who can here declare it,
Whence it was born and whence comes this creation?—
The Gods are later than this world's production.
Who knows then whence it first came into being?
He, the first origin of this creation,

¹ *Vedaguhyopanisatsu*, the Upanishads which are the secret of the Veda (Svetasvatara Up. V. 6).

Whether he formed it all or did not form it,
Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven,
He verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.¹

Who is this mighty personage who beholds in his titanic vision the entire spread of creation, measures as it were, the stature of the very Gods in a single sweep of his look and knocks at the Gates of the Creator Himself to fathom the greatest Mystery of all? He is no ordinary poet or philosopher, to be sure; the audacity of his spirit is too overwhelming to be contained in such human bounds. He is Prajapati Parameshthin, one of the patriarchs of the old aryan society in the Vedic Age, one of the galaxy of the leaders who moulded and shaped the Indian civilisation in its earliest apogee of spiritual progress and advancement, the sole surviving records of which are to be found in the Rig Veda. For, as Sri Aurobindo points out, the Rishis of the Rig Veda are neither the simple priests nor the bards of a primitive society in the infant stages of human progress; nor are the hymns of the Samhita mere chants of liturgy for use in ceremonies of a nature-worshipping community as concluded by European scholars and their Indian following. The Vedic Age represents the rising curve of a remarkable cycle of civilisation governed by a predominantly symbolic mentality. It was essentially a religious, a mystic spirit that suffused the lives and thoughts of its people. A happy, natural intuition was their guide even as it is observed to be elsewhere where men have not yet cultivated the rule of Reason. They were aware that the physical world of objects that is seen before the eyes is not the whole truth of everything. They felt the Presence of Something behind and above informing and moving the external objects and phenomena. Thus indeed were the Natural elements, Physical objects endowed, to their vision and feeling, with a life and power which was Supraphysical. A strong religious imagination and symbolic mentality ordered their life and thought. In fact, "Symbolism and widespread imaginative or intuitive religious feeling go together...the symbol then is of something which man feels to be present behind himself and his life and his activities—the Divine, the Gods, the Vast and the deep unnamable, a hidden, living and mysterious nature of things. All his religions and social institutions, all the moments and phases of his life are to him symbols in which he seeks to express what he knows or guesses of the mystic

¹ को अद्वा वेद क इह प्र वोचत्कुत आजाता कुत इय विसृष्टिः ।
अर्वाग्देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनाथा को वेद यत आबभूव ॥
इय विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।
यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥
(Rig Veda X.129.6,7) translated by Griffith

influences which are behind them and shape and govern them.” (Sri Aurobindo)

The Rishis were the mentors and leaders of such a society who had struck out their own lines of inner development and growth towards the Higher Godheads and the Truth embodied in them. Having perceived the existence and the living influence of the Higher Powers and divinities, they made it their one supreme purpose in life to imbibe and grow into those Higher verities of existence. It is this their journey up the hill of their Being, the Knowledge that was vouchsafed to them on the higher or deeper levels of the soul, their inspired chants of call to the Gods, that found inspired expression in human language and are preserved for posterity in the Mantras of the Veda. No doubt, to the common folk the mantras were only litanies for use in religious ceremonies. But to the initiates, their fuller content was revealed by the Mystics. To them the Mantra was a living vehicle of the spiritual power and truth that was active in the Rishi who gave them the sound-form and it served always as a dynamo with which each seeker could charge the battery of his own flame of aspiration and progress. Sri Aurobindo points out that like everything else, even the ceremonies, the Sacrifice for example, had a symbolic significance. The outer form which was meant for the lay society always concealed a deeper truth which had meaning only for the qualified. The very rituals of worship were arranged with a view to this end viz. to promote and assist the initiate in his inner Yajna. The hymns of the Rig Veda represent but a fragment that has survived of the records of this unique Age.

In time, like all ages in the march of the history of human progress, this Age of the Vedic Mystics came to an end. The vigour with which they pursued their search after Truth was on the wane and a natural fatigue set in. The externals of the rituals gradually lost the breath of the life within them and the luminous truths of the ancient hymns went under an obscurity. Nobody knows how long this eclipse continued. However, certain it is that at some time a powerful movement of revival took place and this had a twin aspect. One was the movement towards the recovery and resuscitation of the forms of the Vedic religion and Sacrifice, the rituals; and this was represented by the Brahmanas. The other was for the reclamation and revelation of the soul of the Vedic religion, the treasure of Knowledge embedded in the sacred Mantras: the stir and movement of the Upanishads. Both of these were among the notable expressions of the fresh outburst of a spiritual and material prosperity that characterised the renaissance of the Aryan Spirit in that epoch.

It was not to be expected that the Rishis of the Upanishads would be content merely to restate or re-inculcate the utterances of the seers of the Veda, however authentic in themselves. These intrepid voyagers of the Unknown sought to re-live the truths embedded in the hymns, in their own lives and

