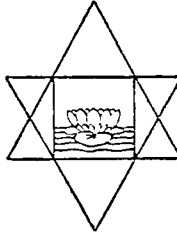


# MOTHER INDIA

MARCH, 195

Price: Re. 1.



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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

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

*Sri Aurobindo*

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

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. VIII

No. 2

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

### LITERARY ACTIVITY AND YOGA

NIRODBARAN *I have been thinking whether I would not profit more by using the time I use for writing in doing meditation instead. Has the writing any spiritual value?*

SRI AUROBINDO No present value spiritually—it may have a mental one. It is the same with the work—it has a value of moral training, discipline, hence, acceptance of work for the Mother. The spiritual value and result come afterwards when the consciousness in the vital opens upward. So with mental work. It is a preparation. If you cannot yet do it with the true spiritual consciousness, it, the work as well as the mental occupation, must be done with the right mental or vital will in it.

*When I showed my inclination towards literary work, Sri Aurobindo wrote:*

“It depends upon what kind of ‘literary man’ you want to be, ordinary or yogic.

A literary man is one who loves literature and literary activity for its own sake. A Yogic ‘literary’ man is not a literary man at all, but one who writes what the inner will and Word wants to express. He is a channel and an instrument of something greater than his own literary personality.” (14-5-1934)

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\*

To be a literary man is not a spiritual aim, but to use literature as a means of spiritual expression is another matter. Even to make expression a vehicle of a superior power helps to open the consciousness. The harmonising rests on that principle.

\*

\*

There should be no "desire" to be a "great" writer. If there is a genuine inspiration or coming of power to write then it can be done, but to use it as a means of service for the Divine is the proper spirit

\*

\*

NIRODBARAN *I saw what you wrote to X about reading, I wonder if it applies to me also?*

SRI AUROBINDO What is written for X is not meant for you. He has got into a movement of consciousness in which reading is no longer necessary and would rather interfere with his consciousness. There is no objection to your reading provided it does not interfere with your meditation. (17-8-1934)

\*

\*

NIRODBARAN *In some cases you don't seem to like people to be engrossed in literary work. Can it be taken as a general rule?*

SRI AUROBINDO There is no general rule, the mind is always trying to build general rules. The thing done may be the same, but it is done in different ways according to the circumstances and the nature of the people. (22-5-1934)

\*

\*

*I once mentioned to Sri Aurobindo that I would like to write poems, stories in Bengali, and so forth. He wrote back*

"Ambitions of that kind are too vague to succeed. You have to limit your fields and concentrate in order to succeed in them. I don't make any attempt to be a scientist or painter or general. I have certain things to do and have done them, so long as the Divine wanted, others have opened in me from above or within by Yoga. I have done as much of them as the Divine wanted. X has had dynamisms and followed them so long as they were there or as often as they were there. You mentalise, mentalise, discuss, discuss, hesitate and hesitate. There is no incompatibility between spirituality and creative activity—they can be united. Fluctuating of course comes in the way of action and therefore of success. One can do one or other or one can do both, but not fluctuate eternally.

NIRODBARAN

# THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

## CHAPTER XIV

WE must now pursue this image of the Cow which we are using as a key to the sense of the Veda, into the striking Vedic parable or legend of the Angirasa Ushas, on the whole the most important of all the Vedic myths

The Vedic hymns, whatever else they may be, are throughout an invocation to certain "Aryan" gods, friends and helpers of man, for ends which are held by the singers,—or seers, as they call themselves (*kavi, rsi, vipra*),—to be supremely desirable (*vana, vāna*) These desirable ends, these boons of the gods are summed up in the words *rayi, rādhas*, which may mean physically wealth or prosperity, and psychologically a felicity or enjoyment which consists in the abundance of certain forms of spiritual wealth. Man contributes his share of the joint effort: the work of the sacrifice, the Word, the Soma Wine and the *ghrita* or clarified butter. The Gods are born in the sacrifice, they increase by the Word, the Wine and the Ghrita and in that strength and in the ecstasy and intoxication of the Wine they accomplish the aims of the sacrificer. The chief elements of the wealth thus acquired are the Cow and the Horse, but there are also others, *hmanya*, gold, *vira*, men or heroes, *ratha*, chariots, *pijā* or *apatya*, offspring. The very means of the sacrifice, the fire, the Soma, the *ghrita*, are supplied by the Gods and they attend the sacrifice as its priests, purifiers, upholders, heroes of its warfare,—for there are those who hate the sacrifice and the Word, attack the sacrificer and tear or withhold from him the coveted wealth. The chief conditions of the prosperity so ardently desired are the rising of the Dawn and the Sun and the downpour of the rain of heaven and of the seven rivers,—physical or mystic,—called in the Veda the Mighty Ones of heaven. But even this prosperity, this fullness of cows, horses, gold, men, chariots, offspring, is not a final end in itself, all this is a means towards the opening up of the other worlds, the winning of Swar, the ascent to the solar heavens, the attainment by the path of the Truth to the Light and to the heavenly Bliss where the mortal arrives at Immortality.

