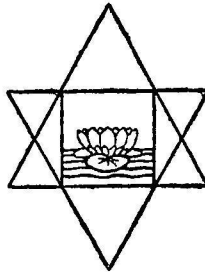


# MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1955

Price : Rs. 2



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

Vol. VII

No. 10 & 11

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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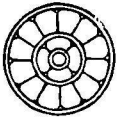
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**TO OUR READERS**

This is the Joint issue of November and December.

There was no issue last month.



15.11.55

India must rise  
to the height of her  
mission and proclaim  
the Truth to the world

The body's rules bound not the spirit's powers:  
When life had stopped its beats, death broke not in;  
He dared to live when breath and thought were still.

*(Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri", Bk. I. Canto V)*

## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

### PERFECTION AND PROGRESS

PERFECTION is a relative term. A thing may be perfect in relation to the present or the past; it may not be so in relation to what is to come. Creation is a perpetual movement, a perpetual progression. Each time a new consciousness manifested upon earth, it was very natural for men of the epoch to have the impression that it was the final definitive realisation, at least a very great progress.

Still we must note that even for an animal, say an elephant or a dog, human capacities appear as marvellous; they feel, the dogs do, that man possesses almost divine powers. So men too from the stage where they are have a hint of things beyond; that is why we are not wholly satisfied, we have the feeling in spite of all things achieved that there is something else which escapes, indeed the true thing escapes, we turn around it, but never touch it. It means that man is ready for a further progress. If it were not so, if he were satisfied only with what he can do, he would try to do that alone, better and better perhaps, but in the same groove. However, it is not that: he seeks something else, something quite different, which is truly true, on which one can count, which does not crash down when one supports oneself upon it, something durable, permanent, the Rock of Ages. This need of eternity, of an absolute good and absolute beauty awakens exactly at the moment when one is ready to receive a new consciousness.

For a very long time, perhaps from the very beginning—I do not mean from the beginning of human evolution, for there have been earlier periods when, before the true man appeared, intermediate beings at first were tried who were much nearer the animal; I mean the beginning of a sufficiently developed human form when it became ready to receive something from above—there have been always and there are still individuals who carry in them this need of the eternal and the absolute. It is only little by little, very gradually, through cycles of enlightenment and obscurity that something like a collective consciousness in humanity awakes to the need of such a higher existence. And today this necessity seems evidently very general, cutting across all turmoils and stupidities of mankind: that shows that the time is near.

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Yes, for a very long time, men were told, "It will be, it will be", were given the promise. It was promised, thousands and thousands of years ago, that a new consciousness, a new world, something of the Divine would manifest itself upon earth; it was always in the future, somewhere in the revolution of the ages. One had not this feeling, this sensation that it is here and now.

By far the larger part of humanity, in fact, most of it, need to make a very great effort to imagine what the future may be like. Its consciousness is so much tied down to what is that it finds it difficult even to imagine that things can be otherwise. When what shall be becomes, for at least the consciousness of a group of individuals, an inevitable necessity and what has been and is appears to it as an absurdity that cannot last, then and then only comes the moment for the change to happen, not before.

The question still remains whether the thing can happen and will happen individually before it happens collectively. But no individual realisation even can be complete or approach perfection, unless and until it is in harmony with a group consciousness representing a new world. There is always an interdependence between the individual and the collective so much so that an individual realisation is bound to be restricted and diminished in an irresponsive atmosphere. Earth life as a whole has to follow a certain curve of progress in order that a new world and a new consciousness may appear in it.

So the future realisation does depend, partially at least, upon you, individually and collectively. Have you ever tried to conceive what the new consciousness may mean, what the new race and the new world would look like?

It is evident that the advent of man upon the earth has changed the terrestrial conditions. One cannot say that this has been to the greatest good of all, for it meant much suffering in many places. Also it is evident that the complication which the human being has brought with him into life has not always been favourable to him or to others. But from another point of view it did mean a progress, a marked progress among the lower species. Man mixed himself up with the life of animals, with the life of plants, even with the life of metals and minerals; it was not, as I said, to the great joy of all those with whom he busied himself; but in any case, their conditions of life were changed by this interference. In the same way, it is likely that the supramental being, whatever he may be, when he comes, will change considerably the life upon earth. We cherish this hope in our heart and in our mind that all the ills the earth suffers from will be, if not completely cured, at least to a large extent alleviated and that conditions of living here will be more pleasant and harmonious, at least tolerable for all. That is quite possible. In man, the mental consciousness that he incarnated acted, by the very force of its nature, for its own satisfaction, for its own growth, without much consideration for the consequences of its actions.



## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

The Supramental, on the other hand, will act differently; that is our hope, at least.

Human life, however, is brief and naturally there is a tendency in man to shorten the distances in proportion to his dimensions. Still there will come a time when the thing will happen; there will be a moment or a movement that will at last land into the reality. Once upon a time there came a moment when the mental being could appear upon earth. The start may be poor, very incomplete, very partial, but after all there was the start. Why should not the same thing occur now?

The people who were announcing the good news from the beginning of time must have been the best informed of men. And I tell you that since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another. And if he came this time and said this is the final, then it must be the final. Perhaps he knows.

In that case, if this time it is final, then those who are ready or make themselves ready will naturally be the people who start first on the new path. There will be many such, I hope. But my own standpoint here is this: even if the thing has only half a chance it is worth the trouble. I think I told you more than once that a moment comes in the life of many when life as it is, human consciousness as it is, becomes absolutely unbearable, creating only disgust and repulsion; one does not wish to continue it any longer, one can only throw all effort, all force, all life and soul into this single chance, into this singular opportunity given at last, so that one may pass on to the other side. What a relief, to set one's foot on a road that takes you elsewhere! It is worth the trouble of throwing behind all your burdens, freeing yourself of all loads so that you may leap all the better. This is how I look at the thing. It is the sublimest of adventures; if you have in you the true spirit of adventure in the least, you will feel it is worth risking all for all. But they who fear and hesitate, who ask, "Am I not giving away my prey for the shadow?"—a most stupid saying, according to me—they who are more for profiting by what they possess than for risking to lose all in the hope of something that may or may not happen tomorrow, I assure you, such people will not notice the change even if it happens right under their nose. They will say, "It is all right, we do not care, there is nothing to regret". Quite possibly; but after all, they might have to regret, we do not know.

In any case, that is what I mean by sincerity. That is to say, if you regard the new realisation as the only thing truly worth living for, if what is is intolerable, not only for oneself, perhaps not so much for oneself as for the whole world, one feels the need of it if one is not small and egoistic; one feels that the

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present has lasted too long and one can do nothing but take up all that one is, all that one can and throw oneself completely—head foremost, without looking backward, without considering what may happen or not—into the adventure. It is far better to jump into the abyss, than to stand on the brink shivering.

12-10-1955

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

When I first met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, I was in deep concentration, seeing things in the Supermind, things that were to be but that were somehow not manifesting, I told Sri Aurobindo what I had seen and asked him if they would manifest. He simply said, "Yes". And immediately I saw that the Supramental had touched the earth and was beginning to be realised! This was the first time I had witnessed the power to make real what is true....

THE MOTHER

*(Words of The Mother: III)*

## UNPUBLISHED POEMS

SRI AUROBINDO

### A VOICE AROSE...

A VOICE arose that was so sweet and terrible  
It thrilled the heart with love and pain, as if all hell  
Tuned with all heaven in one inextricable note.  
Born from abysmal depths on highest heights to float,  
It carried all sorrow that the souls of creatures share,  
Yet hinted every rapture that the gods can bear.  
“O Son of God who camst into my blackest Night  
To sound and know its gulfs and bring the immortal light....”

### THE DUMB INCONSCIENT

The dumb Inconscient drew life's stumbling maze;  
A night of all things, packed and infinite,  
It made our consciousness a torch that plays  
Between the abyss<sup>1</sup> and a supernal Light;

It framed<sup>2</sup> our mind a lens of segment sight,  
Piecing out inch by inch the world's huge mass,  
And reason a small hard theodolite  
Measuring unreally the measureless ways.

Yet is the dark Inconscient whence come all  
The self-same Power that shines on high unwon;  
Our Night shall be a sky purpureal,  
The torch transmute to a vast godhead's sun.

Man is a narrow bridge, a call that grows,  
His soul the dim bud of God's flaming rose.

<sup>1</sup> its night

<sup>2</sup> made

MOTHER INDIA

DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE

I

Only by electric hordes your<sup>1</sup> world is run?  
But they are motes and sparkwhirls of a Light,  
A Fire of which your nebula and your sun  
Are glints and flamedrops scattered eremite.

Veiled<sup>2</sup> by the unseen Light act other Powers,  
An Air of endless movement unbegun  
Expanding and contracting in Time-hours,  
And the intangible ether of the One.

These surface findings—screen-phenomenon—<sup>3</sup>  
Are Nature's offered reasons but behind  
Her occult mysteries lurk safe unknown  
To the crude handling of the empiric Mind.

All yet<sup>4</sup> discovered are but mire and trace  
Of the eternal Energy in her race.

II

How shall ascending Nature near her goal?<sup>5</sup>  
Not through man's stumbling tardy intellect  
Patient all forms and powers<sup>6</sup> to dissect  
But by the surer vision of his soul.

An algebra of mind, a scheme of sense,  
A symbol language without depth or wings,  
A power to handle deftly outward things  
Are our scant earnings<sup>7</sup> of intelligence.

The Truth<sup>8</sup> is greater and asks<sup>9</sup> deeper ways.  
A sense that gathers all in its own being,  
A close and luminous touch,<sup>11</sup> an intimate seeing,  
A Thought flung free from the words' daedal maze,<sup>12</sup>

A tranquil heart in sympathy with all,  
A will one pointed wide imperial

<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>2</sup> And veiled

<sup>3</sup> These things, a front, a screen-phenomenon,

<sup>4</sup> Your truths

<sup>5</sup> How shall earth's evolution find its goal?

<sup>6</sup> godheads

<sup>7</sup> Is our poor booty

<sup>8</sup> Our Spirit      The Soul

<sup>9</sup> has

<sup>10</sup> Into our being,

<sup>11</sup> A luminous touch direct,

<sup>12</sup> A Thought that is a god's all-seeing gaze,

The

UNPUBLISHED POEMS

III

Our science is an abstract cold and brief  
That cuts in formulas the living whole.  
It has a brain and head, but not a soul:  
It sees all things in outward\* carved relief.

But how without its depths can the world be known?  
The visible has its roots in the unseen  
And each invisible hides what it can mean  
In a yet deeper invisible, unshown.

The objects that you probe are not their form.  
Each is a mass of forces thrown in shape.  
The forces caught, their inner lines escape  
In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind's norm.

Probe it and you shall meet a Being<sup>1</sup> still  
Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable.

\* Doubtful reading (Editor).

<sup>1</sup> abysses

## TRANCE EXPERIENCES\*

(Continued from the previous issue)

### SECTION I

*Q. During yesterday's swapna-samadhi it became a little clear why I am unable to record all that happens in the trance. When the consciousness rises my mental Purusha can follow it only up to a certain distance of the higher planes, after which the consciousness flies away leaving it behind.*

SRI AUROBINDO: That is quite natural. The higher planes are not planes on which man is naturally conscious and he is even not open to their direct influence—only to some indirect influence from those nearest to human mind. He can reach there only in a deep inner condition or trance and the higher he goes the less easy is it for him to be conscious of them even in trance. If you are not conscious of your inner being, then it is more difficult to be conscious in trance.

*Q. Is it not possible for me to respond to the spiritual pressure without passing through a sleep in which I fall into a sort of samadhi?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Samadhi is not a thing to be shunned—only it has to be made more and more conscious.

*Q. While coming out from samadhi my body was conscious that it had not been sleeping, but had passed into a certain inner state.*

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a progress—the next step is to be conscious in the samadhi.

*Q. The body also felt a new kind of energy, with a strength and intensity which I can only call spiritual.*

SRI AUROBINDO: Good.

*Q. Ordinarily it is said that a samadhi does not bring any change in the outer being. But I think it is not so in the samadhi of our Yoga.*

\* Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's unpublished letters.

## TRANCE EXPERIENCES

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no reason why samadhi should have no effect on the waking being.

*Q. Why are certain things of the sadhana better worked out in samadhi than in the waking state?*

SRI AUROBINDO: It is easier to do it in samadhi so long as the waking consciousness is not governed consciously by the inner being.

*Q. In that case samadhi is a useful state even for our Yoga. But some time ago you wrote to me, "It is not the samadhi that is needed but a new consciousness."*

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, samadhi is not barred from this Yoga. The fact that the Mother was always entering into it is proof enough of that. What I said then was not a general statement that samadhi is never needed and never helpful, but referred to your then need. Particular statements must not be converted by the mind into exclusive and absolute laws.

*Q. How does a samadhi differ from a trance?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Trance in English is usually used only for the deeper kinds of samadhi; but, as there is no other word, we have to use it for all kinds.

*Q. Is it really too early for me to change the dream or sleep consciousness into a swapna-samadhi, or a conscious and waking sadhana?*

SRI AUROBINDO: All dream or sleep consciousness cannot be converted at once into conscious sadhana. That has to be done progressively. But your power of conscious samadhi must increase before this can be done.

*Q. But why is inner experience got more easily in samadhi than without it? In samadhi I think our central consciousness gets separated from the mind no less than from the body.*

SRI AUROBINDO: In samadhi it is the inner mental, vital, physical which are separated from the outer, no longer covered by it—therefore they can fully have inner experiences. The outer mind is either quiescent or in some way reflects or shares the experience. As for the central consciousness being separated from all mentality that would mean a complete trance without any recorded experiences.

*Q. In samadhi the physical consciousness has a tendency to go inside under the pressure from above. What does it do after going in?*

SRI AUROBINDO: It remains quiet within and supports by its quiescence the experiences of the other parts of the being or if it is conscious shares them. Or it sleeps and has dreams or else is quite asleep and by its quiescence supports the dream experiences of the mind and vital.

*Q. Whatever is experienced in the waking state leaves its effect upon the outer being; does the samadhi experience act in the same way?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessarily, but it helps to prepare the inner being.

*Q. The samadhi sometimes leaves a strong after-effect and sometimes nothing. For instance, yesterday the Mother brought down two kinds of Forces in my samadhi. And yet when all was over I did not feel anything in particular; while in today's samadhi there seemed to be no descent, and yet the outward effect was powerful enough to continue even during the working hours.*

SRI AUROBINDO: It happens in both ways. When there is no outward effect it means that it was something deep within meant for the preparation of the inner being.

*Q. Should the trance become a normal state of our consciousness?*

SRI AUROBINDO: No. It is the waking realisation of the inner consciousness separate from the outer that has to be the normal state. But it is the trance experience that is bringing this separateness.

*Q. The samadhi does not end by itself; it ends because it is difficult to maintain it for a very long time without stirring physically; however, more and more parts of my being remain in it in spite of movement, action and thought. All the physical and mental activities are taken over by the Mother's Force; they are no longer felt as part of my own nature, but as if carried out by a second person and in a different place than in my own being.*

SRI AUROBINDO: That is very good. It is the condition at which the sadhaka arrives in his progress when the inner being goes on with its experience and something in the outer is carried automatically through its action outside.

*Q. You have written in your last letter, "...something in the outer is carried automatically through its action outside". Will you kindly explain what it means?*

SRI AUROBINDO: It means simply that some part of the outer being does its action as a thing outside (you said as if it was somebody else elsewhere) under the push of some Force that carries it through without its having to call



## TRANCE EXPERIENCES

the whole consciousness to aid in the action. It is simply another way of saying what you yourself wrote.

*Q. The other day you asked me to be conscious in trance; I tried it hard and this is the result: I saw a Holy Woman entering a place where a few of the sadhakas were assembled for her darshan. She went in to a closed room where we were to go one by one. I noticed that every one was allowed one or two minutes as is done on our Darshan days. My turn was last.*

*In the centre of the room the Holy Woman was seated in simple clothes. Without looking at her face I put my head on her lap. She placed her hands on my head and caressed me softly, meanwhile murmuring to herself something like "Let him have..." the last word of the sentence I had caught quite distinctly then, but cannot recollect now. It was the name of some spiritual power. No sooner had she said this, I felt a sudden rush of that power entering through my head.*

*After a few seconds she uttered the name of another power. This power knocked me with a tremendous force—it was shattering in its intensity.*

*After a while I raised my head and looked at the Holy Woman for the first time. Her face appeared like the Mother's. Then I told her, "May I ask you a question?" She did not seem to like this, but as she had not refused, I repeated the question. This time she said, "I don't like questions." (I wanted to inquire about her two gifts of different powers conferred on me.) Then I don't remember what I said. After a long time we both came back to consciousness, for we had both entered into a trance together. We knew it only when we asked the door-keeper how much time we had spent together. Afterwards I told her, "You must have entered into a trance and I simply followed you."*

*This whole phenomena is beyond my understanding.*

- (1) *Who was the Holy Woman?*
- (2) *Why did she grant me the gift of higher powers?*
- (3) *A trance within a trance! This is something new!*

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously the Holy Woman was the Mother herself in a supraphysical form. It was natural that she should not like questions—the Mother does not like mental questions very much at any time and least of all when she is giving meditation as she was doing in this experience. It is rather funny to ask "why" (your eternal why) higher powers should be given. People do not question the gifts of the Shakti or demand reasons for her giving them, they are only too glad to get them. Trance within trance of course, since your sadhana was going on in the trance, according to the ways of trance. It is also in this way that it can go on in conscious sleep.

*(To be continued)*

## MOTHER INDIA

### SECTION II

*(Extracts from "The Synthesis of Yoga")\**

THE divine finds itself upon unity and is master of the transcendences and totalities of things; the human finds itself on separated multiplicity and is the subject even when the master of their division and fragmentations and their difficult solderings and unifyingings. Between the two there are for the human being a veil and a lid which prevent the human not only from attaining but even from knowing the divine.

When, therefore, the mental being seeks to know the divine, to realise it, to become it, it has first to lift this lid, to put by this veil. But when it succeeds in that difficult endeavour, it sees the divine as something superior to it, distant, high, conceptually, vitally, even physically above it, to which it looks up from its own humble station and to which it has, if at all that be possible, to rise, or if it be not possible, to call that down to itself, to be subject to it and to adore....

Somehow this chasm has to be bridged. And here there are two possibilities for the mental being. One possibility is for it to rise by a great, prolonged, concentrated, all-forgetting effort out of itself into the Supreme. But in this effort the mind has to leave its own consciousness, to disappear into another and temporarily or permanently lose itself, if not quite abolish. It has to go into the trance of Samadhi. For this reason the Raja and other systems of Yoga give a supreme importance to the state of Samadhi or Yogic trance in which the mind withdraws not only from its ordinary interests and pre-occupations, but first from all consciousness of outward act and sense and being and then from all consciousness of inward mental activities. In this its inward-gathered state the mental being may have different kinds of realisation of the Supreme in itself or in various aspects or on various levels, but the ideal is to get rid of mind altogether and, going beyond mental realisation, to enter into the absolute trance in which all sign of mind or lower existence ceases. But this is a state of consciousness to which few can attain and from which not all can return.

It is obvious, since mind-consciousness is the sole waking state possessed by mental being, that it cannot ordinarily quite enter into another without leaving behind completely both all our waking existence and all our inward mind. This is the necessity of the Yogic trance. But one cannot continually remain in this trance; or, even if one could persist in it for an indefinitely long period, it is always likely to be broken in upon by any strong or persistent call

\* Part Two. Chapter XIII. The Difficulties of the Mental Being.

on the bodily life. And when one returns to the mental consciousness, one is back again in the lower being. Therefore it has been said that complete liberation from the human birth, complete ascension from the life of the mental being is impossible until the body and the bodily life are finally cast off. The ideal upheld before the Yogin who follows this method is to renounce all desire and every least velleity of the human life, of the mental existence, to detach himself utterly from the world and, entering more and more frequently and more and more deeply into the most concentrated state of Samadhi, finally to leave the body while in that utter in-gathering of the being so that it may depart into the supreme Existence....The highest teaching is that even the desire for liberation with all its mental concomitants must be surpassed before the soul can be entirely free. Therefore not only must the mind be able to rise in abnormal states out of itself into a higher consciousness, but its waking mentality also must be entirely spiritualised.

This brings into the field the second possibility open to the mental being; for if its first possibility is to rise out of itself into a divine supramental plane of being, the other is to call down the divine into itself so that its mentality shall be changed into an image of the divine, shall be divinised or spiritualised. This may be done and primarily must be done by the mind's power of reflecting that which it knows, relates to its own consciousness, contemplates. For the mind is really a reflector and a medium and none of its activities originate in themselves, none exist *per se*. Ordinarily, the mind reflects the status of mortal nature and the activities of the Force which works under the conditions of the material universe. But if it becomes clear, passive, pure by the renunciation of these activities and of the characteristic ideas and outlook of mental nature, then as in a clear mirror or like the sky in clear water which is without ripple and unruffled by winds, the divine is reflected. The mind still does not entirely possess the divine or become divine, but is possessed by it or by a luminous reflection of it so long as it remains in this pure passivity. If it becomes active, it falls back into the disturbance of the mortal nature and reflects that and no longer the divine. For this reason an absolute quietism and a cessation first of all outer action and then of all inner movement is the ideal ordinarily proposed; here too, for the follower of the path of knowledge, there must be a sort of waking Samadhi. Whatever action is unavoidable, must be a purely superficial working of the organs of perception and motor action in which the quiescent mind takes eventually no part and from which it seeks no result or profit.

But this is insufficient for the integral Yoga. There must be a positive transformation and not merely a negative quiescence of the waking mentality. The transformation is possible because, although the divine planes are above the

## MOTHER INDIA

mental consciousness and to enter actually into them we have ordinarily to lose the mental in Samadhi, yet there are in the mental being divine planes superior to our normal mentality which reproduce the conditions of the divine plane proper, although modified by the conditions, dominant here, of mentality. All that belongs to the experience of the divine plane can there be seized, but in the mental way and in a mental form. To these planes of divine mentality it is possible for the developed human being to arise in the waking state; or it is possible for him to derive from them a stream of influences and experiences which shall eventually open to them and transform into their nature his whole waking existence. These higher mental states are the immediate sources, the large actual instruments, the inner stations<sup>1</sup> of his perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO

<sup>1</sup> Called in the Veda variously seats, houses, placings or statuses, footings, earths, dwelling-places, *sadas*, *gṛha* or *ksaya*, *dhāma*, *padam*, *bhūm*, *ksiti*.

# THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SEVEN RIVERS

THE Veda speaks constantly of the waters or the rivers, especially of the divine waters, *āpo devīḥ* or *āpo divyāḥ*, and occasionally of the waters which carry in them the light of the luminous solar world or the light of the Sun, *svarvatīr apah*. The passage of the waters effected by the Gods or by man with the aid of the Gods is a constant symbol. The three great conquests to which the human being aspires, which the Gods are in constant battle with the Vritras and Panis to give to man are the herds, the waters and the Sun or the solar world, *gā apah swah*. The question is whether these references are to the rains of heaven, the rivers of Northern India possessed or assailed by the Dravidians—the Vritras being sometimes the Dravidians and sometimes their Gods, the herds possessed or robbed from the Aryan settlers by the indigenous “robbers”,—the Panis who hold or steal the herds being again sometimes the Dravidians and sometimes their gods; or is there a deeper, a spiritual meaning? Is the winning of Swar simply the recovery of the sun from its shadowing by the storm-cloud or its seizure by eclipse or its concealment by the darkness of Night? For here at least there can be no withholding of the sun from the Aryans by human “black-skinned” and “noseless” enemies. Or does the conquest of Swar mean simply the winning of heaven by sacrifice? And in either case what is the sense of this curious collocation of cows, waters and the sun or cows, waters and the sky? Is it not rather a system of symbolic meanings in which the herds, indicated by the word *gāḥ* in the sense both of cows and rays of light, are the illuminations from the higher consciousness which have their origin in the Sun of Light, the Sun of Truth? Is not Swar itself the world or plane of immortality governed by that Light or Truth of the all-illuminating Sun called in Veda the vast Truth, *ṛtam bṛhat*, and the true Light? and are not the divine waters, *āpo devīḥ*, *divyah* or *svarvatīḥ*, the floods of this higher consciousness pouring on the mortal mind from that plane of immortality?