in their own ways, to invest them with the imprimatur of their own personal realisation of their verity, make them freshly alive and give them an expression in terms more suited to the mentality of their time which was so distant from the mystic age of the Vedas. Or, they took the perceptions of the ancient seers as their starting-point and launched upon their own adventure—taking care every now and then to refer to the cumulative Wisdom of the older Fathers for confirmation—arriving at other, if not higher, summits of Realisation. The Upanishads are the “records of (their) many methods of approach to the ultimate Reality, inspired utterances of seers who, by disciplined effort, by whole-souled devotion to their subject, by subtler and higher faculties revelatory and intuitional, developed by spiritual means, penetrated into and broke open the seals of the secrets of subtle psychological and spiritual truths and lived the life of the Spirit. In their effort they were, as a rule, aided by the tradition of the Vedic Rishis, by the achievements of others who had gone before them, or by the help—not unoften—proffered by the Higher Intelligences and Powers of the Universal Spirit itself.”¹ “The thinkers and sages of the Upanishads have certainly drawn their inspiration and support from the Hymns (of the Veda) when they were engaged in developing their Self-culture for the realisation of the ultimate Truth, for conforming their lives to the laws of the Spirit, for the attainment of Brahman-hood while still living on Earth. In their endeavours, in their successes, in their conclusions, they often seek the support of the Vedic seers, though we may not always trace their names or find their hymns in the Samhitas that have come down to us; they make mention of certain verses presumed to be those of the Vedic seers though they are not traceable now; they actually quote the Riks also, but in their own sense and for their purpose though their meanings in the Rig Vedic context may differ or may not be exactly the same. But living in an age far posterior to the Vedic epoch their method of expression is more intellectual and less symbolic and mystical than that of their Vedic forefathers. Even when they use Vedic symbols, they give them often different significances. The results of their explorings in the fields of the inner Life and Spirit, the truths of their intuitive perceptions, the means at their disposal and the lines they proceed along, the fruits of their labour in the occult and spiritual realms, are often implicitly, but in authentic tones, expressed in a language that is more intelligible to the mentality of our age and fairly far removed from that of the Rig Vedic hymns.”²

The imagery of the Upanishads is largely taken over from the older symbolism of the Vedas. The Chhandogya Upanishad, for instance, freely and

¹ Sri Kapali Sastry: *Lights on the Upanishads* (p. 23)

² *ibid.* (p. 74)

naturally uses the terms and symbols of the Vedic religion. So does the Brihadaranyaka.¹ And, Sri Aurobindo observes: "It is to a great extent this element no longer seizable by our way of thinking that has baffled certain scholars and made them cry out that these scriptures are a mixture of the sublimest philosophical speculations with the first awakened stammerings of the child mind of humanity."² Undoubtedly, in keeping with the changing spirit of the age, the Upanishads extend, or even vary at times, the significance of the earlier imagery and symbolism and also bring out more explicitly the inner sense implicit in them. They make these symbols starting-points for their own statements of experience and realisation and go on to 'pass beyond them to another magnificently open and sublime imagery and diction which at once reveals the spiritual truth in all its splendour'. Sri Aurobindo illustrates this development with one or two examples from the texts and we shall have occasion to speak of them later while dealing with the respective Upanishads.

The Gods of the Veda—Surya, Agni, Indra, Vayu—continue to shine in the firmament of the Upanishads. But there is a difference. While in the Veda, each of them was supreme in his own right and power, holding as it were the entire Godhead behind him, in the Upanishads the gods occupy a subordinate position, the constant stress being on the Supreme One of whom the Gods are derivations and on whom they depend for the discharge of their double function, as Powers of Nature, *adhidaravatam*, and as Psychological Powers governing the faculties of man, *adhyātmam*. It should be noted, however, that this conception of the One Supreme God is not a new idea found in the Upanishads.

¹ In a Note on the figure of the Horse of the Ashwamedha with which the Brihadaranyaka opens, Sri Aurobindo subjects the symbolism of the Upanishadic seers to a thorough scrutiny from the modern standpoint and unveils a wealth of meaning and significance lying hidden beneath the figure which has become totally opaque to later thought.

"The Ashwamedha or Horse-Sacrifice is, as we shall see, taken as the symbol of a great spiritual advance, an evolutionary movement, almost, from out of the dominion of apparently material forces into a higher spiritual freedom. The Horse of the Ashwamedha is, to the author, a physical figure representing like some algebrical symbol, an unknown quantity of force and speed. From the imagery it is evident that this force, this speed is something world-wide, something universal; it fills the regions with its being, it occupies Time, it gallops through Space, it bears on in its speed men and gods and the Titans. It is the Horse of the Worlds,—and yet the Horse sacrificial."

The Vedic-Upanishadic symbolism of the Ashwa, Horse, the Dawn, the Sun, the Wind, the Fire, the Oceans—Eastern and Western, the Heaven and Earth, Day and Night—have received at his hands a most illuminating exposition which awes us into the littleness of our modern minds before the towering magnificence of conception and vastness of vision of these ancient Seers. (Vide *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* No. 12: The Great Aranyaka)

² *Foundations of Indian Culture* (p. 310)

nishads. It is not correct to say that when 'the half-gods of the Veda die, the true God arrives'.¹ There are a number of Riks in the Rig Veda—not merely in the tenth Mandala which modern scholars are fond of eulogising as containing seeds of 'advanced thought', but in other Mandalas as well—extolling the One God-head as the Source and Origin of all the Gods, the Deity of deities.²

The Upanishads, we must note, are not philosophical treatises or systematised manuals of religious discipline. "They are a great store of observations and spiritual experiences with conclusions and generalisations from those observations and experiences, set down without any thought of controversial caution or any anxiety to avoid logical contradiction."³ To an alien mind not familiar with the peculiar climate of Indian scriptures and religio-philosophical writings these texts may appear to be a mass of inconsistencies. For instance, it is declared that the Absolute Brahman is unknowable: mind cannot reach it and

¹ Dr. Radhakrishnan

² For instance.

एक सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति

The One Existent, the illumined ones call variously. (RV. I.164.46.)

एक वा इदं विबभूव सर्वम्

The One has become All this. (RV. VIII.58.2.)

एजद् ध्रुव पत्यते विश्वमेकं चरत् पतत्रि विषुण विजातम्

The Universal One that rules over the mobile and the fixed (is) what walks, what flies, what is this manifold birth. (III 54.8.)

महत् देवानाम् असुरत्वमेकम्

The powerful Might of the Gods is the Great One. (III.55.1)

विश्वे देवा समनसः सकेता एकं क्रतुमभि वि यन्ति साधु

All the Gods with a single mind, a common Intuition, move aright in their divergent paths towards the One Will. (VI.9.5.)

