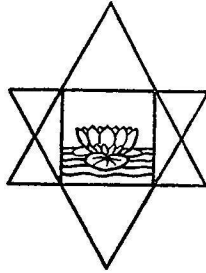


MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY, 1955

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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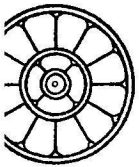
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THE MOTHER'S

NEW YEAR MESSAGE



1955

No human will can finally
prevail against the Divine's Will.
Let us put ourselves deliberately and
exclusively on the side of the Divine
and the Victory is ultimately certain



THE MOTHER'S TALK ON THE EVE OF THE NEW YEAR

I foresee that the coming year will be a difficult year. There will be much inner struggle and much outer struggle too. So I shall tell you of the attitude you should take in such circumstances. The difficulties may last perhaps more than the twelve months of the year, may extend to fourteen months. But I expect you never to lose hold of the attitude I am asking you to keep.

Indeed the more things become difficult, I must say, the quieter you should remain, the more unshakable the faith you should have. This is the most important thing.

When difficulties come, human beings usually get agitated, excited, nervous and so make the difficulties hundredfold more difficult. So I warn you, you must not be like that, you must do exactly the contrary. Repeat the message I have given you for the new year. Whenever there is any cause for anxiety, remember what I tell you today, remember throughout the year. You may repeat the message morning and evening with profit.

Q. What incarnate human will is at present anti-Divine?

A. All human will that is against the Divine is anti-Divine, wherever it manifests, even in you. In the Divine Will there are no political parties, there are only states of consciousness.

Q. Why did you mention the number 14 and not only 12?

A. Perhaps you might ask the stars. But it is like that: why do you take just so many years to grow up? It is in the nature of things. The nature of the struggle determines the measure of its duration. The forces must come up to a certain pitch of activity to produce a certain result. That may mean so many exact months.

We make use of time in the measure of our small human duration. But naturally Divine Forces have not the same measure as we have and that may appear to us too long or too uncertain. For the Divine, however, that is the shortest way, in spite of everything, to the goal aimed at. The goal is the fulfilment of the Divine Will, whatever it is. Given the circumstances, the Divine always takes the shortest way, although that may seem to us the

longest, or tortuous and uncertain. Because we do not see the whole, we see just a little fragment which is according to our proportions. Our vision is narrow, narrow with regard to what is behind, narrow with regard to what is ahead. Man's vision is limited; he cannot see very much beyond his nose. It is true he makes schemes and plans and tries to organise his life from beforehand, but how many can tell what will exactly happen to one's life even a few years ahead? Human vision is linear, that is to say, things present themselves to it one after another in a line. Divine vision is different; it is total, it is global: it looks at the problem integrally, that is to say, from all sides, in the round, not from one side or at one point; the supreme vision takes in all sides and aspects at a glance, not only on the surface, but in the depth too. It embraces all the elements of the question and resolves the question without neglecting any of the points involved in it. Man, on the contrary, follows a straight line; anything that is not on the straight line escapes his notice, and if it were left to his choice, these other things would not get done. The Divine's way is circular and yet it is the most direct.

Q. Would the difficulties be individual or collective?

A. They will be for all, for the world, for India, for the Ashram, and individuals also, more or less equally. It is, I may say, the last hope of the hostile forces—to prevail against the Present Realisation. But we have to hold firm and if we succeed in passing through, we shall find things easier afterwards; the resistance will gradually fritter away.

The adverse forces have always tried to push back the divine Realisation as much as possible, to maintain their hold upon the world as long as possible. That struggle seems now to have come to a head at last. It is their final chance. These forces are not blind or ignorant forces merely, there are conscious beings behind them and they know that it is their last chance; therefore they are putting forth all their will and strength as much as they can and what they can is very great. They are not at all like human beings with their small consciousness and smaller power to which they appear formidable and even as divine forces, not only in the measure of their power, but in their consciousness too. They are engaged in a tremendous battle upon this earth; for it is upon this earth that the victory has to be won, the victory that will decide the course of earth's future.

Those whose heart leaps up, who hold their head high just when things become specially dangerous, will have their full satisfaction. It is now the occasion to surmount oneself.

WHAT THE MOTHER READ OUT ON THE NEW YEAR'S EVE

I

TWO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Question: It seems to me that the number of people in the world accepting the truth of our Yoga of Transformation will not be as large as those who accepted Buddhism, Vedanta or Christianity.

Sri Aurobindo's Reply: Nothing depends on the number. The numbers of Buddhism or Christianity were so great because the majority professed it as a creed without its making the least difference to their external life. If the new consciousness were satisfied with that, it could also and much more easily command homage and acceptance by the whole earth. It is because it is a greater consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness, that it will insist on a real change.

29-4-1934

Question: You have said that the aim of our Yoga is to rise beyond Nirvana, but in the Ashram there are extremely few who have reached or have tried to reach even Nirvana. To reach even Nirvana one has to give up ego and desire. Could it be said that even a few sadhaks in the Ashram have succeeded in doing so? Surely everybody must be making some effort to do this. Why then are they not successful? Is it that after some effort they forget the aim and live here an ordinary life?

Sri Aurobindo's Reply: I suppose if the Nirvana aim had been put before them, more would have been fit for it, for the Nirvana aim is easier than the one we have put before us—and they would not have found it so difficult to reach the standard. The sadhaks here are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer follows still its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part

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of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Ashram itself, and not before.

30-4-1934

2

TWO PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S POEMS

ONE DAY

THE LITTLE MORE

One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.

(Poems Past and Present, p. 17.)

*

Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.

(Ibid. Stanza 7 of "Life".)

THE NEW YEAR BEFORE US

EVERY year marks a deeper probing, by the descending Truth-Light, of the massive darkness at the base of earth's evolutionary being. More and more the supramental Force digs into Matter, grips its slumbering layers, and tears them open for the Light from above to meet the Light hidden below. An increasing victory is here, but every victory preludes a greater fight until the final overthrow of material resistance and the establishment of the Divine Truth in each cell and atom, transforming physical life.

We are now entering a new year close on the heels of a tremendous progressive piercing of the Inconscient by the Supermind on the fourth anniversary of those five days that are associated with the passing of Sri Aurobindo, the lying of his glorious body in state and the laying of it in a vault in the centre of the Ashram courtyard. It is as if on December 5 of 1954 the Mother plucked up to the transformative Light some of the lowest layers of the Inconscient. As a result of this invasion and uplifting, blind powers locked there have broken forth. These would tend to provide a broad ground, as it were, to forces already at work on the earth-plane to retard and repulse the Divine Presence incarnate amongst us.

We may, therefore, expect in the course of the commencing year an aggrandisement of hostility between the Truth that is descending and the Falsehood and Error and Ignorance standing in its way on a basis of primordial obscurity. Huge and multitudinous are the dangers—a possibility of attacks on all fronts, particularly on the physical—because time is running short for the enemies of the Divine and now is their last great chance. They will try their best to create a crisis for the evolving soul of man—perhaps even a catastrophe to all civilisation. Especially against the seekers of the Light we may expect their inner as well as outer strategy to be set. But, balancing the direr peril, there is also the vaster Grace ready to meet the seekers of the Light. And, although we must refrain from letting the dangers and the attacks be encouraged by an egoistic desire on our part to play the hero or by a morbid craving for their stimulus, we must never forget that every danger is only the mask from behind which Sri Aurobindo is calling us to a deeper self-fulfilment and every attack is an invitation to advance still farther the flag of the Divine Mother.

The power of the Truth is with us, preparing for us its kingdom on earth—and once the year of trials reaches its end what is prepared behind the veil will burst out in its true splendour: 1956 will be the golden harvest of the difficult sowing now in rocky soil. We have to hold on and never give way.

Confusions and deformities unsuspected may raise their hideous hoods and hiss and dart at the Light. All that is God-conscious in us may suffer a siege and there may occur breaches in our most solid defences. Doubts and denials may cast shadows over our inmost realisations—and the outer being may be put to severe tests. The body may moan under the burden of its problems. But nothing should shake the central certitude of ultimate victory. The Supreme Divine is ever by our side and the word of Her sweetness and strength will sound always in our hearts and if we listen we shall hear Her say to us under all hardships and conflicts: "Peace".

Yes, "Peace" is the master-word, the sovereign panacea. The dull and massed obscurity on which the hostile forces will base themselves can be converted into spiritual value only by the advent of a profound peace. Profound peace is also the magic spell by which the rage of the hostile forces can be checked, scattered and annulled. Again, it is by profound peace that the various divergent and discordant parts of our complex nature can be held together and set in their true places according to the Divine Design. And profound peace is what will be ever ready to come to our aid because when the Mother plucked up some of the lowest layers of the Inconscient and held them to the descending Light she framed this mighty gesture in a crystalline atmosphere of peace boundless, invincible, all-sustaining. That peace was as if we could see and touch and taste it, as if it were some wonderful stuff with which our very bodies might be remade, some new immaculate matter intended to be sculptured into Spirit. If this peace could be ours, then indeed the strokes against us of the Spirit's enemies would be but strangely guided chisel-smites shaping our physical substance anew. The blows meant to shatter us would be then directed by a hidden Artist of the Worlds to serve as a remoulding of us into perfection. Each attack then would miraculously change into a touch of transfiguring Grace, each difficulty grow a passage creatively hewn out towards a Beauty flawless and imperishable.

Let us call into ourselves the Supermind's peace that the Mother has spread about us. Although the difficulties and the dangers be legion, let us not be obsessed by them or brood upon their blackness. Fear and awed remembrance of them can only feed the night into which they desire to engulf the earth. Knowing that they are there and steeling ourselves to their challenge, let us rather dwell constantly in the immense and luminous tranquillity that is the Mother's protective sheath for our souls, her intimate unfailing embrace of her children. Aware at each moment of this gift of hers by which all difficulties turn to opportunities and all dangers become thrilling short-cuts to the great goal, let us move smiling into the future and discern in it the face of Sri Aurobindo awaiting us.

K. D. SETHNA

DIFFICULTIES

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE
WITH SRI AUROBINDO

11-5-1933

MYSELF: I hear that many are the people here who have been at one time or another on the point of going away due to the pressure of Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not due to the pressure of Yoga, but to the pressure of something in them that negates the Yoga. If one follows one's psychic being and higher mental call, no amount of pressure of Yoga can produce such results. People talk as if the Yoga had some maleficent force in it which produces these results. It is on the contrary the resistance to Yoga that does it.

12-5-1933

MYSELF: The Mother, in her *Conversations*, says that the first effect of Yoga is to take away the mental control so that the ideas and desires which were so long checked become surprisingly prominent and create difficulties.

SRI AUROBINDO: They were not prominent because they were getting some satisfaction or at least the vital generally was getting indulged in one way or another. When they are no longer indulged then they become obstreperous. But they are not new forces created by the Yoga—they were there all the time.

What is meant by the mental control being removed, is that the mental simply kept them in check but could not remove them. So in Yoga the mental has to be replaced by the psychic or spiritual self-control which could do what the vital cannot, only many sadhaks do not make this exchange in time and withdraw the mental control merely.

MYSELF: I find already that at certain moments this life seems distasteful, dull and dreary.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is meant by dull and dreary is that the ordinary preoccupations and amusements of the vital are not there. The whole of one's life and action is to be turned into sadhana and then it is not dull.

MOTHER INDIA

28-5-1933

MYSELF: Sometimes I think that you are giving me a taste of the cup of bliss in very small drops, and at long intervals, but I do not at all despair.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no room certainly for despair. The bliss always comes in drops at first, or a broken trickle. You have to go on cheerfully and in full confidence, till there is the cascade.

30-12-1933

MYSELF: For some time past I have been feeling as if I were receding from the Divine, or is it that the Divine is receding from me?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Divine does not recede. For yourself, you are probably not so much receding as getting into the part where there is the difficulty. I mean you have projected yourself from the mind into the vital. It would have been better if you had drawn back into the psychic—but since you are there, you have only to force your way through it to the psychic gates.

MYSELF: Is there any hint that the projection has been rather invited and encouraged by myself?

SRI AUROBINDO: It came by being preoccupied too much with the difficulties of the nature. It is always better to dwell on the good side of things within yourself. I do not mean in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence, calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable so that a constant positive growth can help in the rejection of all that has to be rejected. But in fact one gets often projected into the vital difficulties at an early stage and then instead of going from the mind into the psychic (through the heart) one has to go through the disturbed vital.

MYSELF: Is it possible to retrace one's steps to the psychic? If so, how?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can be done, if you refuse to be preoccupied with the idea of your difficulties and concentrate on really helpful and positive things. Be cheerful and confident. Doubt and desire & Co. are there, no doubt, but the Divine is there also inside you. Open your eyes and look and look till the veil is rent and you see Him or Her!

10-5-1934

MYSELF: The Mother says in her *Prayers* that experience is willed by the Divine. Am I then to suppose that dearth or abundance of experiences is in any given case willed by the Divine?

DIFFICULTIES

SRI AUROBINDO: To say so has no value unless you realise all things as coming from the Divine. One who has realised as the Mother had realised in the midst of terrible sufferings and difficulties that even these came from the Divine and were preparing her for her work can make a spiritual use of such an attitude. For others it may lead to wrong conclusions.

9-6-1934

MYSELF: My friend is extremely troubled by his own defects and is in utter despair and thinks of putting an end to his own life. What should I say to him from you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Despair is absurd and talks of suicide quite out of place. However a man may stumble, the Divine Grace will be there so long as he aspires for it and in the end lead him through.

15-10-1934

MYSELF: I feel quite helpless and without force and energy, without aspiration or faith. I would like to know if and how one is responsible for such a condition. Shall I persist in meditation or try to replace it by some reading?

SRI AUROBINDO: These things must be the result either of desire or of inertia or of vital restlessness. If you stop meditation, I do not see how you are going to get rid of these things. It is only by bringing in a higher consciousness that you can get rid of the habitual conditions of the old consciousness.

24-10-1934

MYSELF: It seems that it is futile to make any effort for anything. One tries hard to reject habitual thoughts but to no avail. How little is the result after some days of effort! What then is the use?

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is the physical mind refusing to take the trouble of the labour and struggle necessary for the spiritual achievement. It wants to get the highest, but desires a smooth course all the way, "who the devil is going to face so much trouble for getting the Divine?"—that is the underlying feeling. The difficulty with the thoughts is a difficulty every yogi has gone through—so the phenomenon of a little result after some days of effort. It is only when one has cleared the field and ploughed and sown and watched over it that big harvests can be hoped for.

One must either use effort and then one must be patient and persevering, or one can rely on the Divine with a constant call and aspiration. But then the reliance has to be a true one not insisting on immediate fruit.

PEACE

SRI AUROBINDO'S ANSWERS TO SOME QUESTIONS ·

Q: Peace is said to be of capital importance in Yoga. From where is one to get it and how?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is there above you. You have to aspire for it to descend into you. (25-6-1933)

Q: When we get peace and purity and light and other such things, from what plane do they come?

SRI AUROBINDO: From any higher plane. Peace and purity may come from the psychic also. (4-11-1933)

Q: How is one to remain quiet within even while carrying on all kinds of activities?

SRI AUROBINDO: By having a separate consciousness calm and silent within, separate from the mental, vital or physical activity. (18-9-1933)

Q: You have spoken of "a consciousness calm and silent." Is not that the Purusha consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be—But it is part of Nature in you that becomes calm and silent. (20-9-1933)

Q: What is "Silence"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Silence means freedom from thoughts and vital movements—when the whole consciousness is quite still. (28-6-1933)

Q: What is meant by a quiet mind and a quiet vital?