It is, no doubt, easy to point to passages or hymns in which on the surface there seems to be no need of any such interpretation and the *sukta* can be understood as a prayer or praise for the giving of rain or an account of a battle on

the rivers of the Panjab. But the Veda cannot be interpreted by separate passages or hymns. If it is to have any coherent or consistent meaning, we must interpret it as a whole. We may escape our difficulties by assigning to *sva* or *gāh* entirely different senses in different passages—just as Sayana sometimes finds in *gāh* the sense of cows, sometimes rays and sometimes, with an admirable light heartedness, compels it to mean waters.<sup>1</sup> But such a system of interpretation is not rational merely because it leads to a “rationalistic” or “common-sense” result. It rather flouts both reason and common sense. We can indeed arrive by it at any result we please, but no reasonable and unbiassed mind can feel convinced that that result was the original sense of the Vedic hymns.

But if we adopt a more consistent method, insuperable difficulties oppose themselves to the purely material sense. We have for instance a hymn (VII.49) of Vasishtha to the divine waters, *āpo devīh*, *āpo dvyāh*, in which the second verse runs “The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, they whose movement is towards the ocean, pure, purifying,—may those waters foster me.” Here, it will be said, the sense is quite clear; it is to material waters, earthly rivers, canals,—or, if the word *khantrimāh* means simply “dug”, then wells,—that Vasishtha addresses his hymn and *dvyāh*, divine, is only an ornamental epithet of praise; or even perhaps we may render the verse differently and suppose that three kinds of water are described,—the waters of heaven, that is to say the rain, the water of wells, the water of rivers. But when we study the hymn as a whole this sense can no longer stand. For thus it runs:

“May those divine waters foster me, the eldest (or greatest) of the ocean from the midst of the moving flood that go purifying, not settling down, which Indra of the thunderbolt, the Bull, clove out. The divine waters that flow whether in channels dug or self-born, whose movement is towards the Ocean,—may those divine waters foster me. In the midst of whom King Varuna moves looking down on the truth and the falsehood of creatures, they that stream honey and are pure and purifying,—may those divine waters foster me. In whom Varuna the king, in whom Soma, in whom all the Gods have the intoxication of the energy, into whom Agni Vaiswanara has entered, may those divine waters foster me.”

It is evident that Vasishtha is speaking here of the same waters, the same streams that Vamadeva hymns, the waters that rise from the ocean and flow

<sup>1</sup> So also he interprets the all-important Vedic word *r̥itam* sometimes as sacrifice, sometimes as truth, sometimes as water, and all these different senses in a single hymn of five or six verses!

into the ocean, the honeyed wave that rises upward from the sea, from the flood that is the heart of things, streams of the clarity, *ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*. They are the floods of the supreme and universal conscious existence in which Varuna moves looking down on the truth and the falsehood of mortals,—a phrase that can apply neither to the descending rains nor to the physical ocean. Varuna in the Veda is not an Indian Neptune, neither is he precisely, as the European scholars at first imagined, the Greek Ouranos, the sky. He is the master of an ethereal wideness, an upper ocean, of the vastness of being, of its purity; in that vastness, it is elsewhere said he has made paths in the pathless infinite along which Surya, the Sun, the Lord of Truth and the Light can move. Thence he looks down on the mingled truths and falsehoods of the mortal consciousness....And we have farther to note that these divine waters are those which Indra has cloven out and made to flow upon the earth,—a description which throughout the Veda is applied to the seven rivers.

If there were any doubt whether these waters of Vasishtha's prayer are the same as the waters of Vamadeva's great hymn, *mādhuman ūrmīḥ, ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*, it is entirely removed by another Sukta of the sage Vasishtha, VII. 47. In the forty-ninth hymn he refers briefly to the divine waters as honey-streaming, *madhucchutah* and speaks of the Gods enjoying in them the intoxication of the energy, *ūrjam madanti*; from this we can gather that the honey or sweetness is the *madhu*, the Soma, the wine of the Ananda, of which the Gods have the ecstasy. But in the forty-seventh hymn he makes his meaning unmistakably clear.

“O Waters, that supreme wave of yours, the drink of Indra, which the seekers of the Godhead have made for themselves, that pure, inviolate, clarity-streaming, most honeyed (*ghṛtaprusham madhumattamam*) wave of you may we today enjoy. O Waters, may the son of the waters (Agni), he of the swift rushings, foster that most honeyed wave of you; that wave of yours in which Indra with the Vasus is intoxicated with ecstasy, may we who seek the Godhead taste today. Strained through the hundred purifiers, ecstatic by their self-nature, they are divine and move to the goal of the movement of the Gods (the supreme ocean); they limit not the workings of India: offer to the rivers a food of oblation full of the clarity (*ghṛtavat*). May the rivers which the sun has formed by his rays, from whom Indra clove out a moving wave, establish for us the supreme good. And do ye, O gods, protect us ever by states of felicity.”

Here we have Vamadeva's *madhumān ūrmīḥ*, the sweet intoxicating wave and it is plainly said that this honey, this sweetness is the Soma, the drink of Indra. That is farther made clear by the epithet *śatapavitrāḥ* which can only

refer in the Vedic language to the Soma; and let us note that it is an epithet of the rivers themselves and that the honeyed wave is brought flowing from them by Indra, its passage being cloven out on the mountains by the thunderbolt that slew Vritra. Again it is made clear that these waters are the seven rivers released by Indra from the hold of Vritra, the Besieger, the Coverer and sent flowing down upon the earth.

What can these rivers be whose wave is full of Soma wine, full of the *ghṛta*, full of *ūrj*, the energy? What are these waters that flow to the goal of the god's movement, that establish for man the supreme good? Not the rivers of the Punjab; no wildest assumption of barbarous confusion or insane incoherence in the mentality of the Vedic Rishis can induce us to put such a construction upon such expressions. Obviously these are the waters of the Truth and the Bliss that flow from the supreme ocean. These rivers flow not upon earth, but in heaven; they are prevented by Vritra the Besieger, the Coverer from flowing down upon the earth-consciousness in which we mortals live till Indra, the god-mind, smites the Coverer with his flashing lightnings and cuts out a passage on the summits of that earth-consciousness down which they can flow. Such is the only rational, coherent and sensible explanation of the thought and language of the Vedic sages. For the rest, Vasishtha makes it clear enough to us; for he says that these are the waters which Surya has formed by his rays and which, unlike earthly movements, do not limit or diminish the workings of Indra, the supreme Mind. They are, in other words, the waters of the Vast Truth, *ṛtam bṛhat*, and, as we have always seen that this Truth creates the Bliss, so here we find that these waters of the Truth, *ṛtasya dhārāḥ*, as they are plainly called in other hymns (e.g. V. 12. 2 "O perceiver of the Truth, perceive the Truth alone, cleave out many streams of the Truth), establish for men the supreme good<sup>1</sup> and the supreme good is the felicity, the bliss of the divine existence.

Still, neither in these hymns nor in Vamadeva's is there an express mention of the seven rivers. We will turn therefore to the first hymn of Vishwamitra, his hymn to Agni, from its second to its fourteenth verse. The passage is a long one, but it is sufficiently important to cite and translate in full.

2 Prāncham yajnam cakṛima vardhatām giḥ,  
 samidbhūr agnim namasā duvasyan;  
 Divaḥ śaśāsūr vidathā kavīnām,  
 gr̥tsāya cit tavase gātum iṣuḥ.

<sup>1</sup> The word indeed is usually understood as "felicity".



- 3 Mayo dadhe medhirah pūதாகṣo,  
divah subandhur januṣā pṛthivyāḥ;  
Avindan nu darṣatam apsvantar,  
devāso agnim apasi svasṛnām.
- 4 Avardhayan subhagam sapta yahvīḥ,  
śvetam ja jnānam aruṣam mahitvā;  
Ciśum na jātam abhyārur aśvā,  
devaso agnim janiman vapuṣyan.
- 5 Śukrebhir angai raja ātatanvān,  
kratum punānah kavibhih pavitraiḥ;  
Śocir vasānah pari āyur apām,  
śriyo mimīte brihatir anūnāḥ.
- 6 Vavrāja sīm anadatir adabdhāḥ,  
divo yahvir avasānā anagnāḥ;  
Sanā atra yuvatayo sayonir,  
ekam garbham dadhire sapta vāṇiḥ.
- 7 Stīrnā asya sanhato viśvarūpā,  
ghṛtasya yonau sravathe madhūnām:  
Asthur atra dhenavah pinvamānā,  
mahī dasmasya mātārā samicī.
- 8 Babhrāṇaḥ sūno sahaso vyadyaud,  
dadhānah śukrā rabhasā vapūnṣi;  
ścotanti dhārā madhuno ghṛtasya,  
vṛṣā yatra vavṛidhe kāvyena.
- 9 Pituś cid ūdhar janushā viveda,  
vyasya dhārā asṛjad vi dhenāḥ;  
Guhā carantam sakhibhih śivebhir,  
divo yahvībhir na gunā babhūva.
- 10 Pituś ca garbham janituś ca babhre,  
pūrvir eko adhayat pīpyānāḥ;  
Vṛṣṇe sapatnī śucaye sabandhū,  
ubhe asmai manuṣye ni pāhi.

- 11 Urau mahān anibhādhe vavardha,  
 āpo agnim yaśasah sam hi pūrvih;  
 ṛtasya yonāv aśayad damūnā,  
 jāminā agnir apasī svasrīṇām.
- 12 Akro na babhriḥ samithe mahīnām,  
 didṛkṣeyah sūnave bhā-ṛjīkar;  
 Ud usriyā janitā yo jajāna,  
 apām garbho nṛtamo yahvo agnih.
- 13 Apām garbham darśatam ośadhīnām,  
 vanā jajāna subhagā virūpam.  
 Devāsās cin manasā sam hi jagmuḥ,  
 pañīṣtam jātam tavaśam duvasyan.
- 14 Bṛhanta id bhānavo bhā-ṛjīkam,  
 agnim sacanta vidyuto na śukrāḥ;  
 Guheva vṛddham sadasi sve antar,  
 apāra ūrve amṛtam duhānāḥ.

“We have made the sacrifice to ascend towards the supreme, let the Word increase. With kindlings of his fire, with obeisance of submission they set Agni to his workings; they have given expression in the heaven to the knowings of the seers and they desire a passage for him in his strength, in his desire of the word. (2)

“Full of intellect, purified in discernment, the perfect friend (or, perfect builder) from his birth of Heaven and of Earth, he establishes the Bliss; the gods discovered Agni visible in the Waters, in the working of the sisters. (3)

“The seven Mighty Ones increased him who utterly enjoys felicity, white in his birth, ruddy when he has grown. They moved and laboured about him, the Mares around the newborn child; the gods gave body to Agni in his birth. (4)

“With his pure bright limbs he extended and formed the middle world purifying the will-to-action by the help of the pure lords of wisdom; wearing light as a robe about all the life of the Waters he formed in himself glories vast and without any deficiency. (5)

“He moved everywhere about the Mighty Ones of Heaven, and they devoured not, neither were overcome,—they were not clothed, neither were they naked. Here the eternal and ever young goddesses from one womb held the one Child, they the Seven Words. (6)

“Spread out were the masses of him in universal forms in the womb of the clarity, in the flowings of the sweetness; here the fostering Rivers stood nourishing themselves; the two Mothers of the accomplishing god became vast and harmonised. (7)

“Borne by them, O child of Force, thou didst blaze out holding thy bright and rapturous embodiments; out flow the streams of the sweetness, the clarity, where the Bull of the abundance has grown by the Wisdom. (8)

“He discovered at his birth the source of the abundance of the Father and he loosed forth wide His streams and wide His rivers. By his helpful comrades and by the Mighty Ones of Heaven he found Him moving in the secret places of existence, yet himself was not lost in their secrecy. (9)

“He bore the child of the Father and of him that begot him; one, he fed upon his many mothers in their increasing. In this pure Male both these powers in man (Earth and Heaven) have their common lord and lover; do thou guard them both. (10)

“Great in the unobstructed Vast he increased; yea, many Waters victoriously increased Agni. In the source of the Truth he lay down, there he made his home, Agni in the working of the undivided Sisters. (11)

“As the mover in things and as their sustainer he in the meeting of the Great Ones, seeking vision, straight in his lustres for the presser-out of the Soma wine, he who was the father of the Radiances, gave them now their higher birth,—the child of the Waters, the mighty and most strong Agni. (12)

“To the visible Birth of the waters and of the growths of Earth the goddess of Delight now gave birth in many forms, she of the utter felicity. The gods united in him by the mind and they set him to his working who was born full of strength and mighty for the labour. (13)

“Those vast shinings clove to Agni straight in his lustre and were like bright lightnings; from him increasing in the secret places of existence in his own seat within the shoreless Vast they milked out Immortality.” (14)

Whatever may be the meaning of this passage,—and it is absolutely clear that it has a mystic significance and is no mere sacrificial hymn of ritualistic barbarians,—the seven rivers, the waters, the seven sisters cannot here be the seven rivers of the Panjab. The waters in which the gods discovered the visible Agni cannot be terrestrial and material streams; this Agni who increases by knowledge and makes his home and rest in the source of the Truth, of whom Heaven and Earth are the wives and lovers, who is increased by the divine waters in the unobstructed vast, his own seat, and dwelling in that shoreless infinity yields to the illumined gods the supreme Immortality, cannot be the god of physical Fire. In this passage as in so many others the mystical, the spiritual, the psychological character of the burden of the Veda reveals itself not under the surface,

not behind a veil of mere ritualism, but openly, insistently,—in a disguise indeed, but a disguise that is transparent, so that the secret truth of the Veda appears here, like the rivers of Vishwamitra's hymn, "neither veiled nor naked".

We see that these Waters are the same as those of Vamadeva's hymn, of Vasishtha's, closely connected with the clarity and the honey,—*ghṛtasya yonav sravathe madhūnam, śhotanti dhārā madhuno ghṛtasya*; they lead to the Truth, they are themselves the source of the Truth, they flow in the unobstructed and shoreless Vast as well as here upon the earth. They are figured as fostering cows (*dhenavaḥ*), mares (*aśvāḥ*), they are called *sapta vāṇīḥ*, the seven Words of the creative goddess Vak,—Speech, the expressive power of Aditi, of the supreme Prakṛiti who is spoken of as the Cow just as the Deva or Puruṣha is described in the Veda as Vrishabha or Vrishan, the Bull. They are therefore the seven strands of all being, the seven streams or currents or forms of movement of the one conscious existence.

We shall find that in the light of the ideas which we have discovered from the very opening of the Veda in Madhuchchandas' hymns and in the light of the symbolic interpretations which are now becoming clear to us, this passage apparently so figured, mysterious, enigmatical becomes perfectly straightforward and coherent, as indeed do all the passages of the Veda which seem now almost unintelligible when once their right clue is found. We have only to fix the psychological function of Agni, the priest, the fighter, the worker, the truth-finder, the winner of beatitude for man; and that has already been fixed for us in the first hymn of the Rig Veda by Madhuchchandas' description of him,—"the Will in works of the Seer true and most rich in varied inspiration." Agni is the Deva, the All-Seer, manifested as conscious-force or, as it would be called in modern language, Divine or Cosmic Will, first hidden and building up the eternal worlds, then manifest, "born", building up in man the Truth and the immortality.

Gods and men, says Vishwamitra in effect, kindle this divine force by lighting the fires of the inner sacrifice; they enable it to work by their adoration and submission to it; they express in heaven, that is to say, in the pure mentality which is symbolised by Dyaus, the knowings of the Seers, in other words the illuminations of the Truth-consciousness which exceeds Mind; and they do this in order to make a passage for this divine force which in its strength seeking always to find the word of right self-expression aspires beyond mind. This divine will carrying in all its workings the secret of the divine knowledge, *kavikratuḥ*, befriends or builds up the mental and physical consciousness in man, *divaḥ pṛithivyāḥ*, perfects the intellect, purifies the discernment so that they grow to be capable of the "knowings of the seers" and by the super-conscious Truth thus made conscient in us establishes firmly the Beatitude (vs. 2-3).

The rest of the passage describes the ascent of this divine conscious-force, Agni, this Immortal in mortals who in the sacrifice takes the place of the ordinary will and knowledge of man, from the mortal and physical consciousness to the immortality of the Truth and the Beatitude. The Vedic Rishis speak of five births for man, five worlds of creatures where works are done, *pancha janā pancha kṛṣṭīh* or *kṣitīh*. Dyaus and Prithivi represent the pure mental and the physical consciousness; between them is the Antariksha, the intermediate or connecting level of the vital or nervous consciousness. Dyaus and Prithivi are Rodasi, our two firmaments; but these have to be overpassed, for then we find admission to another heaven than that of the pure mind—to the wide, the Vast which is the basis, the foundation (*budhna*) of the infinite consciousness, Aditi. This Vast is the Truth which supports the supreme triple world, those highest steps or seats (*padāni, sadānsi*) of Agni, of Vishnu, those supreme Names of the Mother, the cow, Aditi. The Vast or Truth is declared to be the own or proper seat or home of Agni, *swam damam, swam sadaḥ*. Agni is described in this hymn ascending from earth to his own seat.

This divine Power is found by the gods visible in the Waters, in the working of the Sisters. These are the sevenfold waters of the Truth, the divine Waters brought down from the heights of our being by Indra. First it is secret in the earth's growths, *oshadhīh*, the things that hold her heats, and has to be brought out by a sort of force, by a pressure of the two *araṇis*, earth and heaven. Therefore it is called the child of the earth's growths and the child of the earth and heaven; this immortal Force is produced by man with pain and difficulty from the workings of the pure mind upon the physical being. But in the divine waters Agni is found visible and easily born in all his strength and in all his knowledge and in all his enjoyment, entirely white and pure, growing ruddy with his action as he increases (v.3). From his very birth the Gods give him force and splendour and body; the seven mighty Rivers increase him in his joy; they move about this great newborn child and labour over him as the Mares, *aśvāḥ* (v.4).

The rivers, usually named *dhenavaḥ*, fostering cows, are here described as *aśvāḥ*, Mares, because while the Cow is the symbol of consciousness in the form of Knowledge, the Horse is the symbol of consciousness in the form of force. Ashva, the Horse, is the dynamic force of Life, and the rivers labouring over Agni on the earth become the waters of Life, of the vital dynamis or kinesis, the Prana, which moves and acts and desires and enjoys. Agni himself begins as material heat and power, manifests secondarily as the Horse and then only becomes the heavenly fire. His first work is to give as the child of the Waters its full form and extension and purity to the middle world, the vital or dynamic plane, *raja ātatanwān*. He purifies the nervous life in man.

pervading it with his own pure bright limbs, lifting upward its impulsions and desires, its purified will in works (*kratum*) by the pure powers of the super-conscious Truth and Wisdom, *kavibhiḥ pavitraiḥ*. So he wears his vast glories, no longer the broken and limited activity of desires and instincts, all about the life of the Waters (vs. 4.5).

The sevenfold waters thus rise upward and become the pure mental activity, the Mighty Ones of Heaven. They there reveal themselves as the first eternal ever-young energies, separate streams but of one origin—for they have all flowed from the one womb of the super-conscious Truth—the seven Words or fundamental creative expressions of the divine Mind, *sapta vāṇiḥ*. This life of the pure mind is not like that of the nervous life which devours its objects in order to sustain its mortal existence; its waters devour not but they do not fail; they are the eternal truth robed in a transparent veil of mental forms; therefore, it is said, they are neither clothed nor naked (v.6).

But this is not the last stage. The Force rises into the womb or birthplace of this mental clarity (*ghṛtasya*) where the waters flow as streams of the divine sweetness (*śravathe madhūnām*); there the forms it assumes are universal forms, masses of the vast and infinite consciousness. As a result, the fostering rivers in the lower world are nourished by this descending higher sweetness and the mental and physical consciousness, the two first mothers of the all-effecting Will, become in their entire largeness perfectly equal and harmonised by this light of the Truth, through this nourishing by the infinite Bliss. They bear the full force of Agni, the blaze of his lightnings, the glory and rapture of his universal forms. For where the Lord, the Male, the Bull of the abundance is increased by the wisdom of the super-conscious Truth, there always flow the streams of the clarity and the streams of the bliss (vs.7-8).

The Father of all things is the Lord and Male; he is hidden in the secret source of things, in the super-conscious; Agni, with his companion gods and with the sevenfold Waters, enters into the superconscious without therefore disappearing from our conscient existence, finds the source of the honeyed plenty of the Father of things and pours them out on our life. He bears and himself becomes the Son, the pure Kumara, the pure Male, the One, the soul in man revealed in its universality; the mental and physical consciousness in the human being accept him as their lord and lover; but, though one, he still enjoys the manifold movement of the rivers, the multiple cosmic energies (vs. 9-10).

Then we are told expressly that this infinite into which he has entered and in which he grows, in which the many Waters victoriously reaching their goal (*yaśasaḥ*) increase him, is the unobstructed vast where the Truth is born, the shoreless infinite, his own natural seat in which he now takes up his home.

There the seven rivers, the sisters, work no longer separated though of one origin as on the earth and in the mortal life, but rather as indivisible companions (*jamīnām apasi svasrīnām*). In that entire meeting of these great ones Agni moves in all things and upbears all things; the rays of his vision are perfectly straight, no longer affected by the lower crookedness; he from whom the radiances of knowledge, the brilliant herds, were born, now gives them this high and supreme birth; he turns them into the divine knowledge, the immortal consciousness (vs. 11-12).

This also is his own new and last birth. He who was born as the Son of Force from the growths of earth, he who was born as the child of the Waters, is now born in many forms to the goddess of bliss, she who has the entire felicity, that is to say to the divine conscious beatitude, in the shoreless infinite. The gods or divine powers in man using the mind as an instrument reach him there, unite around him, set him to the great work of the world in this new, mighty and effective birth. They, the outshinings of that vast consciousness, cleave to this divine Force as its bright lightnings and from him in the super-conscious, the shoreless vast, his own home, they draw for man the Immortality.

Such then, profound, coherent, luminous behind the veil of figures is the sense of the Vedic symbol of the seven rivers, of the Waters, of the five worlds, of the birth and ascent of Agni which is also the upward journey of man and the Gods whose image man forms in himself from level to level of the great hill of being (*sānoh sāmum*). Once we apply it and seize the true sense of the symbol of the Cow and the symbol of the Soma with a just conception of the psychological functions of the Gods, all the apparent incoherences and obscurities and far-fetched chaotic confusion of these ancient hymns disappears in a moment. Simply, easily, without straining there disengages itself the profound and luminous doctrine of the ancient Mystics, the secret of the Veda.

## SELECTED HYMNS

SRI AUROBINDO

SOMA, LORD OF DELIGHT AND IMMORTALITY

RIG VEDA IX. 83

1. Wide spread out for thee is the sieve of thy purifying, O Master of the soul; becoming in the creature thou pervadest his members all through. He tastes not that delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire; they alone are able to bear that and enjoy it who have been prepared by the flame.

2. The strainer through which the heat of him is purified is spread out in the seat of Heaven; its threads shine out and stand extended. His swift ecstasies foster the soul that purifies him; he ascends to the high level of Heaven by the conscious heart.

3. This is the supreme dappled Bull that makes the Dawns to shine out, the Male that bears the worlds of the becoming and seeks the plenitude; the Fathers who had the forming knowledge made a form of him by that power of knowledge which is his; strong in vision they set him within as a child to be born.

4. As the Gandharva he guards his true seat; as the supreme and wonderful One he keeps the births of the gods; Lord of the inner setting, by the inner setting he seizes the enemy. Those who are utterly perfected in works taste the enjoyment of his honey-sweetness.

5. O Thou in whom is the food, thou art that divine food, thou art the vast, the divine home; wearing heaven as a robe thou encompassest the march of the sacrifice. King with the sieve of thy purifying for thy chariot thou ascendest to the plenitude; with thy thousand burning brilliances thou conquerest the vast knowledge.

### COMMENTARY

It is a marked, an essential feature of the Vedic hymns that, although the Vedic cult was not monotheistic in the modern sense of the word, yet they continually recognise, sometimes quite openly and simply, sometimes in a complex and



difficult fashion, always as an underlying thought, that the many godheads whom they invoke are really one Godhead,—One with many names, revealed in many aspects, approaching man in the mask of many divine personalities. Western scholars, puzzled by this religious attitude which presents no difficulty whatever to the Indian mind, have invented, in order to explain it, a theory of Vedic henotheism. The Rishis, they thought, were polytheists, but to each God at the time of worshipping they gave preeminence and even regarded him as in a way the sole deity. This invention of henotheism is the attempt of an alien mentality to understand and account for the Indian idea of one Divine Existence who manifests Himself in many names and forms, each of which is for the worshipper of that name and form the one and supreme Deity. That idea of the Divine, fundamental to the Puranic religions, was already possessed by our Vedic forefathers.