यो देवाना नामधा एक एव

One who alone is the holder of the Names of all the Gods (X.82 3.)

सुपर्णं विप्रा. कवयो वयोभिः एकं सन्त बहुधा कल्पयन्ति

The One Existent, beautiful of plumage, the illumined seers by their words formulate in many ways (or forms). (X. 114.5.)

Vide also

एको विभुर् अतिथिर्जनानाम् तं वर्तन्तिर् अनुवावृत एकम् इत् पुरु

The One Lord, Guest of the people .to Him the One Alone, the many paths are turned. (Atharva Veda 7.21.1')

सर्वे अस्मिन् देवा एकवृतो भवन्ति

In him all Deities become one Alone. (Atharva XIII.4.)

³ Sri Aurobindo. *Philosophy of the Upanishads II* (*The Advent Quarterly*, 1952 February)

words return baffled. And yet passages abound in which Brahman is declared to be the sole object of knowledge, this is Brahman, that is Brahman, everything is Brahman and so on. The Reality is sometimes spoken of as the One Absolute, elsewhere it is stated that there are Two Purushas unborn

But the seers of these utterances do not care to refute or reconcile these contradictory statements; they are aware that each is authentic from its own standpoint and the standpoints from which the Reality can be viewed or approached and realised are as many and as diverse as the varied aspects of the Reality in manifestation. They approach the Truth from varying positions and and status, converge upon It from different directions and give expression to the knowledge so obtained in appropriate terms, regardless of their coherence or consistency with the statements of others or of their own under different conditions. As we shall see later, even this contrariety or conflict of statements is more apparent than real.

Again, the texts of the Upanishads may appear to be punctuated with abrupt stops, disconnected beginnings and give the impression of a pronounced lack of sequence. But it must be remembered that the Upanishads are not verbatim reproductions of the instructions given by the Teacher to the initiates. The texts are more in the nature of notes and graphs of leading ideas and truths, fundamental starting-points and important conclusions of their exposition. Again, verbal expositions did not constitute the whole of their instruction even as the external instructions did not form the whole of the method by which the student was initiated and led by the teacher in the mystic or inner Path. This also accounts for the lack of details or even summary procedures of the inner Disciplines which are merely announced in the Upanishads with only a few hints to provide the clues for their working.

The Upanishads thus are a class apart from every other kind of literature. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“These works are not philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind... these seers saw Truth rather than merely thought it, clothed it indeed with a strong body of intuitive idea and disclosing image, but a body of ideal transparency through which we look into the illimitable....

“The Upanishads are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge. The great formulations of philosophic truth with which they abound are not abstract intellectual generalisations, things that may shine and enlighten the mind, but do not move the soul to ascension, but are ardours as well as lights of an intuitive and revelatory illumination, reachings as well as seings of the One Existence, the transcendent Godhead, the divine and universal Self and discoveries of his relation with things and creatures in this great cosmic manifestation....

“The largest metaphysical truths and the subtlest subtleties of psychological experience are taken up into the inspired movement and made at once precise to the seeing mind and loaded with unending suggestion to the discovering spirit. There are separate phrases, single couplets, brief passages which contain each in itself the substance of a vast philosophy and yet each is only thrown out as a side, an aspect, a portion of the infinite self-knowledge. All here is a packed and yet perfectly lucid and luminous brevity and an immeasurable completeness. A thought of this kind cannot follow the tardy, careful and diffuse development of the logical intelligence. The passage, the sentence, the couplet, the line, even the half-line follows the one that precedes with a certain interval full of an unexpressed thought, an echoing silence between them, a thought which is carried in the total suggestion and implied in the step itself, but which the mind is left to work out for its own profit, and these intervals of pregnant silence are large, the steps of this thought are like the paces of a Titan striding from rock to distant rock across the infinite waters. There is a perfect totality, a comprehensive connection of harmonious parts in the structure of each Upanishad; but it is done in the way of a mind that sees masses of truth at a time and stops to bring only the needed word out of a filled silence. The rhythm in verse or cadenced prose corresponds to the sculpture of the thought and the phrase. . . It is a kind of poetry—word of vision, rhythm of the spirit—that has not been written before or after.”¹

(To be continued)

M. P. PANDIT

¹ *Foundations of Indian Culture* (p. 306-310)

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XVIII

LIBERATION

PART I

No ideal produces in the majority of spiritual seekers so great a thrill, such an inspiring sense of exaltation as the ideal of liberation. All rigour of self-discipline, all stress of a sustained, high- uplifting endeavour, and even all harsh austerities seem little enough price for the priceless state of spiritual freedom, if they can but contribute to its attainment. Difficulties are resolutely met and dangers courageously braved by those who are bent upon realising the essential freedom of their soul. What appears even as self-mortification or an extreme self-denial to others, may be, to a spiritual aspirant, a means of awakening his soul's fire and a step towards the mastery of his lower nature. He does not count the cost when he embarks upon self-discovery. If he fails to achieve his object in his present life, unwearied and undejected, he looks forward to pursuing his quest in lives to follow; for, he knows that the bondage of aeons cannot be cut asunder with the same ease and rapidity with which Alexander the Great cut the Gordian knot. A relentless fight with his lower self, renewed from hour to hour, sustained through long years of unrelaxed vigilance and unremitting labour, and supported and fortified by the divine Grace, can alone lead him to liberation.