SRI AUROBINDO: A quiet mind means a mind not restless with all sorts of thoughts. A quiet vital is a vital not restless and troubled by all sorts of impulses and desires. (25-7-1933)

Q: If a silent mind is without thoughts or movements, what place is there for thoughts of the Divine or for spiritual aspirations?

PEACE

SRI AUROBINDO: In the entirely silent mind there is usually the static sense of the Divine without any active movement. But there can come into it all the higher thought and aspiration and movements. There is then no absolute silence but one feels a fundamental silence behind which is not disturbed by any movement. (6-8-1933)

Q: Suppose a man begins to concentrate. He goes deeper and deeper and reaches a stage where his mind becomes empty. At last he throws away the mental bondage and advances further. Now he finds himself all alone. Here, to what will he cling? There must be something to hold on to; otherwise he will have to emerge back to the world. For it will be difficult to stay away from it quite alone.

SRI AUROBINDO: When the mind is silent there is peace and in the peace all things that are divine can come. When there is not the mind, there is the Self which is greater than the mind. (30-5-1933)

Q: All sorts of attitudes, sensations, questions, expectations, exultations or else fears of difficulties or disappointments are mine before I open your letters.

SRI AUROBINDO: A useless activity of the vital mind. You should keep it quiet and receive with a silent mind waiting for light. In the silent mind one can receive an answer even if I write nothing. (9-6-1933)

Q: How is the mind to remain quiet while rejecting a movement? Is it not that the rejection moves the mind away from quietness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you imagine that a quiet mind cannot reject anything and it is only the unquiet mind that can do it? It is the quiet mind that can best do it. Quiet does not mean inert and tamasic. (11-6-1933)

Q: What is meant by the words: "Meet things without any superficial and unnecessary reaction"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not to allow the mind to bubble up with all sorts of ideas and feelings etc. but to remain quiet and learn to think and feel only what is true and right. (11-6-1933)

Q: A sadhak tells me that while cleaning the vital we should also try to achieve peace and that it is not good to occupy ourselves too much with merely cleaning the vital. What is the truth here?

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: If you get peace then to clean the vital becomes easy. If you simply clean and clean and do nothing else, you go very slowly—for the vital gets dirty again and has to be cleaned a hundred times. The peace is something that is clean in itself—so to get it is a positive way of securing your object. To look for dirt only and clean is the negative way. (25-6-1933)

Q: How is one to establish a homogeneity in the vital being?

SRI AUROBINDO: Reject all disturbance and call in more and more peace and equality from above into the vital. (29-5-1933)

Q: It is said that when peace descends, a greater depression and inertia can also come. Is that right?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no connection between the descent of Peace and depression. Inertia there may be if the physical being feels the pressure for quietude but turns it into mere inactivity—but that cannot be called exactly a descent—at least not a complete one, since the physical does not share in it. (8-11-1933)

Q: Would a descent of peace be turned at times into inertia by the physical?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Peace is not of the nature of inertia, but the inertia of *tamas* is a degradation of peace or rest as *rajas* is a degradation of divine Force. So when the physical is invited to peace and cannot receive it, it brings up inertia instead. (10-11-1933)

Q: You say, "The inertia is a degradation of peace or rest." What kind of rest do you mean here?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rest of the being from effort, disturbance etc. The Spirit is eternally at rest even in the midst of action—peace gives this spiritual rest. *Tamas* is a degradation of it and leads to inaction. (16-11-1933)

NAGIN DOSHI

ILION

SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK VI—THE BOOK OF THE CHIEFTAINS

But from their midst uprearing a brow that no crown could ennoble,
Male and kingly of front like a lion conscious of puissance
Rose a form august, the monarch great Agamemnon.
Wroth he rose yet throwing a rein on the voice of his passion,
Governing the beast and the demon within by the god who is mighty.
“Happily for thy life and my fame that thou comst with the aegis of heaven
Shadowing thy hoary brows, thou herald of pride and of insult.
Well is it too for his days who sent thee that other and nobler
Heaven made my heart than his who insults and a voice of the immortals¹
Cries to my soul forbidding its passions. O hardness of virtue
Thus to be seized and controlled as in fetters by Zeus and Athene.
Free is the peasant to smite in the pastures the mouth that has wronged him,
Chained in his soul is Atrides. Bound by their debt to the fathers,
Curbed by the god in them painfully move the lives of the noble,
Forced to obey the eye that watches within in their bosoms.
Ever since Zeus Cronion turned in our will towards the waters,
Scourged by the heavens in my dearest, wronged by men and their clamours

¹ Alternative to lines 4—9:

“Wroth he rose with a reddened brow as reddens the forehead
Wide of the heavens with a glory of wrath on the eve of a* tempest.
Well is it, herald, that sacred thou comst with the aegis of heaven
Sheltering thy hoary brows; for thy age should not shield thee nor pardon.†
Shame to the ancient years and the Argive tongue that can utter
Words like these into Argive ears from the mouth of a Hellene.
Well is it too for the length of his days who sent thee, O envoy,
Voicing** his pride, the haughty‡ chief of a barbarous nation,
One who imagines that sole upon earth he is brave and a fighter.
Well for his days that my strength is restrained by a voice that within me”.

* Alternative: “some”.

† Alternative: “Well is it, herald, that sacred thou comst and protected of heaven,
Bearing this stab to Achaia nor fearest insulting her princes”.

** Alternative: “Voice of”.

‡ Alternative: “insolent”.

MOTHER INDIA

Griefs untold I have borne in Argos and Aulis and Troas,
Yoked to the sacred toil of the Greeks for their children and country,
Bound by the gods to a task that is heavy, a load that is bitter.
Seeing the faces¹ of foes in the mask of a friend I was silent.
Hateful I hold him who sworn to a cause that is holy and common
Broods upon private wrongs or serving his² lonely ambition
Studies to reap his gain from the labour and woe of his fellows.
Mire is the man who hears not the gods when they cry to his bosom.
Grief and wrath I coerced nor carried my heart to its record,
All that has hurt its chords and wounded the wings of my spirit.
Nobler must kings be than natures of earth on whom Zeus lays no burden.
Other is Peleus' son than the race of his Aeacid fathers,
Nor like his sire of the wise-still heart deep-sighted and patient
Bearing the awful ruin of the gods, but hastes to his longings;
Dire is his wrath and pursued by the band of his giant ambitions.
Measure and virtue forsake him as Ate grows in his bosom.
Yet not for tyrant wrong nor to serve as a sword for our passions
Zeus created our strength, but that earth might have help from her children.
Not of our moulding its gifts to our soul nor were formed by our labour.
When did we make them, and where were they forged, in what workshop
or furnace?³

Found in what æon of Time, that pride should bewilder the mortal?
Bowed to our will are the folk and our prowess dreadful and godlike?
Shadows are these of the gods which the deep heavens cast on our spirits.
Transient we made not ourselves, but at birth from the first we were fashioned
Valiant or fearful and as was our birth by the gods and their thinkings
Formed, so already enacted and fixed by their wills are our fortunes.
What were the strength of Atrides and what were the craft of Odysseus
Save for their triumphing gods? They would fail and be helpless as infants.
Stronger a woman, wiser a child were, favoured by Heaven.
Ceased not Sarpedon slain who was son of Zeus and unconquered?
Not to Achilles he fell, but Fate and the gods were his slayers.
Kings, to the arrogant shaft that was launched, the unbearable insult
Armoured wisdoms oppose, let not Ate seize on your passions.
Be not as common souls, O you who are Greece and her fortunes,
Nor of your spirits of wrath take counsel but of Athene.
Merit the burden laid by Zeus, his demand from your natures

¹ Alternative: "eyes".

² Alternative to: "serving his"; "lured by a".

³ Alternative to "or furnace": "of being".

ILION

Suffer, O hearts of his seed, O souls who are chosen and mighty,
 All forgetting but Greece and her good; resolve what is noble.
 I will not speak nor advise, for 'tis known we are rivals and foemen."

Calmed by his words and his will he sat down mighty and kinglike;
 But Menelaus arose, the Spartan, the husband of Helen,
 Atreus' younger son from a lesser womb, in his brilliance
 Dwarfed by the other's port, yet tall was he, gracile and splendid,
 As if a panther might hunt by a lion's side in the forest.
 Smiting his thigh with his firm-clenched hand he spoke mid the Argives:—
 "Woe to me, shameless, born to my country a cause of affliction,
 Since for my sake all wrongs must be borne and all shames be encountered;
 And for my sake you have spun through the years down the grooves of disaster
 Bearing the shocks of the Trojans and ravaged by Zeus and by Hector,
 Slaughtered by Rhesus and Memnon, Sarpedon and Penthesilea;
 Or by the Archer pierced, the hostile dreadful Apollo,
 Evilly and the days of the Greeks remote from their kindred—
 Slain on an alien soil by Asian Xanthus and Ida.
 Doomed to the pyre we have toiled for a woman ungracious who left us
 Passing serenely my portals to joy in the chambers of Troya.
 Here let it cease, O my brother! how much wilt thou bear for this graceless
 Child of thy sire, cause still of thy griefs and never of blessing?
 Easily Zeus afflicts who trouble their hearts for a woman;
 But in our ships that sailed close-fraught with this dolorous Ate
 Worse was the bane they bore which King Peleus begot on white Thetis.
 Evil ever was sown by the embrace of the gods with a mortal!
 Alien a portent is born and a breaker of men and their labours,
 One who afflicts with his light or his force mortality's weakness
 Stripping for falsehoods their verities, shaking the walls they erected.
 Hostile all things the terror¹ divine overbears or, helpful,....²
 Neither without him his fellows can prosper nor will his spirit
 Fit in the frame of things earthly but shatters their rhythm and order
 Rending the measures just that the wise have decreed for our growing.
 So have our mortal plannings broken in this fateful Achilles
 And with our blood and our anguish Heaven has fostered his greatness.
 It is enough; let the dire gods choose between Greece and their offspring.
 Even as he bids us, aloof let our hosts twixt the ships and the Xanthus
 Stand from the shock and the cry where Hellene meets with Eoan,
 Troy and Pthia locked, Achilles and Penthesilea,

¹ Alternative. "scourge".

² The continuation after this line is missing.

MOTHER INDIA

Nor any more than watchers care who line an arena;
Calm like the impartial gods they approve the bravest and swiftest.
So let him fight! The fates shall preserve him he vaunts of or gather,
Even as death shall gather us all for memory's clusters,
All in their day who were great or were little, heroes or cowards.
So shall he slay or be slain, a boon to mankind and his country.
Since if he mow down this flower of bale, this sickle by Hades
Whirled if he break—for the high gods ride on the hiss of his spear-shaft,—
Ours is the gain who shall break rejoicing through obdurate portals
Praising Pallas alone and Hera daughter of Heaven.
But if he sink in this last of his fights, as they say it is fated,—
Nor do I deem that the man has been born in Asia or Hellas
Who in the dreadful field can prevail against Penthesilea,—
If to their tents the Myrmidons fleeing umber the meadows
Slain by a girl in her speed and leaving the corpse of their leader,
Ours is the gain, we are rid of a shame and a hate and a danger.
True is it, Troy shall exultant live on in the shadow of Ida,
Yet shall our hearts be light because earth is void of Achilles.
And for the rest of the infinite loss, what we hoped, what we suffered,
Let it all go, let the salt floods swallow it, fate and oblivion
Bury it out in the night; let us sail o'er the waves to our country
Leaving Helen in Troy since the gods are the friends of transgressors.”
So Menelaus in anger and grief miscounselled the Argives.

Great Idomeneus next, the haughty king of the Cretans,
Raised his brow of pride in the lofty Argive assembly.
Tall like a pine that stands up on the slope of Thessalian mountains
Overpeering a cascade's edge and is seen from the valleys,
Such he seemed to their eyes who remembered Greece and her waters,
Heard in their souls the torrent's leap and the wind on the hill-tops.
“Long¹ have I marvelled at heart² to behold in this levy of heroes
Armies so many, chieftains so warlike suffer in silence
Pride of a single man when he thunders and lightens in Troas.
Doubtless the nations that follow his cry are many and valiant,
Doubtless the winds of the north have made him a runner and spearman.
Shall not then force be the King? is not strength the seal of the godhead?
This my soul replies, 'Agamemnon the Atreid only
Choosing for leader and king I have come to the toil and the warfare.

¹ Alternative: “Of”.

² Alternative to “at heart”: “O Greeks”.

ILION

Wisdom and greatness he owns and the wealth and renown of his fathers
But for this whelp of the northlands, nursling of rocks and the sea-cliff,
Who with his bleak and rough-hewn Myrmidons hastes to the carnage,
Leader of wolves to their prey, not the king of a humanised nation.
Not to such head of the cold-drifting mist and the gloom-vigiled Chaos,
Crude to our culture and light and void of our noble fulfilments
Minos shall bend his knee nor Crete, a barbarian's vassal,
Stain her old glories. Oh, but he boasts of a goddess for mother
Born in the senseless seas mid the erring wastes of the Ocean!¹
Gods we adore enough in the heavens, and if from us Hades
Claim one more of this breed, we can bear that excess to her glories,
Not upon earth these new-born deities huge-passioned, sateless
Who with their mouth as of Orcus and stride of the ruinous Ocean
Sole would be seen mid her sons and devour all life's joy and its greatness.
Millions must empty their lives that a few men may o'ershadow the nations,
Numberless homes must weep but their hunger of glory is sated!
Troy shall descend to the shadow; gods and men have condemned her,
Weary, hating her fame. Her dreams, her grandeur, her beauty,
All her greatness and deeds that now end in miserable ashes,
Ceasing shall fade and be as a tale that was forged by the poets..
Only a name shall go down from her past and the woe of her ending
Naked to hatred and rapine and punished with rape and with slaughter.
Never again must her marble pride high-crowned on her hill-top
Look forth dominion and menace over the crested Aegean
Shadowing² Achaia. Fire shall abolish the fame of her ramparts,
Earth her foundations forget. Shall she stand then affronting the azure?
Dire in our path like a lioness once again must we meet her,
Leap and roar of her led by the spear of Achilles, not Hector!
Asia by Peleus guided³ shall stride on us after Antenor?
Though one should plan in the night of his thoughts where no eye can pursue
him,
Instincts of men discover their foe and like hounds in the darkness
Bay at a danger hid. No silence of servitude trembling
Trains to bondage sons of the race of whom Aeolus father
Storm-voiced was and free, nor like other groupings of mortals
Moulded we were by Zeus, but supremely were sifted and fashioned;
Other are Danaus' sons and other the lofty Achaians:

¹ Alternative: "White and swift and foam-footed, vast Oceanus' daughter!"

² Alternative: "Lessening", "Stunting", "Dwarfing".

³ Alternative: "prompted".

MOTHER INDIA

Chainless like Nature's tribes in their many-voiced colonies founded
They their god-given impulse shall keep and their natures of freedom.
Only themselves shall rule them, only their equal spirits
Bowed to the voice of a law that is just, obeying their leaders
Awed by the gods. So with order and balance and harmony noble
Life shall move golden, free in its steps and just in its measure,
Glad of a manhood complete, by excess and defect untormented.
Freedom is life to the Argive's soul, to Aeolia's peoples.
Dulled by a yoke our nations would perish, or live but as shadows,
Changed into phantoms of men with the name of a Greek for a byeword.
Not like the East and her sons is our race, they who bow to a mortal.
Gods there may be in this flesh that suffers and dies; Achaia
Knows them not. Need if he feels of a world to endure and adore him,
Hearts let him seek that are friends with the dust, overpowered by their heavens,
Here in these Asian vastnesses, here where the heats and the perfumes
Sicken the soul and the sense and a soil of indolent plenty
Breeds like the corn in its multitudes natures accustomed to thralldom.
Here let the northern Achilles seek for his slaves and adorers,
Not in the sea-ringed isles and not in the mountains Achaian.
Ten long years of the shock and the war-cry twixt rampart and ocean
Hurting our hearts we have toiled; shall they reap not their ease in the
vengeance?