The Veda already contains in the seed the Vedantic conception of the Brahman. It recognises an Unknowable, a timeless Existence, the Supreme which is neither today nor tomorrow, moving in the movement of the Gods, but itself vanishing from the attempt of the mind to seize it. (R.V.I. 170.1). It is spoken of in the neuter as That and often identified with the Immortality, the supreme triple Principle, the vast Bliss to which the human being aspires. The Brahman is the Unmoving, the Oneness of the Gods. “The Unmoving is born as the Vast in the seat of the Cow (Aditi),...the vast, the mightiness of the Gods, the One” (III.55.1). It is the One existent to whom the seers give different names, Indra, Matarishwan, Agni, (I. 164-46).

This Brahman, the one Existence, thus spoken of impersonally in the neuter, is also conceived as the Deva, the supreme Godhead, the Father of things who appears here as the Son in the human soul. He is the Blissful One to whom the movement of the Gods ascends, manifest as at once the Male and the Female; *vṛṣan*, *dhenu*. Each of the Gods is a manifestation, an aspect, a personality of the one Deva. He can be realised through any of his names and aspects, through Indra, through Agni, through Soma; for each of them being in himself all the Deva and only in his front or aspect to us different from the others contains all the gods in himself.

Thus Agni is hymned as the supreme and universal Deva, “Thou O Agni, art Varuna when thou art born, thou becomest Mitra when thou art perfectly kindled, in thee are all the Gods, O Son of Force, thou art Indra to the mortal who gives the sacrifice. Thou becomest Aryaman when thou bearest the secret name of the Virgins. They make thee to shine with the radiances (the cows, *gobhūḥ*) as Mitra well-established when thou makest of one mind the Lord of the house and his consort. For the glory of thee, O Rudra, the Maruts brighten by their pressure that which is the brilliant and varied birth of thee.

That which is the highest seat of Vishnu, by that thou protectest the secret Name of the radiances (the cows, *gonām*). By thy glory, O Deva, the gods attain to right vision and holding in themselves all the multiplicity (of the vast manifestation) taste Immortality. Men set Agni in them as the priest of the sacrifice when desiring (the Immortality) they distribute (to the Gods) the self-expression of the being... Do thou in thy knowledge extricate the Father and drive away (sin and darkness), he who is borne in us as thy Son, O Child of Force." (v.3). Indra is similarly hymned by Vamadeva and in this eighty-third Sukta of the ninth Mandala, as in several others, Soma too emerges from his special functions as the supreme Deity.

Soma is the Lord of the wine of delight, the wine of immortality. Like Agni he is found in the plants, the growths of earth, and in the waters. The Soma-wine used in the external sacrifice is the symbol of this wine of delight. It is pressed out by the pressing-stone (*adri*, *grāvan*) which has a close symbolic connection with the thunderbolt, the formed electric force of Indra also called *adri*. The Vedic hymns speak of the luminous thunders of this stone as they speak of the light and sound of Indra's weapon. Once pressed out as the delight of existence Soma has to be purified through a strainer (*pavitra*) and through the strainer he streams in his purity into the wine bowl (*camu*) in which he is brought to the sacrifice, or he is kept in jars (*kalāśa*) for Indra's drinking. Or, sometimes, the symbol of the bowl or the jar is neglected and Soma is simply described as flowing in a river of delight to the seat of the Gods, to the home of immortality. That these things are symbols is very clear in most of the hymns of the ninth Mandala, which are all devoted to the God Soma. Here, for instance, the physical system of the human being is imaged as the jar of the Soma-wine and the strainer through which it is purified is said to be spread out in the seat of Heaven, *divas pade*.

The hymn begins with an imagery which closely follows the physical facts of the purifying of the wine and its pouring into the jar. The strainer or purifying instrument spread out in the seat of Heaven seems to be the mind enlightened by knowledge (*cetas*); the human system is the jar. *Pavitrām te vitatam brahmanaspate*, the strainer is spread wide for thee, O Master of the soul; *prabhur gātrāni paryeṣi viśvatah*, becoming manifest thou pervadest or goest about the limbs everywhere. Soma is addressed here as Brahmanaspati, a word sometimes applied to other gods, but usually reserved for Brihaspati, Master of the creative Word. *Brahman* in the Veda is the soul or soul-consciousness emerging from the secret heart of things, but more often the thought, inspired, creative, full of the secret truth, which emerges from that consciousness and becomes thought of the mind, *manma*. Here, however, it seems to mean the soul itself. Soma, Lord of the Ananda, is the true creator

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who possesses the soul and brings out of it a divine creation. For him the mind and heart, enlightened, have been formed into a purifying instrument; freed from all narrowness and duality the consciousness in it has been extended widely to receive the full flow of the senselife and mind-life and turn it into pure delight of the true existence, the divine, the immortal Ananda.

So received, sifted, strained, the Soma-wine of life turned into Ananda comes pouring into all the members of the human system as into a wine-jar and flows through all of them completely in their every part. As the body of a man becomes full of the touch and exultation of strong wine, so all the physical system becomes full of the touch and exultation of this divine Ananda. The words *prabhu* and *vibhu* in the Veda are used not in the later sense, "lord", but in a fixed psychological significance like *pracetas* and *vicetas* or like *prajñāna* and *vijñāna* in the later language. "Vibhu" means becoming, or coming into existence pervasively, "prabhu" becoming, coming into existence in front of the consciousness, at a particular point as a particular object or experience. Soma comes out like the wine dropping from the strainer and then pervading the jar; it emerges into the consciousness concentrated at some particular point, *prabhu*, or as some particular experience and then pervades the whole being as Ananda, *vibhu*.

But it is not every human system that can hold, sustain and enjoy the potent and often violent ecstasy of that divine delight. *Ataptatanur na tad āmo aśnute*, he who is raw and his body not heated does not taste or enjoy that; *śrītāsa id vahantas tat samāśate*, only those who have been baked in the fire bear and entirely enjoy that. The wine of the divine Life poured into the system is a strong, overflowing and violent ecstasy; it cannot be held in the system unprepared for it by strong endurance of the utmost fires of life and suffering and experience. The raw earthen vessel not baked to consistency in the fire of the kiln cannot hold the Soma-wine; it breaks and spills the precious liquid. So the physical system of the man who drinks this strong wine of Ananda must by suffering and conquering all the torturing heats of life have been prepared for the secret and fiery heats of the Soma; otherwise his conscious being will not be able to hold it; it will spill and lose it as soon as or even before it is tasted or it will break down mentally and physically under the touch.

This strong and fiery wine has to be purified and the strainer for its purifying has been spread out wide to receive it in the seat of heaven, *tapoś pavitram vitatam divas pade*; its threads or fibres are all of pure light and stand out like rays; *śocanto asya tantavo vyasthran*. Through these fibres the wine has to come streaming. The image evidently refers to the purified mental and emotional consciousness, the conscious heart, *cetas*, whose thoughts and emotions are the threads or fibres. *Dyaus* or Heaven is the pure mental principle not subjected

to the reactions of the nerves and the body. In the seat of Heaven,—the pure mental being as distinguished from the vital and physical consciousness,—the thoughts and emotions become pure rays of true perception and happy psychical vibration instead of the troubled and obscured mental, emotional and sensational reactions that we now possess. Instead of being contracted and quivering things defending themselves from pain and excess of the shocks of experience they stand out free, strong and bright, happily extended to receive and turn into divine ecstasy all possible contacts of universal existence. Therefore it is *divas pade*, in the seat of Heaven, that the Soma-strainer is spread out to receive the Soma.

Thus received and purified these keen and violent juices, these swift and intoxicating powers of the Wine no longer disturb the mind or hurt the body, are no longer spilled and lost but foster and increase, *avanti*, mind and body of their purifier; *avantyasya pavitaram āsavo*. So increasing him in all delight of his mental, emotional, sensational and physical being they rise with him through the purified and blissful heart to the highest level or surface of heaven, that is, to the luminous world of Swar where the mind capable of intuition, inspiration, revelation is bathed in the splendours of the Truth (*ṛtam*), liberated into the infinity of the Vast (*bṛhat*). *Divas priṣṭham adhi tiṣṭhanti cetasā*.

So far the Rishi has spoken of Soma in his impersonal manifestation, as the Ananda or delight of divine existence in the human being's conscious experience. He now turns, as is the habit of the Vedic Rishis, from the divine manifestation to the divine Person and at once Soma appears as the supreme Personality, the high and universal Deva. *Arūrucad uśasaḥ pṛsnir agrīyaḥ*; the supreme dappled One, he makes the dawns to shine: *ukṣā bibharti bhuvanāni vājayuh*; he, the Bull, bears the worlds, seeking the plenitude. The word *pṛsnih*, dappled, is used both of the Bull, the supreme Male, and of the Cow, the female Energy; like all words of colour, *śveta*, *śukra*, *hari*, *harit*, *hṛṣna*, *hiranyaya*, in the Veda it is symbolic; colour, *varṇa*, has always denoted quality, temperament, etc., in the language of the Mystics. The dappled Bull is the Deva in the variety of his manifestation, many-hued. Soma is that first supreme dappled Bull, generator of the worlds of the becoming, for from the Ananda, from the all-blissful One they all proceed; delight is the parent of the variety of existences. He is the Bull, *ukṣan*, a word which like its synonym *vṛṣan*, means diffusing, generating, impregnating, the father of abundance, the Bull, the Male; it is he who fertilises Force of consciousness, Nature, the Cow, and produces and bears in his stream of abundance the worlds. He makes the Dawns shine out,—the dawns of illumination, mothers of the radiant herds of the Sun; and he seeks the plenitude, that is to say the fullness of being, force, consciousness, the plenty of the godhead which is the condition of the divine delight. In other

words it is the Lord of the Ananda who gives us the splendours of the Truth and the plenitudes of the Vast by which we attain to Immortality.

The fathers who discovered the Truth, received his creative knowledge, his Maya, and by that ideal and ideative consciousness of the supreme Divinity they formed an image of Him in man, they established Him in the race as a child unborn, a seed of the godhead in man, a Birth that has to be delivered out of the envelope of the human consciousness. *Māyāvino mamire asya māyayā, nṛcakṣasahpitaro garbham ādadhuḥ*. The fathers are the ancient Rishis who discovered the Way of the Vedic mystics and are supposed to be still spiritually present presiding over the destinies of the race and, like the gods, working in man for his attainment to Immortality. They are the sages who received the strong divine vision, *nṛcakṣasaḥ*, the Truth-vision by which they were able to find the Cows hidden by the Panis and to pass beyond the bounds of the Rodasi, the mental and physical consciousness, to the Super-conscious, the Vast Truth and the Bliss (R.V.I.36.7. IV.1.13-18. IV.2.15-18 etc.).

Soma is the Gandharva, the Lord of the hosts of delight, and guards the true seat of the Deva, the level or plane of the Ananda; *gandharvo itthā padam asya rakṣati*. He is the Supreme, standing out from all other beings and over them, other than they and wonderful, *adbhuta*, and as the supreme and transcendent, present in the worlds but exceeding them, he protects in those worlds the births of the gods, *pāti devānām janimāni adbhutaḥ*. The "births of the gods" is a common phrase in the Veda by which is meant the manifestation of the divine principles in the cosmos and especially the formation of the godhead in its manifold forms in the human being. In the last verse the Rishi spoke of the Deva as the Divine child preparing for birth, involved in the world, in the human consciousness. Here he speaks of Him as the transcendent guarding the world of the Ananda formed in man and the forms of the godhead born in him by the divine knowledge against the attacks of the enemies, the powers of division, the powers of undelight (*dviṣaḥ, arātīḥ*), against the undivine hosts with their formations of a dark and false creative knowledge, Avidya, illusion, (*adevir māyāḥ*).

For he seizes these invading enemies in the net of the inner consciousness; he is the master of a profounder and truer setting of world-truth and world-experience than that which is formed by the senses and the superficial mind. It is by this inner setting that he seizes the powers of falsehood, obscurity and division and subjects them to the law of truth, light and unity; *grbhṇati ripum nidhayā nidhāpati*. Men therefore protected by the lord of the Ananda governing this inner nature are able to accord their thoughts and actions with the inner truth and light and are no longer made to stumble by the forces of the outer crookedness; they walk straight, they become entirely perfect in their works and by this

truth of inner working and outer action are able to taste the entire sweetness of existence, the honey, the delight that is the food of the soul. *Sukṛttamā madhuno bhakṣam āsata.*

Soma manifests here as the offering, the divine food, the wine of delight and immortality, *haviḥ*, and as the Deva, lord of that divine offering (*haviṣmah*), above as the vast and divine seat, the superconscient bliss and truth, *bṛhat*, from which the wine descends to us. As the wine of delight he flows about and enters into this great march of the sacrifice which is the progress of man from the physical to the superconscient. He enters into it and encompasses it wearing the cloud of the heavenly ether, *nabhas*, the mental principle, as his robe and *Havir haviṣmo mahi sadma daivyaṃ, nabho vasānah pari yasi adhvaram.* The divine delight comes to us wearing the luminous-cloudy veil of the forms of mental experience.

In that march or sacrificial ascent the all-blissful Deva becomes the King of all our activities, master of our divinised nature and its energies and with the enlightened conscious heart as his chariot ascends into the plenitude of the infinite and immortal state. Like a Sun or a fire, as Surya, as Agni, engirt with a thousand blazing energies he conquers the vast regions of the inspired truth, the superconscient knowledge; *rājā pavitraratho vājam āruhaḥ, sahasrabhṛṣṭir jayasi śravo bṛhat.* The image is that of a victorious king, sun-like in force and glory, conquering a wide territory. It is the immortality that he wins for man in the vast truth-consciousness *śravas*, upon which is founded the immortal state. It is his own true seat, *utthā padam asya*, that the God concealed in man conquers ascending out of the darkness and the twilight through the glories of the Dawn into the solar plenitudes.

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With this hymn I close this series of selected hymns from the Rig Veda. My object has been to show in as brief a compass as possible the real functions of the Vedic gods, the sense of the symbols in which their cult is expressed, the nature of the sacrifice and its goal, explaining by actual examples the secret of the Veda. I have purposely selected a few brief and easy hymns, and avoided those which have a more striking depth, subtlety and complexity of thought and image,—alike those which bear the psychological sense plainly and fully on their surface and those which by their very strangeness and profundity reveal their true character of mystic and sacred poems. It is hoped that these examples will be sufficient to show the reader who cares to study them with an open mind the real sense of this, our earliest and greatest poetry. By other translations of a more general character it will be shown that these ideas are not merely the highest thought of a few Rishis, but the pervading sense and teaching of the Rig Veda.

## SOME EARLY WRITINGS OF SRI AUROBINDO

### THE GENIUS OF VALMIKI

OUT of the infinite silence of the past, peopled only to the eye of history or the ear of the Yogin, a few voices arise which speak for it, express it and are the very utterance and soul of those unknown generations, of that vanished and now silent humanity. These are the voices of the poets. We whose souls are drying up in this hard and parched age of utilitarian and scientific thought when men value little beyond what gives them exact and useful knowledge or leads them to some outward increase of power and pleasure, we who are beginning to neglect and ignore poetry and can no longer write it greatly and well,—just as we have forgotten how to sculpture like the Greeks, paint like the mediaeval Italians or build like the Buddhists—are apt to forget this grand utility of the poets, one noble faculty among their many divine and unusual powers. The Kavi or Vates, poet and seer, is not the *manīṣī*; he is not the logical thinker, scientific analyser or metaphysical reasoner; his knowledge is one not with his thought, but with his being; he has not arrived at it but has it in himself by virtue of his power to become one with all that is around him. By some form of spiritual, vital and emotional oneness he is what he sees; he is the hero thundering in the forefront of the battle, the mother weeping over her dead, the tree trembling violently in the storm, the flower warmly penetrated with the sunshine. And because he is these things, therefore he knows them; because he knows thus, spiritually and not rationally, he can write of them. He feels their delight and pain, he shares their virtue and sin, he enjoys their reward or bears their punishment. It is for this reason that poetry written out of the intellect is so inferior to poetry written out of the soul, is,—even as poetical thinking, so inferior to the thought that comes formed by inscrutable means out of the soul. For this reason, too, poets of otherwise great faculty have failed to give us living men and women or really to show to our inner vision even the things of which they write eloquently or sweetly because they are content to write about them after having seen them with the mind only, and have not been able or have not taken care first to be the things of which they would write and then not so much write about them as let them pour out in speech that is an image of the soul. They have been too easily attracted by the materials of poetry, *artha* and *shabda*; drawn by some power and charm in the substance of speech, captivated by some

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melody, harmony or colour in the form of speech, arrested by some strong personal emotion which clutches at experience or gropes for expression in these externals of poetry, they have forgotten to bathe in the Muses' deepest springs.

Therefore among those ancient voices, even when the literature of the ages has been winnowed and chosen by Time, there are very few who recreate for us in poetic speech deeply and mightily the dead past, because they were that past, not so much themselves as the age and nation in which they lived and not so much even the age and nation as that universal humanity which in spite of all differences, under them and within them even expressing its unity through them is the same in every nation and in every age. Others give us only fragments of thought or outbursts of feeling or reveal to us scattered incidents of sight, sound and outward happening. These are complete, vast, multitudinous, infinite in a way, impersonal, many-personed in their very personality, not divine workmen merely but fine creators endowed by God with something of His divine power and offering therefore in their works some image of His creative activity.

*(Incomplete)*

RAMAYAN

*(Translation)*

THE BOOK OF THE WILD FOREST

(Canto 1)

Then, possessing his soul, Rama entered the great forest, the forest Dandaka with difficulty approachable by men and beheld a circle there of hermitages of ascetic men; a refuge for all living things, with ever well-swept courts and strewn with many forms of beasts and swarming with companies of birds and holy high and temperate sages graced those homes. The high of energy approached them unstringing first his mighty bow and they beholding him like a rising moon with wonder in their looks gazed at the fabric of his beauty and its glory and softness and garbed grace and at Vaidehie too with unfalling eyelids they gazed and Lakshmana; for they were things of amazement to those dwellers in the woods. Great-natured sages occupied in doing good to all living things, they made him sit a guest in their leafy home and burning with splendour of soul like living fires they offered him guest-worship due and presented all things of auspice, full of high gladness in the act, roots, flowers and fruits they gave, yea, all the hermitage they laid at the feet of Rama. And high-souled, learned in righteousness they said to him with outstretched and



upward folded palms. "For that he is the keeper of the virtue of all this folk, a refuge and a mighty fame, high worship and honour are the king's, and he holds the staff of justice and is reverend to all. Of Indra's self he is the fourth part and protects the people. O seed of Raghau, therefore he enjoys noble and beautiful pleasures and to him men bow down. Thou shouldst protect us, then, dwellers in thy dominions; for whether the city hold thee or the wilderness, still art thou the king and the master of the folk. But we, O king, have laid by the staff of offence, we have put anger from us and the desire of the senses and 'tis thou must protect us always, ascetics rich in austerity but helpless as children in the womb.

CANTO 2

Now when he had taken of their hospitality, Rama towards the rising of the sun took farewell of all these seers and plunged into mere forest scattered through with many beasts of the chase and haunted by the tiger and the bear. There he and Lakshmana following him saw a desolation in the midmost of that wood, for blasted were tree and creeper and bush and water was nowhere to be seen, but the forest was full of the screaming of vultures and rang with the crickets' cry. And walking with Sita there Cacoostha in that haunt of fierce wild beasts beheld the appearance like a mountain peak and heard the thundering roar of an eater of men; deep set were his eyes and huge his face, hideous was he and hideous bellied, horrid, rough and tall, deformed and dreadful to the gaze and wore a tiger's skin moist with fat and streaked with gore, a terror to all creatures even as death the ender when he comes with yawning mouth. Three lions, four tigers, two wolves, ten spotted deer and the huge fat-smearred head of an elephant with its tusks he had stuck up on an iron spit and roared with a mighty sound. As soon as he saw Rama and Lakshmana and Sita Maithili he ran upon them in sore wrath like Death the ender leaping on the nations. And with a terrible roar that seemed to shake the earth he took Vaidehie up in his arms and moved away and said, "You who wearing the ascetic's cloth and matted locks, O ye whose lives are short, yet with a wife have you entered Dandak woods and you bear the arrow, sword and bow, how is this that you being anchorites hold your dwelling with a woman's beauty? Workers of unrighteousness, who are ye, evil men, disgrace to the garb of the seer? I Viradha the Rakshasa range armed these tangled woods eating the flesh of the sages. This woman with the noble hips shall be my spouse, but as for you, I will drink in battle your sinful blood". Evil-souled Viradha speaking thus wicked words, Sita heard his haughty speech, alarmed she shook in her apprehension as a plantain trembles in the stormwind. The son of Raghau

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seeing the beautiful Sita in Viradha's arms said to Lakshmana, his face drying up with grief, "Behold, O my brother, the daughter of Janak, lord of men, my wife of noble life taken into Viradha's arms, the king's daughter high-splendoured and nurtured in utter ease! The thing Kaikeyie desired, the thing dear to her that she chose for a gift, how quickly today, O Lakshmana, has it been utterly fulfilled, she whose foresight was not satisfied with the kingdom for her son, but she sent me, beloved of all beings, to the wild woods. Now today she has her desire, that middle mother of mine. For no worse grief can befall me than that another should touch Vaidehie and that my father should perish and my own kingdom be wrested from my hands". So Cacoostha spoke and Lakshman answered him, his eyes filled with the rush of grief, panting like a furious snake controlled, "O thou who art like Indra and the protector of this world's creatures, why dost thou afflict thyself as if thou wert one who has himself no protector, even though I am here, the servant of thy will? Today shall the Rakshasa be slain by my angry shaft and Earth drink the blood of Viradha dead. (The wrath that was born in me against Bharat for his lust of rule, I will loose upon Viradha as the Thunderer hurls his bolt against a hill.)

### CANTO 3

Then Viradha spoke yet again and filled the forest with his voice. "Answer to my questioning, who are ye and whither do ye go?" And Rama answered to the Rakshasa with his mouth of fire, in his pride of strength he answered his questioning and declared his birth in Ikshwaku's line. "Kshatriyas accomplished in virtue know us to be, farers in this forest, but of thee we would know who thou art that rangest Dandak woods". And to Rama of enormous might Viradha made reply: "Java's son am I, Shatahrida was my dam and Viradha am I called by all Rakshasas on earth.

*(Incomplete)*

### NOTES ON THE MAHABHARATA

The problem of the Mahabharata, its origin, date and composition, is one that seems likely to elude scholarship to times indefinite if not for ever. It is true that several European scholars have solved all these to their own satisfaction, but their industrious and praiseworthy efforts....

In the following pages I have approached the eternal problem of the Mahabharata from the point of view mainly of style and literary personality, partly of substance; but in dealing with the substance I have deferred questions

of philosophy, allusion and verbal evidence to which a certain school attach great importance and ignored altogether the question of minute metrical details on which they base far-reaching conclusions. It is necessary therefore out of respect for these scholars to devote some space to an explanation of my standpoint. I contend that owing to the peculiar manner in which the Mahabharata has been composed, these minutiae of detail and word have very little value. The labour of this minute school has proved beyond dispute one thing and one thing only, that the Mahabharata was not only immensely enlarged, crusted with interpolations and accretions and in parts rewritten and modified, but even its oldest parts were verbally modified in the course of preservation. The extent to which this happened has I think been grossly exaggerated, but that it did happen, one cannot but be convinced. Now if this is so, it is obvious that argumenta from verbal niceties must be very dangerous. It has been sought to prove from a single word, *suranga*, an underground tunnel, which European scholars believe to be identical with the Greek *suringks* that the account in the Adiparva of the Pandavas' escape from the burning house of Purochana through an underground tunnel must be later than another account in the Vanaparva which represents Bhima as carrying his brothers and mother out of the flames; for the former they say must have been composed after the Indians had learned the Greek language and culture and the latter, it is assumed, before that interesting period. Now whether *suranga* was derived from the Greek *suringks* or not, I cannot take upon me to say, but will assume on the authority of better linguists than myself that it was so—though I think it is as well to be sceptical of all such Greek derivations until the connection is proved beyond doubt, for such words even when not accounted for by Sanskrit itself may very easily be borrowed from the original languages. Bengali, for instance, preserves the form "sudanga" where the cerebral letter is Dravidian. But if so, if this word came into fashion along with Greek culture, and became *the* word for a tunnel, what could be more natural than that the reciter should substitute for an old and disused word the one which was familiar to his audience? Again much has been made of the frequent occurrence of Yavana, Vahlika, Pehlava, Saka, Huna; as to Yavana its connection with Iacon does not seem to me beyond doubt. It was certainly at one time applied to the Bactrian Greeks, but so it has been and is to the present day applied to the Persians, Afghans and other races to the north-west of India. Nor is the philological connection between Iacon and Yavana very clear to my mind. Another form Yanna seems to represent Iacon fairly well; but are we sure that Yanna and Yavana were originally identical? A mere resemblance however close is the most misleading thing in philology. Upon such resemblances Pocock made out a very strong case for his theory that the Greeks were a Hindu colony. The identity of the Sakas and Sakyas was for a long time a pet

theory of European Sanscritists and on this identity was based the theory that Buddha was a Scythian reformer of Hinduism.