But what is liberation? The average man knows little about it and has no definite desire for it; for, a desire for liberation presupposes an agonised awareness of one's own bondage. The born slave does not feel the pangs of his slavery—he is content with it. Rather, if he is suddenly set free, he is sure to find his freedom unbearable, like the old prisoner who, on being released, wanted to be sent back into the prison where he had spent forty long years of his life without a break. We know our ordinary life of desires and passions, struggles and sufferings, pleasures and pains, and cannot think of an existence completely devoid of these conflicting elements. What will remain of life, we wonder, if desires and passions are extinguished for ever and the dramatic dualities of pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, success and failure are done away with? Would it not be something savourless, insipid, inert and drained of all sap and

substance? If desires do not drive us into action, if passions do not toss and heave our being, if envy and jealousy do not rankle in our hearts, if the heady wine of ambition is snatched away from our lips, life would, indeed, be a dreary affair for most of us. We have not only become habituated to slavery, we are not even conscious that it is slavery. We are not aware that our vaunted freedom—freedom of will and freedom of action—is a deplorable delusion; we do not know that it is always the goad of a desire or the lash of a passion that determines our choice and dictates our action. Even what we regard as a reasoned or rational choice is, in the last analysis, found to have been determined by a subtle, hidden desire. We are bound in our thoughts, involved in our emotions, torn by our desires, glued to our sensations and caged in our body. It is a manifold and consolidated servitude that is our common lot in the material world. “The perception of the ignorance of our assumption of freedom while one is all the time in the meshes of this lower nature, is the view-point at which the Gita arrives and it is in contradiction to this ignorant claim that it affirms the complete subjection of the ego-soul on this plane to the gunas. ‘While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of Nature,’ it says, ‘he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his “I” which is doing them.’”¹

To awake to the agony of this servitude and to be conscious that we are yoked to the leaden rule of our lower nature, is the first step towards our soul’s freedom. But this perception or awareness comes only when our real being, our psychic personality, awakes to its inherent liberty. In proportion as it awakes, we begin to feel with a growing poignancy how cramped and constricted we live in the rigid mould made for us by Nature. There is no freedom in this total subjection. For our very existence we are dependent upon the world. If the contacts of the world do not stir our senses, we do not feel our existence—we faint or fall asleep; for our life is nothing but a series of sensations, and most of our thoughts and feelings are but various responses of our cognitive, reflective and affective personality to the primary reactions of our senses. It is a pathetic fact that for our pleasure and happiness we are almost wholly at the mercy of the touches of the world. If a man gives me something, I feel pleased; but if he fails to give me what I expected from him, I feel displeased or disappointed—my peace, if I had any, is disturbed. If I am honoured or praised, I feel very happy and am gentle and grateful to those who praise or honour me; but if I am criticised or ridiculed, all my gentleness vanishes in a moment and the unreclaimed savagery of my nature betrays itself. My sense of justice and equality, my kindness and sympathy for others, my courtesy and amiability, all are contingent upon factors over which I have no control. It is

¹ *Essays on the Gita* by Sri Aurobindo

circumstances that determine the trend of my nature, the direction of my thoughts and the form and quality of my action. If I muster courage enough to revolt and react against circumstances, I find to my bewilderment that I am swept by forces within me which defy all control. I become a sport of them. I painfully realise my inner slavery even while I struggle to assert my outer freedom. If we would but pause to consider the abject slavery in which we live! We feel secure in our happiness when everything goes well with us—when we have health and wealth and fame and honour and everything else that we normally covet; but, all of a sudden, something may surge up from the subsoil of our being, and we are overwhelmed with a sense of despair or frustration, and a dark cloud settles upon our being. The sunshine and laughter are suddenly eclipsed by lamentation and gloom. Or, even when we are at the height of our powers, some unforeseen calamity may strike us down and make havoc of our life and its achievements. A mere turn of events, a casual word or gesture from somebody, a sudden eruption from the sealed wells of memory, a passing physical ailment or affliction, and our happiness is engulfed in misery. A smile from a person we love and adore sends us into raptures, and a frown or a frigid look of indifference casts us into the pit of despair. It is the world that makes us smile or weep, rejoice or repine. It is the world's baubles that we run madly after, delighted, if we snatch them for a moment, miserable if they elude our grasp. We are beside ourselves when we are attacked by grief or anger, lust or greed, and we hardly suspect that we are moved by forces which are in no way native to our essential being. It is only when our soul awakens within us that we begin to feel the agony of our bondage and realise our utter helplessness in the hands of the universal forces of ignorance. A ray of light seems then to glint in the darkness, a gentle breath of hope seems to steal into our hearts and an intuition of something within us which is immortally free, pure and blissful, springs up into our consciousness. That is a fateful experience which lights up the secret sense of our fettered wanderings in the darkness and makes us press forward towards liberation. Hypnotised bond-slaves of Nature, we awake at long last to our soul's innate freedom.

When we thus awake, we are seized with a consuming hunger for the Infinite. We chafe at the fetters which bind us and dash against the barriers that impede our progress. The contrast between the luminous self-existence we perceive within us and the shackled life we lead without, becomes increasingly painful and turns us into spiritual revolutionaries. We yearn to break all chains, to tread upon all crippling conditions, to transcend all limitations and—be free. We yearn to “breathe infinity, to soar in eternity,...escape from Time and Space.” The fiery intensity of this yearning has been movingly expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his poem, “The Vedantin's Prayer”:

Spirit Supreme

Who musest in the silence of the heart,
Eternal gleam,

Thou only Art!

Ah, wherefore with this darkness am I veiled,
My sunlit part

By clouds assailed?

Why am I thus disfigured by desire,
Distracted, haled,

Scorched by the fire

Of fitful passions, from Thy peace out-thrust
Into the gyre

Of every gust?

Betrayed to grief, o'ertaken with dismay,
Surprised by lust?

Let not my grey

Blood-clotted past repel Thy sovereign ruth,
Nor even delay,

O lonely Truth!

Nor let the specious gods who ape Thee still
Deceive my youth.

These clamours still;

For I would hear the eternal voice and know
The eternal Will.