Troas is strewn¹ with the lives of our friends and with ashes remembered;
Shall not Meriones slain be reckoned in blood and in treasure?
Cretan Idomeneus girt with the strength of his iron retainers
Slaying and burning will stride through the city of music and pleasure,
Babes of her blood borne high on the spears at the head of my column,
Wives of her princes dragged through her streets in its pomp to their passion,
Gold of Troy stream richly past in the gaze of Achilles.
Then let him threaten my days; then let him rally the might of his trumpets,
Yet shall a Cretan spear make search in his heart for his godhead.
Limbs of this god can be pierced; not alone shall I fleet down to Hades."

After him rose from the throne the Locrian swift-footed Ajax.
"Kings of the Greeks, throw a veil o'er² your griefs, lay a curb on your anger:
Moved man's tongue in its wrath looses speech that is hard to be pardoned,
Afterwards stilled we regret, we forgive. If all were resented,
None could live on this earth that is thick with our stumblings. Always
This is the burden of man that he acts from his heart and his passions,

¹ Alternative: "Sown".

² Alternative: "on".

ILION

Stung by the goad of the gods he hacks¹ at the ties that are dearest.
Lust was the guide they sent us, wrath was a whip for his coursers,
Madness they made the heart's comrade, repentance they gave for its scourger.
This too our hearts demand that we bear with our friend when he chides us.
Insult forgive from the noble embittered soul of Achilles!
When with the scorn and the wrath of a lover our depths are tormented,
Who shall forbid the cry and who shall measure the anguish?
Sharper the pain that looses the taunt than theirs who endure it.
Rage has wept in my blood as I lived through the flight o'er the pastures,
Shame coils a snake in my back when thought whispers of Penthesilea.
Bright shine his morns if he mows down this hell-bitch armed by the furies!
But for this shaft of his pity it came from a lesser Pelides,
Not from the slayer of Hector, not from the doom of Sarpedon,
Memnon's mighty o'erthrower, the blood-stained splendid Achilles.
These are the Trojan snares and the fateful smile of a woman!
This thing the soul of a man shall not bear that blood of his labour
Vainly has brought him victory leaving life to the hated;
This is a wound to our race that a Greek should whisper of mercy.
Who can pardon a foe though a god should descend to persuade him?
Justice is first of the gods, but for Pity 'twas spawned by a mortal,
Pity that only disturbs God's measures and false and unrighteous
Holds man back from the joy he might win and troubles his bosom.
Troy has a debt to our hearts; she shall pay it all down to the obol,
Blood of the fall and anguish of flight when the heroes are slaughtered,
Days without joy while we labour and see not the eyes of our parents,
Toil of the war-cry, nights that drag past upon alien beaches,
Helen ravished, Paris triumphant, endless the items
Crowd on a wrath in the memory, kept as in bronze the credit
Stretches out long and blood-stained and savage. Most for the terror
Graved in the hearts of our fathers that still by our youth is remembered,
Hellas waiting and crouching, dreading the spear of the Trojan,
Flattering, sending gifts and pale in her mortal anguish,
Agony long of a race at the mercy of iron invaders,
This shall pay most, the city of pride, the insolent nation,
Pay with her temples charred and her golden mansions in ruins,
Pay with the shrieks of her ravished virgins, the groans of the aged
Burned in their burning homes for our holiday. Music and dancing
Shall be in Troy of another sort than she loved in her greatness

¹ Alternative: "hews".

MOTHER INDIA

Merry with conquered gold and insulting the world with her flutings.
All that she boasted of, statue and picture, all shall be shattered;
Out of our shame she chiselled them, rich with our blood they were coloured.
This not the god from Olympus crowding, this not Achilles,
This not your will, O ye Greeks, shall deny to the Locrian Ajax.
Even though Pallas divine with her aegis counselling mercy
Cumbered my path I would push her aside to leap on my victims.
Learn shall all men on that day how a warrior deals with his foemen."

Darting flames from his eyes the barbarian sate and there rose up
Frowning Tydeus's son, the Tirynthian, strong Diomedes.
"Ajax Oileus, thy words are foam on the lips of a madman.
Cretan Idomeneus, silence the vaunt that thy strength can fulfil not.
Strong art thou, fearless in battle, but not by thy spear-point, O hero,
Hector fell, nor Sarpedon, nor Troilus leading the war-cry.
These were Achilles' deeds which a god might have done out of heaven.
Him we upbraid who saved, nor would any now who revile him
Still have a living tongue for ingratitude but for the hero.
Much to the man forgive who has saved his race and his country:
Him shall the termless centuries praise when we are forgotten.
Curb then your speech, crush down in your hearts the grief and the
choler;

Has not Atrides curbed who is greatest of all in our nations
Wrath in the heart and the words that are winged for our bale from our bosoms?
For as a load to be borne were these passions given to mortals.
Honour Achilles, conquer Troy by his god-given valour.
Now of our discords and griefs debate not for joy of our foemen!
First over Priam's corpse stand victors in Ilion's ramparts;
Discord then let arise or concord solder our nations."

Rugged words and few as fit for the soul that he harboured
Great Tydides spoke and ceased; and there rose up impatient
Tall mid the spears of the north the hero king Prothoënor,
Prince in Cadmeian Thebes who with Leitus led on his thousands;

"Loudly thou vauntest thy freedom Ionian Minos recalling,
Lord of thy southern isles who gildst with thy tribute Mycenae!
We have not bowed our neck to Pelops' line or at Argos'
Iron heel have not crouched nor clasped like thy time-wearied nations,
Python-befriended, gripped in the coils of an iron protection,
Bondage soothed by a name and destruction masked as a helper.
We are the young and lofty and free-souled sons of the Northland.
Nobly Peleus, the Aeacid, seer of a vaster Achaia,

ILION

Pride and his strength and his deeds renouncing for joy of that vision,
Yielded his hoary right to the sapling stock of Atrides.
Noble, we gave to that nobleness freely our grandiose approval.
Not as a foe then, O King, who angered sharpens his arrows,
Fits his wrath and hate to the bow and aims at the heart-strings
But from the Truth that is seated within me compelling my accents,
Taught by my fathers stern not to lie nor to hide what I harbour,
Truth the goddess I speak, nor constrain the voice in my bosom.
Monarch, I own thee first of the Greeks save in valour and counsel,
Brave but less than Achilles, wise but not as Odysseus,
First still in greatness and calm and majesty. Yet, Agameonon,
Love of thy house and thy tribe disfigures the king in thy nature;
Thou thy brother preferrest, thy friends and thy nation unjustly,
Even as a common man whose heart is untaught by Athene,
Beastlike favours his brood forgetting the law of the noble.
Therefore Ajax grew wroth and Teucer sailing abandoned
Over the angry seas this stern fierce toil of the nations;
Therefore Achilles has turned in his soul and gazed towards the Orient.
Yet are we fixed in our truth like hills in heaven, Atrides;
Greece and her safety and good in our passions strive to remember.
Nor of this stamp was thy brother's speech; such words Lacedaemon
Hearing may praise in her kings; we speak not in Thebes what is shameful.
Shamefuller thoughts have never escaped from lips that were high-born.
We will not send forth earth's greatest to die in a friendless battle,
Nor will forsake the daughter of Zeus and white glory of Hellas
Helen the golden-haired Tyndarid, left for the joy of our foemen,
Chained to Paris' delight, earth's goddess the slave of the Phrygian,
Though Menelaus the Spartan abandon his wife to the Trojans
And from the field where he lavished the unvalued blood of his people
Flee to a hearth dishonoured. Not the Atreid's sullied grandeurs,
Greece to defend we have toiled through the summers and lingering autumns
Blind with our blood; for our country we bleed, repelling her foemen.
Dear is that loss to our veins and still that expense we would lavish
Claiming its price from the heavens, though thou sail with thy brother and
cohorts.

Weakling, flee! take thy southern ships, take thy Spartan levies,
Still will the Greeks fight on in the Troad helped by thy absence.
For though the beaches vast grow empty, the tents can be numbered
Standing friendless and few on the huge and hostile champaign.
Always a few will be left whom the threatenings of Fate cannot conquer,

MOTHER INDIA

Always earth has sons¹ whose courage waits not on fortune;
Hellas' heart will be firm confronting the threat of the victor,
Sthenelus war and Tydides, Odysseus and Locrian Ajax,
Thebes' unconquered sons and the hero chiefs of the northland.
Stern and persistent as Time or the seas and as deaf to affliction
We will clash on in the fight unsatisfied, fain of the war-cry,
Helped by the gods and our cause through the dawns and the blood-haunted
evenings,

Rising in armour with morn and outstaying the red of the sunset,
Till in her ashes Troy forgets that she lusted for empire
Or in our own the honour and valour of Greece are extinguished.”
So Prothoënor spoke nor pleased with his words Agamemnon;
But to the northern kings they were summer rain on the visage.

Last Laertes' son, the Ithacan, war-wise Odysseus,
Rose up wide-acclaimed; like an oak was he stunted in stature,
Broad-shouldered, firm-necked, lone and sufficient, as on some island
Regnant one peak whose genial streams flow down to the valley,
Dusk on its slopes are the olives, the storms butt in vain at its shoulders,—
Such he stood and pressed the earth with his feet like one vanquished,
Striving, but held to his will. So Atlas might seem were he mortal,
Atlas whose vastness free from impatience suffers the heavens,
Suffering spares the earth, the thought-haunted motionless Titan,
Bearer of worlds. In those jarring tribes no man was his hater;
For as the Master of all guides humanity, so this Odysseus
Dealt with men and helped and guided them, careful and selfless,
Crafty, tender and wise,—like the Master who bends o'er his creatures,
Suffers their sins and their errors and guides them screening his guidance;
Each through his nature He leads and the world by the lure of His wisdom.

“Princes of Argolis, chiefs of the Locrians, spears of the northland,
Warriors vowed to a sacred hate and a vengeance that's holy,
Stateless still is that hate, that vengeance cries for its victims,
Still is the altar unladen, the priest yet waits with the death-knife.
Who while the rites are unfinished, the gods unsatisfied, impious
Turns in his heart to the feuds of the house and his strife with his equals?
None will approve the evil that fell from the younger Atrides;
But it was anger and sorrow that spoke, it was not Menelaus.
Who would return from Troy and arrive with his war-wasted legions
Back to his home in populous city or orcharded island;

¹ Alternative to “earth has sons” : “souls are born”

There from his ships disembarked look round upon eyes that grow joyless
 Seeking a father or husband slain, a brother heart-treasured,
 Mothers in tears for their children, and when he is asked "O our chieftain,
 What dost thou bring back in place of our dead to fill hearts that are empty?"
 Who then will say, 'I bring back my shame and the shame of my nation;
 Troy yet stands confronting her skies and Helen in Troya'?
 Not for such foil will I go back to Ithaca or to Laertes,
 Rather far would I sail in my ships past southern Cythera
 Turning away in silence from waters where on some headland
 Gazing south o'er the waves my father waits for my coming,
 Leaving Sicily's shores and on through the pillars of Gades.
 Far I would sail whence sound of me never should come to Achaia
 Out into tossing worlds and weltering reaches of tempest
 Dwarfing the swell of the wide-wayed Aegean,—Oceans unbounded
 Either by cliff or by sandy margin, only the heavens
 Ever receding before my keel as it ploughs on for ever
 Frail and alone in a world of waves. Even there would I venture
 Seeking some island unknown, not return with shame to my fathers.
 Well might they wonder how souls like theirs begot us for their offspring.
 Fighters¹ war-afflicted, princes² banded by heaven,
 Wounds and defeat you have borne; bear too their errors who lead you.
 Mortals are kings and have hearts; our leaders too have their passions.
 Then if they err, yet still obey lest anarchy fostered,
 Discord and deaf rebellion that speed like a poison through kingdoms,
 Break all this army in pieces while Ate mocking at mortals
 Trails to a shameful end this noble³ essay of the nations.
 Who among men has not thoughts that he holds for the wisest, though foolish?
 Who, though feeble and nought, esteems not his strength o'er his fellow's?
 Therefore the wisest and strongest choose out a king and a leader,
 Not as a perfect arbiter armed with impossible virtues
 Far o'er our heads and our ken like a god high-judging his creatures,
 But as a man among men who is valiant, wise and far-seeing,
 One of ourselves and the knot of our wills and the sword of our action.
 Him they advise and obey and cover his errors with silence.
 Not Agamemnon the Atreid, Greeks, we obey in this mortal;
 Greece we obey; for she walks in his gait and commands by his gestures.
 Evil he works then who loosens this living knot of Achaia,
 Falling apart from his nation; who, wed to a solitary virtue,

¹ Alternative: "Chieftains".² Alternative: "champions".³ Alternative: "lofty".

MOTHER INDIA

Deeming he does but right, renounces the yoke of his fellows,—
Errs more than hearts of the mire that in blindness and weakness go stumbling.
Man when he spurns his kind, when he equals himself with the deathless
Even in his virtues sins and, erring, calls up Ate:
For among men we were born, not as wild beasts sole in a fastness.
Oft with a name are misled the passionate hearts of the noble;
Chasing highly some image of good they trample its substance.
Evil is worked, not justice, when into the mould of our thinkings
God we would force and enchain to the throb of our hearts the immortals,—
Justice and Virtue, her sister; for where is justice mid creatures
Perfectly? Even the gods are betrayed by our clay to a semblance.
Evil not good he sows who lifted high o'er his fellows
Dreams by his light or his force to compel this deity earth-born,
Evil though his wisdom exceeded the gathered light of the millions,
Evil though his single fate were vaster than Troy and Achaia.
Less is our gain from gods upon earth than from men in our image;
Just is the slow and common march, not a lonely swiftmess
Far from our human reach that is vowed to impossible strivings.
Better the stumbling leader of men than inimitable paces.
If he be Peleus' son and his name the Pthian Achilles,
Worse is the bane: lo, the Ilian battlefield red with his errors!
Yet, O ye Greeks, if the heart returns that was loved, though it wandered,
Though with some pride it return and reproaching the friends that it fled from,
Be not less fond than heart-satisfied parents who yearn o'er that coming,
Smile at its pride and accept the wanderer. Happier music
Never has beat on my grief-vexed ears than the steps of Achilles
Turning back to this Greece and the cry of his strength in its rising.
Zeus is awake in this man who his dreadful and world-slaying puissance
Gave in an hour of portentous birth to the single Achilles.
Taken today are Ilion's towers, a dead man is Priam.
Cross not the hero's will in his hour, Agamemnon Atrides,
Cross not the man whom the gods have chosen to work out their purpose
Then when he rises; his hour is his, though thine be all morrows.
First in the chambers of Paris' delight let us stable our horses,
Afterwards bale that is best shall be done persuading Achilles;
Doubt not the gods' decisions, awful, immutable, ruthless.
Flame shall lick Troy's towers and the limbs of her old men and infants.
O not today, not now remember the faults of the hero!
Follow him rather bravely and blindly as children their leader,
Guide your fate through the war-surge loud in the wake of his exploits,

ILION

Rise, O ye kings of the Greeks! leave debate for the voices of battle.
Peal forth the war-shout, pour forth the spear-sleet, surge towards Troya.
Ilion falls today; we shall turn in our ships to our children.”
So Odysseus spoke and the Achaians heard him applauding;
Ever the pack by the voice of the mighty is seized and attracted!
Then from his seat Agamemnon arising his staff to the herald
Gave and around him arose the Kings of the west and its leaders.
Loud their assembly broke with a stern and martial rumour.