Such is the undoubted substance of the Veda. The ritual and mythological sense which has been given to it from very ancient times is well-known and need not be particularised; in sum, it is the performance of sacrificial worship as the chief duty of man with a view to the enjoyment of wealth here and heaven

hereafter. We know also the modern view of the matter in which the Veda is a worship of the personified sun, moon, stars, dawn, wind, rain, fire, sky, rivers and other deities of Nature, the propitiation of these gods by sacrifice, the winning and holding of wealth in this life, chiefly from human and Dravidian enemies and against hostile demons and mortal plunderers, and after death man's attainment to the Paradise of the gods. We now find, that however valid these ideas may have been for the vulgar, they were not the inner sense of the Veda to the seers, the illumined minds (*kaṛi, cypia*) of the Vedic age. For them these material objects were symbols of the immaterial, the cows were the radiances or illuminations of a divine Dawn, the horses and chariots were symbols of force and movement, gold was light, the shining wealth of a divine Sun—the true light, *itam jyotiḥ*, both the wealth acquired by the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself in all their details symbolised man's effort and his means towards a greater end, the acquisition of immortality. The aspiration of the Vedic seer was the enrichment and expansion of man's being, the birth and the formation of the godheads in his life-sacrifice, the increase of the Force, Truth, Light, Joy of which they are the powers until through the enlarged and ever-opening worlds of his being the soul of man rises, sees the divine doors (*ācān dvārah*) swing open to his call and enters into the supreme felicity of a divine existence beyond heaven and earth. This ascent is the parable of the Angirasa Rishis.

All the gods are conquerors and givers of the Cow, the Horse and the divine riches, but it is especially the great deity Indra who is the hero and fighter in this warfare and who wins for man the Light and the Force. Therefore Indra is constantly addressed as the Master of the herds, *gopati*, he is even imaged as himself the cow and the horse, he is the good milker whom the Rishi wishes to milk and what he yields are perfect forms and ultimate thoughts, he is *Vrishabhā*, the Bull of the herds, his is the wealth of cows and horses which man covets. It is even said in VI 28 5 "O people, these that are the cows, they are Indra, it is Indra I desire with my heart and with my mind." This identification of the cows and Indra is important and we shall have to return to it, when we deal with *Madhuchchhandas'* hymns to that deity.

But ordinarily the Rishis image the acquisition of this wealth as a conquest effected against certain powers, the *Dasyus*, sometimes represented as possessing the coveted riches which have to be ravished from them by violence, sometimes as stealing them from the Aryan who has then to discover and recover the lost wealth by the aid of the gods. The *Dasyus* who withhold or steal the cows are called the *Panis*, a word which seems originally to have meant doers, dealers or traffickers, but this significance is sometimes coloured by its further sense of "misers." Their chief is *Vala*, a demon whose name signifies probably

e circumscriber or "encloser", as Vritra means the opponent, obstructor or folding coverer. It is easy to suggest, as do the scholars who would read as such primitive history as possible into the Veda, that the Panis are the Dardians and Vala is their chief or god. But this sense can only be upheld in isolated passages, in many hymns it is incompatible with the actual words of the Rishis and turns into a jumble of gaudy nonsense: their images and figures. We have seen something of this incompatibility already, it will become clearer to us as we examine more closely the mythus of the lost cows.

Vala dwells in a lair, a hole (*bila*) in the mountains. Indra and the Angirasa Rishis have to pursue him there and force him to give up his wealth, for he is the owner of the cows, *valam gomantam*. The Panis also are represented as concealing the stolen herds in a cave of the mountain which is called their concealing prison, *vavra*, or the pen of the cows, *vaya*, or sometimes in a significant phrase, *gayam ūrvam*, literally the cowey wideness or in the other sense *śrogo* "the luminous wideness", the vast wealth of the shining herds. To recover this lost wealth the sacrifice has to be performed, the Angirasa or else Rikhaspati and the Angirasa have to chant the true word, the *mantra*, Sarama the heavenly hound has to find out the cows in the cave of the Panis, Indra along with the Soma wine and the Angirasa, the seers, his companions, have to follow the track, enter the cave or violently break open the strong places of the hill, defeat the Panis and drive upward the delivered herds.