This brilliant show

Cumbering the threshold of eternity
Dispel,—bestow

The undimmed eye,

The heart grown young and clear. Rebuke, O Lord,
These hopes that cry

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So deafeningly,
Remove my sullied centuries, restore
My purity.

O hidden door
Of knowledge, open! Strength, fulfil thyself
Love, outpour!¹

According to the Gita there are four causes of our bondage: ego, desire, the dualities and attachment to the three gunas (sattwa, rajas and tamas) of the lower Nature. But it can be said that the principal cause is the ego and that emancipation from the ego is true liberation. It is the ego that makes us identify ourselves with the perishable objects of the world and undergo the fate of their mutations. It makes us identify ourselves with our mind, life and body which have only an instrumental value. To get beyond the ego; to identify oneself with no finite form, physical, vital or mental; to live in the limitless consciousness of the Self or Spirit, is the essence of liberation.

The liberated state is a state of absolute freedom and equality. It is a sovereign independence of the world and its touches. Neither sensations nor emotions nor thoughts can impinge upon the stirless silence of the soul's unconditioned self-existence. Liberated, we live in the inalienable peace and purity, light and joy, power and plenitude of our spiritual being. The world's din cannot raise a single ripple in that fathomless peace and silence, it remains impregnable; the world's pleasures and sufferings cannot trouble that serene and limpid joy, it abides unassailable; the world's darkness cannot cast any shadow over that self-existent Light. We are poised high above all disturbing sense of honour and dishonour, gain and loss, success and failure, victory and defeat. Disease and decrepitude cannot affect us, and even death loses all its reality for us; for, our boundless spiritual consciousness knows no infirmity, no sleep, no cessation. Nature's dualities may still persist in our phenomenal parts, the habitual reactions may continue by their past momentum, calamities may come and even death, but nothing can shake our inner poise—we stand imperturbable in the luminous calm of our soul, independent of the whole world, like the limitless sky watching unmoved the stormy tumult of the sea below. Liberated, we have gone beyond the slavery of hunger and thirst, heat and cold, comfort and discomfort, life and death. We live in our soul, in its native light and peace and bliss, and no longer in the succession of the moments of Time or the illusory divisions of Space. Our consciousness re-

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo Vol I*

mains untouched by the turmoil of the gunas and our freedom inviolable. We are plunged in the termless bliss and blessedness of our infinite and immortal existence.

The above description may be said to represent the essence of liberation as it is understood by most schools of spiritual discipline. It is a transcendence of the ego and the turbid working of the lower nature and a tranquil poise in the purity and freedom of the Self. But this transcendence, if it is attained by a flight or defensive self-withdrawal, does not lead to a complete mastery and transformation of the lower nature. It is true that the liberated man is not affected by the turmoil of his lower nature, but the turmoil persists, in however diminished a form, and he endures it in the hope that it will end with the end of his material life. The imperfections of the nature and the evils of life are suffered with a calm fortitude as indispensable elements of human existence, and a release from the wheel of karma and the painful process of birth and death is awaited with an almost religious eagerness. This is the general conception of mukti, kaivalya or nirvana.¹ In the ideal of the jivanmukta, there is an extension of the concept of liberation—the liberated man need not, perhaps should not, abstain from all action or long for an escape from the labour of life; he should preserve his spiritual poise even in the midst of all life's activities and, by personal example and influence, help the world on its onward march. The nature of the jivanmukta is irradiated with the light of his liberated soul; there is greater purity and freedom and flexibility in his natural instruments than in those of the sadhakas who seek only personal salvation and an escape from the ills of life. But even a jivanmukta cannot be said to possess a transformed nature. He enjoys perfect freedom in his soul and a reflected and relative freedom in his nature. His soul is liberated, his inner consciousness is liberated, but not his nature which labours still in bondage though, of course, it is a modified bondage greatly relieved of much of its normal rigour. There is a considerable development of the sattwa guna in his nature and its effective predominance over the other gunas, but there is no radical conversion of the gunas themselves into their divine counterparts—sattwa into jyotih, rajas into tejas or tapas and tamas into shanti. The ideal of the jivanmukta is, therefore, even at its best, an ideal of a semi-liberation of the human being—liberation in the soul or the Self, but a modified and attenuated bondage in the parts of nature. The ancient ideal of the liberation and transformation of nature has long been lost sight of in the spiritual culture of humanity.

There is another thing to consider in this connection. There is always

¹ The traditional orthodox conception, much discounted today, is that Mukti or Nirvana can be attained only after death.

the possibility of one's being liberated into the absolute of what one's inmost being ardently aspires for with a resolute will, for the Absolute is the beginning and end of our soul's journey. If I aspire only for peace, I can be liberated into an absolute of peace. I can likewise be liberated into an absolute of silence or an absolute of bliss, if I aspire for them. Though there is no basic difference, there is a substantial difference of emphasis between the Nirvana of the Buddhists and the Moksha of the Jainas, the Kaivalya of the Sankhyas and the Mukti of the Vedantins. The Buddha speaks of Nirvana or self-extinction in the infinite Void; the Gita of Nirvana in the Brahman, Brahmanirvana; and Jainism of Nirvana in the chitswarupa of the soul. The sadhaka, if he is sincere, is sure to end by realising that which his consciousness fixes upon as the supreme goal from the beginning of his sadhana. The crown of attainment lies casketed in the seed of aspiration.

But by liberation Sri Aurobindo means liberation into the Divine, the Supreme Being, the Omnipresent Reality. In the Integral Yoga we do not aspire exclusively for peace or silence or power or bliss, though they do come as auxiliary and contributory experiences, but solely for the Divine. Transcending the limitations of Nature, we long to reach no "infinite inane" (shunyam), but the eternal Master and Lover of our being. We take all the experiences that come our way, but proceed, undeflected and firm, towards the single goal of our endeavour—the Divine. Liberation means for us, then, liberation into the Supreme Purusha.