To be continued.

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

SELECTED HYMNS

VAYU THE MASTER OF THE LIFE ENERGIES

RIGVEDA IV. 48

1. Do thou manifest the sacrificial energies that are unmanifested, even as a revealer of felicity and doer of the work; O Vayu, come in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma wine.

2. Put away from thee all denials of expression and with thy steeds of the yoking, with Indra for thy charioteer come, O Vayu, in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma wine.

3. The two that, dark, yet hold all substances, shall observe thee in their labour, they in whom are all forms. O Vayu, come in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma wine.

4. Yoked let the ninety and nine bear thee, they who are yoked by the mind. O Vayu, come in thy car of happy light to the drinking of the Soma wine.

5. Yoke, O Vayu, thy hundred brilliant steeds that shall increase, or else with thy thousand let thy chariot arrive in the mass of its force.

COMMENTARY

The psychological conceptions of the Vedic Rishis have often a marvellous profundity and nowhere more than when they deal with the phenomenon of the conscious activities of mind and life emerging out of the subconscious. It may be said, even, that this idea is the whole basis of the rich and subtle philosophy evolved in that early dawn of knowledge by these inspired Mystics. Nor has any other expressed it with a greater subtlety and felicity than the Rishi Vamadeva, at once one of the most profound seers and one of the sweetest singers of the Vedic age. One of his hymns, the last of the fourth Mandala, is indeed the most important key we possess to the symbolism which hid behind the figures of the sacrifice those realities of psychological experience and perception deemed so sacred by the Aryan forefathers.

In that hymn Vamadeva speaks of the ocean of the subconscious which underlies all our life and activities. Out of that ocean rises "the honeyed wave" of sensational existence with its undelivered burden of unrealised delight climbing full of the "Ghrita" and the "Soma", the clarified mental consciousness and the illumined Ananda that descends from above, to the heaven of Immortality. The "secret Name" of the mental consciousness, the tongue with which the gods taste the world, the nexus of Immortality, is the Ananda which the Soma symbolises. For all this creation has been, as it were, ejected into the subconscious by the four-horned Bull, the divine Purusha whose horns are infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Truth. In images of an energetic incongruity reminding us of the sublime grotesques and strange figures that have survived from the old mystic and symbolic art of the prehistoric world, Vamadeva describes the Purusha in the figure of a man-bull, whose four horns are the four divine principles, his three feet or three legs the three human principles, mentality, vital dynamism and material substance, his two heads the double consciousness of Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, his seven hands the seven natural activities corresponding to the seven principles. "Triply bound"—bound in the mind, bound in the life-energies, bound in the body—"the Bull roars aloud; great is the Divinity that has entered into mortals".

For the "ghritam," the clear light of the mentality reflecting the Truth, has been hidden by the Panis, the lords of the lower sense-activity, and shut up in the subconscious; in our thoughts, in our desires, in our physical consciousness the Light and the Ananda have been triply established, but they are concealed from us. It is in the cow, symbol of the Light from above, that the gods find the clarified streams of the "ghritam". These streams, says the Rishi, rise from the heart of things, from the ocean of the subconscious, *hr̥dyāt samudrāt*, but they are confined in a hundred pens by the enemy, Vritra, so that they may be kept from the eye of discernment, from the knowledge that labours in us to enlighten that which is concealed and deliver that which is imprisoned. They move in the path on the borders of the subconscious, dense if impetuous in their movements, limited by the nervous action, in small formations of the life-energy Vayu, *vatapramiyah*. Purified progressively by the experiences of the conscious heart and mind, these energies of Nature become finally capable of the marriage with Agni, the divine Will-force, which breaks down their boundaries and is himself nourished by their now abundant waves. That is the crisis of the being by which the mortal nature prepares its conversion to immortality.

In the last verse of the hymn Vamadeva describes the whole of existence as established above in the seat of the divine Purusha, below in the ocean of the subconscious and in the Life, *antar samudre hr̥di antar āyusi*. The conscious

mind is, then, the channel through which there is communication between the upper ocean and the lower, between superconscient and subconscient, the light divine and the original darkness of Nature.

Vayu is the Lord of Life. By the ancient Mystics life was considered to be a great force pervading all material existence and the condition of all its activities. It is this idea that was formulated later on in the conception of the Prana, the universal breath of life. All the vital and nervous activities of the human being fall within the definition of Prana, and belong to the domain of Vayu. Yet this great deity has comparatively few hymns to his share in the Rig Veda and even in those Suktas in which he is prominently invoked, does not usually figure alone but in company with others and as if dependent on them. He is especially coupled with Indra and it would almost seem as if for the functionings demanded from him by the Vedic Rishis he needed the aid of the superior deity. When there is question of the divine action of the Life-forces in man, Agni in the form of the Vedic Horse, *Aśwa*, *Dadhikrāvan*, takes usually the place of Vayu.

If we consider the fundamental ideas of the Rishis, this position of Vayu becomes intelligible. The illumination of the lower being by the higher, the mortal by the divine, was their principal concept. Light and Force, *Go* and *Aśwa*, the Cow and the Horse, were the object of the sacrifice. Force was the condition, Light the liberating agency; and Indra and Surya were the chief bringers of Light. Moreover the Force required was the divine Will taking possession of all the human energies and revealing itself in them; and of this Will, this force of conscious energy taking possession of the nervous vitality and revealing itself in it, Agni more than Vayu and especially Agni *Dadhikrāvan* was the symbol. For it is Agni who is master of Tapas, the divine Consciousness formulating itself in universal energy, of which the Prana is only a representative in the lower being. Therefore in Vamadeva's hymn, the fifty-eighth of the fourth Mandala, it is Indra and Surya and Agni who effect the great manifestation of the conscious divinity out of the subconscient. Vata or Vayu, the nervous activity, is only a first condition of the emergent Mind. And for man it is the meeting of Life with Mind and the support given by the former to the evolution of the latter which is the important aspect of Vayu. Therefore we find Indra, Master of Mind, and Vayu, Master of Life, coupled together and the latter always somewhat dependent on the former; the Maruts, the thought-forces, although in their origin they seem to be as much powers of Vayu as of Indra, are more important to the Rishis than Vayu himself and even in their dynamic aspect are more closely associated with Agni Rudra than with the natural chief of the legions of the Air.

The present hymn, the forty-eighth of the Mandala is the last of three

in. which Vamadeva invokes Indra and Vayu for the drinking of the Soma-wine. They are called in conjointly as the two lords of brilliant force, *çavasaspati*, as in another hymn, in a former Mandala, they are invoked as lords of thought, *dhiyaspati*. Indra is the master of mental force, Vayu of nervous or vital force and their union is necessary for thought and for action. They are invited to come in one common chariot and drink together of the wine of the Ananda which brings with it the divinising energies. Vayu, it is said, has the right of the first draught; for it is the supporting vital forces that must first become capable of the ecstasy of the divine action.

In the third hymn, in which the result of the sacrifice is defined, Vayu is alone invoked, but even so his companionship with Indra is clearly indicated. He is to come in a chariot of happy brightness, like Usha in another hymn, to drink of the immortalising wine.¹ The chariot symbolises movement of energy and it is a glad movement of already illuminated vital energies that is invoked in the form of Vayu. The divine utility of this brightly happy movement is indicated in the first three verses.

The god is to manifest—he is to bring into the light of the conscious activity sacrificial energies which are not yet manifested,² are yet hidden in the darkness of the subconscious. In the ritualistic interpretation the phrase may be translated, “Eat of offerings that have not been eaten” or, in another sense of the verb *vi*, it may be rendered “Arrive at sacrificial energies which have never been approached”; but all these renderings amount, symbolically, to the same psychological sense. Powers and activities that have not yet been called up out of the subconscious, have to be liberated from its secret cave by the combined action of Indra and Vayu and devoted to the work.

For it is not towards an ordinary action of the nervous mentality that they are called. Vayu is to manifest these energies as would “a revealer of the felicity, a doer of the Aryan work”, *viṣo na rāyo aryah*. These words sufficiently indicate the nature of the energies that are to be evoked. It is possible, however, that the phrase may have a covert reference to Indra and thus indicate what is afterwards clearly expressed, the necessity that Vayu’s action should be governed by the illumined and aspiring force of the more brilliant god. For it is Indra’s enlightenment that leads to the secret of beatitude being revealed and he is the first labourer in the Work. To Indra, Agni and Surya among the gods is especially applied the term *arya*, which describes with an untranslatable compactness those who rise to the noble aspiration and who do the great labour as an offering in order to arrive at the good and the bliss.

¹ Vāyavā chandren’ā rathena yāhi sutasya pītaye.
Vihi hotrā avitā.

In the second verse the necessity of Indra's guidance is affirmed expressly. Vayu is to come putting away all denials that may be opposed to the manifestation of the unmanifested, *niryuvāno açastih*. The word *açastih* means literally "not-expressings" and describes the detention by obscuring powers like Vritra of the light and power that are waiting to be revealed, ready to be called out into expression through the influence of the gods and by the instrumentality of the Word. The Word is the power that expresses, *çastram, gir, vachas*. But it has to be protected and given its right effect by the divine Powers. Vayu is to do this office; he has to expel all powers of denial, of obscuration, of non-manifestation. To do this work he must arrive "with his steeds of the yoking and Indra for charioteer," *niyutvān indrasārathih*. The steeds of Indra, of Vayu, of Surya have each their appropriate name. Indra's horses are *hari* or *babhru*, red gold or tawny yellow; Surya's *harit*, indicating a more deep, full and intense luminousness; Vayu's are *niyut*, steeds of the yoking; for they have to be driven by Indra, the movements of the Master of nervous and vital energy guided by the Master of mind.

The third verse¹ would seem at first to bring in an unconnected idea; it speaks of a dark Heaven and Earth with all their forms obeying or following in their labour the movements of Vayu in his Indra-driven car. They are not mentioned by name but described as the two black or dark holders of substance or holders of wealth, *vasudhit*; but the latter word sufficiently indicates earth and by implication of the dual form Heaven also, its companion. We must note that it is not Heaven the father and Earth the mother that are indicated, but the two sisters, Rodasi, feminine forms of heaven and earth, who symbolise the general energies of the mental and physical consciousness. It is their dark states—the obscured consciousness between its two limits of the mental and the physical,—which by the happy movement of the nervous dynamism begin to labour in accordance with the movement or under the control of Vayu and to yield up their hidden forms; for all forms are concealed in them and they must be compelled to reveal them. Thus we consider that this verse completes the sense of the two that precede. For always when the Veda is properly understood, its verses are seen to unroll the thought with a profound logical coherence and pregnant succession.

The two remaining riks indicate the result produced by this action of Heaven and Earth and by their yielding up of hidden forms and unmanifested energies on the movement of Vayu as his car gallops towards the Ananda. First of all his horses are to attain their normally complete general number. "Let the ninety-nine be yoked and bear thee, those that are yoked by the

¹ Anu krishne vasudhit, yemāte vi vapeçasā.

mind.”¹ The constantly recurring numbers ninety-nine, a hundred and a thousand have a symbolic significance in the Veda which it is very difficult to disengage with any precision. The secret is perhaps to be found in the multiplication of the mystic number seven by itself and its double repetition with a unit added before and at the end, making altogether $1+49+49+1=100$. Seven is the number of essential principles in manifested Nature, the seven forms of divine consciousness at play in the world. Each, formulated severally, contains the other six in itself; thus the full number is forty-nine, and to this is added the unit above out of which all develops, giving us altogether a scale of fifty and forming the complete gamut of active consciousness. But there is also its duplication by an ascending and descending series, the descent of the gods, the ascent of man. This gives us ninety-nine, the number variously applied in the Veda to horses, cities, rivers, in each case with a separate but kindred symbolism. If we add an obscure unit below into which all descends to the luminous unit above towards which all ascends we have the full scale of one hundred.

It is therefore a complex energy of consciousness which is to be the result of Vayu’s movement; it is the emergence of the fullest movement of the mental activity now only latent and potential in man,—the ninety and nine steeds that are yoked by the mind. And in the next verse the culminating unit is added. We have a hundred horses, and because the action is now that of complete luminous mentality, these steeds, though they still carry Vayu and Indra, are no longer merely *niyut*, but *hari*, the colour of Indra’s brilliant bays². “Yoke, O Vayu, a hundred of the brilliant ones, that are to be increased.”

But why to be increased? Because a hundred represents the general fullness of the variously combined movements, but not their utter complexity. Each of the hundred can be multiplied by ten; all can be increased in their own kind: for that is the nature of the increase indicated by the word *poshyānām*. Therefore, says the Rishi, either come with the general fullness of the hundred to be afterwards nourished into their full complexity of a hundred tens or, if thou wilt, come at once with thy thousand and let thy movement arrive in the utter mass of its entire potential energy.³ It is the completely varied all-ensphering, all-energising mental illumination with its full perfection of being, power, bliss, knowledge, mentality, vital force, physical activity that he desires. For, this attained, the subconscious is compelled to yield up all its hidden possibilities at the will of the perfected mind for the rich and abundant movement of the perfected life.

¹ Vahantu twā manoyujo yuktāso navatir nava.

² Vayo çatam harin’am yuvasva poshyān’am.

³ Uta vate sahasrin’o ratha ā yātu pājasā.

THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME INTRODUCTORY NOTES

(Continued from the previous issue)

3

IN the poetry of sheer spiritual Light we have two kinds of work by Sri Aurobindo. One makes an individual use of traditional forms: here the greatest achievement is the blank-verse *Savitri*. The other makes experiments in new forms: here the outstanding accomplishment is compositions solving the problem of quantitative metre which has baffled so many English poets. But these compositions are themselves of two kinds—those that deal with directly spiritual experiences and an unfinished epic of about four thousand lines, entitled *Ilion*, that is based on Homer's theme in the *Iliad*. Only some four hundred and odd lines of this fragment were subjected to thorough revision by Sri Aurobindo, but the whole of it is memorable both as poetry and as technique. And even if this were not so and only the few thoroughly revised verses were worth attention, we should have to devote some space to them and to an exposition of their main metrical principles. For these verses are an astonishing piece and in general their metric applies also to other forms than theirs and this form itself is central to the problem of quantity, attempting as it does to bring the Olympian pace of the ancient hexameter into English.

Sri Aurobindo holds it essential for the classical hexameter's typical pace that not only a suggestive rhythmical function but also full metrical value should be given, as in the ancient languages, to quantity, to the time taken by the voice to pronounce the vowel on which a syllable is supported. English builds on stress, the vertical weight on a vowel. In quantity we deal with the horizontal vowel-mass. A word like "shadows" is by stress prominent in the first syllable; by quantity in the second. Hitherto the English hexameter has been constructed either by subduing stress and enforcing the quantitative prominence current in Greek and Latin or else by ignoring this prominence and counting only the stress-element natural to English. Sri Aurobindo says that stress in English can never be ignored, but that substantial quantity of the old kind must also be recognized. He considers both to be legitimate lengths as they make the

voice accumulate either from above or with a movement across. Stress thus becomes a special form of quantity, and in the genuine quantitative English hexameter a word like "shadows" must be scanned as long in both its syllables.