This identity is now generally given up, yet it is quite as close as that of Yavana and Yanna and as closely in accordance with the laws of the Sanscrit language. If Yanna is the original form, why was it changed to Yavana? It is no more necessary than that *manna* be changed to mavana; if Yavana be earlier and Yanna a prakrit corruption, how are we to account for the short a and the v; there was no digamma in Greek in the time of Alexander. But since the Greeks are always called Yavanas in Buddhist writings, we will waive the demand for strict philological intelligibility and suppose that Yavana answers to Iaon. The question yet remains when did the Hindus become acquainted with the existence of the Greeks. Now here the first consideration is why did they call the Greeks Ionians and not Hellenes or Macedonians? That the Persians should know the Greeks by that name is natural enough, for it was with the Ionians that they first came into contact; but it was not Ionians who invaded India under Alexander, it was not an Ionian prince who gave his daughter to Chandragupta, it was not an Ionian conqueror who crossed the Indus and besieged..... Did the Macedonians on their victorious march give themselves out as Ionians? I for my part do not believe it. It is certain therefore that if the Hindus took the word Yavana from Iaon, it must have been through the Persians and not direct from the Greek language. But the connection of the Persians with India was as old as Darius Hystaspes who had certainly reason to know the Greeks. It is therefore impossible to say that the Indians had not heard about the Greeks as long ago as 500 B.C. Even if they had not the mention of Yavanas and Yavana kings does not carry us very far; for it is evident that in the earlier parts of the Mahabharata they are known only as a strong barbarian power of the North West, there is no sign of their culture being known to the Hindus. It is therefore quite possible that the word Yavana now grown familiar may have been substituted by the later reciters for an older name no longer familiar. It is now known beyond reasonable doubt that the Mahabharata war was fought out in or about 1190 B.C.; Dhritarashtra, son of Vichitravirya, Krishna, son of Devaki and Janamejaya are mentioned in Vedic works of a very early date. There is therefore no reason to doubt that an actual historical event is recorded with whatever admixture of fiction in the Mahabharata. It is also evident that the Mahabharata, not any "Bharata" or "Bharati Katha" but the Mahabharata existed before the age of Panini, and though the radical school bring down Panini the next few centuries.....

(Incomplete)

MAHABHARATA

(*Translation*)

Let the reciter bow down to Naraian, likewise to Nara the Highest Male, also to our Lady the Muse (Goddess Saraswati), and thereafter utter the word of Hail!

Vaishampayan continueth

But the hero Kurus and who clove to them thereafter having performed joyously the marriage of Abhimanyu rested that night and then at dawn when glad to the Assembly-hall of Virata.

Now wealthy was that hall of the lord of Matsya with mosaic of gems excellent and perfect jewels, with seats set out, garlanded, perfumed; thither went those great among the kings of men.

Then took their seats in front the two high kings, Drupada and Virata, old they and honoured of earth's lords, and Rama and Janardan with their father.

Now by the Panchala king was the hero Shini with the son of Rohinnie, but very near likewise to the Matsya king Janardan and Yudhishtira;

And all the sons of Drupada, Bhima, Arjuna and the sons of Madravatie and Pradyumna and Samba, heroes in the strife, and Abhimanyu with the children of Virata;

And all those heroes equal to their fathers in heroism and beauty and strength sat down, the princely boys, sons of Draupadie, on noble seats curious with gold.

Thus as those great warriors sat with shining ornaments and shining robes rich shone that senate of kings like wide heaven with its stainless stars.

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“To all of you it is known how Yudhishtira here was conquered by Saubala in the hall of the dicing; by fraud was he conquered and his kingdom torn from him and contract made of exile in the forest; and though infallible in the mellay, though able by force impetuous to conquer the whole earth, yet the sons of Pandu stood by their honour religiously; harsh and austere their vow but for the six years and the seven they kept it, noblest of men, the sons of Pandu; and this the thirteenth year and most difficult they have passed before all your eyes unrecognised; in exile they passed it, the mighty-minded ones, suffering many and intolerable hardships, in the service of strangers, in menial employments cherishing their desire of the kingdom that belongeth to their

lineage. Since this is so, do ye think out somewhat that shall be for the good both of the King, the son of Righteousness and of Duryodhan, just and glorious and worthy of the great Kurus. For Yudhishthira the just would not desire even the kingship of the gods unjustly, yet would he cling to the lordship of some small village which he might hold with expediency and justice. For it is known to you kings that how by dishonest proceeding his father's kingdom was torn from him by the sons of Dhritarashtra and himself cast into great and unbearable danger; for not in battle did they conquer him by their own prowess, these sons of Dhritarashtra; even so the king with his friends desire the welfare of his wrongers. But what the sons of Pandu with their own hands amassed by conquest crushing the lords of earth that these mighty ones demand, even Kuntie's sons and Madravatie's. But even when they were children, they were sought by various means to be slain of their banded foemen, savage and unrighteous, for greed of their kingdom; yea all this is known to you utterly. Considering therefore their growing greed and the righteousness of Yudhishthira, considering also their close kinship, form you a judgment each man to himself and together. And since these have always clung to truth and loyally observed the contract, if know they are wronged, they may well slay all the sons of Dhritarashtra. And hearing of any wrong done by these in this business their friends would gather round, the Pandavas yea and repel war with war and slay them. If nathless ye deem these too weak in numbers for victory, yet would they all band together and with their friends at last to strive to destroy them. Moreover none knoweth the mind of Duryodhan rightly, what he meaneth to do, and what can you decide that shall be the best to set about when you know not the mind of your foeman. Therefore let one go hence, some virtuous, pureminded and careful man such as shall be an able envoy for their appeasement and the gift of half the kingdom to Yudhishthira". This hearing the just, expedient, sweet and impartial speech of Janardan, the elder brother of him took up the word, "O prince, honouring the younger's speech even greatly...

*(Incomplete)*

## THE PHYSICAL AND THE SUBCONSCIENT

*(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters)*

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

22-4-1936

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It is most probably something that has come from outside and covered. This happens at this stage when the working is in the physical and subconscious—for that is the nature of these parts, to live in the external with the inner being covered up by a sort of natural veil of obscurity. Therefore when one makes the opening through this veil, it has a tendency to come back. When that happens, one has to remain undisturbed and call down the Force and Light from above to remove the obstacle. This must be done till the opening is permanent and complete and no covering is possible.

25-8-1936

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In dealing with the physical and subconscious the working is always slower than when [it] acts on the mind and vital because the resistance of physical stuff is always heavier and less intelligent and adaptable; but as a compensation the work done in the being by this slower movement is in the end more complete, solid and durable.

14-12-1936

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Yes, what you see is correct; it was a cloud from the subconscious colouring the clear consciousness. In this transitional movement of the physical consciousness from its roots of darkness to its foundation in light, such cloudings can happen and one must be on one's guard against them; but even when they come, they pass after a while and by their passing some ground is conquered by the light from the obscurity. The physical nature here is founded in the subconscious, it is full of obscure movements; that has to be changed and the whole

physical being down to the most material body consciousness has to be refounded in the Mother's light.

22-9-1936

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All that is probably things that rise from the subconscious—or perhaps the subconscious itself is being worked upon to arrive at a state of light and peace. It sometimes enters into a happy condition, sometimes into a neutral one, sometimes it raises up a causeless sorrow. The movements of the subconscious take place even without reason, of themselves, owing to the inherent habit in Nature, that is why the grief is without discoverable cause. It is only because it is in the subconscious that you cannot locate it. When the grief comes, you must dissociate yourself from it and reject it, not taking it as your own, until it ceases to come and call down the Mother's peace and Ananda in its place.

13-9-1936

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These thoughts that attack in sleep or in the state between sleep and waking do not belong to any part of your conscious being, but come either from the subconscious or from the surrounding atmosphere through the subconscious. If they are thoughts you had in the past and have thrown out from you, then what rises must be impressions left by them in the subconscious—for all things thought, felt or experienced leave such impressions which can rise from there in sleep. Or the thoughts can have gone out from you into the environmental consciousness, that is, an atmosphere of consciousness which we carry around us and through which we are connected with universal Nature and from there they may be trying to return upon you. As it is difficult for them to succeed in the waking state, they take advantage of the absence of conscious control in sleep and appear there. If it is something new and never yours, then it can be neither of these, but an attack of some outside Force.

It is to be hoped that as you have rejected them, they will not come again, but if they do, then you must put a conscious will before going to sleep that they should not come. A suggestion of that kind on the subconscious is often successful, if not at once, after a time; for the subconscious learns to obey the will put upon it in the waking state.

20-11-1936

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What you describe seems to be in its nature an uncontrolled rushing up of the subconscious taking the form of a mechanical recurrence of old thoughts,



## THE PHYSICAL AND THE SUBCONSCIENT

interests or desires with which the physical mind is usually occupied. If that were all, the only thing would be to reject them, detach yourself and let them pass till they quieted down. But I gather from what you write that there is an attack, an obscure force using these recurrences to invade and harass the mind and body. It would be helpful if you could give an exact description of the main character of the thoughts that come, what things and ideas they are concerned with etc. But in any case the one thing to do is to open yourself to the Mother's force by aspiration, thought of the Mother or any other way and let it drive out the attack. We shall send Force continually till this is done. It will be better to let us know every three days or so how you go on, for that will help to make the action of the Force more precise.

7-12-1936

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What is taking place, the subsiding of the surge of subconscious thoughts and movements, and their pressure on the mind, is just what ought to take place. It is not a suppression or pulling back into the subconscious, it is an expulsion from the conscious self into which it has arisen. It is true that something more may rise from the subconscious, but it will be what is still left there. What is now rejected, if it goes anywhere and is not abolished, will go not into the subconscious but into the surrounding consciousness which [one] carries around him—once there it no longer belongs to oneself in any way and if it tries to return it will be as foreign matter which one has not to accept or allow any longer. These are the two last stages of rejection by which one gets rid of the old things of the nature, they go down into the subconscious and have to be got rid of from there or they go out into the environmental consciousness and are no longer ours.

The idea that one should let what rises from the subconscious go on repeating itself till it is exhausted is not the right idea. For that would needlessly prolong the troubled condition and might be harmful. When these things rise they have to be observed and then thrown out, not kept.

12-12-1936

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All the difficulties are bound to vanish in time under the action of the Force. They rise, because if they did not rise the victory would not be complete, for all has to be faced and worked out, in order that nothing may be left to rise up hereafter. The psychic being itself can throw the light by which the full consciousness will come and nothing remain in the darkness.

26-8-1936

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## MEDICAL NOTES\*

*(The following remarks came in reply to a statement made by me regarding the specifics used in medicine.—Nirodbaran)*

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not enough for a medicine to be a specific. Certain drugs have other effects or possible effects which can be ignored by the physician who only wants to cure his case, but cannot be in a whole-view of the system and its reactions. The unfavourable reactions of quinine are admitted by medical opinion itself and doctors in Europe have been long searching for a substitute for quinine.

4-1-1936

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SRI AUROBINDO: Medicine is not exactly science. It is theory and experimental fumbling and luck.

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*(Nirodbaran: But our allopathic medicine is a science developed by painstaking labour—experiment, research, etc.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: To a certain extent. The theory is imposing, but when it comes to application, there is too much fumbling and guess work for it to rank as an exact science. There are many scientists (and others) who grunt when they hear medicine called a science. Anatomy and physiology, of course, are sciences.

*(Nirodbaran: Dr. X, who is a homeopath, does not believe much in allopathy. What do you think of his treatment?)*

SRI AUROBINDO: There are plenty of allopathic doctors who consider homeopathy, Nature-cure, Ayurveda and everything else that is not orthodox “medical science” to be quackery. Why should not homeopaths etc. return the compliment?

\* From Sri Aurobindo's Correspondence with Nirodbaran.

## MEDICAL NOTES

I don't know anything about X's homeopathic knowledge or capacities.... But sometimes he seems to be remarkably effective. It is perhaps however due to a great power of suggestion or, if you like to call it so, induced auto-suggestion. But many doctors say it is more the confidence in the doctor and the medicine that cures than either the doctor himself or the medicine. All this is meant not to support X, but to throw some cold water on the "my" in "my science".

*(Nirodbaran: I must say, however, that I have learnt a few things from him—calmness, self-confidence, faith.)*

SRI AUROBINDO: Right—that is the thing every physician should have.

*(The following remarks were made in reference to a person who in a disturbed condition of mind drank something injurious under the misapprehension that his ailment would be cured if he did so.—Nirodbaran)*

SRI AUROBINDO: If he did do it with such an idea, it is evidently a suggestion of the hostile force, or if you like to put it more psychologically, he was possessed by a mental fixation of an irrational undetermined character. It is of the same class as the ideas which get hold of people's minds and become "fixed ideas", only these are momentary. But even if he did it by mistake, it was a suggestion from a source that wanted to do him injury and took advantage of a momentary "absence of mind."

## DIFFERENT METHODS OF WRITING\*

SRI AUROBINDO

*Q. What is the origin of the different methods of writing,—from right to left, from left to right or, like the Chinese, vertically?*

The question is one of great interest but impossible to solve definitely for lack of substantial data. All one can do is to speculate on the most probable and satisfying explanation.

In the first place, it is evident that these differences are no mere accident nor the result of some trivial and local cause; for they coincide with great cultural divisions of humanity belonging to prehistoric times. It is the races called Aryan from their common original culture whose script is directed from left to right; the Mesopotamian races deriving their culture from the Chaldeans proceed from right to left; the Mongolians write vertically.

In the second place no explanation is possible if we adopt the view that writing is a comparatively recent invention in the history of the human race and borrowed by all the ancient nations from a common source,—a derivation, let us say, from Egyptian hieroglyphs popularised and spread broadcast over earth by the commercial activities of Phœnician traders. We must suppose on the contrary that these differences were developed at a very early time while the great cultures were in their formation and before the dispersal of the races representing them.

Undoubtedly, the general use of writing is a late development in the history of the present cycle of civilisation. And to this retardation two causes contributed, at first, the absence of a simple and easy system and, afterwards, the absence of a simple, common, but handy and durable material. While this state of things endured, writing would not be used for daily and ordinary purposes, but only in connection with great religious ceremonies or, where culture was materially more advanced, for the preservation of important records or of treasured and sacred knowledge.

It is, therefore, in some circumstance intimately connected with religious ideas and practices that we must look for the explanation we are seeking; and it

\* Originally published in the *Arya* under the title. *The Question of the Month.*

should be a circumstance common to all these cultures, yet capable of leading to so striking a difference.

The one important circumstance common, one might almost say central, to the ideas and practices of the ancient nations was the reverence for the sun and its supreme importance in religious ceremonies. Might not the direction adopted for their writing be determined by some difference in their attitude towards the direction of the sun in its daily movement from east to west?

The difference of attitude can only be explained if we suppose that for some reason the Aryan forefathers had their faces turned southwards, the Mesopotamian northwards and the Mongolian eastwards. In that case, the sun for the Aryans would move from their left to their right, for the Mesopotamians from their right to their left, for the Mongolians straight towards them, and this difference would be represented by the movement of the hand tracing the sacred symbols on some hard flat surface, of stone or other material used for these early scripts.

But what circumstance, again, could lead to this difference? We can only think of one,—that this tendency might have been formed during the constant migration of these races from their original habitat. If we accept Mr. Tilak's theory of an Aryan migration from the Arctic regions southwards towards India, Persia and the Mediterranean countries; if we can suppose that the fathers of the Mesopotamian culture came from the south northwards and that the first Mongolian movement was from Central Asia to the east, we shall have the necessary conditions. We may thus explain also the Sanscrit terms for the four directions; for entering India from the west and following this line in their early colonisation, the east would be in front of the Aryans, *pūrva*, the West behind, *paśchima*, the South on their right, *dakṣiṇa*, while the name for the north, *uttara*, higher, might possibly indicate a memory of their old northern home in that supreme point of the earth where they still placed the sacred mountain of their gods.

Necessarily, this explanation is in the highest degree conjectural and depends on pure intellectual reasoning which is an unsafe guide in the absence of solid and sufficient data. Nevertheless, it is the one positive explanation that suggests itself to us and, as hypothesis, is well worth taking into consideration.

## SOME COMMENTS ON POETRY\*

SRI AUROBINDO

(Q. About English poetry which is not the most modern (to-day in 1932) Livingstone Lowes, writing in 1918, remarks in his *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*: "That which does allure it (modern poetry) in the East is an amazing tininess and finesse—the delicacy, that is to say, and the deftness, and the crystal-line quality of the verse of China and Japan....The strange, the remote, in its larger, more broadly human aspect—all this has been gradually losing its hold upon poetry. Instead, when we fly from the obsession of the familiar, it is growingly apt to be the more recondite, or precious, or quintessential, or even perverse embodiments of the strange or far—to 'the special exquisite perfume' of Oriental art; to the exceptional and the esoteric, in a word, rather than to the perennial and universal".

He quotes as a specimen of Imagist verse:

We bring the hyacinth-violets, sweet, bare, chill to the touch.)

The remark of Livingstone Lowes is no doubt correct. Even now and even where it is the external, everyday, obvious that is being taken as theme, we see often enough that what the mind is trying to find is some recondite, precious or quintessential aspect of the everyday and obvious—something in it exceptional or esoteric. But while in the East, the way to do it is known, the West does not seem yet to have found it. Instead of going inside, getting intimate with what is behind, and writing of the outside also from that inside experience, they are still trying to stare through the surface into the inner depths with some X-Ray of mental imagination or "intuition" and the result is not the quintessence itself but a shadow-picture of the quintessence. That is perhaps why there is so much feeling of effort, artifice, "even perverse embodiment" in much of this poetry—and no very definitive success as yet. But, I suppose, the way itself, the endeavour to leave the obvious surfaces and get deeper is the only road left for poetry, otherwise it can but repeat itself in the old modes with slight alterations till exhaustion brings decadence. On the road that is being now followed there is also evident danger of decadence, through an excess of mere technique and

\* From unpublished letters, except the second item.

SOME COMMENTS ON POETRY

artifice or through a straining towards the merely out-of-the-way or the perverse. But there seems to be no other door of progress than to make the endeavour.

(10-10-1932)

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(Q. Have you seen the poem, *Limber Horses*, in the copy of *The New Statesmān and the Nation* recently sent up to you? What sort of inspiration has it?)

It is evidently inspired from the vital world—from a certain part of it which seems to be breaking out in much of today's literature and art. All that comes from this source is full of a strange kind of force, but out of focus, misshaped in thought or vision or feeling, sometimes in the form too, ominous and perverse. For that matter, the adverse vital world is very much with us now,—the War was the sign of its descent on the earth and After-war bears its impress. But from another point of view that is not a cause for alarm or discouragement—for it has always been predicted from occult sources that such a descent would be the precursor of the Divine Manifestation.

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(Q. With regard to W. J. Turner's poem *The Word made flesh* in the latest *New Statesman and the Nation*, is there any justification for my impression that this was a ghost of the nineties (the meretricious "diabolism", cult of the bizarre etc.) that had gone to a Fancy Dress Ball in the clothes of 1934? There seemed to be a certain slickness in achieving the fashionable formula of today—and of course the inevitable sop to the anti-Victorian Cerberus, the introduction of something to offend the conventions of last century.

But I did not feel any inevitability behind it all. Some "modern" verse is perverse but powerful; these lines seemed just built up by an adroit mind that knows how to tickle the modern fancy.)

I think your criticism is very much to the point. The writer is a very clever manipulator of words, but he is dressing up an idea so as to catch the surface mind—there is no sincerity and therefore no power or conviction or poetical suggestion. Such made-up stuff as

The head of Satan is curled

and the rest of it has no real significance and is therefore rhetorical, not poetic. The rest is no better—there is no single line that carries conviction, not an image or a phrase or a movement of rhythm that is inevitable.

...This crude braggadocio of the flesh is not telling nor attractive. The diabolism and cult of the bizarre in the nineties had a certain meaning,—it was at least a revolt against false conventions and an attempt to escape from the furnished obviousness of much that had gone before. But now it has itself become the obvious and conventional—not quite exactly it in its old form but the things it attempted to release and these are now trying to escape from their own obviousness by excess, the grotesque, the perverse. The writer brings in or brings back Satan (for whom there is no longer any need) to give, I suppose, a diabolical thrill to that excess—but, as poetry at least, it is not successful. Satan and sexual realism...do not match together.

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(Q. I so often fail to detect the poetry in modern “poems” that the piece by W. H. Auden, quite a young man, in *The New Statesman and the Nation* of July 16, 1932, was a welcome exception—also it hints at an unusual warmth of interest in England. But neither grammar nor sense is plain to me in the opening line and elsewhere.)

It took me all these three days to overcome the obscurity of the phrasing and the uncouthness of some of the lines; even so I do not know whether I can give a very decided answer to your question. The poetical quality of much of the piece is undoubted, though very uneven; for some of the lines, as those about Newton, seem to me to be quite prosaic whether in expression or rhythm; at other places even where the expression is strong and poetic, the movement falls short of an equal excellence. All the same, there is a rhythm and there is a power of thought and poetic speech, rising to a climax in the nine or ten lines of the close. What seems most to contribute is the skilful and happy vowelation and consonantal assonances,—the rhythmic form of the lines is not always so happy,—and on the side of expression the concise power of much of the phrasing at once clear-cut in line and full in significance—in spirit though not in manner akin to the Dantesque turn of phrase. I mean such lines and expressions as

- (1) a murmuration of starlings.
- (2) This fortress perched on the edge of the Atlantic scarp,  
The mole between all Europe and the exile-crowded sea.
- (3)                   a life  
Grim as a tidal rock-pool's in its glove-shaped valleys.
- (4) gasping in the impossible air (this is quite Dante) (3) also.
- (5)                   these intelligible dangerous marvels.



SOME COMMENTS ON POETRY

- (6) Far-sighted as falcons, they looked down another future,  
(and the two lines that follow)  
    For the seed in their loins were hostile, though afraid of their pride,  
    And tall with a shadow now, inertly wait.
- (7)           the years of the measured world.
- (8) The barren spiritual marriage of stone and water.
- (9) Its military silence, its surgeon's idea of pain.
- (10) And called out of tideless peace by a living sun.
- (11) And into the undared ocean swung north their prow  
    Drives through the night and the star-concealing dawn.  
  (These two lines again very Dantesque)

It is a pity he did not take pains to raise the whole to the same or a similar equal level—and more still that he did not think it worth while to make the underlying meaning of the whole as clear and powerfully precise as are in themselves these phrases. (15-9-1932)

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(Q. Here are some verses from George Santayana. Santayana is a Spaniard who has a post at Harvard—English is not his mother tongue. In spite of traditionalism and lack of any very individual or developed technique, is there not some arresting quality in this poetry?

There we live o'er, amid angelic powers,  
Our lives without remorse, as if not ours,  
And others' lives with love, as if our own;  
For we behold, from these eternal towers,  
The deathless beauty of all wingèd hours.  
Ane have our being in their truth alone.

...and I knew

The wings of sacred Eros as he flew  
And left me to the love of things not seen.  
'Tis a sad love, like an eternal prayer,  
And knows no keen delight, no faint surcease.  
Yet from the seasons hath the earth increase,  
And heaven shines as if the gods were there.  
Had Dian passed there could no deeper peace  
Embalm the purple stretches of the air.)

## MOTHER INDIA

It has a considerable beauty of thought and language in it. It is a great pity that it is so derivative in form as to sound like an echo. With so much mastery of language and ease of rhythm it should have been possible to find a form of his own and an original style. The poetic power and vision are there and he has done as much with it as could be done with a borrowed technique. If he had found his own, he might have ranked high as a poet.

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(Q. Here is a poem by Stephen Spender, one of the most promising of our young modernist poets, in *The New Statesman and the Nation* of November 4, 1933:

### PERHAPS

the explosion of a bomb  
the submarine—a burst bubble filled with water—  
the chancellor clutching his shot arm (and that was Perhaps  
a put-up job for their own photographers)  
the parliament their own side set afire  
and then our party forbidden  
and the mine flooded, an accident I hope

motorcycles wires aeroplanes cars trains  
converging at that one town Geneva  
top-hats talking at edge of crystal healing lake  
then mountains

we know this from rotating machines  
from flanges stamping, cutting, sicking out sheets from paper rolls.  
The newsmen run like points of compass: their arms are  
gusts that carry sheets of mouldy paper:  
our eyes mud those scraps rub on.