Let us, first, take note of certain features which ought not to be overlooked when we seek to determine the interpretation of this parable or this myth. In the first place the legend, however precise in its images, is not yet in the Veda simple mythological tradition, but is used with a certain freedom and fluidity which betrays the significant image behind the sacred tradition. Often it is stripped of the mythological aspect and applied to the personal need or aspiration of the singer. For it is an action of which Indra is always capable, although he has done it once for all in the type by means of the Angirasa, yet he repeats the type continually even in the present, he is constantly the seeker of the cows, *gavesana*, and the restorer of the stolen wealth.

Sometimes we have simply the fact of the stolen cows and the recovery by Indra without any reference to Sarama or the Angirasa or the Panis. But it is not always Indra who recovers the herds. We have for instance a hymn to Agni, the second of the fifth Mandala, a hymn of the Atris, in which the singer applies the image of the stolen cows to himself in a language which clearly betrays its symbolism. Agni, long repressed in her womb by mother Earth who is unwilling to give him to the father Heaven, held and concealed in her so long as she is compressed into limited form (*peshu*), at length comes to birth when she becomes great and vast (*mahushī*). The birth of Agni is associated with a mani-



festation or vision of luminous herds "I beheld afar in a field one shaping his weapons who was golden-tusked and pure bright of hue, I give to him the Amrita (the immortal essence, Soma) in separate parts, what shall they do to me who have not Indra and have not the word? I beheld in the field as it were a happy herd ranging continuously, many, shining, they seized them not, for *he* was born, even those (cows) that were old, become young again." But if these Dasyus who have not Indra, nor the word, are at present powerless to seize on the luminous herds, it was otherwise before this bright and formidable godhead was born "Who were they that divorced my strength (*maryakam*, my host of men, my heroes, *vina*) from the cows? for they (my men) had no warrior and protector of the kine. Let those who took them from me, release them, he knows and comes driving to us the cattle."

What we may fairly ask, are these shining herds, these cows who were old and become young again? Certainly, they are not physical herds, nor is it any earthly field by the Yamuna or the Jhelum that is the scene of this splendid vision of the golden-tusked warrior god and the herds of the shining cattle. They are the herds either of the physical or of the divine Dawn and the language suits ill with the former interpretation, this mystical vision is surely a figure of the divine illumination. They are radiances that were stolen by the powers of darkness and are now divinely recovered not by the god of the physical fire, but by the flaming Force which was concealed in the littleness of the material existence and is now liberated into the clarities of an illumined mental action.

Indra is not, then, the only god who can break up the tenebrous cave and restore the lost radiances. There are other deities to whom various hymns make the attribution of this great victory. Usha is one of them, the divine Dawn, mother of these herds "True with the gods who are true, great with the gods who are great, sacrificial godhead with the gods sacrificial, she breaks open the strong places, she gives of the shining herds, the cows low towards the Dawn!" Agni is another, sometimes he wars by himself as we have already seen, sometimes along with Indra—"Ye two warred over the cows, O Indra, O Agni" (II 60 2)—or, again, with Soma,—“O Agni and Soma, that heroic might of yours was made conscient when ye robbed the Pani of the cows” (I. 93. 3). Soma in another passage is associated in this victory with Indra; “This god born by force stayed, with Indra as his comrade, the Pani” and performed all the exploits of the gods warring against the Dasyus (VI. 44. 22). The Ashwins also are credited with the same achievement in VI 62. 1, “Ye two open the doors of the strong pen full of the kine” and again in I 112. 18, “O Angiras, (the twin Ashwins are sometimes unified in a single appellation), ye two take delight by the mind and enter first in the opening of the stream of the cows,” where the sense is evidently the liberated, outflowing stream or sea of the Light.