Again, by liberation Sri Aurobindo means liberation both of the soul of man and of his nature. This conception of a double liberation has not been familiar to spiritual seekers for many a long century. The endeavour to purify human nature, so that it may not stand in the way of the soul's liberation, is universally regarded as an indispensable discipline, but it is hardly ever thought possible that even this nature of the three gunas can be liberated from its lower poise and working and transmuted into the divine Nature. But this double liberation is the very base of the supramental manifestation as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. The Integral Yoga really begins where the other yogas usually end.

We shall now pass in brief review the nature and potentiality of this double or integral liberation.

(to be continued)

RISHABHCHAND

Students' Section

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

(To The Children of the Ashram)

THE FORCE OF BODY-CONSCIOUSNESS

THERE is a state of consciousness in which you perceive that the effect of things, circumstances, movements, all the activities of life upon yourself depends almost exclusively upon your attitude towards them. You become then conscious, conscious to the extent of realising that things in themselves are neither good nor bad, they are so only in relation to ourselves: their effect, I say, depends entirely upon the way in which we regard these things. If we take, for example, a circumstance as a gift from God, as a divine Grace, as an outcome of the total harmony, it will help us to become more conscious and truer and stronger. The same identical circumstance, if we take it differently, as a blow of Fate, as a bad force wishing us harm, becomes, on the contrary, a damper on our consciousness, it takes away our strength, brings obscurity, creates disharmony. And yet in either case it is altogether the same circumstance. I would like you to have the experience and make the experiment. For your ideal is to be master of yourselves. But not that only. You should not only be master of your own selves, but master of the circumstances of your life, the circumstances, at least, that immediately surround you and concern you. You must note further that it is an experience that is not confined to the mind alone: it need not happen in your head only, it may and indeed must continue into the body. Certainly, this is a realisation needing great labour, much concentration and self-mastery: you have to force the consciousness into the body, into dense Matter. It is the attitude of the body that will in the end determine every thing: shocks and contacts of the outside world will change its nature according to the way in which they are received by the body. And if you attain perfection in that line, you can become even master of accidents. Such a thing is possible, not only possible, but it is sure to happen, for it is a forward step in man's progress. First of all, you have to realise the power in your mind to the extent that it can act upon

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circumstances and change their effect upon you. Then the power can descend into Matter, into the substance, the cells of your body and endow the body with this capacity of control over things outside and around you.

There is nothing impossible in the world. We ourselves put the limit; always we say, this is possible, that is impossible, one can do this, one cannot do that. Sometimes we admit a thing to be possible but ask who would do it, so it is impossible and so on. Like slaves, like prisoners we bind ourselves to our limits. You call it common sense, but it is a stupid, narrow, ignorant sense; it does not truly know the laws of life. The laws of life are not what we think them to be, what our mind or intellect conceives them to be; they are quite otherwise.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

TENNIS WITH THE MOTHER

SHE seems but playing tennis—
The whole world is in that game!
A little ball she is striking—
What is struck is a huge white flame
Leaping across time's barrier
Between God's hush, man's heart,
And while the exchange goes speeding
The two shall never part.

In scoring the play's progress,
The result of minds that move,
One word in constant usage
Is the mystic syllable "Love".
And the one high act repeated
Over and over again
By either side is "Service",
And it never is done in vain.
For, whether defeat or triumph
Is the end, each movement goes
Soulward: through this short pastime
Eternity comes more close!

K. D. SETHNA

“PERSONALITY TRAITS” OF THE TEACHER ACCORDING TO THE MOTHER*

1. COMPLETE self-control not only to the extent of not showing any anger, but remaining absolutely quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances.

2. In the matter of self-confidence, must also have the sense of the relativity of his importance.

Above all, must have the knowledge that the teacher himself must always progress if he wants his students to progress, must not remain satisfied either with what he is or with what he knows.

3. Must not have any sense of essential superiority over his students nor preference or attachment whatsoever for one or another.

4. Must know that all are equal spiritually and instead of mere tolerance must have a global comprehension or understanding.

5. “The business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material”.—The Human Cycle.

* Some time back a Training College for Teachers sent a questionnaire to the Sri Aurobindo International University regarding the “Personal Traits” of a successful teacher, a subject on which this College was collecting data. When the Mother was informed about it, She made a few remarks which are given here.—Editor.

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

THE VITAL AND ITS NATURE

SELF: It is said that we must be quiet, vigilant and conscious even in our vital being—what does this mean?

SRI AUROBINDO: It means to observe the vital movements, and not allow them to catch hold of you or force you into action, not to be careless and let them come in you—not to let the vital get excited or depressed—to keep it calm always. (12-6-33)

SELF: Please tell me if it is possible to make my surrender to Mother complete before my vital is cleaned?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not possible to make it complete before—but if you do not do it at all, how will the vital be cleaned? Who will do it for you? (18-6-33)

SELF: What do you exactly mean by “cleaning the vital”?

SRI AUROBINDO: To be straightforward, sincere and without falsehood and unclean desires. (19-6-33)

SELF: How is one to do the cleaning?

SRI AUROBINDO: Reject all that is false, mean and dirty. (19-6-33)

SELF: Isn't everything that is in the vital always impure?

SRI AUROBINDO: In the vital itself everything is not necessarily impure. (29-9-33)

SELF: I suppose that unless each part of the being aspires for transformation, there cannot be a total surrender. But how is our low-down vital part to aspire?