In his skidding car he wonders  
when watching landscape attack him  
“is it rushing? (I cannot grasp it) or is it  
at rest with its own silence I cannot touch?”

SOME COMMENTS ON POETRY

was that final when they shot him? did that war  
lop our dead branches? are my new leaves splendid?  
is it leviathan, that revolution  
hugely nosing at edge of antarctic?

only Perhaps. can be that we grow smaller  
donnish and bony shut in our racing prison:  
headlines are walls that shake and close  
the dry dice rattled in their wooden box.

Can be deception of things only changing. Out there  
perhaps growth of humanity above the plain  
hangs: not the timed explosion, oh but Time  
monstrous with stillness like the himalayan range.

Aren't the emotion and the rhythm all in a rather subdued key—but that appears to be universal among up-to-date poets?)

It seems to me they are so subdued as hardly to be there except at places. A certain subdued force of statement getting less subdued and more evidently powerful at the colse—this there is, but it is the only power there.

(Q. How did the poem impress you?)

I am afraid it made no impression on me—no poetical impression. I cannot persuade myself that this kind of writing has any chance of survival once the mode is over.

“On consideration I should say that whatever merits there are in ‘Perhaps’ lie in the last four stanzas. The first three seem to me distinguishable from a strong prose only by the compression of the language and the stiffness of the movement—too stiff for prose, in quite another way too stiff for the fineness and plasticity there should be in poetic rhythm—especially needed, it seems to me, in free verse. From the fourth line of the fourth stanza I begin to find what seems to me the real poetic touch. The fifth and seventh have the substance and diction of very fine poetry—what I miss is the rhythm that would carry it home to the inner consciousness and leave it with its place permanently there. There seems to be in this technique an unwillingness to get too far away from the characteristic manner of prose rhythm, an unwillingness either to soar or run, as if either would be an unbecoming and too ostentatious action—in three or four lines only the poet is just about to let himself go. Or perhaps

MOTHER INDIA

there is the same tendency as in some modern painting and architecture, a demand for geometric severity and precision? But the result is the same. It may be that this kind of writing cuts into the intellect—it touches only the surface of the vital, the life-spirit which after all has its rights in poetry, and does not get through into the soul. That at least is the final impression it leaves on me.

(?-II-1933)

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(Q. Taking as my model your poem *Trance* in which the system discovered by you of true English Quantitative Metre is exemplified at its simplest—

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

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

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

—I have tried my hand at poetry, but I find that so many lines read like ordinary—that is, non-quantitative—iambic five-foot ones with a monosyllable at the first foot.)

This liability to be read as an iambic pentameter is the pitfall of this metre—everything else is easy, this is the critical point in the movement. All the same, it seems to me that it is only the standing convention which imposes the iambic movement here. The reason why it can do so at all is that in both the lines you keep up what one accustomed to the ordinary rhythms would take to be three successive trochees and would be irresistibly tempted to go on on the same lines. In order to get the right pace, the reader in dealing with these transplanted classic metres must be prepared to make the most of quan-

tities and stresses (true ones) and then, if the verse is well executed, there should be no difficulty. One can help him sometimes by a crowding of stresses in the first part of the line and a refusal of all but the lightest sounds in the close with of course a strong stress at the end.

(22-10-1933)

I think the principle of this metre should be to say a few very clearcut things in a little space. At least it looks so to me at present—though a more free handling of the metre might show that the restriction was not justifiable....

I had chosen this metre—or rather it came to me and I accepted it—because it seemed to me both brief and easy, so suitable for an experiment. But I find now that it was only seemingly easy and in fact very difficult. The ease with which I wrote it only came from the fact that by a happy inspiration the right rhythm for it came into my consciousness and wrote itself out by virtue of the rhythm being there. If I had consciously experimented I might have stumbled over the same difficulties as have come in your way....

The *Bird of Fire* was written on two consecutive days and afterwards revised. The *Trance* at one sitting—it took only a few minutes. You may have the date as they were both completed on the same day and sent to you the next.

(Q. In the line—

Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown—

is the “o” assonance satisfactory, or does the ear feel the two first “o”’s as coming too close or as being for some reason too insistent?)

It seems to me that there is sufficient space between to prevent the assonance from being too prominent; it came like that and I kept it because the repetition and the prolongation of the full “o” sound seemed to me to carry in it a certain unexpressed (and inexpressible) significance.

(Q. What exactly does “Halo-moon” signify? In line 2 there was the concrete physical moon ringed with a halo. Is the suggestion of line 10 that a glory or indefinable presence is imaged by a lunar halo—the moon as a distinct object now being swallowed up in the halo? My difficulty is that if it is “halo” simply it cannot be a “moon” as well. But possibly the compound “halo-moon” is elliptical for “moon with its surrounding halo”.)

## MOTHER INDIA

Well, it is of course the "moon with its halo", but I wanted to give a suggestion if not of the central form being swallowed up in the halo, at least of moon and halo being one ecstatic splendour as when one is merged in ecstasy.

(Q. The last line—

Ocean self enraptured and alone—

I took as meaning "Self, who art symbolised by this ocean", since otherwise you would probably have written "self-enraptured"?)

Yes, that is right.

## POEMS

### NO RETURN

I STAND here for all time, rooted in God.  
A thousand heart-gropes find each root their goal.  
I am caught by a depth and a warmth of eternal Love,  
Love that by being eternity is true earth,  
The rock-grip of a bliss that cannot end.  
Here is my Country, my Creatrix, my World's Core.  
To the old out-scattered life there is no return.

But my fixed tree is a branching magnificence;  
Everywhere spread huge arms that pierce all space,  
Nothing the sweep of the universe can give  
Eludes; but now from a stainless height I search  
Earth's distances of lost divinity.  
Here is the Abroad, the All-Mother, the World's Edge.  
To the low rush, the blind grasp there is no return.

K. D. SETHNA

MOTHER INDIA

ROSE-RED

WHEN a rose meditates,  
Does it grow less red?  
The carmine burns but inward  
To the core, instead

Of flaring out to the tips  
Of petals from  
That tranquil centre: beauty  
Points back to its home,

Gathers the oneness within  
That broke into flame,  
Tongue upon tremulous tongue  
Of a secret name.

Damask is damask still,  
But the life-breath knows  
By what deep blissfulness fed  
Its perfume blows—

Cup of creative calm  
Where the root unseen,  
Dreaming the invisible  
Ethereal sheen,

Rises from buried blindness  
In the pistil's spire  
And, through the spark of the pollen,  
Catches sky-fire—

Mystery underneath,  
Mystery beyond  
Merging in a mid-space  
Where darkness is dawned—

A heart of hidden honey,  
Wing-visited shrine  
Within whose child-gaze vigil  
Dust feels divine!

K. D. SETHNA



POEMS

WAITING

Thy glorious face of Love reveals to earth  
A calm compassion and a Grace divine,  
Supernal infinities embodied in birth,  
Soul-harmonies of Bliss in beauty's line.  
The Light which Matter seeks in her leaden drowse,  
The Light which mystics ken in their vision's sky,  
Thou hast brought down into this frail clay-house  
From shadowless worlds of vast Eternity.

When shall its open workings seize our days  
And oust the iron Demon from the cave?  
Withheld, they wait for a Word to quench the Night.  
We too shall wait, O Love, in life's pathways,  
We too shall wait for Thy Word and calmly brave  
The mists of Doom till breaks Thy sovereign Light.

PRITHWI SINGH

FIELDS OF LIGHT

Dawn comes, with a burst of radiance wonder-born;  
Young clouds receive their first baptism of light  
And rush towards the bounds of impetuous day.

The noon-sun holds a universe in its eye;  
Above, the hypnotic vast—its challenging might  
Reflected in the bronzed and burnished haze—  
Draws all unto itself: thought, sense and sound  
The mute omniscience of immortal Day.

But an evening splendour and majesty of sky  
Gives back a glory which is heaven itself—  
Each moment a changing vesture of delight  
Borne on Beauty's body—a goddess gleam,  
Where the highest clouds are kissed by the setting sun  
And our earthly day meets with the light of stars  
Lost in silent realms of Eternity.

NORMAN DOWSETT

MOTHER INDIA

TOWARDS THE BEYOND

A mere spark grown into a star  
Upon this earth of sluggish pace  
Suddenly viewed a sun ablaze.

Ere the mind stirred from its surprise  
The impatient star with a straight run  
Leaped, vanishing into its parent sun.

That pink-white fire on the Mother's breast  
Was no smaller than our heavenly sphere;  
All hearts its loving rays gathered here.

It was no globe in far-off lands,  
Veiled it had remained with us on earth  
Ever since we as sparks took birth.

The dive into that bottomless light  
Was but a fleeting respite sought—  
Yet agelong separation was forgot.

The vision changed, the puny star  
Soon became the immaculate sun.  
Then far beyond the breast it shone.

The fast expanding orb then left  
This world, this varied cosmos and  
Searched high above for its native land.

There the blue-white sun grew at once  
All that it felt and all that it saw.  
The miracles there were wonders no more.

The wideness broke into infinity  
At every point, time into eternity.  
Space now was the breath of immortal life.

Beyond it still the Splendour absolute  
From where flowed forth the endless rivers;  
Suns and stars were its tiny quivers.

There everything was held in Itself  
And yet far more than all It was,  
As the sky outvast the ethereal glows.

NAGIN DOSHI

POEMS

LOTUS-FLAME

(From Book IX)

Like an immaculate unaging call  
Stopped the pronunciamiento vast of the Unseen.  
A revealing beam from the photospheres of Sun,  
Golden with truth no gloomward mind could deny,  
Was cast upon his path of rich upwardness—  
A zenith-road for his wayfaring immense,  
A lasting route of the lasting Orient.  
Almost the earth seemed to lose a glorious friend  
And welkin gain an ally unquestionable.  
But a stark resolve kindled his towering soul.  
Unflattered by the Unknown's miraculous grace,  
His spirit traced not the brilliant trace of light.  
He ceased his glorious march imperishable.  
And before the altar of the Absolute  
Stopped sheer to send his voice like an obelisk  
To the far unnamable and the Alone.  
"No greater splendour I seek, O gnostic peak;  
No limiting end for my one towering self  
Can fill the endless gulf of my soul and god.  
If I should seek Thy burning immensities  
Why would I rise bearing the grief of the Soil,  
And all the world burdening my vast soul?  
If self-release was my tremendous close,  
Why chain my being with birth's unrelenting weight?  
My path no mortal doom could bar or hold  
If I should choose to wing to the Unwallable Root.  
I come with sleepless message from the Pit  
Garbed with a robe of great aspiring fire.  
No barrier was larger than my heart's one call;  
No veil more stupendous than my one appeal,  
My birth and quest is a single prayer-chant,  
An invocation to Thy zenithless whole.  
I came not to Union with eternity  
Nor fling aside this boon and cross of dust.  
It is on clay I crave for heaven's descent.  
The soil is the rendezvous of the Crest and night.

## MOTHER INDIA

This is the station of the birthless All;  
This is the ground of all epiphanies.  
To grow to godliness is man's lone fate,  
To leap and inarm light's immortality  
And let all shadows pass like dreams grotesque,  
To ensoul the vivid glory of the One,  
Becoming radiant with a blaze beyond,  
Surpassing the meagre titles of Fate and Name,  
Is the one core-ache of all humanity here.  
In me its hidden upwardness ever burns;  
In me its insatiable longing and its quest;  
Now to Thy changeless flame-strange summit I come  
Bearing the ageless suffering and cry.  
Never shall my spirit disown its goal unique  
And leave the earth to her doom and pang and fall.  
How could I leave the globe<sup>3</sup> unaided, void,  
When one god-stroke could reshape her occult trend.  
And I was missioned with the gold command  
To raise this mass futile of hoary ease,  
Even I who bore the diamond seal of Thy sun?"  
With dire inextinguishable voice he sent  
His appeal paramount to the Unconquered Vast.  
On earth he lay frozen, prostrate and still  
But his spirit-cry assailed the far Universe  
Of self-wide seas and omnipotence unbound.  
The mighty wings that soared the Unknown's edge  
Stopped dead its balanced ascent, cosmic and large,  
Awaiting the unbarring of the gnostic gates  
To yield to its lone prayer and call occult.  
Nothing could live in that dire moment of God.  
All passions failed, all gropings died and were lost.  
All pursuing tremors ceased their etheric quest.  
Gone was the disturbing sheen of upward notes  
And with felicity that knew no end.  
The ethers of the transcendences absolute  
Ingathered once more the lull of mystic peace.  
A vacant plenitude of stunned repose  
Filled now the vistas of echoing resonant swells.  
The foam-crack of aspiration undelivered, free  
On the waste-main of uneddied vastnesses

POEMS

Forgot the bright delirium of ache  
And even, still, laughless, unchangeable  
Returned to the poise of deep unmirroring hush.  
In that unforgettable infinite hour  
A wonder-seed of lightning without a birth  
Floated in from sheer trance-wrapped spaces beyond.  
A crystal-thrill born from a nameless fount,  
A wallless spark unthinkable and whole,  
This seed of light with wings of timeless force  
Brought down a messenger-word illimitable.  
A vast prelude before a gigantic march,  
Its motion-dream undid the diamond doors  
With a touch that revealed at once the sun of suns.  
There was a bourneless truth hidden in its fount  
Whose one flicker was thunder without a name.  
His exalted drouth and keen imperial ache  
Were stilled by the touch of the enormous spark.  
He knew at once this presaging symbol-flare  
Was the wide beginning's day that never would cease.  
He knew that a blinding omnipotence unseen,  
A sun before whose blaze all suns were nights,  
Was hid above his prophetic unmoving brow.  
A rift was made in the wall of the Untraced,  
The dimless spaces incommensurable;  
A passage etched on the Impossible's breast,  
Nameless with secrecy that bound his heart,  
And a wallless bliss, unceasing, sure, alone  
Now clutched his soul's towering and glorious limbs.  
He ceased from grief and all longings untame;  
He outgrew the self that moves or acts or sleeps  
And one became with the act and motion's root.  
He ceased from thirst, hammering colossal rush  
Outgrowing nature's noose that clung like shreds  
About his body of vast divinity nude.  
Unmeasured were his irrevocable strides  
And with the seal of unattainable fire  
He found realisation's summit in front.  
Limitless, bare, he leaped to the breast of the Peak.

ROMEN

## THE LOTUS OF INDIA'S MANASSAROWAR

*This is a translation of the article in Bengali which Upadhyay Brahmabandhav wrote in the "Sandhya" on the eve of the first appearance of the "Bande Mataram" by way of introducing Sri Aurobindo to the public. It dates back to 1906, a time when India's struggle for independence was at a critical early stage and political passions ran high—a time also when it may not have been difficult for those who knew Sri Aurobindo in private to discern his qualifications as a political leader but perhaps few could have brought like Brahmabandhav and with equal poetic beauty a clear insight into the spiritual depths of his character.*

Have you ever seen the spotless all-white lotus? The hundred-petalled lotus in full bloom in India's Manassarowar! No lily or daffodil, this, growing in odd and obscure corners of a European dwelling, scentless, mere play and display of colour! Of no use in worship of the gods, of no need in a sacrificial celebration. Sheer pomp and vanity in the western way. Our Aurobindo is a rare phenomenon in the world. In him resides the *sattwic* divine beauty, snow-white, resplendent. Great and vast—vast in the amplitude of his heart, great in the glory of his own self, his *swadharma* as a Hindu. So pure and complete a man—a fire-charged thunder yet tender and delicate as the lotus-leaf. A man rich in knowledge, self-lost in meditation. You can nowhere find his like in all the three worlds. In order to free the land from her chains Aurobindo has broken through the glamour of western civilisation, renounced all worldly comfort, and now as a son of the Mother he has taken charge of the *Bande Mataram*. He is the Bhavananda, Jivananda, Dhirananda of Rishi Bankim, all in one.

You, fellow-countrymen, touch no more those bloated, whining, Moderate papers servilely echoing their master's voice. This Aurobindo's Word will flood our breasts with cascades of patriotism, provide the impetus to the country's service. The words of the *Bande Mataram* will drive out your fear, steel your arms with the might of thunder; fire will course through your veins; death will put on a face of spring-time splendour. The mantric power of the *Bande Mataram* will expel the venom of Anglomania; the infirmities sapping the national stamina will be things of the past. You will come to realise that those rifles and guns, jails and tribunals, governors and viceroys are so many

empty nothings. The *feringhi's* frown and threat, rage and roar will vanish like an evil dream.

True, he has had his education in England, but he has not succumbed to its bewitching spell. An efflorescence of the glory of his country's *swadharma* and culture, Aurobindo is now at the feet of the Motherland, as a fresh-blown lotus of autumn, aglow with the devotion of his self-offering. Oh, was there ever its like? Aurobindo is no fop sprung from the vulgarities of English life. That is why, a true son of the Mother, he has set up the Bhawani Temple. There, bow down to the Mother, with the mantra of "Bande Mataram". Swaraj is now no far-off event.

Translated by TINKARI MITRA

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga** (Extracts compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother), published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Rs. 4:-

This is not just another compilation of extracts from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings. It is essentially a practical guide. All the extracts are arranged under about eighty headings; and these headings are neither academic nor abstract in character, but are directly connected with life and one's everyday activities in relation to the sadhana. For convenience and easy reference the headings are arranged, in three sections, in alphabetical order.

It is primarily a reference book, rather than one for reading straight through. Like a railway guide, when we have difficulties in our travel on this yogic path we turn to this book with some pressing problem that perhaps someone else has had to face, and we see exactly what the Mother or Sri Aurobindo has said, or rather written, to other travellers on the path in similar circumstances; and thus we have the direct guidance on how to act ourselves. Most of the extracts have in fact been chosen for their universal value, although the great bulk of them have been taken from letters to individuals. It is a pity, however, that the compiler did not indicate briefly the source against each of those extracts that are not taken from letters. But this is a minor point. The main thing is that the book serves as an excellent guide for everyone, young and old, and above all it is practical.

Some aspects of its usefulness might be pointed out. Firstly we want to know what the spiritual life demands of us. On page 73 we have the Mother's answer:

“To enter the spiritual life means to take a plunge into the Divine, as you would jump into the sea. And that is not the end but the very beginning; for after you have taken the plunge, you must learn to live in the Divine. That is the plunge you have to take, and unless you do it, you may do Yoga for years and yet know nothing of a true spiritual living.

“Yoga means union with the Divine, and the union is effected through offering—it is founded on the offering of yourself to the Divine. When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life



shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence.”

Then what should be the sadhak’s attitude? First a total dedication to the Divine. A resolve to live for the Divine Truth. To be free from desire and attachment. But above all to be inwardly conscious and completely open to the Divine Force. The Divine Force acts in its own time and way, and not according to individual preference. All these are difficult enough in themselves, but they have to become a combined and integral part of one’s life and aspiration.

The Yoga is not only a withdrawal into one’s inner being, but a grappling also with the problems thrown out by life and one’s action in life. Those who have taken the path meet with this challenge at every step. To overcome difficulties one must have the firm inner resolve and contact with the Divine. That is why the inner calm and quietude—to act from the divine centre in oneself—is the essential basis for meeting any difficulty. Only then can right action be assured.

On page 85 is Sri Aurobindo’s categorical summary of what one has first to establish in order to proceed in the Yoga:

“Brahmacharya, complete sex-purity; Shamah, quiet and harmony in the being, its forces maintained but controlled, harmonised, disciplined; Satyam, truth and sincerity in the whole nature; Prashantih, a general state of peace and calm; Atmasamyama, the power and habit to control whatever needs control in the movements of the nature. When these are fairly established, one has laid the foundation on which one can develop the Yoga consciousness and with the Yoga consciousness there comes an easy opening to realisation and experience. A Yoga like this needs patience, because it means a change both of the radical motives and of each part and detail of the nature.”

When these are established in the being one has then to learn how to bring them into one’s active living. The Yoga is essentially a Yoga of action, and not merely one of words. Hence comes the need of an absolute sincerity, which is only tested in action. The Mother’s statement is very direct and forceful:

“The secret of this attainment of perfection lies in the sincere urge for it. In one’s action one must be free from all social conventions, all moral prejudices. All physical activities should be organised entirely in such a way as to make the body grow in balance and force and beauty. With this

end in view one must abstain from all pleasure-seeking including the sexual pleasure. For each sexual act is a step towards death.”

It is true that each individual has his own path, but there is also the mutual help that arises through service for the Divine. Each one has his own particular difficulties and at the same time shares in the general difficulties of all around him. One is not merely fighting an individual battle, although the individual struggle is the necessary basis for right-centred action. All hinges on one's surrender to the Divine which is the sole guide for any wider action, whether individual or with others.

What this surrender means is expressed by Sri Aurobindo as follows (p.122):

“The whole principle of this Yoga is to give oneself entirely to the Divine alone and to nobody and nothing else, and to bring down into ourselves by union with the Divine Mother-Power all the transcendent light, force, wideness, peace, purity, truth-consciousness and Ananda of the supramental Divine. In this Yoga, therefore, there can be no place for vital relations or interchange with others; any such relation or interchange immediately ties down the soul to the lower consciousness and its lower nature, prevents the true and full union with the Divine and hampers both the ascent to the supramental Truth-consciousness and the descent of the supramental Ishwari Shakti.”

One of the most powerful means for bringing about an integral surrender is through work for the Divine. Work is also a most powerful means of breaking the ego, or transforming its power. The following statement of Sri Aurobindo's indicates this value of work (p. 133):

“The work here is not intended for showing one's capacity or having a position or as a means of physical nearness to the Mother, but as a field and as an opportunity for the Karmayoga—part of the integral Yoga, for learning to work in the true yogic way, dedication through service, practical selflessness, obedience, scrupulousness, discipline, setting the Divine and the Divine's work first and oneself last, harmony, patience, forbearance, etc. When the workers learn these things and cease to be egocentric, as most of you are, then will come the time for work in which capacity can really be shown, although even then the showing of capacity will be an incident and can never be the main consideration or the object of divine work.”

Once any action is taken in the Yoga, one begins to meet with obstacles. A comparatively large section is devoted to 'Obstacles in the Sadhana', which range from attachment, desire, and despondency, to sex, speech, and vital obstacles. An important difference between happenings in ordinary life and the struggle in the sadhana is brought out pointedly by Sri Aurobindo as follows, (p. 142):

"In ordinary life people accept the vital movements, anger, desire, greed, sex, etc. as natural, allowable and legitimate things, part of the human nature. Only so far as society discourages them or insists to keep them within fixed limits or subject to a decent restraint or measure, people try to control them so as to conform to the social standard or morality or rule of conduct. Here, on the contrary, as in all spiritual life, the conquest and complete mastery of these things is demanded. That is why the struggle is more felt, not because these things rise more strongly in sadhaks than in ordinary men, but because of the intensity of the struggle between the spiritual mind which demands control and the vital movements which rebel and want to continue in the new as they did in the old life."

It must not be thought that surrender to the Divine Will means submitting to a perpetual series of deterrents—'thou shalt nots'. Behind all these words is the Divine Love, the Divine Grace, the Divine encouragement. It is this that has gone with the message in the original instance, and it is there behind for those who want to catch the spirit behind these words.

For a period of darkness and perversity, such as we are now passing through, the following message of Sri Aurobindo's comes like a beam of heartening light, giving us the courage and the hope to go through until the Divine Light has come upon the world (p. 147):

"It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with a great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come, the light which is not of the mind but of the spirit. It does not really indicate any radical disability in the nature but certainly it is a hard ordeal and one has to stick very firmly to pass through it."

While Section One is devoted to general problems of the sadhana, Section Two covers a number of general points on the Ashram life, what is ordinary and spiritual life, progress, education etc. Naturally education and evolution are topics which are given their due prominence. And quite a fresh presentation,

with the addition of less familiar material also, has been given to subjects that have been fully elaborated in the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's important works. Section Three contains direct extracts from three most important books: "Prayers and Meditations of the Mother", and Sri Aurobindo's "The Synthesis of Yoga" and "The Life Divine".

Appendix I is a useful compilation of letters and words of the Mother on the passing of Sri Aurobindo; while Appendix II is an original essay by the compiler (Mambhai) entitled "An Outline of the Integral Yoga". On the whole this latter is a good exposition of a subject difficult to compress in a few words. Sometimes, however, the compression takes much for granted, and expects the reader to possess a great deal of background knowledge of the stages of the Yoga, and especially Sri Aurobindo's passing in relation to that. This is a very difficult and occult subject to deal with in a few passing remarks. When the compiler states: "Sri Aurobindo will manifest in a physical form", he is attempting to state a faith which we all share. But would it not have been less ambiguous to say that the Divine Light will manifest in a physical form by an occult process which is in the hands of the Divine, and of which we know nothing? We must realise the difficulty facing the compiler, but at the same time it is necessary to avoid, in one's zeal to express a deep faith, making any ambiguous statements (such as introducing name when we refer to Him who is beyond name), which may very easily be misinterpreted by the less knowledgeable reader, and especially those whose faith is less firm.