Another important feature of the Aurobindonian hexameter is that the classical rule about length accruing through a load of consonants after a short vowel is scrapped except in rare cases where the consonants naturally stretch out the voice by their peculiar combined sounds: e.g. "strength". In English, according to Sri Aurobindo, the voice is carried away by the strong stress from all unstressed syllables that are intrinsically short: it is not allowed to dwell unless an intrinsic long meets it. To reckon intrinsic shorts as long because of a consonantal clutter behind them is to artificialise English. All the more is artificiality invited if we take a short vowel as lengthened by a throw-back influence from the initial consonants of the next word: words in English are individual units with greater separateness and independence than in Greek or Latin where the voice is more uniformly and more continuously spread out. Even sensitive students of the language like Robert Bridges have fallen into the error of employing spurious lengths as well as the error of slurring over the stress-factor, just as poets like Longfellow have ignored the intrinsic long when unstressed. Sri Aurobindo, fighting free of either oversight, reaches a form in tune both with the spirit of the classical tongues and with that of English.

Besides syllables about which a clear rule can be given, there are many sounds in English which are doubtful or variable in quantity and some whose quantitative value may alter with position or other circumstances. Sri Aurobindo wants the ear to be the sole judge in such cases and hence a certain latitude to be conceded to the poet.

As a result of taking all these factors into consideration the form reached by Sri Aurobindo is more plastic in foot-modulation than in the past. The Aurobindonian plasticity is most necessary, since English, unlike Greek and Latin, is by nature prone to a free play on the metrical base. To un-English the hexameter by denying it that play on the ground that it will not duplicate the classical type is to see the structure and form of poetry with a scholarly instead of a creative eye. The usual English type is a run of five dactyls (long-short-short) with a closing spondee (long-long) or trochee (long-short) and a spondaic or trochaic substitution anywhere in the line. Sri Aurobindo, regarding stress as part of quantity and admitting the unstressed long as vital to the technique gets automatically other trisyllabic feet than the dactyl: for instance, the words "shadows of" would constitute for him an anti-bacchius (long-long-short). Nor then is there any reason why a non-dactylic trisyllable should contain one stress alone: there can be more than one stress in a foot,

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as in "Deep under" or "Golden flame". These and other modulations, including four-syllabled feet, have no acknowledged role in the existing English hexameter. Sri Aurobindo legitimises them into organic effective components.¹

So much for the technique. But what is technique without the life-breath of inspiration? Sri Aurobindo's merit lies in providing at the same time an imaginative vitality and a versatile metrical mould readily responding to it. The two are adequate to all moods and moments. *Iliad* commences augustly with a new day breaking over the besieged city and rousing once more the world:

...Earth in the dawn-fire delivered from starry and shadowy vastness
Woke to the wonder of life and its passion and sorrow and beauty,
All on her bosom sustaining, the patient compassionate Mother.
Out of the formless vision of Night with its look on things hidden,
Given to the gaze of the azure she lay in her garment of greenness,
Wearing light on her brow...

Then there is the suggestive picture of the Dawn-Goddess:

Fateful she lifted the doom-scroll red with the script of the Immortals,
Deep in the invisible air that folds in the race and its morrows
Fixed it, and passed on smiling the smile of the griefless and deathless,
Dealers of death though death they know not, who in the morning
Scatter the seed of the event for the reaping ready at nightfall.

As poetically delineated is the advent of the herald from Argos to Troy in the first daylight. A few bold antithetical strokes and a momentous figure stands before us:

One and unarmed in the car was the driver; grey was he, shrunken,
Worn with his decades. To Pergama cinctured with strength Cyclopean
Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.

¹ To appreciate in full and in all its nuances his conception of quantity and particularly of the hexameter one must read his long essay *On Quantitative Metre* included in *Collected Poems and Plays*, two volumes published in 1942. Here he touches also upon several problems related to poetry at large. An English reviewer, Banning Richardson, writing in *The Aryan Path* of March 1944, remarks about this "admirable essay" that it is "an essay which deserves wide currency and consideration by all those interested in the future of English poetry and of poetry in general." It is further remarked. "In it he seems to have struck at the root of the problem which modern poets have been attempting to solve by recourse to free verse forms. Both argument and example are convincing, and one wonders whether poets like Eliot, Auden and Spender have reached similar conclusions. At least, they should be made aware of this considerable contribution to English prosody by an Indian poet."

THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

The eye that catches the outer hues and contours as well as the inner reality, the vision both precisely evocative and interpretatively imaged, is almost everywhere in this epic. Take the phrase about the significance of coming events being hidden from us by life's superficial clamour to such a degree that at times "least knows the messenger chosen for the summons":

Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper,
Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.

Or that unforced yet arresting symbolisation of a mental state by a most materially outward picture in the last verse of the following:

...on the threshold Thrasymachus halted

Looking for servant or guard, but felt only a loneness of slumber
Drawing the soul's sight within away from its life and things human;
Soundless, unheeding, the vacant corridors fled into darkness.

A simile both charming and sinister presents the occult reason for the seemingly issueless long-protracted war—the radiant and yet, from the human angle, heartless play of the Gods:

Triumph and agony changing hands in a desperate measure
Faced and turned as a man and a maiden trampling the grasses
Face and turn and they laugh in their joy of the dance and each other.
These were gods and they trampled lives...

Perhaps the greatest stroke of imagination in the poem is when we are told of Deiphobus, one of the Trojan heroes, as seen by the Immortals after they had stopped their play with Troy and withdrawn from the battle their mighty zest, the issue already decided by them, the warriors slain and Troy burned in their minds. The Goddess of Doom, gigantic and sombre, bounding and hurrying and

Seeing before her the end and imagining massacre calmly,
Laughed and admired the flames and rejoiced in the cry of the captives.
Under her, dead to the watching Immortals, Deiphobus hastened
Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,
Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the daemon.
Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,
Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting
Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,
So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.

Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour by things coming.
 Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power of the future
 Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit
 Only an eidolon seemed of the being that lived in him, fleeting
 Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

Elaborated in true Homeric style, the simile fills us not only with its own grandeur but also with a sense of the far stretch and clairvoyant depth of a time-transcending Consciousness beyond the human. And how inevitably the spacious speed of the hexameter, meaningfully modulated, rolls into our mind all the suggestions! No other span of line, no other variety of foot-structure would have served so well. And when we feel this, we have a disclosure of the poet's absolute intimacy with the essence of his medium, a genuine seizing of the very soul of the measure.

Though sensuously more complex, philosophically more subtle, spiritually more inward than Homer, Sri Aurobindo has the same elemental energy, the same objectifying eye, the same untortured freshness of appeal. The accent is Homer's—the mixture is there of simplicity, strength, sinuousness, movement and majesty. *Iliad* is throughout a triumphant fusing of the Homeric with the Aurobindonian. And in places the spirit of Greek myth and epic is blended with the spirit of Indian Yoga in a masterly inspiration: flawless word and rhythm embody a vision packed with the light of the occult Orient yet tempering and naturalising itself to the atmosphere of heroic Hellas.

This atmosphere envelops us not only when it is charged with accents of bounding energy, thrilled with the tones of passionate gesture either physical or mental: it spreads about us with the burden of the least movement, the lightest act. The conjuring up of the heroic, the high-souled, by even the most casual turn we may indirectly describe through the two lines put into the mouth of Deiphobus about the sudden actualisations of Fate:

Always man's Fate hangs poised on the fitting breath of a moment;
 Called by some word, by some gesture it leaps, then 'tis graven, 'tis granite.

And sometimes just a bare phrase is the transparent vesture of a whole world of proud pathos—a truly Homeric effect as in the last part of the line on the old Priam:

Lonely, august he stood, like one whom death has forgotten.

A subtler impression, but with as much economy and as direct a stress of dignified feeling, is the phrase about Priam's wife Hecuba who has suffered

the loss of her most virile and valiant son as well as of the son who was most boyishly beautiful:

Mother once of Troilus, mother once of Hector.

An entire history of rare happiness unremittingly snatched away is touched off with a supreme restraint twice repeated by that diminutive poignancy, the adverb "once". And a long persistent mass of pitiful experience is gathered, with a deft display of knowledge of human nature, in the moving yet poised phrases:

Helped by the anxious joy of their kindred supported their anguish
Women with travail racked for the child who shall rack them with sorrow.

The irony here is of personal life; an irony of martial interrelations strikes its note, both stern and tragic, in

Ajax has bit at the dust; it is all he shall have of the Troad;
Tall Meriones lies and measures his portion of booty.

But, of course, the verses that remain fastest in our memory are those where the thought or the image hurls upon us with a wide yet controlled grandeur as in Homer at his highest. The impact is essentially no less when it is single-lined, as in the verse about the cripple god Hephaestus—the verse whose beginning is reminiscent of several of Homer's "Olympian descents" ("*Bê de kat' oulumpoio...*"):

Down upon earth he came with his lame omnipotent motion.

Perhaps the impact is at its most effective in the declarations of the gods and goddesses when Zeus summons them together as well as in the harangues by Antenor, Laocoon and Paris in the Trojan assembly. The latter are masterpieces of political oratory that yet miss nothing of the poetic in the political and of the personal in the public, whether it is the old statesman who advises a strategy of temporary surrender for preparing covertly a future revolt—

...Be as a cavern for lions;

Be as a Fate that crouches! Wordless and stern for your vengeance
Self-gathered work in the might and the secrecy shrouding your bosoms,

or it is the young lover and warrior setting aside both caution and self-censure

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and evoking a haughty happy confident heroism in what seems a world of iron caprice—

Power is divine; divinest of all is power over mortals...
Conscious dimly of births unfinished hid in our being
Rest we cannot; a world cries in us for space and for fullness...
All is injustice of love or all is injustice of battle...
You cannot utterly die while the Power lives untired in your bosoms;
When 'tis withdrawn, not a moment of life can be added by virtue...
Proudly determine on victory, live by disaster unshaken.
Either Fate receive like men, nay, like gods, nay, like Trojans.

When, however, a deeper sense of the Divine is expressed than Helen-drunk Paris could reach and there is a pressing forward through verse after weighty verse to a large picture of Heaven's dealings with earth the impact becomes more clearly Aurobindonian without ceasing to be Homeric:

...not alone the mind in its trouble
God beholds, but the spirit behind that has joy of the torture.
Might not the human gaze on the smoke of a furnace, the burning
Red, intolerable anguish of ore that is fused in the hell-heat,
Shrink and yearn for coolness and peace and condemn all the labour?
Rather look for the purity coming, the steel in its beauty,
Rather rejoice with the master who stands in his gladness accepting
Heat of the glorious god and the fruitful pain of the iron.

Such lines remain fastest in our memory, but the poet's absolute intimacy with the very soul of the medium is evident everywhere and does not depend on any particular mood or situation. It is difficult to resist the conviction that the classical hexameter has once for all been authentically "Englishified" by an Indian after poet on English poet had failed. Side by side with the five-foot blank verse there is now a second sovereign string to the bow of English poetry for whoever can stir to a deep or lofty theme. And with the addition of it the task is made easy to revive in forms natural to English many kinds of classical quantitative metres as well as to cut entirely new patterns on a quantitative basis. Both these things Sri Aurobindo does in his latest work.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

THE ACTION OF THE FORCE

SADHAKA: Could I not leave the charge of my sadhana to the Mother's Force? Why let my adhar think that it is doing it for the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: The system has first to be accustomed to the Force working. (9-5-1934)

SADHAKA: From eleven o'clock I have been feeling some force trying to descend. Am I right? Till the morning there was such a darkness that I could not even aspire quietly.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Force is always there, one has to keep oneself open to it.

SADHAKA: Today I felt as if someone else than myself was carrying out my actions. Of course I was there, but in the background. Was it not the Mother's Force trying to take me into itself integrally?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is too much to say that. What you say amounts only to some glimpse of the cosmic Force behind all the actions. (2-6-1934)

SADHAKA: I gather that the cosmic Force is behind all our actions whether we see it or not. Now, have we to open ourselves to this Force in order to arrive at the divine Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessarily—for the perfect action it is necessary. (4-6-1934)

SADHAKA: Since, "for the perfect action it is necessary", should I open myself to the cosmic Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: Do what you have to do and never mind about the cosmic Force. (5-6-1934)

SADHAKA: During the evening meditation with the Mother my consciousness felt released in the silence. Then there flowed in some new energy which helped me to throw out the hindrances which the sciatica often brings in. Does all that mean that my being has now begun to allow the Mother's working—silence and power of transformation, which she generally brings down at that time?

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SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, certainly—if you always received the Power and let it work, there would soon be no sciatica. (25-6-1934)

SADHAKA: At the end of the above experience, it was also felt that something like an electricity shock passed through my physical sensations.

SRI AUROBINDO: Electricity shock always indicates a passage of dynamic Force.

SADHAKA: My psychological analysis indicates that it is not always possible for us, sadhakas, to let the Mother work in us spontaneously. For often something in us keeps off and closes the doors against her. I think the best course would be to develop our will-power, so that something might be always there to help us reopen the doors. I mean here the will not of the vital or mental kind but the true will-power. Would you kindly enlighten me as to how to develop it?

SRI AUROBINDO: The only way to do it is (1) to become aware of a conscious Force behind that uses the mind etc. (2) to learn by practice to direct that Force towards its object. I don't suppose you will find it easy to do either of these things at once—one must first learn to live more deeply in the inner consciousness than you have done hitherto. (16-7-1934)

SADHAKA: At present what I often feel is the silence and the Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are the two first things that have to be frequent till they are stabilised. (18-7-1934)

SADHAKA: It is after a long time that there is a pressure on the head. Perhaps a higher Force is trying to descend and my being resists?

SRI AUROBINDO: The being does not resist—if it did the pressure would disappear. It is some part of the nature which is not yet able to have the free flow so there is the pressure of the Force to make a way for itself. (19-7-1934)

SADHAKA: As the Mother's Force seems to be succeeding more and more, so the adverse Forces are now trying to hamper her progress.

SRI AUROBINDO: Adverse Forces will always try to interfere—it is their trade. But there is no necessity for the sadhakas to listen to their suggestions. (21-7-1934)

SADHAKA: If I do not allow any mental activity, through which agency will the Force act?

SRI AUROBINDO: It creates its own activities in the mind or elsewhere. (2-8-1934)

SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SADHAKA: At present there is no pressure of the Force. Does it mean that the Force has gone behind and works under a veil?

SRI AUROBINDO: The action of the Force does not always create a pressure. When it does not need to press it acts quietly. (7-8-1934)

SADHAKA: When I got up from sleep I found that a cold had already entered. My consciousness brought down the Mother's Force and the cold disappeared. The same process was tried for other troubles too. I want to know if the method adopted for the Force was quite the right one.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is quite the right way. It is very good that you are learning to use the Force. (27-8-1934)

SADHAKA: Sometimes a burning spark suddenly enters my forehead and remains there for a short time only.

SRI AUROBINDO: A spark of the higher dynamic force, I suppose. (7-9-1934)

SADHAKA: The higher consciousness flows down perpetually its Force. Coming down the nose it has begun to work on my throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: It has then touched the externalising mind centre. (11-9-1934)

SADHAKA: During the evening meditation there were very powerful pressures inside the head. Is there any working started?

SRI AUROBINDO: No—an extension of the working on the inner mind.

SADHAKA: There were also sharp pressures on many parts of the face as with a pointed instrument.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is a working on the externalising mind.

SADHAKA: During the blank state my consciousness shifts its lodging from the inner mind centre to the centre on the head.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a first entry into the higher consciousness. (12-9-1934)

SADHAKA: When the pressure on the temples of the head becomes stronger there comes a spontaneous tendency to soar upwards.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is through the inner mind that one ascends—so that is quite natural.

MOTHER INDIA

SADHAKA: There is such a prolonged pressure on the whole head that I am forced to remain withdrawn all the time. And the eyes have become like two balls of fire—so much so that I cannot keep them open easily for a while—they are as if intoxicated. How then shall I carry out my outer work?