Brihaspati is more frequently the hero of this victory. "Brihaspati, coming first into birth from the great Light in the supreme ether, seven-mouthed, multiply-born, seven-rayed, dispelled the darknesses; he with his host that possess the *stubbh* and the Rik broke Vala into pieces by his cry. Shouting Brihaspati drove upwards the bright herds that speed the offering and they bowed in reply;" (IV 50) And again in VI 73 1 and 3, "Brihaspati who is the ill-breaker, the first-born, the Angirasa. Brihaspati conquered the treasures *vasūni*, great pens this god won full of the kine" The Maruts also, singers of the Rik like Brihaspati, are associated, though less directly in this divine action "He whom ye foster, O Maruts, shall break open the pen" (VI 68. 8), and elsewhere we hear of the cows of the Maruts (I 38 1.) Pushan, the Increaser, a form of the sun-god is also invoked for the pursuit and recovery of the stolen cattle, (VI 54), "Let Pushan follow after our kine, let him protect our war-steeds Pushan, go thou after the kine, let him drive back to us that which was lost" Even Saraswati becomes a slayer of the Panis. And in Madhuchhandas' hymn (I 11 5) we have this striking image, "O lord of the thunderbolt, thou didst uncover the hole of Vala of the cows, the gods, unfearing, entered speeding (or putting forth their force) into thee."

Is there a definite sense in these variations which will bind them together into a single coherent idea or is it at random that the Rishis invoke now this and now the other deity in the search and war for their lost cattle? If we will consent to take the ideas of the Veda as a whole instead of bewildering ourselves in the play of separate detail, we shall find a very simple and sufficient answer. This matter of the lost herds is only part of a whole system of connected symbols and images. They are recovered by the sacrifice and the fiery god Agni is the flame, the power and the priest of the sacrifice,—by the Word, and Brihaspati is the father of the Word, the Maruts its singers or Brahmas, *brahmāno narutah*, Saraswati its inspiration,—by the Wine, and Soma is the god of the Wine and the Ashwins its seekers, finders, givers, drinkers. The herds are the herds of Light and the Light comes by the Dawn and by the sun of whom Pushan is a form. Finally, Indra is the head of all these gods, lord of the light, king of the luminous heaven called Swar,—he is, we say, the luminous or divine Mind, into him all the gods enter and take part in his unveiling of the hidden light. We see therefore that there is a perfect appropriateness in the attribution of one and the same victory to these different deities and in Madhuchhandas' image of the gods entering into Indra for the stroke against Vala. Nothing has been done at random or in obedience to a confused fluidity of ideas. The Veda is perfect and beautiful in its coherence and its unity.

Moreover, the conquest of the Light is only part of the great action of the Vedic sacrifice. The gods have to win by it all the boons (*viśhvā vārā*) which are

necessary for the conquest of immortality and the emergence of the hidden illuminations is only one of these. Force, the Horse, is as necessary as Light, the Cow, not only must Vala be reached and the light won from his jealous grasp, but Vritra must be slain and the waters released, the emergence of the shining herds means the rising of the Dawn and the Sun, that again is incomplete without the sacrifice, the fire, the wine. All these things are different members of one action, sometimes mentioned separately, sometimes in groups, sometimes together as if in a single action, a grand total conquest. And the result of their possession is the revelation of the vast Truth and the conquest of Swar, the luminous world, called frequently the wide other world, *uim u lokam* or simply *u lokam*. We must grasp this unity first if we are to understand the separate introduction of these symbols in the various passages of the Rig Veda.

Thus in VI 73 which has already been cited, we find a brief hymn of three verses in which these symbols are briefly put together in their unity, it might almost be described as one of the mnemonic hymns of the Veda which serve to keep in mind the unity of its sense and its symbolism. "Ho who is the hill-breaker, first-born, possessed of the truth, Brihaspati, the Angirasa, the giver of the oblation, pervader of the two worlds, dweller in the heat and light of the sun, our father, roars aloud as the Bull to the two firmaments. Brihaspati who for man the voyager has fashioned that other world in the calling of the gods, slaying the Vritra-forces breaks open the cities, conquering foes and overpowering unfriends in his battles. Brihaspati conquers for him the treasures, great pens this god wins full of the kine, seeking the conquest of the world of Swar, unassailable, Brihaspati slays the Foe by the hymns of illumination *arikath*." We see at once the unity of this many-sided symbolism.

Another passage more mystic in its language brings in the idea of the dawn and the restoration or new-birth of light in the sun which are not expressly mentioned in the brief hymn to Brihaspati. It is in the praise of Soma of which the opening phrase has already been cited, VI 44 22, "This god born by force stayed with Indra as his comrade the Pani, he it was wrested from his own unblest father (the divided being) his weapons of war and his forms of knowledge (*māyāh*), he it was made the Dawns glorious in their lord, he it was created in the Sun the Light within, he it was found the triple principle (of immortality) in heaven in its regions of splendour (the three worlds of Swar) and in the tripartite worlds the hidden immortality (this is the giving of the Amrita in separate parts alluded to in the Atris' hymn to Agni, the threefold offering of the Soma given on the three levels, *trishu sānushu*, body, life and mind), he it was supported widely heaven and earth, he it was fashioned the car with the seven rays, he it was held by his force the ripe yield (of the *madhu* or *ghrta*) in the cows, even the fountain of the ten movements." It certainly seems

astonishing to me that so many acute and eager minds should have read such hymns as these without realising that they are the sacred poems of symbolists and mystics, not of Nature-worshipping barbarians or of rude Aryan invaders warring with the civilised and Vedantic Dravidians.