What the compiler says in his Preface by way of outlining the purpose and aim of our life in the world is very true indeed. And we echo his closing remarks: "These collections will surely be very precious and of great help to those who have taken up this Yoga or to the sincere aspirants of this path." Very true, and a very handy volume it is for all to possess.

N. PEARSON

**Gita Navanita** (Hindi), Part I. by Keshavadeva Acharya. Published by Sri Aurobindo Pustakalaya, Railway Road, Hapur, Meerut. Rs. 4 and 3/8/.

It is now being widely recognised that in order to save humanity and human culture by abolishing war altogether, some sort of a world government is indispensable. Disarmament and pacts may ease the tension for the time being, but as long as standing national armies, however small, are allowed to remain, any ambitious nation can use that as a nucleus to build up rapidly a vast army of aggression and spring a surprise on its neighbours. But a world-government will remain a shining dream only, unless there is a psychological change in the human race enabling it to realise the fundamental unity of all mankind.

Thus side by side with all efforts of external adjustment it has become urgently necessary to start a vast spiritual movement which alone can awaken the sense of unity in the hearts of men.

The great religions sought to inculcate this sense by preaching the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, but so long as it remains only an intellectual conception or a religious dogma, it cannot have much practical effect in the affairs of men. There must be a deep spiritual realisation of the Vedantic truth of Unity of which the brotherhood of men is only a popular expression, the truth that Reality is one without a second, and that the whole world with all its beings is only a manifestation of that Reality in names and forms. Only by this realisation men and nations can transcend the ego which is the root cause of all conflict and suffering in the world. It is the ego which makes us feel separate from all other beings in the world and as long as this is the centre of our life, as is actually the case now everywhere, we shall feel justified in aggrandising ourselves at the expense of others, in dominating and exploiting others. This ego which has been Nature's device in us to develop our individual personality has now to be transcended if we are to rise to a higher life, thus completing our evolution on the earth. And this will be done only when we find the true Self in which we are one with God and all other beings. The feeling of identity is the basis of true love which will divinise human life and make earth a heaven and realise the ancient dream of mankind. When we shall see our own self and God in all our fellow beings and love God in all, we shall have the divine life full of peace and light and love and beauty. That is the sublime ideal which the Gita has placed before all mankind, bringing out the essence of India's age-long spiritual culture.

"The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings, however and in all ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me." (Gita 6/31). Such a Yogin need not follow any moral rule or perform any religious ceremony; whatever he does becomes spontaneously true, good and beautiful, for now he is moved in all his actions by the Divine. That is the Gita's solution of the ills of human life and the world will have to see that there is no other except the spiritual. The Gita gives us a practical psychological discipline by which one can attain this state; that is the Gita's Yoga which it is the mission of India to hold up before the troubled world today. But so that humanity may profit by the life-giving message of the Gita it has to be presented with the help of a good commentary. The current editions of the Gita, based mostly on the commentary of Shankaracharya, cannot serve the purpose as that turns the Gita into a gospel of life-renunciation and sannyasa, and does not give any clue how to make human life on earth better and happier. The modern commentaries, like that of Lokmanya Tilak, go to the other extreme and turn the

Gita into a gospel of the western ideal of duty for the sake of duty. According to Tilak, the Gita teaches us Karmayoga in the sense that we should work unceasingly for the good of others, for the benefit of country or humanity without caring for the consequences. This is no doubt a high ideal, but for this the western people need not turn to the Gita, they have their Mill, Spencer and Kant. That this western ideal has great deficiencies is proved by the fact that it has not saved them from disastrous wars and cataclysms which now threaten their very existence. The real contribution of the Gita is to show that there is no ultimate solution in these human ideals, however great they may be, and that man must rise above his mind to a spiritual consciousness in which he will find his unity with God and all other beings.

The Gita's Karmayoga is not compassed by the formula of doing good to humanity. There is danger of this formula getting used for even undivine ends; for instance, the Nazis claimed that the best interests of humanity would be served by bringing the whole world under the domination of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race. The communists are now making a similar claim for Communism; they do not care if two-thirds of humanity be wiped out if one-third remains to uphold their "great ideal".

The Yoga of the Gita is not disinterested work as Tilak would have it, it is finding our union with the Divine by whatever means—work, knowledge, devotion or by a combination of all these. According to Tilak, Yoga in the Gita means also doing work skilfully; "skill in work is Yoga", he says, quoting a phrase from that scripture. But in truth Yoga in the Gita means, essentially, conscious union with the Divine and any work becomes Karmayoga only when it is done in such a manner as to lead to this conscious union, and true "skill in work" consists in doing it in union with the divine as a conscious instrument of His perfect will, *numittamātram*.

Following his own interpretation, Tilak says, in addition, "It is sheer madness to renounce work." But says Sri Aurobindo looking at this aspect as well as all the others that bear on problems of world-activity: "It is a mistake to interpret the Gita from the standpoint of the mentality of today and force it to teach us the disinterested performance of duty as the highest and all-sufficient law. A little consideration of the situation with which the Gita deals will show us that this could not be its meaning. For the whole point of the teaching, that from which it arises, that which compels the disciple to seek the Teacher, is an inextricable clash of the various related conceptions of duty ending in the collapse of the whole useful intellectual and moral edifice erected by the human mind. In human life some sort of a clash arises fairly often, as for instance between domestic duties and the call of the country or the cause, or between the claim of the country and the good of humanity or some larger

religious or moral principle. An inner situation may even arise, as with Buddha, in which all duties have to be abandoned, trampled on, flung aside in order to follow the call of the Divine within. I cannot think that the Gita would solve such an inner situation by sending Buddha back to his wife and father and the government of the Shakya State, or would direct a Ramakrishna to become a Pandit in a vernacular school and disinterestedly teach little boys their lessons, or bind down a Vivekananda to support his family, and for that to follow dispassionately the law or medicine or journalism. The Gita does not teach the disinterested performance of duties but the following of the divine life, the abandonment of all dharmas, *sarvadharmān*, to take refuge in the Supreme alone, and the divine activity of a Buddha, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda is perfectly in consonance with this teaching. Nay, although the Gita prefers action to inaction, it does not rule out the renunciation of works, but accepts it as one of the ways to the Divine. If that can only be attained by renouncing works and life and all duties and the call is strong within us, then into the bonfire they must go, and there is no help for it. The call of God is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other considerations." (*Essays on the Gita*, First Series, chapter IV)

Tilak, as Sri Aurobindo aptly remarked, was a man of action and organisation. He will be remembered and honoured as one of the founders of the Freedom movement in India which ultimately led to her liberation from foreign rule. But for a correct interpretation of the spiritual heritage we must turn elsewhere, and in this matter there is no better guide than Sri Aurobindo himself, the last of the great Rishis, as Romain Rolland called him. His *Essays on the Gita* "brings to a new perfection the difficult art of interpreting Hindu thought to the West." It is a hopeful sign that his interpretation of the Gita has rapidly increasing popularity in Europe and America.

Acharya Keshavadeva has rendered a great service to the Indian people by giving the gist of this wonderful interpretation through Hindi, the Rashtra bhasa. One has to read only the chapter on Karmayoga in his book to see how clearly he has brought out the implications of a really spiritual life following the illumination given by Sri Aurobindo. We recommend this book to all Hindi-knowing people, and the Central and Provincial Governments will do well to use this book in spreading the great teaching which becomes alive once again in Sri Aurobindo.

ANIL BARAN RAY

# *Students' Section*

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## GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG

*(Unpublished Letters of THE MOTHER)*

IL y a des personnes qui portent autour d'elles ces idées de désespoir et de dépression qui les harcèlent. Ces idées sont contagieuses comme une maladie et on les attrape comme on attraperait toute autre maladie.

There are people who carry in their atmosphere these ideas of despair and depression which harass them. These ideas are contagious like a disease and one catches them as one would catch any other disease.

*(Comment savoir qui les portent? How is one to know who carries them?)*

Ce n'est pas possible par aucun moyen extérieur, ce n'est que par l'acquisition du discernement intérieur qu'on peut savoir ces choses.

This is not possible by any outer means, it is only by acquiring the inner perception that one can know these things.

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Je pense qu'il serait bien préférable de prendre l'habitude de contrôler vos paroles et de vous refuser à parler de sujets malsains et dangereux. Mais il est évident que si de vous recontrer éveille en tout les deux justement ce que vous voulez surmonter, sûrement il vaut mieux vous en abstenir.

I think it would be indeed preferable to get the habit of controlling your speech and to resist talking on unhealthy and dangerous subjects. But evidently if meeting each other awakens in both of you just what you wish to overcome, surely it would be better to refrain from it.

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## GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG

Si vos conversations se bornent à des remarques de ce genre, elles n'ont pas plus d'importance que toutes les innombrables remarques ignorantes que les habitants de l'Ashram ont l'habitude d'échanger entre eux quand ils croient pouvoir savoir ce que je fais et pourquoi je le fais.

If your talks are confined to remarks of this sort, they have no more importance than all the innumerable ignorant remarks which the inmates of the Ashram are in the habit of exchanging among themselves when they believe they know what I am doing and why I am doing it.

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Certainement le mieux est justement de s'abstenir de toutes pensées sur les gens; comme cela on ne risque pas d'en avoir de fausse.

Certainly the best thing is just to abstain from all thoughts about people; in that way one runs no risk of having wrong ideas.

*(Je pense que ce n'est pas possible d'avoir aucune pensée sur les autres avant la purification du mental.—I don't think it is possible to have no thoughts about others before the mind has been purified.)*

Si, c'est tout à fait possible si le mental est occupé et intéressé dans quelque chose de plus utile.

Yes, it is quite possible if the mind is busy with and interested in something more useful.

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Chacun a sa nature propre et suit son propre chemin et les comparaisons avec les autres sont toujours inutiles et le plus souvent dangereuses.

Each one has his own nature and follows his own path and comparisons with others are always useless and most often dangerous.

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Il ne faut pas attacher trop d'importance à ces petites choses. Ce qui est important est de toujours garder en vue l'idéal que l'on veut réaliser et toujours faire de son mieux pour le réaliser.

It is unnecessary to attach too much importance to these small matters. What is important is: keep ever in view the ideal which you want to realise, and always do your best to realise it.

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MOTHER INDIA

La vérité est d'être assez totalement consacré au Dieu pour ne plus attacher d'importance à ces relations avec les autres.

Il faut s'occuper d'avantage de fortifier la consécration au Dieu que de régler des détails dans les relations avec les gens.

The truth is: to be consecrated to God totally enough not to attach importance any longer to these relations with others.

One should attend more to strengthening the consecration to God than to settling the details of one's relations with people.

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Il ne faut pas se tourmenter pour les erreurs qu'on peut faire, il faut seulement garder la parfaite sincérité de son aspiration et à la fin tout sera bien.

One need not torment oneself about the mistakes one may commit, it is only necessary to keep a perfect sincerity of aspiration and all will be well at the end.

*(Que veut dire l'aspiration sincère?—What does "sincere aspiration" mean?)*

Une aspiration qui n'est mélangée d'aucun calcul intéressé et égoïste.

An aspiration which is not mixed with any interested and egoistic motive.

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Vous semblez être très conscient déjà au sujet de ce qu'il faut faire et ne pas faire, mais la difficulté commence pour vous avec la mise en pratique. Ce n'est pas plus de connaissance qu'il vous faut demander mais l'énergie et le courage de mettre en pratique sincèrement et scrupuleusement le peu que vous savez déjà.

You seem to be very conscious already in the matter of what is to be done and what is not to be done, but the difficulty begins for you in putting it into practice. It is not more knowledge that you need to ask for, but the energy and the courage to practise sincerely and scrupulously the little that you already know.

(From SHANTI)

## MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

### THE INNER BEING AND THE EXTERNAL CONSCIOUSNESS

14-3-1935—27-9-1935

SELF: Because of the disturbed condition of my consciousness I feel depressed. Is it only the outer being or the inner also that is affected?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no reason why the inner being should become depressed, but the outer seems to become restless when the inertia is increasing or else it gives some kind of response. If the outer being becomes quiet, then the inner can act—otherwise more force is given to the adverse action of the inertia.

SELF: Recently I experienced an elevated condition of silence in spite of the inertia, and then after a while the silence disappeared and I was again plunged in gloom.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the oscillation between the two consciousnesses which always happens, until one can so stabilise the inner that it remains calm and fixed behind even when there are surface movements of the vital or surface rising of the inertia.

SELF: I now find that even during the bad periods, my inner being does not get identified with the inertia.

SRI AUROBINDO: If the inner being keeps separate then it is all right. The inertia will be worked out of the external being.

SELF: You once spoke of “the inner being supporting the talk”. In my present state, if I speak more than a few sentences at a time I feel the inner being tired.

SRI AUROBINDO: That happens very usually. Talking of an unnecessary character [tires] the inner being because the talk comes from the outer nature while the inner has to supply the energy which it feels squandered away.

Even those who have a strong inner life, take a long time before they can connect it with the outer speech and action. Outer speech belongs to the externalising mind—that is why it is so difficult to connect it with the inner life.

SELF: By stages a division has come to be felt in my being.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the true Yogic consciousness in which one feels the oneness and lives in it, not touched by the outer being and its inferior movements, but looking on them with a smile at their ignorance and smallness. It will become much more possible to deal with these outer things if that separateness is maintained always.

SELF: In both the parts now, the Mother's presence is experienced.

SRI AUROBINDO: That was what was needed—on one side the dwelling in the Mother, on the other the consciousness of her Force working in the physical being.

### THE PSYCHIC BEING AND THE VITAL NATURE

8-1-1934—17-12-1934

SELF: When the psychic works in the nature parts, they begin to aspire for the Divine; in my case its influence is spreading to the lower vital with the result that the latter is beginning to make demands for the Divine. Is that the usual movement?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, so long as the psychic has not transformed the lower vital.

SELF: Were my demands then due to the working of the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: The demands were there already—when the psychic touches there is an intensification of love but the lower vital mixes up the love with all sorts of demands.

SELF: You speak of the psychic transforming the lower vital. Can it do so completely or is it the higher consciousness that does it?

SRI AUROBINDO: I mean here a preliminary transformation turning it towards the Divine and purifying it so that it can receive the higher consciousness.

SELF: What is required for the psychic to emerge?

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspiration for devotion, and refusal of egoistic movement.

SELF: You have written: "The heart is the seat not only of the psychic but also of the emotional vital." Does this mean that the emotional being itself acts as a veil in front of the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, when it is full of vital movements or accustomed more to a vital than a psychic way of emotion.

Self: Some dissatisfactions come and affect the heart which is opening to the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO: Get rid of these dissatisfactions, they prevent the permanent psychic opening.

SELF: Perhaps it is because the psychic is just opening that it comes under the influence of these dissatisfactions?

SRI AUROBINDO: What the psychic always feels is "What the Mother does is for the best", and accepts all with gladness. It is the vital part of the heart that is easily touched by the suggestions.

SELF: How is it that when one is realising the Self above, one does not get the ecstasies one has when the psychic is active?

SRI AUROBINDO: Love, joy and happiness come from the psychic. The Self gives peace or a universal Ananda.

SELF: Is it possible for the psychic to be inactive even though the Self is realised, and the mind and the vital do not resist the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is often like that. The psychic waits till the full stabilisation of the self-realisation down to the physical or sometimes down to the higher vital.

SELF: When the consciousness drops a little below the overhead centre, there is a sense of separation and the heart begins to yearn.

SRI AUROBINDO: The yearning of the heart may be there but it should not disturb the peace.

SELF: Do you think this yearning should be stopped if the peace gets disturbed?

SRI AUROBINDO: I think it is better to stop it for the present. It is very possible that the vital is taking advantage of it to create dissatisfaction with the

MOTHER INDIA

progress of the sadhana. The psychic yearning brings no reaction of impatience, dissatisfaction or disturbance.

SELF: If the psychic yearning is like that, then how will it express the pangs of separation?

SRI AUROBINDO: Pangs of separation belong to the vital, not to the psychic; the psychic having no pangs need not express them. The psychic is always turned towards the Divine in faith, joy and confidence—whatever aspiration it has is full of trust and hope.

SELF: If the pangs of separation are in the vital, is it because its nature is such that when it turns to the Divine it feels them? Or are they a wrong movement?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is its ordinary nature applying itself to the movement towards the Divine.

SELF: Is this the right way of the vital's opening to the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not in this yoga. It is allowed in certain Vaishnava forms of Yoga. In this Yoga, the more psychic the movements, the better.

SELF: What would be the right way for the vital in this Yoga?

SRI AUROBINDO: It must conform its movement to the psychic movement.

SELF: It is said that the psychic is in direct connection with the Divine. Why should it then have yearnings for the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is for the presence of the Divine in the heart consciousness or manifestation here.

SELF: How is one to get the psychic aspiration?

SRI AUROBINDO: It comes with the sincere will for it.

SELF: Is the fire of aspiration the fire of the psychic being?

SRI AUROBINDO: The central fire is in the psychic being, but it can be lit in all the parts of the being.

SELF: My psychic sometimes feels sad and lonely because it feels it cannot properly love the Mother.

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: It can't be the psychic in that case. The psychic never feels that it cannot love the Divine.

SELF: How is one to distinguish the bhakti of the vital from that of the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: The main distinction is that the vital demands, the psychic gives itself.

SELF: When the whole nature is engrossed in feeling, thinking, acting round the word "Mother", would the psychic be realised?

SRI AUROBINDO: That would of itself be the psychic state.

SELF: An increasing pressure is felt, right from the cardiac centre down to the navel. It rises and descends increasingly.

SRI AUROBINDO: It means a strong working to connect the psychic and vital together.

SELF: Can there be a conscious contact with the Mother through the psychic before the latter comes forward fully?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the psychic is always there.

SELF: Can one be wide-awake to the Mother's presence in sleep even?

SRI AUROBINDO: That does happen, but usually only when the psychic is in full activity.

SELF: What is meant by having a "psychic basis"?

SRI AUROBINDO: The psychic in front and supporting the whole experience.

SELF: I dreamt of three aeroplanes rising from a steamer. What does it indicate?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose something capable of ascent in the psychic, the inner mind, the inner vital.

SELF: During the sadhana, has the psychic also to ascend?

SRI AUROBINDO: It joins itself to the higher consciousness.

NAGIN DOSHI

## “CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

*(An expansion of Notes given to the First Year Poetry Class at the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre)*

### I

PERHAPS more ink has been shed in making a distinction between what is “Classical” and what is “Romantic” than on any other theme in literature: already in 1936 F. L. Lucas could count 11,397 books, including his own. Once even some blood was about to be shed: on the night of November 25, 1830, the theatre at Paris where Victor Hugo’s play *Hernani* was first shown became a roaring cockpit of combatant critics. But not always has much light been shed: possibly the heat of the discussion was too great to leave room for sufficient light. This does not mean that no guiding conceptions have emerged. But to give them proper shape we must look more coolly than is done by protagonists of the two schools, more closely than by on-looking commentators. And we must penetrate from the shape to the living essence and to the specific character of the soul by which the shape is created and vivified.

A schoolboy-howler has it that what one is forced to study and be bored with in the classroom is Classical and what one reads on one’s own and enjoys, away from the task-master’s eye, is Romantic. A variant of this notion may be stated: all that aims at teaching one a lesson and gets taught as a lesson is Classical, while all is Romantic that means to give pleasure and needs no discipline in order to be absorbed. But here we shall be given pause by two of the greatest poets labelled as Romantic—Wordsworth and Shelley. For, Wordsworth conceived poetry as ultimately a musing

On Man, on Nature and on Human Life,

and Shelley considered poets the tutors and the legislators, however unacknowledged, of the world. Nor is either of them such easy flow of harmonious numbers as would yield its meaning without any serious concentration. They may not always insist, as does Valéry following the example of Mallarmé, on our labouring for our pleasures: that insistence belongs to the school of Symbolism and not to the school of Romanticism or Classicism, but they do have depths



which call for some digging on our part and heights which cannot be gained by a skip and a run.

It has been found difficult to confine Romanticism and Classicism within neat and tight formulas. *Vis-à-vis* a number of famous names often listed on the one side or the other, F. L. Lucas dwells at some length on this difficulty. We may pick out his main statements, interweaving with them a few of our own. He quotes a series of definitions and questions them. Thus Goethe has sweepingly said: “Romanticism is disease, Classicism is health.” Lucas queries whether Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*, one of the most typical Romantic works, is diseased. No doubt, we may say it deals with an obsession and is haunted by vague and vast fears; but does it not drive towards a purgation of them, a sweet and deep resolution of discords? Lucas asks whether Goethe’s own masterpiece *Faust*, which is the quintessence of its author’s mind and art, is not Romantic. Surely, even when it aims at Classicism, is there not Romanticism in the colourful ache for infinite experience and knowledge that it poetises and in the crowded kaleidoscopic variety of its thought-themes? Victor Hugo associates Romanticism above all with “the grotesque”. Christianity, with its sense of Sin, is said to have brought melancholy into the world by making man realise the paradox of his imperfect nature: as William Watson puts it,

Magnificent out of dust we came  
And abject from the spheres.

With the melancholy sense of that paradox grew up the sense of the grotesque and hence the habit of mingling the grotesque with the tragic or sublime. Classicism is thought to forbid this kind of mingling, but actual life is taken to confirm it. For instance, after signing Charles I’s death-warrant, Cromwell and another of the regicides are reported to have bespattered each other’s faces with the ink on their pens! Romanticism therefore is, according to Hugo, really truthfulness, “verité.” And yet, questions Lucas, what is grotesque in Wordsworth’s *Highland Maid* or Keats’s *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Musset’s *Nuits* or Yeats’s *Innisfree*, poems which all critics have declared to breathe the utmost Romanticism?

To Heine Romanticism was “the reawakening of the Middle Ages”—a passion-flower nourished by and blooming from the blood of Christ. Sismondi too has defined it by its themes as a mixture of love, religion and chivalry. But Lucas poses the query: what is mediaeval in Goethe’s novel *Werther* which belongs to that poet’s early unmistakable Romantic period or to Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* which has always been deemed chockfull of Romantic qualities? And where is religion in Byron or Morris, love in Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* unless we take his

## Woman wailing for her demon lover

as characteristically charged, in her weird preoccupation, with love as the human heart generally understands it?

Brunetière regarded the Romantic Movement as a blind wave of literary egotism. But is, again, *The Ancient Mariner* egotistic rather than a powerful sermon against egotism? What of Scott? asks Lucas—and what of Keats with his theory of “negative capability” that the true poet is, like Shakespeare, a selfless sympathy inhabiting the shoes and the very skins of others and having an in-feeling of even sparrows and stones?

Romanticism is also summed up as “Emotion against Reason”. Whatever overflows and breaks bounds set by the sober intellect is described as Romantic and the practitioners of such literature as holding in them the very heart of poetry. Thus George Sand said: “Everything excessive is poetic.” Léon Daudet defined Romanticism as “une beatification d’impulsivité”. Yet—to follow Lucas—the heroine of *The Heart of Midlothian* by the Romantic Scott is a Stoic who refuses to perjure herself even to save a sister’s life and Scott’s own private *Journal* remains a monument of sanity and honesty, courage and self-control. The whole life of Christian Rossetti, who is accounted a Romantic poet, was a semi-tragedy of the practice of self-repression. Nor was Classicism unemotional: think, says Lucas, of Swift dying as he himself said, “like a poisoned rat in a hole” (and, we may add, of Swift writing his own epitaph, “He has gone where savage indignation can lacerate his heart no longer”); of Voltaire of whom it has been noted that we might as well call white-hot iron “cold” because it is not “red”; of Johnson who even in manhood could not face the end of *Lear*. And what of the passion of the Classical Racine’s *Phèdre*, the horrors of the Classical Sophocles’s *Oedipus*?

To Walter Pater Romanticism was the addition of “strangeness” to beauty. For Watts-Dunton it was “the Renaissance of Wonder” after “the periwig poetry” of the eighteenth century. For still others it is “mystery” or “aspiration”. Romantic literature, they might say, is a Wonderland, whereas Classical literature is a Looking-glass World. However, we are asked by Lucas whether there is much mystery in Byron or Swinburne, in Burns or Musset. Often there is little aspiration, either.