SRI AUROBINDO: If the pressure is too great, the remedy is to widen the consciousness. With the peace and silence there should come a wideness that can receive any amount of Force without any reactions, whether heaviness or compulsion to remain withdrawn or the difficulty of the eyes. (9-10-1934)

SADHAKA: Some strong vibrations were felt when I went to the Mother for Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: Strong vibrations are simply those of the force coming in. (12-10-1934)

SADHAKA: About the strength you wrote, "That can only come by the Force as well as the Peace descending." I think I was wrong in taking that the Mother's Force and Peace were already there.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have not said that the Force of the Higher Consciousness has come down and settled itself in the body. It is only now that you are speaking of the descent of that Force. Mother's Force is acting all the time, but that can act upon or through the ordinary consciousness also. (20-10-1934)

SADHAKA: What is meant by the above question is: is it possible for me now to remain centrally in the pure-existence and direct the actions of the outer being by the true consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is not yet possible. The true consciousness must be there in the mind and vital before that is done and the true consciousness is the psychic and the higher. What one can do before that is to use the mental will to direct the actions in the right way or to reject the things that have to be rejected. But this you had stopped when the silence, emptiness etc. came down. (20-10-1934)

SADHAKA: Could I ask you why I had stopped that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because you thought you must leave everything to the Mother and not interfere. (22-10-1934)

NAGIN DOSHI

WHY I AM HERE*

As I begin to write, I observe that an unseen Hand has spread a striking symbol across the morning sky. A perfect double rainbow forms a giant arch in the west. The deluge of the long night has ended. From its source in the east the splendour of the new day spreads across the world.

As I ponder why I am here, this spectacle reminds me that the great things of life, like life itself, are not achieved but given. Man has painted many entrancing scenes, has flung his feats of engineering across vast rivers, and has erected in honor of his heroes magnificent triumphal arches. But no man has ever fashioned a rainbow or a dawn. Mighty as have been his successes, man is on earth, primarily and overwhelmingly, not to achieve but to receive.

As a *sadhak* of the Integral Yoga, I am here to become an *adhar*, a vessel fit to receive the divine Grace and Power. The earnest of fulfilment is the divine double rainbow that fills our ashram horizon and heralds a New Day for our perplexed and stricken world. Is it not fitting, then, that even so small an offering as this essay be dedicated to the Mother in whose wisdom and providence it affords a further opportunity to clarify the *raison d'être* of my *sadhana*? May the writing be free from the taint of desire for the fruit of works.

In the days of wayward youth this subject haunted me in the form of the question, "Why am I here?" It pursued me like "The Hound of Heaven" until I surrendered to the divine claim on my life. During the decades of my professional religious "leadership" it was I who, in my "pride of the instrument" and my shallow self-assurance, presumed, "in the name of God," to confront *others* with the challenging query, "Why are YOU here?" Now that I am once again primarily a disciple, and only incidentally a teacher, this has become a second time a deeply searching personal question.

The drag of habit, the clutch of circumstance, the human tendency to drift—all these make it necessary to stop taking myself in any way for granted. This question is therefore a means of grace, arresting me and providing a stimulus to alert and responsible *sadhana*. Recalling the question from time to

* The Sri Aurobindo Ashram Sahitya Parishad had invited short essays from the Ashram members on this subject. Out of several entries the one we are publishing—a contribution by an American resident who was once a prominent Christian missionary—was adjudged the best and awarded a prize.

time through the day helps to keep one more nearly faithful—"intent, vigilant, integrally conscious."

The "Why" in my subject faces both ways. It points to the past which bears in all its parts the stamp of divine Providence. It looks also to the future, radiant with the unfolding of "One Increasing Purpose".

What brought me here? The sovereign Call of the Divine through the Master's writings. As I read in the New York Public Library his supremely evocative words, "the Word" sounded in the depths of me. His replies to others' questions spoke straight to my heart, a fresh and compelling Revelation.

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken..."

Only, this was not a planet but a constellation, nay a new universe. It seemed that I was being exhilaratingly liberated from an essentially man-centered cosmos by this Copernicus of the spiritual world.

One of the best things about the matchless writings of Sri Aurobindo was the fact that in the very first chapter of *The Synthesis of Yoga* was his declaration that "the disciple of the Integral Yoga must live in his own soul beyond the written Truth, for he is not the disciple of a book or of many books; he is a disciple of the Infinite."

The two chief interests of my life had been inner or personal integration and social or world integration. In the Master's works I found deeply satisfying and creative answers to the world's need and to my own, answers which carried the unassertive authority of a thoroughly experienced traveller of the Way.

The phrase "I am" is central to the subject of this essay. It is also of central significance to my *sadhana*. I found the Master an incomparable Guide on a long voyage of self-discovery. Lifting me out of my spiritual stagnation, he spurred me on to a rendezvous with my evolutionary destiny. Unfolding the Integral Yoga as the science of conscious evolution, he taught me that "to become aware of this truth of our being, to realise it, to make it effective here and elsewhere is the object of all Yoga."

I was early impressed with the fact that the Master bore every testimony to the Mother's spiritual identity and equality with himself, and this I could readily appreciate when I began to read also her writings. Especially in her "Prayers and Meditations" I felt an overwhelming sense of the divinity of her consciousness, while her aspiration was at once infinitely exalting and awesomely humbling. Her "Words" were such a treasury of practical spiritual wisdom as I had never met before. They drew me towards her as, with her sanction, I prepared to make the long voyage to the Ashram.

WHY I AM HERE

In the maelstrom of New York these "Words of the Mother" in far-away Pondicherry showed me that she knew "what the score was"! She wrote:

"Once you step back from these whirling forces into quiet regions you see how great is the illusion! Humanity appears to you like a mass of blind creatures rushing about without knowing what they do or why they do it and only knocking and stumbling against each other".

I came here the more readily, because I had become disillusioned with hyper-active efforts to save the world and was therefore prepared to follow the Mother's counsel, "Stand back from your action and rise into an outlook above these temporal motions; enter into the consciousness of Eternity. Then only you will know what true action is."

I had been attracted to the Master partly by his emphasis upon "a new power of action" for a world-changing. For many years—in teaching and in the ministry, in Christian ashrams, in organisations for racial justice and for an end to imperialism, and in movements for world peace—I had tried, with earnest comrades, to bring closer to realisation the Kingdom of God on earth. I had learned much more from our failures than from our "successes." In certain of these movements I had had an unusual opportunity, while working with leaders of scores of the world's large non-governmental organisations, to sense their organisational self-centredness, their frustrations, and our common inadequacy in the face of the world crisis. It was therefore not hard for me to be convinced by Sri Aurobindo that "man can never get out of the futile circle the race is always treading until he has raised himself to a new foundation." As I learned something of how, for four decades, the mighty seer continued to perfect "this new power of action" to the point where, in World War II it exerted a decisive turn upon the course of world events, I was assured that here is the divine Answer to the crisis of the age.

Another thing that drew me to Pondicherry was the fact that I found in this Integral Yoga a glorious sense of fulfilment. This was not only in the all-important realms of inner and social integration but also in relation to the dearest elements of my spiritual and cultural heritage, the way of Christ and the principles of the friends or "Quakers". Like the Master of Galilee in the first century, the Master of Pondicherry in the twentieth has come "not to destroy but to fulfil."

But how could we have come through all the vicissitudes of all the years, and across these ten thousand miles of land and sea, had the Mother's loving Providence not opened the way by "irresistible grace"?

These are the factors and forces that brought me here. Behind the im-

mediate and evident causes of my coming to this blessed place was always the real, the first Cause, the Prime Mover.

And now, for what purposes am I here? There can be but one answer—first, always, and only for *sadhana*. There must be nothing outside the *sadhana* in this integral way. Work there will be, and a varied and active life is always possible here, but everything must subserve the supreme and undeviating purpose in terms of the great Transformation. I am here to learn that whatever else happens or whatever may be accomplished, I am nothing without this. For this was I born. This, and this only, is my destiny. As the Master says, “The ascent to the divine Life is the human journey, the work of works, the acceptable sacrifice. This alone is man’s real business in the world and the justification for his existence, without which he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which had managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe.”

The Ashram is providentially here as the scene of my *sadhana* in order that there may be “the opportunity of a constant grace.” To any *gurubhai* or *gurubahin* “a constant grace” means simply “the Mother”! “Where there is response to the call of the All-Beautiful, and concord and unity, and the glad flow of many lives turned towards the Divine, in that atmosphere She consents to dwell.”

Here is her laboratory for the Great Transformation, her seed-plot for the New Divine Order, here a “colony of heaven”, founded by the “colonist of Immortality” and by Her who wrote of her Vision in 1912—before she had seen the Master with her physical eyes, “To establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the sons of God.” Here also is the constant reminder to make my self-offering an integral one. I am here to offer “a glad and strong and helpful surrender to the working of the Divine Force, the obedience of the illumined disciple of the Truth, of the inner Warrior who fights against obscurity and falsehood, of the faithful servant of the Divine.”

Here let me learn also how to make my aspiration a constant and living flame, the upward yearning and the outreach of my whole being; how to reject from every part of my nature those elements of “the old man” which are hostile to the divine Force; how to make progressively a thorough and integral surrender to the point where I offer “every moment and every movement to the Divine”.

Thoroughly disenchanted with the noise and tinsel of the old separative consciousness, I shall be enabled, by the Mother’s grace, gradually to recover my true Self, ever more aware of my oneness with the One, the Real, the Infinite. By her stimulus and with her guidance I shall learn to live steadfastly

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in harmony with the psychic core of my being. A majestic calm and a dynamic peace become increasingly the climate of one's life. They may be dimmed by occasional careless follies, especially by any form or degree of excitement, but they are always *there*, ready to re-emerge with the recovery of quiet faithfulness.

One learns also to discern the Divine even in the most unlikely phenomena and the most untoward circumstances, to grow in equality of regard for all beings, and to be led by an unerring Hand towards the annihilation of Ego, that happy consummation which is said to open the door to limitless growth in the Life Divine.

Am I not also here because there is an essential part, however small, for me and my bit of work in the cosmic drama that points to 1955 as a year of destiny? Let my faith in the Divine Mother's Victory over the asuric hosts in the supreme world crisis be matched by my loving obedience, that I may be her faithful *sattwic* soldier.

O Mother of the kind, all-seeing eyes,
Fountain of all to which the soul aspires,
Creatrix of this ashram paradise,
Kindle in me anew Thy sacred fires.

JAY SMITH

THE HOUR

CAST off all delay and thy sail unfurl,
To thee has come a call;
Upon thy road fire-rays the horizons hurl—
Make for thy Beloved All.

Now falls asleep the raging ocean-moan,
Blows soft the silver breeze;
The waves retrace the path to the unknown,
“Leave the shore of empty ease”.

A vast radiant expanse is beckoning thee,
Sail to the infinite's end;
All ties break into bits and thy soul set free,
This hour let nothing suspend.

Night may throw shadows, weary seem the way,
But unfailing is the Star
That shall break open the veil and lead into day,
Thy joy within no bounds can bar.

Face the storm and know that its lord thou art;
The rose withers, the spring fades,
But time cannot outlast the fire in thy heart—
Set sail, where the God-dawn treads!

ROBI GUPTA

SELF-DEDICATION

MOTHER! from dawn to dusk, from cradle to grave
I follow Thee—through darkness or delight...
And for life's fleeting glamour I do not crave:
My soul hovers around Thy Beauty and Light.

All my fire-dreams weave but the face of Thee...
And I am mute...self-lost in tranquil trance...
Now hushed for ever is all the world in me—
Lo! mortal being mock at death and her dance.

MANJU GUPTA

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XX

“THE HOUR OF GOD”

THE modern age is an age of singular paradoxes and unprecedented promises. On the one hand, man is ardently yearning for unity and harmony, and, on the other, he is frantically tearing himself and his society with divisions and discords. He is athirst for peace and the cessation of all that threatens the progressive tenor of his life, and yet he is driven to create and multiply a myriad causes of conflict, within him and without. He longs so much for a harmonious advance of the collectivity and a general well-being of his species, and yet he is so helplessly dominated by aggressive, individualistic tendencies and an exclusive self-assertion. It is an age of darkness pierced by stray shafts of an uncommon light, an age of colossal frustrations astir with exceptional promises and essential preparations. New hopes, lofty dreams, unforeseen visions are flashing out of the sombre gloom in which man is engulfed today. In the world of ideas, it is a veritable revolution he has achieved; and in the province of technology, a progress that defies comparison with the achievements of any other age in the accredited history of civilisation. In every sphere of life, one hears the clank of snapping chains and the ringing cry for the inestimable blessings of freedom—freedom of the individual, freedom of the nation, freedom of each society and institution, freedom of thought and speech and action—in the teeth of a pervasive totalitarian constraint and regimentation. Countering the fading influence of old-world distinctions, the gospel of equality has installed itself in the heart and mind of humanity with a firmness that augurs extremely well for the future of our life and culture. In every field of activity, one observes earnest and persistent attempts at self-adaptation, coordination and cooperation, both individual and collective, national and international, meeting with varying degrees of success, in spite of all possible opposition. The prodigious work of the U.N.O. is a typical reflection of the many promises, paradoxes, aspirations and anomalies that are locked in a desperate struggle behind the ambiguous front of the present world. What will surge out of this heaving welter? Where, in what distant country, lies the harbour of peace and harmony and creative light?

What do we see when we turn to the different branches of modern knowledge? It is the same spectacle of great promises gleaming out of profound paradoxes. In Philosophy, in spite of the verbal acrobatics of Logical Positivism, there is a deepening tendency towards the recovery of the ancient knowledge of the Orient and the Greeks, a synthesis of the essential elements of the philosophies of East and West, and even an intrepid envisaging of the dim heights of mysticism. This new trend is not so much visible in the veteran philosophers as in the young ones who have been touched by the rays of the new Light. Religion is coming again to the forefront of human thought, and even theology is shedding off its habitual narrowness to embrace the wider horizons of human aspiration. Keyserling, Eddington, Einstein, Jung and P. Sorokin—all now meet on a common platform, not always easy to define, yet perceptible on an intuitive approach, a platform of many-aspected idealism heralding the advent of an age of higher values. Physics has developed a philosophy of its own which tends to approximate to a metaphysic of material realities. The dividing lines between the different departments of knowledge are melting away into a universal feeling of family kinship and organic unity, in spite of the tough resistance of the dyed-in-the-wool materialists and rationalists.

But nowhere is the change more striking and pregnant with far-reaching possibilities than in the psychological researches of modern times. This is a very significant fact, pointing, as it does, a finger of light to what is preparing in the womb of the future. For, true philosophy, as the ancients knew it, is an outcome of spiritual and psychological experiences, and not a product of mere intellectual speculation. It is invariably preceded by an urge for an intensive psychological discipline and research. "The rapid and world-wide growth of a 'psychological' interest over the past two decades shows unmistakably that modern man has to some extent turned his attention from material things to his own subjective processes," says Jung, adding that "...modern man, in contrast to his nineteenth century brother, turns his attention to the psychic with very great expectations; and...he does so without reference to any traditional creed, but rather in the Gnostic sense of religious experienceHe wants to know—to experience for himself." This wide-spread interest in psychological and subjective phenomena is sure to yield a bountiful crop of psychological knowledge and lead to spiritual experience. But the question is: on what lines of research should man proceed in order to reach his spiritual fulfilment? With his remarkable candour and straightforwardness, Jung confesses to an ignorance on the point: "I would rather emphasise what has already been said: that the newest developments of analytical psychology confront us with the imponderable elements of human personality; that we have learned to place in the foreground the personality of the doctor himself as a curative

factor; and that we have begun to demand his transformation—the self-education of the educator....What was formerly a method of medical treatment now becomes a method of self-education, and therewith the horizon of modern psychology is immeasurably widened....We Occidentals had learned to tame and subject the psyche, but we know nothing about its methodical development and its functions. Our civilisation is still young, and we therefore required all the devices of the animal-tamer to make the defiant barbarian and the savage in us in some measure tractable. But when we reach a higher cultural level, we must forego compulsion and turn to self-development. For this we must have knowledge of a way or a method—and so far we have known of none.”