SRI AUROBINDO: If the others change and bring down the influence, it can also turn and aspire. (9-10-33)

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SELF: When an undivine action is done, I feel that something jumps on me and keeps on telling me about it again and again even though I decide at once to tell you of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you do an undivine action, it is quite natural that the lower nature-force connected with it should jump on you and insist on it. (27-11-33)

SELF: Will not the lower movements fall off naturally when one begins to live in the higher consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not when one begins, but when the higher consciousness has fixed itself in the vital and physical. But meanwhile, if dealt with by the higher Light, they can be pushed out and can no longer occupy an important place. (26-12-33)

SELF: The vital wants to do what it likes and I suppose most actions are under its control. What is to be done about it?

SRI AUROBINDO: The vital has to be controlled, and not allowed to do what it likes. It is not the vital that has to control you, it is you who have to control the vital.

SELF: Many a time, though the mind resists, the vital fancies itself as something superior to others—greater than others, etc. What am I to do then?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a silly vital egoism and vanity. Your reason ought to be able to show to the vital mind how absurd it is. (18-6-33)

SELF: The other day I had become a bit more conscious. I felt I had overcome everything and asked directly for the divine consciousness! If one wave of the higher consciousness makes me so proud what will happen when the whole thing comes down? I would like very much to know how a mere wave coloured my ideas so much—so that next time I may not make myself so absurd.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is again the vital mind. It has no sense of proportion or measure and is eager to be or achieve something big at once. (18-6-33)

SELF: How is one to check the vital mind from rushing out and constructing wrong or useless formations when one has to deal with some physical objects?

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: Reject them—do not follow or attend to these thoughts—think of something else worth thinking about. (12-6-33)

SELF: During my English class, I notice that the vital creates depression for its own sake. The mental reasons are superficial. Would quietness of the vital, allowing more play to the mind, help?

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally, if the vital is quiet and allows the mind to see things rightly, there will not be this depression. (9-7-33)

SELF: While receiving mental influences from our intellectual superiors (professors, heads of departments etc.) do we not also catch their bad (vital) things?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mental influences are not of a vital character. It is from the vital that the bad things come. (18-7-33)

SELF: What is a vital impulse?

SRI AUROBINDO: An impulse is a push to do something. (12-7-33)

SELF: There is an idea that one should allow an impulse to have some play instead of suppressing it, and that this is the best way of getting rid of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: If you do that the impulse may spread so far as to take hold of you and master you. If a wrong impulse comes, you must reject it as soon as you become aware of it. (24-3-33)

SELF: There is an idea that one should have no clinging desire for anything but take anything that comes one's way and then be ready also to give it up without feeling depressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can such a rule stand? Supposing some one comes and offers you meat or wine, can you accept it? Obviously not. A hundred other instances can be given where the rule would not stand: What the Mother gives or allows you, you can take. (24-3-33)

SELF: How are we to distinguish between our needs and desires? The vital can easily cheat the mind and show its desires as needs.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to develop discrimination so that it becomes impossible for the vital to deceive you. (8-12-33)

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SELF: Why is there no place for even good desires in the spiritual life?

SRI AUROBINDO: If there are good desires, bad desires will come also. There is a place for will and aspiration, not for desire. If there is desire there will be attachment, demand, craving, want of equanimity, sorrow at not getting, all that is unyogic. (5-9-33)

SELF: If our desires are to be rejected, why does Mother sometimes satisfy them?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is you who have to get rid of them. If the Mother does not satisfy at all and the sadhaka keeps them, they will get stronger by suggestion from outside. Each one has to deal with them from within. (4-9-33)

SELF: Does a desire recur in one even when it has been satisfied?

SRI AUROBINDO: It recurs in another form—it is the principle of desire that is maintained in the being by indulgence—unless or until there is detachment from the desire. (1-9-33)

SELF: I have been given the following method of rejecting impulses and desires: "First recognise that it is the vital that has sent the thought or the impulse. Then dissociate yourself from that thought or impulse, as if you had no real connection with it. Finally, throw it away." Is this method correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it is the recognised method of getting the desire out of the system. (24-3-33)

SELF: What is meant by "vital consecration"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Consecration means offering and making sacred to the Mother so that the whole vital nature may belong to her and not to the lower nature. (18-6-37)

SELF: What would be the nature of a transformed vital?

SRI AUROBINDO: Calm, strong, wide, obedient only to the Divine will. (10-9-33)

SELF: You speak of the vital becoming "strong". Is it not already strong by nature?

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: It is weak or strong according to the person or the occasion—but its strength is rajasic and narrow and ignorant and imperfect, not divine. (10-9-33)

SELF: You also speak of the vital becoming “wide”. Here what precisely is the meaning of “wide”?

SRI AUROBINDO: Wide means not narrow or limited or shut up in a small consciousness as all human consciousness, mental, vital or physical always is. (10-3-33)

NAGIN DOSHI

(To be continued)

POEMS

THE CALL

O friends, let's haste, the night is drawing near
And darkness comes darting through heaven's arcades.
Earth groans in grief, and pain's low sobs besmear
The air; dead longings rise from graveyard shades.

Hear, how the moments mourn with panting hearts
And centuries throb with endeavours unfulfilled.
Let's haste, the last quivering ray departs
And skies and waters to night's embraces yield.

Let's haste, let's haste towards a brighter birth...
Hear, hear the trumpet-call of the herald dawn.
A day more splendid, more divine this earth
Shall foster and night vanish with her mask and moan.

Though paved with a myriad failure and decay
Our path shall lead us to the eternal Day.

RANAJIT

POEMS

SEASCAPE

THE sun is sinking; and the swelling sea
Is humming all her sacred speechless lore
Of mighty love in notes of evening breeze:
An unknown spell lies on the sandy shore

That waits in a tranquil drowsy dreamy mood;
A mystic form I see along the vast
Blue ocean's heave, imploring heaven's grace
To send on earth a flame, to slay at last

The blinded forces of the womb of night.
I hear a pang of plaintive goblin-screams
In a mob of scornful voices dull and dry.
I feel the thrilling bliss of moon-born beams

In a myriad lines of golden ruth that sweep
From the Spirit's sky. I lose myself and pray
To Thee, O Lord, to give me eyes to see
Thy deeds of marvel, Thy magnificent Play!