To Lascelles Abercrombie, Romanticism is opposed to Realism. By Realism he means not the literary creed of Zola but the utilitarian habit of mind of a Bentham. “Romanticism”, he writes, “is a withdrawal from outer experience to concentrate on inner experience” as in Blake, Shelley or “Cubist painting”. But, as Lucas points out, it is Classicism which raised a clamour against outer experience if it happened to be of a familiar kind: Hugo was almost mobbed for using

the word “muchoir” (handkerchief) in poetry. Louis XIV, arch-patron of the French Age of Classicism, exclaimed on being shown some realistic Dutch pictures: “Enlevez-moi ces magots!” “Similarly”, continues Lucas, “Schiller, adapting in Classical mood the Romantic pages of *Macbeth*, felt it necessary to replace the raw conversation of the Porter by a morning-hymn about skylarks.” Besides, Hugo, as we have seen with Lucas, justified Romanticism as a return to reality, because real life perpetually mingles hornpipes and funerals to compose its “Satires of Circumstance”. Lucas pertinently inquires what, again, could be more realistic than the low life in Scott’s romances, the details in Keats’s *Eve of St. Agnes* or in Morris the grey ears of Lancelot’s horse twitching on the dusty downs of Glastonbury, the beads of melted snow-water on the steel-shoes of Sir Galahad, the mud and rain and cold and hopelessness of that sodden Haystack in the Floods. Similarly with the *minutiae* of Pre-Raphaelite painting. “It was, in fact, this love of the Romantics for realistic *décor* and setting, furniture and local colour, that provided one source of Naturalism in the later novel.”

In Lucas’s view, Romanticism is a variety of things and often contains queer combinations. As a general catalogue of its specific qualities he mentions: remoteness, the sad delight of desolation, silence and the supernatural, winter and dreariness, vampirine love and stolen trysts, the flowering of passion and the death of beauty, Radcliffe horrors<sup>1</sup> and sadistic cruelty, disillusion and death and madness, the Holy Grail and battles long ago on the Border, the love of the impossible. Over against these he enumerates certain features distinguishing Classicism: grace, self-knowledge, self-control, the sense of form, the easy wearing of the chains of art hidden under flowers, idealism steadied by an unfaltering sense of reality, the lamp and the midnight oil rather than the wine-cup. But he refuses to draw any too sharp line between the Romantic writer and the Classical. “Romanticism”, he says, “is indeed as old as European literature—as old as the *Odyssey*. It is even older.” He considers the legends of Greek mythology highly Romantic, nor does Greek Romanticism end for him with the fabulous and the fantastic in Homer: imagination breaks bounds in Aeschylus, passion snaps the leash in Euripides and strange as well as violent themes are found in much Greek drama. Touches of the Romantic occur in Latin literature too,—in Ovid “with his love-lorn heroines”, Virgil “with his Messianic broodings and his passionate Dido”, Catullus “the Roman Burns”, Propertius “the Roman Rossetti.”

In giving examples of Romantic lines, Lucas does not only mention Wordsworth’s

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the novels of Anne Radcliffe.

## MOTHER INDIA

Lady of the Mere  
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.

He finds the typical Romantic atmosphere in that reticently emotional line of Dante's where Francesca of Rimini, after she and her lover Paolo have come in their joint reading to a certain episode in the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, says:

Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.  
Upon that day no further did we read. (K.D.S.)

The Romantic atmosphere is sensed also in that verse of Propertius:

Sunt apud infernos tot milia formosarum—  
So many thousand beauties are among the Shades— (K.D.S.)

and in those lines of Virgil:

Hic tibi mortis erant metae, domus alta sub Ida,  
Lyrnesi domus alta, solo Laurente sepulchrum.  
Here for thee all death's fears were—the lofty house under Ida,  
House of Lyrnesus, high-hung, tomb by the lonely laurel. (K.D.S.)

The Classical Milton is said to have it—

And airy tongues that syllable men's names  
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses—

no less than Keats with his

magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in faerylands forlorn.

Seeking a psychological basis for the associations the words "Classical" and "Romantic" have for him as well as a reason for his feeling that a Classical writer can be Romantic and *vice versa*, Lucas takes a cue from Freud. "Much of the Freudian system may be pure moonshine," he remarks; but, because it emphasises "what goes on in our minds without our knowledge", he adopts for the sake of convenience its picture of the human "ego" as torn three ways between the "id", the "super-ego", and the "reality-principle". The "id" drives towards some object of desire; the "reality-principle" may cry, "It can't be done";

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the “super-ego” may whisper, “It isn’t done”. The ego then pulls back the “id”. To simplify things, it shuts its eyes to certain impulses and conflicts too difficult to resolve; it practices “repression”, leaving them, however, to writhe unseen, so that what they do remains in the “unconscious”. During sleep it is as if the “censor” who keeps the forbidden impulses submerged below consciousness relaxed his vigilance: the prisoners slip upwards into experience as dreams, though even then they come more or less disguised to enjoy this temporary release.

“Now the lives men live and the art they make”, opines Lucas, “depends enormously on how strict and oppressive, or relaxed and easy-going, are their sense of reality and their sense of the ideal, their consciousness and their conscience. Different periods vary widely in this—and, within periods, different individuals....So considered, the differences between Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism turn out, I think, to be differences mainly of degree; depending on the strictness with which, if we may call them so, the reality-principle and the super-ego control and censor emanations from the unconscious mind. The Realist writer tends to sacrifice everything to his sense of reality. The Classic, while ruthless towards some forms of unreality in the name of ‘good sense’, elaborately cultivates others in the name of ‘good taste’; his impulses and fantasies are much more dominated by a social ideal, formed under the pressure of a finely civilized class ...The Romantic is...a ‘dreamer’. He may indeed, like a nightmare, be vividly realistic at moments. At moments he may be ruled, like the Classic, by a social ideal of conduct—partly social, at least, in its heroism and generosity, though in other ways rebelliously anti-social. But, essentially, he believes with Blake in letting his impulses and ideas run free....If I had to hazard an Aristotelian definition of Romanticism, it might run—‘Romantic literature is a dream-picture of life; providing sustenance and fulfilment for impulses cramped by society or reality.’ Whereas the world of Classicism, on the contrary, is wide awake and strictly sober.”

No doubt, Lucas has caught hold of some genuine aspects of psychological truth. But he has failed to penetrate to the core of the subject. The mention of Freud in matters of poetry or art is itself an unpromising omen. The Freudian system emerges from the neuropathological clinic and to transfer neuropathology in a merely intenser shape to the operations and discoveries of poetic genius is crass folly. Such psychology ignores just the specific art-element in art, the glory and delight of the revelatory, the perfect, in word and rhythm; and the subconscious or unconscious region it analyses is far too low and small. Lucas, keen as his aesthetic sensibilities are, appears to slur over this art-element. Again, though he accepts the Freudian picture not without dubbing it just an “as if”, he seems too much impressed with the talk of submerged

impulses and fantasies. A good deal in life—at least in the poetic phenomenon—occurs “as if” a lot more were involved.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the subconscious or the unconscious is not all that lies beyond our waking condition: he refers to the subliminal being, a hidden domain much greater, with powers like our own wakeful state’s but intenser, wider, finer, more varied and with rarer powers too that are either absent in that state or present only in embryo. Poetry, like all art, draws considerably on the subliminal and discloses that domain’s surprising realities in diverse patterns of image and sound. It can draw also on another domain—the superconscious—which is a diviner secrecy. Often the two commingle. In addition, certain factors in the wakeful condition as well as in the processes below consciousness may lend their own colours. And, whatever form poetry may take, essentially its whole style and rhythm, Sri Aurobindo tells us, belong to our inmost self and employ the rest of our personality, outer or inner, as an instrument: they “are the expression and movement which come from us out of a certain spiritual excitement caused by a vision in the soul of which it is eager to deliver itself”. He goes on to say: “The vision may be of anything in Nature or God or man or the life of creatures or the life of things”. Yet what stamps poetic speech with a marvellous inevitability and absoluteness is the soul-stress. “A divine Ananda, a delight interpretative, revealing, formative—one might say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul has felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into its original creative vision—such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. And this delight is not merely a godlike pastime; it is a great formative and illuminative power.”

Here we may emphasise that the so-called “reality-principle” does not weigh decisively for the true poet. To him it is infantile to confine the real to outward reality: his very breath of life is to transcend external concreteness and circumstance, just as it is a necessity for him never to stop content with mere feigning or fiction. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, “the essential poetic imagination...is creative, not of either the actual or the fictitious, but of the more and the most real; it sees the spiritual truth of things,—of this truth too there are many gradations,—which may take either the actual or the ideal for its starting-point.” The aim of poetry, as of all authentic art, is neither a photographic imitation of sensible things nor a fanciful furbishing or painting of them, but an interpretation by the images Nature “affords us not on one, but on many planes of her creation, of that which she conceals from us, but is ready, when

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rightly approached, to reveal.” Even modern realistic art exceeds the demands of outward things and starts from an inner view and, in consonance with subjective claims of temperament and imaginative *penchant*, makes an arbitrary selection of motives, forms and hues, even as idealistic art makes a different selection. Of course, a certain objectivity is needed to make poetry live and the thing seen stand out before our eyes, but the creation is always out of the poet’s self and not out of what he externally sees: “that outward seeing only serves to excite the inner vision to its work.” The Classical poet—a Sophocles or a Virgil—no less than the Romantic has his mind environed by much more than the immediate physical reality, by even much more than the physical universe he imagines in his drama or epic: invisible powers of the subjective being, spiritual presences beyond the activities of men and of the elements are part of the reality-principle to which he stirs. Not that Lucas’s view of the relation between material or sensible actuality and, on the one side, the Classical poet and, on the other, the Romantic is quite off the mark. But it must be taken in the midst of diverse considerations and not too narrowly.

Further, Lucas in judging the differences between Romanticism and Classicism to be mainly of degree forgets that, except when in fact the Romantic and the Classical are blended as at times in certain poets, the Romantic moment of the Classical writer remains fundamentally Classical and so too the other way about. There is a basic difference which is not defined by mere theme or even mood and motive—something in the manner of the vision, the disposition of the word, the run of the rhythm. The distracted Oedipus of Sophocles may resemble the mad Lear of Shakespeare, but they are caught in poetry of two distinct orders and neither theme nor mood nor motive can make Sophocles Romantic or Shakespeare Classical. Similarly, Dante rests Classical for all his poignancy and sensitivity. Lucas himself feels that though he has called several things in Greek poetry Romantic he would like not to exaggerate; for Homer and Aeschylus never sound the extreme Romantic note that is heard in Spenser and Marlowe, while Catullus in even his “Romantic frenzy” is still “Classically clear”. Could we argue that impulses and fantasies were not as much at work in them? Should we put Aeschylus, for instance, below any Elizabethan in sheer imaginative fury? Lucas himself writes: “The rumour went that Aeschylus dipped his pen in the wine-pot. His imagery was so undisciplined. He roared like a bull, they said, piled up phrases like towers, talked mountains.” How is it then that he, as Lucas admits, “never outrages common sense or common taste like Marlowe?” Nor is it that the Greek poets conceived of their art tamely: they felt it to be a storm sent into them by Heaven, a divine madness. The theory of God-given inspiration has entered European culture through the Greeks, and surely such inspiration—whether it blow in a continuous sweep

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or with a gradual and intermittent gust, whether it rush unbidden or answer a call—is a matter of depths, of ultimately what Sri Aurobindo terms the soul. To change the metaphor: something of the nectar quaffed by the immortals flows through Classical poetry no less than Romantic, and if the intoxication shows less flush in the former and if the *enthousiasmos* even of an Aeschylus or of a Milton works with a hand that never trembles, the world of true Classicism cannot yet be described as “strictly sober”. The more tempered look, the less agitated gesture, the suggestion of the lamp and the midnight oil rather than the wine-cup can only be hit off by that paradoxical phrase of Milton’s: “sober ecstasy”. The function of poetry, as Longinus who had nothing save Classicism before him recognised centuries ago, is neither to teach nor merely to please: it is to render visionary and to transport. But the glow of soul on the lips that is poetry can vary and, as between the Classical and the Romantic, the variation is covered more distinctly, widely, fundamentally in certain observations of Sri Aurobindo than in Lucas’s “Aristotelian definition”, acute as the latter is in several respects. Apart from being based on a psychology more developed than Freud’s monotonous raking of the mire in search for the roots of the Goddess Saraswati’s lotus, these observations take the term “Romantic” itself outside the narrow historical and psychological context given it by Lucas who restricts it to the movement started at the end of the eighteenth century and regards as an anticipation of Romanticism whatever in European literature reached in that movement its fullness in the direction of “dream-life”, “spontaneous feeling”, “liberation of the less conscious levels of the mind.”

## II

Sri Aurobindo cuts down to the characteristic plane of psychological being from which a poet writes and through which all his themes, moods, motives get expressed. What he means by “plane” is something more definite than merely a particular side of our complex psychology: its definiteness prevents the Classical and the Romantic from being “a difference mainly of degree”. Not that they cannot ever shade off into each other. They certainly can and also there are some common powers at work in both. Again, the pure poetic essence is the same on each plane. But all this does not rub away genuine dividing lines. The soul-stress and soul-sight of poetry function differently on different planes and a poet is Classical or Romantic, or whatever else we may designate him, according as he articulates habitually the “spiritual excitement” from one plane or another.

How the planes differ can be understood by noting what this excitement may be employed to present in poetic form. It may be “used, in poetry, to give a



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deeper and more luminous force and a heightened beauty to the perceptions of outward life or to the inner but still surface movements of emotion and passion or the power of thought to perceive certain individual and universal truths which enlighten or which raise to a greater meaning the sensible appearances of the inner and outer life of Nature and man.” Beyond these uses, it may be set to bring out in the mould of word the inmost or topmost potentialities of the spiritual consciousness itself which is secretly at play everywhere, even in purposes not always its intrinsic one. Of course, in poetry of all kinds, sense, heart, thought-mind no less than the basic soul-intuitiveness are concerned, but this or that element may be the matrix and determinant, the remainder acting in terms of its psychological bent and texture. The determining matrix is what Sri Aurobindo calls a plane and he conceives it as a whole hidden universe in itself, of which we have an individual manifestation in our own workings. The immediate planes manifesting in most poetry are named by him subtle-physical, vital and mental: then there are those where the inwardness necessary to all poetry plunges to the directly psychic, occult, mystical or rises to the openly spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo’s reading of the psychological plane of Classicism is evident from several remarks of his. Thus, Milton’s poetry, amidst the posture and gait personal to him, is, in Sri Aurobindo’s eyes, “a language of intellectual thought which is of itself highly poetic without depending in the least on any of the formal aids of poetic expression except those which are always essential and indispensable, a speech which is in its very grain poetry and in its very grain intellectual thought-utterance.” And he adds: “This is always the aim of the classical poet in his style and movement.” He speaks also of “the lucid, restrained, intellectual and ideal classic form, in which high or strong ideas govern and develop the presentation of life and thought in an atmosphere of clear beauty and the vision of the satisfied intelligence” and he calls the achievement of this form the greatness of the Greek and Latin poets who are the prototypes of Classicism. The plane of consciousness from which the Greek and Latin poets write is, to use another phrase of Sri Aurobindo’s, the “creative Intelligence” and all classical work done since bears the stamp of the same origin, though, as we shall see, there are different provinces of this plane. In general, Classicism is “the clear and straightforward expression of thought with a just, harmonious and lucid turn”, it “insists on the presentation of life but for the purposes of thought; its eye is on the universal truths and realities of which it is the visible expression.” On the side of form, as a result of the intellectual power at work, the particular, though never effaced, is taken up into the general; and the details, though never suppressed, are subdued to the whole.

Classical poetry has a history of three phases. The first and prototypal,

the Graeco-Roman phase, especially in its Greek spirit, is marked by what Sri Aurobindo terms the dealing with life from a large view-point taken by "the inspired reason and the enlightened and chastened aesthetic sense." What exactly are we to understand by the inspired reason? We may consider it to be strong thought-power seeing relations and connections between things and putting them into broad concepts to interpret the world, but a thought-power receiving some influence from agencies wider, deeper, higher than itself, an influence which it yet converts into mental terms so that ultimately it seems only the mind itself loftily inspired to a high clarity of life-vision. As for the enlightened and chastened aesthetic sense, we may take it to be the aesthetic sense which is very sensitive to the form-beauty of things but particularly the form-beauty that is general harmony, a shapely interrelated whole, and that stands forth in a sort of light satisfying the thought-mind and making a kind of chaste or poised fusion of beauty with truth—beauty in which no *minutiae* unduly stick out, truth in which the eye is steady upon the object yet always assimilates the external appearance into an inner interpretative presentation. This aesthetic sense operates also in the domain of emotion; it is itself a subtle feeling giving fineness to all other feelings and keeping the emotional nature within bounds, exercising exquisite "taste" and happy "measure" in matters of the heart and the passions, a smiling control and a shaping propriety over the *élan* of assertive individuality.

The chief names usually listed in Graeco-Roman Classicism are Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil and Lucretius. These six, all things considered, are indeed greater than the brilliant quintet: Pindar, Simonides, Sappho, Horace, Catullus. There need be no quarrel on this score. But does Homer belong exactly to the same psychological plane as the others put with him? If we associate him with them it must be with a small reservation derived from Sri Aurobindo's insight. Sri Aurobindo, in the interests of accuracy, regards Homer as a poet not of the creative Intelligence but of the subtle-physical plane at its work of creation. Homer's is a poetry of external life: he is the singer of man at the stage when "he turns his view on the outward physical world and on his own life of outward action and concentrates on that or throws into its mould his life-suggestions, his thought, his religious idea, and, if he arrives at some vision of an inner spiritual truth, he puts even that into forms and figures of the physical life and physical Nature." "A primitive epic bard like Homer", Sri Aurobindo has said, "thinks only by the way and seems to be carried constantly forward in the stream of his strenuous action and to cast out as he goes only so much of surface thought and character and feeling as obviously emerges in a strong and single and natural speech and action." Such a poet does not typify the mental plane, even as he does not typify the plane

of the Life Force—or, rather, since man is characteristically a mental being, we should say that Homer’s is the subtle-physical mind and not the vital mind or the mind proper. But, as Sri Aurobindo observes, poetry “can reach great heights in this kind of mental mould, can see the physical forms of the gods, lift to a certain greatness by its vision and disclose a divine quality in even the most obvious, material and outward being and action of man: and in this type we have Homer.”

Homer thus is not supreme in the strict Classical category where the eye of the poet rises to the clarities and widenesses of a thought which intimately perceives and understands life. As a result, his effect on the cultural consciousness of ancient Greece through his two epics was different from that of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides through their dramas. To quote Sri Aurobindo again: “the epic poems revealed the Hellenic people to itself in the lucid and clear nobility and beauty of an uplifting of life and an aesthetic sense of the humanity and divinity of man: the later art and poetry interpreted to Athens her religious ideas, her thought, her aesthetic instinct, the soul of grandeur and beauty of her culture.” But we may note that something of the essential Greek soul operates in Homer in the same way as in the later art. Lucidity, clarity, a high and fine delight of the beautiful are the features common to him and his successors, however dissimilar the planes from which he and they make poetry. There is another feature too that has to be considered. He has not their high and active intelligence, but, unlike Chaucer who also is a poet of outward character and act, he is not an observer of external life “without any preoccupying idea, without any ulterior design, simply as it reflects itself in the individual mind and temperament of the poet”: he is moved to interpret and not merely present. “When we read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, we are not really upon this earth, but on the earth lifted into some plane of a greater dynamis of life, and so long as we remain there we have a greater vision in a more lustrous air and we feel ourselves raised to a semi-divine stature.” This vision is not of the intense vital plane, turning everything into moved thought and emotion and sensation of the life-soul carried forward in its own passionate surge, nor is here the mind-soul’s climbing to a freer height to get a clear and detached idea of life’s workings, man seeking “to dominate his emotions and vital intuitions and see with the calm eye of his reason, to probe, analyse, get at the law and cause and general and particular rule of himself and Nature”. Homer subjects impulse and action to no change by the vital or mental vision, but his subtle-physical sight is intuitive and interpretative—and, like the mental sight of his successors, it is so “on large and comparatively bare lines dwelling only on the salient details for a first strong and provisionally adequate view.” Considering all this and the constant play of aesthesis, we may declare

that if Homer worked from the subtle-physical plane the power which he kept the least subordinated to this matrix was the inspired reason and the chastened and enlightened aesthetic sense, just as what his successors kept the least subordinated to their matrix was the perception of external life, the steady eye upon the object. By a not wholly illegitimate extension of the meaning of Greek Classicism we may for our purposes deem Homer Classical.

Standing on a common basis, each of the six masters in Graeco-Roman Classicism has his own quality. Homer is eminent by the simultaneous presence of simplicity, amplitude, dynamic sweep, smoothness and splendour in his style. Aeschylus brings a packed terrific sublimity, daring in colour and image, at once weighty and impetuous. Sophocles shines out by calm elevation and measured wideness: as Arnold puts it, he gives the impression of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole: Newman speaks of his sweet composure and melodious fullness. Euripides carries his effect by a pointed versatile ease, a piquancy wedded to deep grace and a brilliance of quick pathos. Virgil is most chiselled, most euphonious, a blend of elegance and majesty, exhibiting a charming strength, a dignified sensitivity. Lucretius comes in rushing force and grandeur winged with philosophical imaginativeness.

Classicism has a later phase which continues the Graeco-Roman spirit of poetic utterance, but in its two great names it is the philosophical intellect ruled by theology: Dante brings mediaeval Roman Catholic thought to bear upon the cosmos, Milton post-Renaissance Puritan thought surveying the universe. Their ancestor, as it were, in Graeco-Roman Classicism is Lucretius whose *magnum opus* is the philosophical poem *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*), but there is no theology there, rather the very opposite, an anti-religious thought based on the theories of Democritus and Epicurus. Dante is distinguished by a severe and concise and clear-cut force of intellect with a strong intuitive drive which affects us as much by what is left suggestively unsaid as by what is incisively articulated with a few exact significant strokes. Emotion in him is deep but firm and he commands a power of primitive symbols, a pictorial narrative ability, a rich religious fervour, a sustained artistic form as in Virgil though not so elaborated as in the author of the *Aeneid* whom he took for literary master. Milton is distinguished by complex grandeur matched with immense and copious yet controlled energy. His too a sensuous imagination over which the shadow of a very formalistic religious intellect falls. He is capable of superb epic creativeness when inspired, but the art often becomes no more than externally constructive, though in sheer sculpture of rhythmic word it never fails.

The next phase of Classicism is the French, mainly under Louis XIV. About it Sri Aurobindo writes that it is much more limited than the Graeco-

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Roman, much less powerful in inspiration. “For it deals with life from the standpoint not of the inspired reason, but of the clear-thinking intellect, not of the enlightened aesthetic sense, but of emotional sentiment. These are its two constant powers; the one gives it its brain-stuff, the other its poetical fervour and appeal.” These two motives, which are of the very essence of the French spirit, have been faithfully adhered to and therefore French Classicism has almost always found a satisfying and characteristic form by which it has exercised a great influence from time to time on other European literatures. The difference, however, of its quality from that of the Graeco-Roman we may gauge by understanding how the clear-thinking intellect differs from the inspired reason and how emotional sentiment varies from the enlightened aesthetic sense. The first may be defined as intellect which depends considerably on itself, believes itself capable, unaided, to cope with the world, becomes argumentative and demonstrative rather than inspiredly lucid. When things are seen by it in an outward “rational” clarity, it thinks it has the whole truth. It is logical and analytic, while the inspired reason is not only more synthetic but has a background of keener intuitiveness. Emotional sentiment is feeling which on one side is fervent and on the other tender; which inclines towards heroic ardour as well as towards poignant sentimentality; which is at once a strength and a weakness of emotion and is capable of warm enthusiasm no less than lax infatuation; which stands on the verge of high chivalry and also on the brink of facile tearfulness. But, all through, it is considerably touched by the temper and climate of thought and is not sheer impulse or passion. For the clear-thinking intellect tends to give us not so much creation of life as studies of it, “thought about the meaning of character and emotion and event and elaborate description rather than the living presence of these things. Passion, direct feeling, ardent emotion, sincerity of sensuous joy are chilled.. and give place to sentiment,—sentiment which is an indulgence of the intelligent observing mind in the aesthesis, the *rasa* of feeling, passion, emotion, sense.” One step more and these latter get thinned away into “a subtle, at the end almost unreal fineness.” No such extreme attenuation happens in French Classicism in its golden age, but the perfect balance between thought and life, “the life passing into self-observing thought and the thought returning on the life to shape it in its own vital image” is not maintained with the sovereignty peculiar to Graeco-Roman Classicism. However, the poetic achievement of French Classicism is admirable enough and its two motives at their best give us, in Corneille, “a strong nobility of character”, a pulsing and powerful rhetoric and, in Racine, “a fine grace of poetic sentiment”, a clear controlled poignancy. Racine is also one of the world’s master artists in expression, comparable in his own way with Virgil and Milton, a much lesser way in quality

yet unique for evoking poetry from language of the commonest.