It is here, in this predicament of psychology, which mirrors, in fact, the great cultural crisis of modern humanity, that the immemorial Yoga of India can render the greatest help and guidance. Jung himself is not unconscious of it, but, not having had any first-hand experience of the true yogic life, he seems to shy at some of its untoward pathological symptoms and unwilling to surrender his reason to a higher light. What he sadly lacks is a clear perception of the Superconscious and its incalculable powers of creation and transformation. The way or the method he is groping after can only come as a result of a systematic exploration not only of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious layers of our being, but also—and more—of the Superconscious. And yoga is precisely that method. Kenneth Walker, a clear-eyed thinker on the problems of human culture, believes that “because Western man has been so preoccupied with the outside world, it is to the East that we must turn to find the highest level that human thought has reached.” The problem of the illumination, transformation and integration of the human personality is the most urgent and vital problem of the present human culture. If the human personality cannot be reclaimed from its present state of mutinous animality and transformed into its divine counterpart, which lies latent in itself, then all its culture and civilisation are indeed doomed. How long can a society last that is afflicted with all conceivable moral infirmities and led by a blinded intellect into ever-multiplying falsehoods, iniquities and discords? It is a state that has reached the peak-point of its crisis and stands dangerously poised between extinction and renovation. If no way is found to the rebirth and reconstruction of man, all the labours of countless ages, all the pride and glory of human dreams, all the boundless variety and magnificence of human achievements will be buried for ever beneath the smoking ruins of a misguided Science. Neither modern psychology, nor philosophy, nor the facile socio-economic nostrums of Communism or Democratic Socialism will have saved mankind from this total destruction.

There are some well-meaning thinkers who regard moral reformation or

rearmament as the best remedy for the present state of affairs. They seem to be ignorant of the fact that only that morality which is derived from spiritual or religious life has an ennobling and elevating power; the morality that has no spiritual or religious basis, but is a hot-house product of the eclectic and utilitarian intellect, is powerless to control and purify the obscure and perverse energies of life, and either creates serious complexes and reactions in the human nature, or acts only as a pious mask covering many a festering sore. "It was when the Great Way declined that human kindness and morality arose" is the penetrating verdict of Lao Tzu, and Whitehead chimes with him when he says, "The insistence upon the rules of conduct marks the ebb of religious fervour". He reminds us that St. Paul denounced the Law and Puritan divines contemptuously spoke of the rags of righteousness. Is it not time the ardent advocates of moral reform took this truth to heart and turned their benevolent energies to deeper and more fruitful channels?

There are many who look up to education to achieve the miracle of human transformation. But education can regenerate and transform only if it is based on a regenerative and transformative philosophy of life.¹ And to have a philosophy of life, one must first have a goal of life. The average man has forgotten today that life has a goal other than the petty satisfaction of passing desires by the not always unquestionable use of money and power. He hardly feels the need of a higher philosophy than Dialectical Materialism which flaunts before his wondering gaze the delusive promise of economic emancipation and social and political equality. What regenerative education can come out of such a sordid slimy philosophy of life? Can it develop the divine qualities that lie latent in man? Has it ever produced a single specimen of a godly nature? Even the American ideal of education, which is almost universally acclaimed and adopted today, is severely condemned by its own results. What man hopes to make gods of his children so long as he burns incense at the altars of Mammon and Material Efficiency? No doubt education is a great regenerative agent, but it must be an education that can educe what is high and noble, pure and luminous, infinite and immortal in man. It must be an education that can educe and reveal the Divine in man.

It is a radical change of consciousness, a psychological transformation, that alone can deliver man from his present darkness. And, as we have just seen, this transformation is far beyond the capacity, even beyond the conception, of any modern science or philosophy, ethics or psychology. It is not enough to know the superficial layers of man's being and consciousness; it is

¹ "Philosophic thought in antiquity was the vital centre of liberal education as it has never been for the modern world."

—Thomas Whittaker.

not enough to explore some parts of his Unconscious, individual and collective; it is not enough to hold up before him a bright ideal of moral life and altruistic activity. What is indispensable for the radical conversion and integration of his being is a systematic exploration of the Superconscious and an illumination and reconstruction of his conscious and unconscious parts by its purifying and transforming light. P. Sorokin hits the mark when he declares, "If the as yet largely unknown fission 'forces' of the superconscious are revealed and fully exploited, they can become the most decisive agency of man's self-control, as well as the control of others and of all the known and unknown forms of the inorganic, organic and conscious energies in man and the universe. Their neglect by sensate science has been one of the chief reasons for its failure. What is needed is a concentration of humanity's efforts on unlocking the secrets of the superconscious as the realm of the most powerful, most creative and most ennobling forces in the entire universe. The more man becomes an instrument of the superconscious, the more creative, wiser and nobler he grows; the more easily he controls himself and his unconscious and egoistic conscious energies; the more he comes to resemble God as the supreme ideal. In the superconscious lies our main hope, the road to humanity's 'promised land' of peace, wisdom, beauty, and goodness."

For reaching the Superconscious and canalising its light and force into human existence, there is no other means than Yoga.¹ But it must be a yoga that accepts the whole of life, looks upon it as the field for the progressive manifestation of the Transcendent and knows the secret of bringing about its radical transformation by the highest Truth-Light of the dynamic Superconscious. The yogas that are wedded to the philosophy of Maya or attached to an ascetic withdrawal from life, branding it as illusory or incorrigibly imperfect, cannot solve the present problems of human culture. For, the hour of world-negation is past, the ochre robe and the monastery have lost their old appeal, and the soul of man aspires today for a divine perfection and fulfilment *in life*. Awakening to its great mission and infinite possibilities, it seems contemptuous of the idea of a flight from the field of life and pledged to manifest the Divine here, in the material world, and turn all human existence into a vehicle of His transcendent splendours.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, as we have followed it in the preceding chapters, envisages as its aim such an all-round divinely pragmatic consummation—an integral perfection and fulfilment of man in God and an unflawed manifestation of God in man. It promises to fulfil all the deep-seated

¹ "Contemplation survives only in the East and to learn it we have to turn to the East."
—A. Koestler.

aspirations of man by developing all his powers and faculties, visible and invisible, and raising him beyond his mental consciousness to the Truth-Consciousness of the Supermind. It does not ask him to renounce or unduly reduce the activities of his life and forswear the salutary, secular aims of his existence. That way lies not victory but the defeat of life and the disintegration of the material basis of all spiritual conquests.¹ All that it asks him to do is to shift upward his central will of life and, discovering and realising the infinite and eternal Reality of his existence, shape his nature and life in Its image. It asks him to recover the Truth, the harmony, the beauty and bliss, move the peace and power of God and express them in his nature and in all its movements.

The Integral Yoga is neither Hindu nor Christian, neither Buddhist nor Moslem; nor is it an eclectic blend of their essential elements. Standing above all doctrinal denominations and mind-made categories, it calls upon the soul of man to awake and assert its divinity and fulfil the purpose for which it has come down to earth—the manifestation of God in Matter. Its aim is the most comprehensive ever conceived by man, its appeal is at once intimate and universal, and its method—if method it can be called—an integral surrender to the Divine Shakti and Her Grace. It grips the thought, feeling and will of man and, forging them into an organic unity round the psychic or soul centre, lifts them all into the embrace of the Divine. It is a life-transforming yōga, purporting to fulfil the Time-Spirit by realising the ideal of human unity and the divine perfection of human life.

Mankind is passing through perhaps the greatest crisis of its cultural life. It is living in one of those epochs in which there takes place what the Gita calls “dharmasya glani”, the decay and disintegration of the very upholding principle of existence and a resurgence of the forces of darkness—one of those epochs in which the Avatara descends to deliver mankind from darkness and help it take a decisive step forward in its evolution. The soul of man, like the earth in winter, looks stripped and desolate. Distraught and unhappy with its mean material obsessions, prostrate in the dust in the very hour of its resounding scientific triumphs, drained of hope, drained of spiritual strength and courage, drained even of the will to rise up and advance, it turns an anguished, appealing eye to the Heavens above. Its hour of prayerful prostration is the hour of its salvation. Already there are invasions of Light, thrills of hope, spurts of quickening energies in its hidden depths, but it is not aware of them on its surface, and in the mass of mankind, the stricken collectivity. The Age

¹ “The true message of the West has been misunderstood. That message is that a comprehension and subordination of the concrete are necessary for the ultimate security of the ideal life.”
—Anandacoomaraswamy.

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of Kāli has been the nurse of the Age of Satya—a long, dark night preparing the glory of the coming dawn. It is passing now. The splendour of spring will soon burst forth out of the pervading blight of winter. The hour of man's defeat is the hour of God's Victory, for, the intense cry, the vibrant appeal that rises from the agony of a fall and an inner destitution cannot fail to bring down a deluge of God's all-achieving Grace.

Let us listen to what Sri Aurobindo says on the Hour of God:

THE HOUR OF GOD

“There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being; there are others when it retires and men are left to act in the strength or the weakness of their own egoism. The first are periods when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny; the second are spaces of time when much labour goes to the making of a little result. It is true that the latter may prepare the former, may be the little smoke of sacrifice going up to heaven which calls down the rain of God's bounty.

“Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.

“In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let wordly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear: for it is the hour of the unexpected.”

God's hour is now, and His breath is abroad upon the waters of our being. In the calm solemnity of this blessed hour, the Mother proclaims the advent of a New Age and the victory of a new Light:¹

¹ *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, June, 9, 1914.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

“.....From this centre, this burning nucleus which is and will be more and more penetrated with Thy light and love, Thy forces will radiate over the whole earth, visibly and invisibly, in the hearts of men and in their thoughts.

“Such is the certitude Thou givest me in reply to my aspiration for Thee.

“An immense wave of love descends upon everything and penetrates all.

“Peace, peace, on all earth, victory, plenitude, marvel.

“O beloved children, sorrowful and ignorant, and thou, O rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, tranquillise your force, it is the omnipotence of Love that is coming to you, *it is the pure radiance of the light that is penetrating you.* This human, this earthly hour is the most beautiful among all hours. Let each, let all know it and enjoy the plenitude that is accorded.

“O saddened hearts and anxious foreheads, foolish obscurity and ignorant ill-will, let your anguish be calmed and effaced.

“This is the splendour of the new word that comes:

‘*I am here.*’”

RISHABHCHAND

(Concluded)

NEW ROADS

BOOK III

THE ALTARS OF AGNI

IN Krishna's Day the play of gods and men
Had met in Brindavan's happy hunting grounds.
As then, so now, an epic forest rose
As Circumstance around the hopes of man.
As in that Vedic Age so here today
A Chosen Few aspire to reach beyond
The sprawling jungle covering the paths,
Encircling life with nature's undergrowth
That hides forgotten shrines, and tombs of men
In suffocating rites and clinging toil
Crumbling the temples of the ancient gods.
As then so now the fateful hour has come
When Agni, flame-force of the will of God,
Flings forth the Challenge to the Powers of Night,
To battle on the fertile fields of men
And fill the forests with the cries of war.
Battle there must be when forces meet
Armipotent each to measure might with might
Along the cosmic corridors of Fate.
War is made on ordered Circumstance,
On man's complacency and rigid rules
That struggle to conserve the ancient ways,
That settle in a state of stagnancy—
Like aged bones contented with their past,
Resigned to Nature and the laws of death.
But man the rebel feels within a flame;
A burning pressure slowly comes to life
Behind the centre of his beating heart
Persistent in its aim to seek new Truth,
New Powers, new worlds, new Potencies divine,

NEW ROADS

Mounting in those aspiring hearts that burn
Towards the unknown brilliancies of God,
Where flames the Fire of our eternities.

SONG TO AGNI

O Agni, Flame of the secret heart within!
Sole messenger of man and the Supreme;
Burn bright in our hearts that His will may be done
Flame-pure towards the sempiternal spheres.
Mount to His Altar of Eternity
And take the Soma wine of mortal days,
The sole delight that here sustains our lives,
And offer up our all to Him on high.
Take there the marvels that have made our might:
The Atomic wonders of our earthly toil,
The songs of service that our Science sings,
The hymns of magic anthemed in our skies.
Take too the progress that our mind conceives,
The threads of ego that support our ways
And build the forest-structures of the world.
Flame-flower thy Sun within our human breast
To mount the skies of immortality.
Arise, O Agni! aspiration's Lord!
Rise up within us, glorify His Name!
And sing His praises to eternity.
To Thee, O Fire, we dedicate our all,
To Thee, O Giver of Cosmic energies,
O wondrous Fire, all flame-force burns in thee!
O generous Flame! priest of the sacrifice!
By thee alone our offering is made,
By thee alone our call is made secure;
By thee alone our prayer is left with God.
O Fire-force wedding Matter to the soul,
O Flame-Vast hidden in atomic deeps!
Thou art the Messenger from Golden skies,
Thou art the Flame within the womb of night.
To the ancient Rishis thou didst bring the Fire,
And sight to the seer of the Golden World,
The World that reaches there beyond the Sun.

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But now, O Agni, now has come the time
When man aspires for that same world on earth.
For that our Master fashioned these New Roads,
For that the mighty Mother came to earth,
For that the souls of Rishis are reborn
To see again the Golden Age of Light,
To know again that God rules all the worlds.
To glimpse those worlds in trance is not enough.
To feel the bliss of moments out of Time
And know the mysteries beyond the Sun
Has been the boon of sages gone before:
Now man awaits the Light to touch the earth,
To mould anew the laws of Nature's Art.
To blossom from the seed, the atom's core,
New Worlds of Wonder, harmonies of life
That long for oneness in Eternity.
To thee, O Agni, do we bow in prayer;
Flame-Messenger and Herald of the Dawn—
Hail Fire! Hail sacred Flame! Hail Will of God!

SONG OF AGNI

I am the Fire! I am the sacred Flame
I am the Energy that built the worlds!
I am the Force that man can never touch
Unless he be as pure as a new born babe.
I am the Runner between mankind and God;
I am the flame-born lightnings in the skies
Between the earth and heaven's Golden Sun.
I am the will behind each mortal act
That finds a place in Immortality.
I am the ready messenger of the heart
Aspiring for Truth in Sun-Fire worlds of Love;
I am the Flame that mounts beyond the stars
To lay all offerings at the Eternal's feet.
I am Agni, God in the secret heart,
Priest at the Footstool of the Lord of Life!
I hear thy plea, thy word rests now with God.

NORMAN DOWSETT

Students' Section

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

(TO THE CHILDREN OF THE ASHRAM)

What is the difference between Desire or Wish and Will?

They are not the same thing. When, for example, you see that a thing is to be done and that it is good to do it, then normally your reason decides and judges; then it is your will that sets to work and makes you do what is necessary for the work to be done. Thus will is the power of execution which should be at the disposal of what has been decided by you or a higher force. It is a thing coordinated and organised: it acts according to plan and is in full self-control. Wish or desire, on the other hand, is an impulse. There are people who are full of desires, but have no will; they are eaten up with their desires, as it is said. You go nowhere if you have not even the will to fulfil your desires. The little bit of will most people have is indeed put at the service of their desires. Will is a force capable of deliberation and organisation and can be used for any purpose in view.