PRITHWINDRA

WITH THE STUDENTS

II

LANGUAGE

ONE of you asked in class, "Why is it that there seems such a world-wide stress on language these days?"—It is perhaps due largely to the growing consciousness of culture and the educational awakening of the masses. This growing consciousness is not at all easy to define because it is, apart from the main lines of force which impel it, a complex movement of a universal nature. The main lines of force may include the Time-Spirit—the spirit of the age in which we live, the spirit of speed and progress. This urge naturally makes it possible for more people to come together and it also follows, according to human nature, that when we see others in a better position than ourselves we want to better our own position. So there is a "reaching up", an urge "to grow," a need for aspiring, a praying for perfection.

In a general way this urge for progress, speed, perfection and knowledge is, at its highest and its lowest, culture; for culture is both mental and physical improvement. In its highest sense it is—intellectual improvement, the imperative instinct for beauty, and the poise of the being in relation with others. Then we may say that the key to culture is language—the ability to read and to understand, to speak and be understood; to listen and have the power to appreciate. It is the stepping-stone to a greater existence, a fuller consciousness, a wider vision; perhaps the greatest aid towards tolerance, understanding and love of our fellow humans and the ultimate ideal of a common unity of mankind aspiring to greater vistas of dawns yet to be made manifest. And to us here in the Ashram, language has a value all its own. The Word is a power unique in itself; whether it be French, the precise mantra-force of the Mother, or the mighty Overmind tones of Sri Aurobindo's English, we have experienced at times while listening to *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo says: "The Word has power—even the ordinary written word has a power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself—as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures, Veda, Upanishads, Gita, it may well have a power to awaken a spiritual and uplifting impulse, even certain

kinds of realisation. To say that it cannot contradict spiritual experience".¹ The great and ancient cultures of the past—the Vedic age of the Rishis, the rich and generous period of the Guptas, the antique and delicate culture of Southern China, the culture of an active intelligence together with a subtle sense, and worship of beauty of ancient Greece, then the culture of the Celtic nations, to which we owe much of the finer strains of beauty in English literature—all of these still remain the fountain-head of our evolving civilisation. To a fast evolving generation, aspiring to greater things, the importance of language and its perfect handling cannot be overstressed. It is the key to open many doors, the doorway leading to the halls of knowledge, the 'Open Sesame' to new worlds leading to yet unknown adventures of the soul and consciousness.

THE CIVILISATION OF THE VENETIANS

We were discussing the plays of Shakespeare today when one of you asked a question which had a wealth of thought behind it; it was: "Why in the civilized life of the Venetians was there so much fighting and cruelty?"

First of all, we should ask: were they really, or only apparently or partly civilized? The type of people we find, say in *The Merchant of Venice* or *Romeo and Juliet*, were apparently highly cultured; they had a very high appreciation of Art, a legacy left them by the Masters of Greece and Rome, as also of Literature from such great poets as Homer, Virgil, Horace and Dante—Government, Law and Administration from various sources both ancient and medieval, Philosophy and Metaphysics from Plato and Aristotle and Aquinas as well as pre-Christian and Christian mystics such as Plotinus and St. Augustine—a wealth of food for the mind. You might say they were on the crest of a wave of mental evolution and progress, and yet cruelty and passion swept through their lives with no apparent control and in spite of all their culture and learning, their fine manners and customs which, like the lavish clothes they wore, seemed so many fine feathers to hide a poverty of soul. What is the answer to this apparent paradox?

First, perhaps we should remember that man is made up of many personalities, he is a psychic being, a mental being, a vital being, and a physical being, which make up the integral whole of his consciousness. In the course of evolution, or, shall we say, growth of mankind as a whole, these various parts of his consciousness grow according to their need at the time. In one age it may be the

¹ Letters of Sri Aurobindo: Third Series P. 292

physical, in another the vital and so on. The time of the Venetians of which we are talking was perhaps an age of mental assimilation (they were assimilating the achievements of the mental age which went before) and vigorous vital expression. The mental assimilation took the form of erudition only among that class of people who could afford it, who set the standard of a culture and education which was more superficial than real; and the vital expression took the form of lavishness in art and dress, in manners and customs, which, when on occasions this touched the lower vital being, burst forth in extravagance and extremes of conduct, exceeding the bounds of mental control or correction; it was a vital perhaps more powerful than the mental being which was probably undergoing a change owing to its period of assimilation.

If we compare the consciousness, then, with the consciousness of today, we find that where in those times a man would draw his sword on the slightest provocation of an insult and fight to the death, today, owing to a higher mental control and a somewhat purer vital, such an idea of killing another because of an insult would be unthinkable in the normal civilised man, when in his right consciousness. This gives us an idea of the progress made in man's evolving consciousness. Of course it is not a progress in a straight line, there are constant set-backs such as wars, and declines, crimes and catastrophes, but these are recoils to allow of assimilation or a gathering of forces for a further push onwards with often a greater impetus. Nevertheless a progress is always there and is apparent in the manifestation of material things such as the progress of science—i.e. man's increasing conquest over time and space with the aeroplane and the radio, and a hundred other examples in all branches of science which have become so apparent in the last fifty years. I suppose no other half century in the whole history of man has been so filled with a multitude of startling discoveries as have been these last fifty years. Also we should remember that this material manifestation, all the wonders which we have witnessed in this age, have had their source in a growing consciousness within—everything built by the hand of man was first conceived in his mind and his soul before it could be expressed in its outer form, as all things and actions which are of any value to life must come from within, for it is within you that you will find the real you, the core and essence of your true being.

(To be continued)

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