The fourth phase of Classicism comes in the so-called Augustan Age of England, the age of Dryden and Pope. As Sri Aurobindo remarks, "it took for its models the Augustan poets of Rome, but it substituted for the strength and weight of the Latin manner an exceeding superficiality and triviality. It followed more readily contemporary French models, but missed their culture, taste, tact of expression and missed too the greater gifts of the classical French poetry." The surface intellect is at play here, combining fancy with wit. Its chief contributions are satire and the mock-epic. It practises a neat, clear, pointed utterance of superficial ideas in the form of epigrams mostly struck out with the help of antithesis. There is a masterly treatment of the shallow and the commonplace. A robust vigour and a confident driving force are nearly always at the disposal of the writers and here they excel as a rule their nearest French exemplars. Although their diction becomes conventionalised and artificial, governed by the desire to please the urbane intellect and the decorous sentiment, some memorable moments are there of steady incisiveness and metallic mobility in Dryden and of intense archness and effective clatter in Pope. Pope's truly imaginative moments are no more than a few lines. In the following he seems to hit off with real vision his own tragedy as poet:

Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,  
Dull, sullen prisoners in the body's cage:  
Dim lights of life, that burn a length of years,  
Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres.

Once or twice in Dryden we even get an instance of what the clear-thinking intellect can do supremely in an external manner when a deep inspiration blows through it. The opening of *Religio Laici* is eighteenth-century Classicism at its purest peak of poetry.

The artificial and conventional nature of the style in this age can at once be seen by taking any lines from Homer and putting them before Pope's translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Here are two addressed by Ulysses in surprise to Elpenor who, unknown to his leader, had fallen overboard to his death in the sea and afterwards met Ulysses in the underworld: Homer, in a straightforward rendering, would run:

How hast thou come, Elpenor, under the shadowy darkness?  
Camest thou faster on foot than I in my black-hued galley?

Pope works these questions into four verses of elaborate superfluities:

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O say, what angry power Elpenor led  
To glide in shades and wander with the dead?  
How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjointed,  
Outfly the nimble sail and leave the lagging wind?

Ruskin, disgusted with the falseness of such poetry, has shown in contrast the exquisite sincerity of a line of Keats's which, though with a slight Romantic touch in the style, reflects part of the surprise uttered by Ulysses:

How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?

Even where there is no obvious falseness the characteristic level of eighteenth-century Classicism falls below the quality both of articulation and of the mind behind the voice, that belongs to the truly Classical. We have merely to pick anything representative out of Pope and set it beside a similar culling from Milton, in order to prove the crudeness of this Classicism. Next to the satiric, the reflective vein is most congenial to Pope, as in

Know thy own point: This kind, this due degree  
Of blindness, weakness, Heaven bestows on thee.  
Submit.—In this, or any other sphere,  
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:  
Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,  
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.

Let us listen to Milton in the same vein and on his own blindness, the “degree” of “weakness” bestowed by Heaven on him and perplexing him how “to serve therewith” his Maker:

God doth not need  
Either man's work or His own gifts, who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best, His state  
Is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait.

We can feel at once that Pope's wisdom is not graceful in gesture and sounds no depths but is jauntily skimmed off the clever brain.

To appreciate true Classicism in all its aspects and not only the reflective and, even in this aspect, to appreciate it in the round, we may glance at it under four heads, saying of it what Denham, in the antithetical fashion dear to the eighteenth century, drew as his lesson in poetry from observation of the river Thames:

Though deep, yet clear: though gentle, yet not dull:  
Strong, without rage: without o'erflowing, full.

The four types cannot always be disengaged from one another; often all of them are fused, at times some go hand in hand, but a rough division can be made and illustrated. Of course, when non-English poets are illustrated, it is the originals rather than the translations that are to be considered, though the translations attempt to approach them in both quality and manner. In the deep yet clear type, we may cite that "world-cry" from Homer:

Son of Cronion, of Zeus the supreme was I, yet have I suffered  
Infinite pain. (K. D. S.)

Equally magnificent in its expression of a similar motive in a more picturesque style is the voice of Aeschylus's Prometheus:

Aether divine, and Winds of swiftest wing!  
Founts of all rivers! All the Deeps that know  
The innumerable laughter of the waves!  
All-Mother Earth, Sun's circle of all-sight!  
What a God bears at the hands of Gods, behold. (K. D. S.)

The Sophoclean Chorus makes a masterpiece of sweetness and light:

O let a life be mine  
In word and deed both reverent and pure—  
True to those Laws whose feet, for ever sure,  
Tread still the heights divine!  
For Heaven alone begot them, to endure—  
Not our mortality  
Hath power to bid them be;  
On them Oblivion's slumber hath no hold;  
Yea, God is great in them, and grows not old. (Lucas)

A paradoxical aspect of the world-scene is laid bare by Euripides's pathetic irony:

When I remember that the gods take thought  
For human life, often in hours of grief  
To me this faith has brought  
Comfort and heart's relief.  
Yet, though a wistful understanding lies  
Deep in my hope, experience grows and faith recedes:  
Men's fortunes fall and rise  
Not answering to their deeds. (Vellacott)



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Virgil has fine firm brevities of wisdom:

Facilis descensus Averno,  
Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,  
Hoc opus, hoc labour est.

Easy the descent into Darkness;  
Turning our feet and escaping back to the lofty spaces—  
There lies the task and that is the labour. (K.D. S.)

Dante is at once tense and tender in his profundity—

Me la bonta infinita ha si gran braccia  
Che prende cio, che si rivolge a lei,—

But infinite Goodness stretches out arms so wide  
They gather each soul straining back to it— (K.D. S.)

or

E la sua voluntade è nostra pace.

His will alone is our tranquillity.

And there is Milton with his “organ-voice”, prophet-pitched in

And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all Temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know’st. Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dovelike satst brooding on the vast abyss  
And mad’st it pregnant. What in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men—

or keyed to splendid pride in

...one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.  
What matter where if I be still the same...?

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or majestically modulating to beauty:

Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid  
Tunes her nocturnal note.

Lastly, Dryden's sublimation of didactic thinking, almost as of prose, by a revealingly sustained image and a suggestive atmosphere conjured up by a deft play of vowel sounds and modulating consonants, cannot be omitted:

Dim, as the borrowed beams of moon and stars  
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers  
Is Reason to the soul: and as on high  
These rolling fires discover but the sky,  
Not light us here, so Reason's glimmering ray  
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
But guide us upward to a better day.  
And as those nightly tapers disappear  
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere;  
So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight;  
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.

To exemplify the gentle-yet-not-dull type we may begin with Simonides whose epitaph for the Spartan dead at Thermopylae is immortal for its sensitive understatement:

Tell them at Lacedaemon, passer-by,  
That here obedient to their laws we lie. (*Lucas*)

Dante brings many lines of a vivid delicacy, like these from the passage where Beatrice from Heaven descends to the soul of Virgil on Dante's behalf:

Io son Beatrice, che ti facio andare:  
Vegno di loco, ove tornar disio:  
Amor mi mosso, che mi fa parlare.

Beatrice am I who now thy help beseech:  
Out of a place that lures me back I come:  
Love brought me here and love impels my speech. (*K.D.S.*)

“CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

Milton has the famous passage:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble,

or this softly attractive simile:

Innumerable as the stars of night  
Or stars of morning, dew-drops which the Sun  
Impearls on every leaf and every flower,

or that smoothly defunctive music with which his epos ends:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:  
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

Racine commands some remarkable effects, incantatory yet the gentlest.  
About the line,

Dans l'orient désert quel devint mon ennui,

In the desert orient how my weariness grew! (K.D.S.)

Geoffrey Brereton says that it comes without any hyperbole, on your own level  
and has you by the throat before you can reflect. Perfect too in suave directness  
is the couplet:

Belle sans ornement, dans le simple appareil  
D'une beauté qu'on vient d'arracher au sommeil.

Lovely with not one ornament, in the simple sweep  
Of a beauty that one comes to startle out of sleep. (K.D.S.)

For the strong-without-rage type, nothing can be better than Homer on  
the priest of Apollo returning with bitter thoughts after Agamemnon's refusal  
to give him back his captured daughter:

Silent he walked by the shore of the many-rumoured Ocean—  
(Sri Aurobindo)

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or the subsequent description of the Sun-God himself as he descended towards the Greek camp to avenge the wrong done to his worshipper—a description rhythmized out with a poised irresistibility and imaged with an audacious simplicity:

Down from the peaks of Olympus he came, wrath-vexed in his heart-strings,  
Over his shoulders carrying arrows and double-packed quiver,  
And, with the speed of his moving, his silver bow shaken about him  
Clanged, and he came like the night.

(K.D.S.—the first line adapted from Sri Aurobindo)

Then take those terrible yet beautiful words of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus after she has thrown an embroidered robe upon her husband in his bath and killed him. She lifts the blood-stained robe and says:

Round him I flung, like a fishing-net escapeless,  
These folds of fatal splendour; then I struck  
Twice—and with twice-repeated cry of woe  
His limbs gave way beneath him; where he fell,  
A third time yet I hewed him, as in prayer  
And sacrifice to the infernal Zeus,  
Deliverer of the dead.  
So on the earth he gasped his life away,  
And from his lips burst forth a gush of blood,  
That splashed me, like a shower of dark red rain;  
And I rejoiced in it as wheat grows glad  
With heaven's moisture, when the ear is born.

(Lucas)

Lucretius is stupendous at times, as in those phrases where he describes the philosopher Epicurus, of whom he was a disciple, triumphing over the crude superstitions of popular religion that blocked the way of rational investigation:

Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra  
Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi  
Atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque.

Therefore his vivid vigour of mind stood everywhere master;  
Forward afar beyond the world's flaming walls he ventured,  
Crossing the measureless span of the all with the power of his spirit.

(K.D.S.)

Virgil can make us hear the very gates of the Gods swing formidably on their hinges:

“CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

Panditur interea domus omnipotenti Olympi.

Wide-open lay by that hour the house of omnipotent Olympus.  
(K.D.S.)

Dante's restrained energy can be shown in countless lines: here is he invoking Apollo, the vanquisher and punisher of the uncouth presumptuous Marsyas:

Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue  
Si come quando Marsia traesti  
Della vagina della membre sue.

Enter within my bosom and breathe there  
The self-same power thou hadst of singing when  
From his limbs' scabbard Marsyas thou didst tear. (K.D.S.)

Milton teems with strength, large-swept as in

Millions of spirits for his fault amerced  
Of Heaven and from Eternal Splendour flung  
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,  
Their glory withered. As when Heaven's fire  
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines  
With singèd top their stately growth though bare  
Stands on the blasted heath—

or close-gathered as in

Fall'n Cherub, to be weak is miserable,  
Doing or suffering—

or brief-cut as in

Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.

Corneille provides many an occasion of dignified force, like

Je rends graces aux Dieux de n'être pas Romain,  
Pour conserver encor quelque chose d'humain.

I give my thanks unto the Gods that I am no Roman,  
But still within me keep some touches of the human. (K.D.S.)

The full-without-overflowing type may be instanced from the opening hexameters of Homer's *Odyssey*:

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Many the woes in his soul he suffered driven on the waters,  
Fending from fate his life and the homeward course of his comrades.  
Them even so he saved not, for all his desire and his striving,  
Who by their own infatuate madness piteously perished,  
Fools in their hearts! for they slew the herds the deity pastured,  
Helios high-climbing; but he from them reft their return and the daylight.  
*(Sri Aurobinbo)*

Virgil is the sovereign hand at this type, briefly marvellous:

O passi graviora! dabit deus his quoque finem—

Fiercer griefs you have suffered: to these too God will give ending—  
*(Sri Aurobindo)*

or

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore—

Out of their love they stretched their hands to the shore that lay yonder—  
*(K.D.S.)*

or the verse that Arnold Bennett used to consider the most musical in all poetry,

Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem.

Grief that no words can utter, O Queen, thou bidst me remember.  
*(K.D.S.)*

Dante also specialises in this genre—with a greater severity, heart breaking yet backbone firm:

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale  
Lo pane altrui e com'è duro calle  
Lo scendere e'l salir l'altrui scale.

How bitter another's bread is, thou shalt know  
By tasting it; and how hard to the feet  
Another's stairs are, up and down to go. *(Laurence Binyon)*

Milton the stern Puritan springs several surprises of the utmost poignancy held on the rein: those lines Arnold admired to excess for their closing sequence of long vowels, most of them in slow limping monosyllables enforcing the pathos of the sense:

“CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

...fair field  
Of Enna where Proserpin gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis  
Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world,

or the passage on the poet's own blindness:

Seasons return, but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine—

also the phrases about the blind Samson, intensely subjective in

Dark, dark, dark amid the blaze of noon,

intensely objective in

Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.

Racine is well-known for achieving with the most ordinary vocabulary, plainly set forth, a moving exquisiteness for which the Romantics and even other Classical writers need more elaborate means:

Ariane, ma sœur, de quel amour blessée,  
Vous mourûtes aux bords où vous fûtes laissée?

Ariane, my sister, by what love deep-hurt,  
Diedst thou upon this shore that all desert? (K.D.S.)

A little less subdued, he has still an essential simplicity as of conversation:

Impitoyable Dieu, toi seul as tout conduit.

God without pity, none but thou brought all to pass. (K.D.S.)

Even a shade of colour does not lessen the same heart-shattering directness and candour:

J'ai senti son beau corps tout froid entre mes bras.

I felt her beautiful body all cold within my arms. (K.D.S.)

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

## THE MOTHER OF AMENHOTEP

### SCENE I

*Curtain rises on Bilo, the royal tutor, and Prince Amenhotep.*

*The scene is the schoolroom in the palace of Amenhotep III, Pharaoh of Egypt. Prince Amenhotep, son of the Pharaoh, is finishing his lessons for the day prior to attending the daily ceremony of sacrifice in the temple.*

*Prince:* Then may I finish the last papyrus? Have I time before the procession starts?

*Bilo:* Yes, if you begin and stop chattering.

*Prince:* Oh, I wish, I wish I did not have to go to that beastly temple, this poetry is of another world.

*Bilo:* Yes, and of another god. What would Amon say?

*Prince:* Oh, Nile rats to Amon! listen to this.

*(He reads)*

Thou who nourishest the grasses  
With thy rays of golden light,  
While the Mother Isis passes  
O'er the skies of yesternight.  
Thou, O Aton! gracious godhead,  
Shine thy blessings on our land;  
Who would dare to daunt thy flooded  
Power of sunshine on this sand?  
Without thee naught on earth can live,  
Death is near when thou dost flee—  
Come, O Mighty One, and give  
Thy true heart of Liberty!  
Thou hast borne great names in Egypt,  
From thy rays the birth of kings  
Stoops here to find an earthly crypt  
On the breast of mighty things—



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Things that are of dawns becoming,  
Yet unseen by mortal eyes,  
Dawns that we have seen fore-looming  
Writ on thy eternal skies....

*Bilo:* Stop! stop, child, stop! Such words make me tremble. I fear for you lest the soldiers of the high priest should hear you.

*Prince:* O fear not, dear Bilo, they are so ignorant they would never understand a word of it. Only you and my lady mother can appreciate these lines.

*Bilo:* And what of your father?

*Prince:* Oh, these days he concerns himself not with my affairs. I fear he has given me up as lost. I find no favour in his eyes. I hunt not the deer, nor do I act the warrior.

*Bilo:* Methinks you are older than your years—perhaps I press your learning overmuch.

*(Sound of trumpets off)*

There are the heralds! the procession to the temple is already forming. You must hurry!

*(The Prince stands rigid with fear)*

What is the matter, child! Come, you must join your father; the procession waits without.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

*Hibon, the High Priest, is looking furtively through some papyrus rolls from the rack in the schoolroom.*

*Enter Ty, nurse-slave to the Prince.*

*Hibon:* *(startled)* You made no noise on entering; are you spying on me?

*Ty:* Do you think of nothing but spying? How should I expect to find you here, the Prince is not returned!

*Hibon:* Then I'll wait no longer, I am wanted at the temple.

*(He goes out hurriedly—but unseen by Ty he conceals himself behind a screen)*

*Enter the Prince, he throws himself down on a couch of tiger skins.*

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*Ty: (Turning to him)* So! again you lost your senses at the temple today. Again all eyes were turned scornfully on the Pharaoh's son and for a week tongues will be wagging in the market place that the son of the mighty Pharaoh is a weakling.

*Prince:* Oh! please, Ty, don't scold me, I did try hard to be brave, I forced my eyes to stay open at the time of the sacrifice but it was no good....I think it was the smell as much as the horrid sight. Do you think I will ever be cured of this sickness, Ty?

*Ty:* I don't know I'm sure; your father has tried all the priests and physicians in two kingdoms, and magicians from other lands have seen you—What else is there to do?

*Prince:* When I am Pharaoh I will put an end to these beastly practices!

*Ty:* Be silent, child! You should not say such things—Oh! if the high priest's soldiers heard you!...Hush! someone comes!

*Enter Tiy, the Queen.*

*Tiy:* All right, Ty, you may leave us.

*Ty:* Very well, my lady. *(Exit)*

*Tiy:* Now, my son! you have recovered? Your face seems not so pale. Come, sit by me here and tell me what you fear.

*Prince:* Sweet mother! You have more power to drive away disturbance than any god in Egypt. It's not exactly fear, but it seems I have no stomach for the sacrifice.

*Tiy:* Dear boy, I understand, and how I wish it need not be!

*Prince: (quickly)* When I am Pharaoh I will not allow such beastly practices ...*(slower)* O...or perhaps I should not have spoken so?

*Tiy: (Meditatively)* I have always felt the same as you, my son; and I have prayed earnestly though silently to the great god Aton, the sun god of our ancient ancestors, who is much more gracious than the cruel and dreadful Amon of our temple. I know now that this horror which you have of the killings in the temple and which others call fear is really disgust, disgust for a beastly practice that should have died with the dark and ignorant superstitions of the past.

*(She goes over to the window)*

O gracious Aton! Come, with thy Light of Truth!  
Come with thy radiant power of delight!  
Egypt is prostrate now before thy throne;  
Though seeming prosperous are the ways of men

THE MOTHER OF AMENHOTEP

A violence rules their actions and their lives  
And thunder echoes in the human heart.  
Greatness has vanished, Beauty is no more—  
Fashion takes the throne where Art once reigned,  
And love is squandered in the arms of lust.

*(Tenderly)* Yet in the valley of the sleeping Nile  
A mother weeps for Egypt and for man,  
And prays that Light may come again to earth,  
That man may turn victoriously to Truth  
Glimpsed in the promise of thy Golden Eye.  
Come, pure radiance! heed a mother's prayer!  
We would transcend our dim mortality,  
Raise Egypt to the god's immortal throne.  
Surrender all to thy Divinity.

*(There is a silence, then slowly she turns to the young Prince)*

My son, these sacrifices are born out of fear and ignorance and seek to endure with other evils held dear in the hearts of our priests, whose cruelty seems so to gain with their power that I fear soon there will hardly be a throne left for you to occupy.

*(With slow determination)* But that must not be!

*Prince:* Mother, tell me—what does my father do when he goes into the inner temple alone with the high priest? Do they speak to Amon? And... and...does Amon speak to them?

*Tiy: (reflectively)* No, the god does not speak. Each morning before your father goes to the temple he tells the high priest what question he wants to ask Amon that day. The high priest writes two answers to that question on separate rolls of papyrus. When he and your father enter the Holy of Holies they stand before the statue of Amon. The high priest puts one roll into each of the hands of the statue. He asks the god to decide which roll bears the wisest answer to the Pharaoh's question. Then he and your father wait for Amon to decide. After a while the statue drops one roll of the papyrus to the floor, but holds on to the other. The roll which the statue keeps is the one which bears the wisest answer.

*Prince: (puzzled)* But the statue cannot read? How does Amon know?

*Tiy:* Sh! Of course the statue cannot read! It cannot move either without help. I think there is always a priest hidden nearby who watches the high

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priest and at a signal from him, moves the statue's hands by pulling some hidden strings.

*Prince:* But mother! my father is not such a fool!

*Tiy:* Hush, child! your father is hypnotised by inherent tradition, which is a blind faith in the priesthood of Egypt, a mistaken loyalty to his misguided forefathers and the ignorant superstitions of the past.

*Prince:* Oh, unhappy sovereign! So this is the secret! Priests of Amon, what a joke!

*Tiy:* Amon may be a joke, my son, but not the priests of Amon.

*Prince:* Yes, my sweet mother, we must see to them. But come! I will read you some verses I have written to Aton. He will help us or the Power that is He will help us. Come!

*(Hibon, the high priest, comes from behind the screen where he has been hiding, he stands there regarding them for some minutes taking full advantage of their obvious surprise and discomforture).*

*Hibon: (addressing the Queen)* Yes, madam, I have heard all. *(pause)* So, you have made yourself responsible for the religious growth and instruction of your son. You would usurp authority from Egypt's priesthood. You would replace an instruction, madam, contrary to Egypt's laws and ancient customs, contrary to the will and preference of the king,—your Lord and Master.

*(He waits for her to speak—she remains silent.)*

You have nothing to say, madam?—*(pause)*—Then I have little more. Tonight after the sacrifice in the inner temple of Amon, I will acquaint Royal Egypt of your preferences, unless by then you and your son have left, agreeing to exile on the isle of Tros; which shall be arranged for you. *(He turns to leave)*

*Tiy:* Wait! I'll...

*Hibon: (vehemently)* There is no waiting, madam, and there is no alternative; after the sacrifices I will know if you are gone. *(Exit)*

*(The Prince goes over to comfort his mother)*

*Prince:* Oh! my poor mother! what shall we do?

*Tiy:* Wait and pray, my son, wait and pray.

*(Fada-out of lights)*

THE MOTHER OF AMENHOTEP

SCENE III

*(The same)*

DAWN

*The young Prince is seen sleeping restlessly on his couch.*

*Enter Ty*

*Ty:* Wake up! wake up! O wake, my Prince! my baby, wake your eyes!

*Prince:* *(rising quickly)* Why, why do you come before I have had my bath?

*Ty:* Oh! such news! such wonderful news!

*Prince:* Oh yes, I know, I know, I am to be sacrificed at the altar of Amon, then I shall know the secret. What news! What news!—*(slowly)* O what a dream!

*Ty:* Hush! hush! How can you say such dreadful things; but...but last night the high priest was indeed sacrificed—The king's bull which was ready for the knife went suddenly raving mad and gored the priest Hibon, who now lies dead, oh, just as dead as the dead bull.

*Prince:* What! you really mean...

*Ty:* O yes, it is not palace gossip, I was there and saw it all with my own eyes.

*Enter Ty*

*Ty:* Yes, my son, it is true. Our prayers were answered.

FINALE

*Prince:* *(Towards the window, where the morning sun is streaming through)*

O Aton! O Aton! O Aton!

*(Turning and running to his mother's knees)*

O Mother! O sweet Mother!

*(Together they face towards the dawn sunlight)*

The radiant orb of Truth controls our fate  
Which will endure for all eternity.  
Aton is Truth, and Truth is Egypt's law—

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So says the spirit deep within my heart.  
O Sun! have I not worshipped from afar  
Thy splendour? Have I not put my trust in Thee?  
And left my worldly troubles in Thy care?  
Surrendered all, even my royal name  
To meet Thy call, bowed to Thy high command,  
To lay all Egypt at Thy shining feet?  
O Sun! O Truth! now Thou art radiant, near.  
Within each mortal heart Thou shalt be found!  
Thy rays shall penetrate the depths of night.  
The dark, dark ignorance of Amon's law  
Shall break asunder at Thy vibrant touch  
And worlds of Light come like a myriad stars  
Into the superstitions of an age  
Dead from this day since Thy brave Sun arose  
Covering the earth with newborn Energies.  
Softly Thou comest on bright wings of Bliss,  
Softly across the waters of the Dawn,  
Rose-tipped, like the morning of the world  
When love first touched the edge of silent Night;  
Golden, like the Bridegroom and the Bride  
Who in some future Dawn are yet to come:  
Light-born, uplifting man from Nature's soil  
To tread the brilliant Pathways of the Sun.

*(The Queen comes and stands behind him—he kneels facing the Sunlight.)*

O Aton! Lord of Love and Truth and Light!  
*(Chorus off)*: Of Love and Truth and Light!  
*(Echo)*: Of Love and Truth and Light!

## C U R T A I N

NORMAN DOWSETT