When you have the will, it means you have the capacity of sustained effort for a definite end. A desire, on the contrary, is something violent, passionate and momentary; it is very rarely a durable thing. It has not the stuff, the substance and organisation of a sustained effort. When desire gets hold of you, it can make you do anything, but in a fit of impulse, not in a methodical and consistent manner.

Why do children have the habit of always asking for things—material objects, I mean?

Precisely because they are full of desires. Perhaps when they were conceived, they were imbued with the vibrations of desire, and as they have no control over themselves, they give free vent to their feelings. Older people are also full of desires, but they are too shy to show them. They are ashamed of these things, they fear they will be ridiculed and so hide them. Children

are more simple and straightforward; when they want anything, they speak out. They do not think that it is not proper or wise to reveal themselves. They do not reason in that way. People, of course—ordinary people, I mean—live constantly full of desires, only they do not express themselves, sometimes they do not even avow it to themselves. But it is always there, this sense of the need for things. Directly you see a beautiful object, you are at once seized by the idea of possessing it. It is childish, it is even ridiculous. Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred do not get at all the things they desire. And of the one per cent how many are interested in the thing once they have actually got it? A child is even more like that. Give him what he wants, a second after he will not even look at it.

How to help a child to get out of this habit?

There is more than one method. First of all, it is to be known whether one may not altogether stop the child from expressing freely what he thinks and feels. People do this usually and constantly. They scold, they punish and the child takes the habit of hiding his desires. That does not cure. If you always tell the child, "No, you won't have it", you simply instal this idea in him: "Yes, when I am a child, I am not given anything, I must wait till I grow up; well, when I am a man I shall have all that I want." So I say it is not a cure; the task is not easy to bring up a child. There is however the other way of which I spoke, to give him what he wants. But the difficulty is that the next moment he will ask for another thing and continue to do so without end. For it is a law, the law of desire, that it is never satisfied. So you can change your method and tell the child, supposing it is intelligent enough: "You see, you wanted so much to have the thing and now that you have it you don't care, you ask for something different. You will do the same with that also." But if it is a shrewd child he would reply: "Well, the best way to cure me of my desires is to give what I ask for."

Many hold this last idea all their life. When they are told to overcome their desires, they answer, "The best way of overcoming them is to satisfy them." But what is needed is not merely to change the object of desire, but change the impulse, the movement itself. For that purpose, a good deal of knowledge and understanding and experience is required. That you cannot expect of young children. First of all, they do not possess the capacity for reasoning and you cannot explain the matter to them, they will not understand your reasons. It is why the parents have normally no other go than to cut them short, saying: "Stop, you bother us." That is how they get out of the difficulty.

It is not a solution. The task is hard, demanding continuous effort and

unshakable patience. There are people, a good many, who, although no longer children, yet continue to be so all their life: they too do not understand reason. If you tell them, they are not reasonable and that it is not possible to be continually satisfying their desires, they simply think: "These people are quite unpleasant, they are not amiable." That is all.

What one may try, in respect of a child, is to turn the direction of his desires, let him desire better things, better because more true and also more difficult to obtain. For example, when you see a child full of desires, put into him a desire of higher quality, that is to say, instead of desiring purely material objects which can give only a temporary satisfaction, one could awaken in him the desire to know, to learn, to become great and so on. That would indeed be a very good beginning. As these things are more difficult to secure, it will serve to develop, to strengthen his will. Even if the difficulty is of a physical kind, if, for example, you give the child a doll to prepare, a Chinese puzzle to solve or a game of Patience, the effort helps in the development of concentration, perseverance, a certain clarity of ideas etc. You can in this way divert the child's will from wrong pursuits to right ones. True, it needs constant attendance and application on your part, but that seems to be the surest way. It is not easy, but it is the most effective.

To say "no" does not cure, but to say "yes" does not cure either. I knew some persons who allowed their children to do as they pleased. There was one child who tried to eat anything he could get hold of. Naturally he fell sick and got disgusted in the end and cured of the habit. Still the method means risk. For example, a child one day got hold of a match-box and as he was not stopped, burnt himself in playing with it, although thereafter he did not touch a match-box any more. The method may be even catastrophic. For there are children who are dare-devils—most children are so—and when a desire possesses them they are stopped by nothing in the world. Some are fond of walking along the edge of walls or on house tops; some have an impulse to jump into water directly they see it. Even there are some who love to take the risk of crossing a road when a car is passing. If such children are allowed to go their way, the experiment may prove fatal sometimes. There are people who do allow their children to have this liberty and take the risk. For they say prevention is not a cure. Children who are refused anything do not usually believe that what is refused is bad, they consider that a thing is called bad simply when one wishes to refuse it. So would it not be better, it is argued, to concede the liberty? The theory is that individual liberty must be respected at all costs. Past experiences should not be placed before beings that are come newly into the world; they must get their own experiences, make their own experiments free from any burden of the past. Once I remonstrated that a child should be warned about a

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possible accident, I was answered it was none of my business. And when I persisted saying the child might get killed, the answer was, "What if? Each one must follow his destiny. It is neither the duty nor the right of anybody to interfere in the affairs of others. If one goes on doing stupid things one will suffer the consequences oneself and most likely stop doing them of one's own accord—which is hundredfold better than being forced by others to stop." But naturally there are cases when one stops indeed, but not in the way expected or wished for.

The matter gets difficult and involved, if you make a theory and try to follow it. In reality, each case is different and to be able to deal with each adequately needs a whole life-time occupation.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

CENTRES AND PLANES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

SELF: Mother sent a picture of flowers named by her: "opening of the centres". What does the whole phrase signify? What is meant by "centres"?

SRI AUROBINDO: The centres of consciousness, the chakras. It is by their opening that the Yogic or inner consciousness develops—otherwise you are bound to the ordinary outer consciousness. (7-7-1933)

SELF: Do the centres open themselves or has one to aspire for their opening?

SRI AUROBINDO: They open under the pressure of the sadhana. (9-7-1933)

SELF: How many centres are there?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are reckoned as six usually—or with the one above the head, seven.

SELF: May I know what the "Adhara" is?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Adhara is that in which the consciousness is now contained—mind-life-body. (10-7-1933)

SELF: The Vedanta speaks of seven planes. It says that the human mind tends naturally to confine its activities to the three lower centres. Does our Yoga accept this? What are the three lower centres?

SRI AUROBINDO: According to our system the three lower centres are the vital, the lower vital and the physical—but the planes are quite different. The three lower planes are mind, life and matter and it is true that the human mind confines itself to these three activities. But it is not true that its activities are confined to the vital and physical things.

SELF: The Vedanta also says that when one enters into the fourth centre one sees the Divine Effulgence. Is that a fact?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the fourth centre? In our system the fourth centre is the heart and the Divine is there in the psychic, behind the heart. But the

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fourth of our seven planes is the supramental which is far above the head, but can be communicated with through the seventh centre, the Sahasradala padma. (22-9-1933)

SELF: After attaining to the fourth centre—with the psychic behind it—does one still lapse back into the three lower centres?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is meant by *attaining* to the fourth centre? The centre is there already in the manifested being—it is not above it like the Supermind. (23-9-1933)

SELF: What I meant by “attaining” is “passing through” the centres during sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO: One does not pass through the psychic centre or any centre. The centres open under the pressure of the sadhana. You can say that the Force descends or ascends into a centre. (23-9-1933)

SELF: When the force descends into the fourth centre, is one safe from the attacks of the vital and the physical?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. (25-9-1933)

SELF: When the centres open, do they make us conscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course—the more they open, the more the consciousness increases. (25-9-1933)

SELF: What are the fifth and sixth centres?

SRI AUROBINDO: The throat centre (externalising, expressing mind, the physical mind) and the *ajnachakra* between the eyebrows, centre of inner thought, will and vision. (26-9-1933)

SELF: It is said that in the higher ranges of mind there are gods and goddesses whom one can see and talk with. Is this true?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are gods everywhere on all the planes. (30-9-1933)

SELF: “Surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness.” Kindly explain the last five words.

SRI AUROBINDO: The mind, psychic, vital, physical etc. are different planes, among them also there are several different planes. (6-10-1933)

MY BOYHDOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SELF: Are our higher levels—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind, Supermind—automatically in connection with the Divine even though we may be dealing with the lower nature? And are they aware of being above the *adhara*?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, but you can hardly call them your levels, since you are not conscious of them and in your manifested being they are not organised to act or function. (11-10-1933)

SELF: Has one to reach the planes or do they open themselves like the centres?

SRI AUROBINDO: They open by the concentration and by the opening of the centres. (13-10-1933)

SELF: There are the higher forces of the Divine Nature on every plane; when the vital attacks come, why do we not feel the Divine Forces intervening to help?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you are sufficiently awake to them and call them in, they will act. (24-10-1933)

SELF: Where do you locate the sex centre?

SRI AUROBINDO: The lowest centre at the bottom of the spine. (8-11-1933)

SELF: Nowadays I often feel much pressure in the head between the eyebrows or on top of the head. Why is this so?

SRI AUROBINDO: These are the two highest centres—and the first to be touched by the descending Force. (12-11-1933)

SELF: What is the higher vital?

SRI AUROBINDO: The heart and the dynamic vital. The heart centre and navel centre. (20-11-1933)

SELF: Can the higher vital remain more easily than the lower vital under the psychic influence?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

SELF: The Overmind and the Supermind—are they the sixth and seventh planes?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. The Overmind is part of the mental plane. The Supermind is the fourth not the seventh plane. (21-11-1933)

NAGIN DOSHI

THE MASTER

DECEMBER 5

TODAY beholds the world entire
The snow-trance of the King supreme.
His fire-winged Will clasps firm the withes of dust;
No more the ignorance-chain.
A blazing hope that knows not how to cease
Now flies through earth's sky-breast.
He was, He is, and shall be; nowhere his end,
And He, the brooding Nest
Of teeming vast and immortality.
Our nature's creative flow
To Him now leaps with heart immaculate.
The pinnacled Guide and Glow
Is He, and He the Sacrifice Sublime.
The Gnostic Sun from Him
Bursts forth, the golden All now floods the Mother's core
Of hyaline immortal Dream.

CHINMOY

THROUGH NIGHT

THE last ray of the sun was lost from the Vast,
On the face of earth a veil of dark was cast,
We comrades three, in black, went through the night,
Hidden from light.

Like phantoms we walked. The giant trees of the wood
As solemn sentinels around us stood.
The wind breaking this silence feared to blow,
Our march was slow.

The earth, the sky, the stars from us were lost,
There was no warmth of life; the icy frost
Caressed us coldly with its hands of death—
We heard its breath.

But slowly lighter turned the misty wall
And we heard approaching us a swift foot-fall,
As the heavy winged enchantress night was gone
We greeted Dawn.

RANAJIT

TEACHING OF LITERATURE

THERE is no other subject so intimately bound up with the whole gamut of human life as Literature, so much so that it is impossible to give any precise definition of it. Philosophy, Mathematics and other Sciences do not give any clue to the personality behind them; they spring only from one faculty of the man. Literature reveals to us the whole man and not only that but it acts as a channel through which the personality of the writer pours itself into us and recreates us in his own living image.

Human pains and pleasures, human attempts to puzzle out the meaning of life and by following it in all its deceptive mazes to see if some pattern can be disengaged, human aspirations, boldest flights of imagination, dreams and ideals, all fall into its sphere. Literature is the expression of life and hence all human pursuits from man's most material to his highest spiritual quests find a voice here and claim a warm response from us. Novels, dramas, essays, criticism, short stories and poetry spring from a profound and rich experience of life, its whole play full of thrills, struggles, successes and frustrations. A study of literature pulls down the narrow walls that imprison you to your own petty and self-centred round of joys and sorrows and enlarges your vision to cosmic proportions so that your personal interests cease their clamour and merge themselves in the world-sorrow. You listen to the 'still, sad music of humanity', and are full of a vast compassion which dove-like broods over the whole creation.

One who teaches literature must be a very keenly sensitive soul, for otherwise he will remain untouched by the subtle emotions and high thoughts of the writer. A narrow and self-centred man cannot rouse the student to the splendour of 'A poet, hidden in the light of thought'. Sri Aurobindo's lines about the plane of the Jivanmukta may be turned to apply here also:

A splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
That floods some deep, flame-covered all-seeing eye.

The eye of the teacher should have not only a deep penetration which tears up the veil drawn over things but also be flame-covered or else he will enter into sympathy with those poets and writers only who have a wide vision but not those who have lofty ideals. The mere explanation of words or phrases can hardly do justice to work like this. The teacher is called upon to bring out the depth of the poet's subjective state by lending it the fresh blood of his

THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

own experience. Unless he has himself felt keenly the transience of life, its dark and "insane mystery", its uncertain turns and suddennesses, its manifoldness, he cannot touch a responsive chord in the student's heart. The wider and loftier the range of his consciousness the greater will be the scope of his appreciation.

Those who have not grown beyond the life of the physical and the vital can appreciate poetry of the senses only but not that of the finer emotions. There are others who stop short at the vital life of man, his loves and hatreds, jealousies and angers and ambitions but cannot step forth into the realm of idealistic aspirations, the soul's yearnings for some absolute good and beauty. For them Homer and Shakespeare will be true poets but not Shelley and A.E.

There is another danger also. Sometimes the teacher is wedded to a particular ideal, however high it may be, and then all that does not coincide with the goal he has set before himself or runs counter to it, will be despised by him. Dr. Johnson's whole view of Milton's poetry was infected by his contempt for puritanism. The sublime grandeur of *Paradise Lost* left him cold. A noble spirit like Shelley perched on the peak of ideal beauty could not peer down into the abyss and see how far deep the roots of evil stretch. Human frailty in face of such formidable difficulties prompted only a recoil in him. As he said about a kindred soul:

The fact that he was greater than his kind
Had made his eagle spirit blind.

The teacher of literature should combine in himself the horizontal and the vertical man.

Literature like the "duration" of Bergson continuously gathers mass; it does not divest itself of the past when breaking new ground but absorbs into itself its quintessence and concentrates a whole episode in a telling phrase. A great writer expects us to be conversant with all the great classics of the past. Milton in his famous sonnet *On his Blindness* compresses the whole biblical story in a line by using the word 'talent', and by this economy is able to devote the rest of his sonnet to other thoughts and feelings. This concentrated phrase acts like a drop of undiluted wine. Similarly T.S. Eliot in his *Wasteland* puts in 'I did not know Death had undone so many'. The obvious meaning is that modern civilisation is a death in life but there is the deeper hint of Dante's hell. The line has been bodily lifted from its context and the reader's memory is flashed back to the torment of souls suffering in Inferno. This packed and concentrated utterance can be distilled only if the poet expects his reader to be a man who has gathered in himself all the riches of the past and brings to

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bear that equipment on his present reading. And the modern poet fuses into his utterance not only his national heritage but the whole past of the world which crowds thick in his creations. Sri Aurobindo's poetry demands not only the background of the whole Western Literature including Greek and Latin but also that of the East especially India. T.S. Eliot takes for granted a knowledge of the Gita and the Upanishads. In *Savitri* the heroine turns away from the joys of Heaven proffered to her single self and says:

The servitudes on earth are greater, king,
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.

Can the teacher bring out their full significance without setting them beside Satan's words in *Paradise Lost*?—

To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.

Finally, he must be endowed with a fine aesthetic taste which means a sense of harmony that can discern the unity in a work of art, and an ear that thrills ecstatically to the music of words and their rhythmic order.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

NOTE

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