Let us now pass rapidly through certain other passages in which there is a more scattered collocation of these symbols. First, we find that in this image of the cavern-pen, in the hill, as elsewhere, the Cow and Horse go together. We have seen Pushan called upon to seek for the cows and protect the horses. The two forms of the Aryan's wealth always at the mercy of marauders? But let us see "So in the ecstasy of the Soma thou didst break open, O hero (Indra), the pen of the Cow and the Horse, like a city" (VIII 32 5) "Break open for us the thousands of the Cow and the Horse," (VIII 34) "That which thou holdest, O Indra, the cow and the Horse and the imperishable enjoyment, confirm that in the sacrificer and not in the Pani, he who lies in the slumber, doing not the work and seeking not the gods, let him perish by his own impulses; thereafter confirm perpetually (in us) the wealth that must increase", (VIII. 97 2 and 3). In another hymn the Panis are said to withhold the wealth of cows and horses. Always they are powers who receive the coveted wealth but do not use it, preferring to slumber, avoiding the divine action (*vaia*), and they are powers who must perish or be conquered before the wealth can be securely possessed by the sacrificer. And always the Cow and the Horse represent a concealed and imprisoned wealth which has to be uncovered and released by a divine puissance.

With the conquest of the shining herds is also associated the conquest or the birth or illumination of the Dawn and the Sun, but this is a point whose significance we shall have to consider in another chapter. And associated with the Herds, the Dawn and the Sun are the Waters, for the slaying of Vritra with the release of the waters and the defeat of Vaia with the release of the herds are two companion and not unconnected myths. In certain passages even, as in I 32. 4, the slaying of Vritra is represented as the preliminary to the birth of the Sun, the Dawn and Heaven, and in others the opening of the Hill to the flowing of the Waters. For the general connection we may note the following passages. VII 90 4, "The Dawns broke forth perfect in their shining and unhurt, meditating they (the Angrasas) found the wide Light, they who desire opened the wideness of the cows and the waters for them flowed forth from heaven", I 72. 8, "By right thought the seven Mighty Ones of heaven (the seven rivers) knew the truth and knew the doors of bliss; Sarama found the strong wideness of the cows and by that the human creature enjoys," I. 100. 18, of Indra and the Maruts "He with his shining companions won the field, won the Sun, won the waters;" V. 14. 4, of Agni, "Agni, born, shone out slaying the Dasyus, by the

Light the Darkness; he found the cows, the waters and Swar" VI 60 2, of Indra and Agni, "Ye two warred over the cows, the waters, Swar, the dawns that were ravished, O Indra, O Agni, thou untest (to us) the regions, Swar, the brilliant dawns, the waters and the cows," I 32 12, of Indra, "O hero, thou didst conquer the cow, thou didst conquer the Soma, thou didst loose forth to their flowing the seven rivers "

In the last passage we see Soma coupled with the cows among the conquests of Indra. Usually the Soma intoxication is the strength in which Indra conquers the cows, e.g. III 43 7, the Soma "in the intoxication of which thou didst open up the cowpens," II 15 8, "He, hymned by the Angirasas, broke Vala and hurled apart the strong places of the hill, he severed their artificial obstructions, these things Indra did in the intoxication of the Soma." Sometimes, however, the working is reversed and it is the Light that brings the bliss of the Soma wine or they come together as in I 62 5, "Hymned by the Angirasas, O achiever of works, thou didst open the dawns with (or by) the Sun and with (or by) the cows the Soma."

Agni is also, like the Soma, an indispensable element of the sacrifice and therefore we find Agni too included in these formulas of association, as in VII 99 4 "Ye made that wide other world for (as the goal of) the sacrifice, bringing into being the Sun and the Dawn and Agni," and we have the same formula in III 31 with the addition of the Path and in VII. 44 3 with the addition of the cow.

From these examples it will appear how closely the different symbols and parables of the Veda are connected with each other and we shall therefore miss the true road of interpretation if we treat the legend of the Angirasas and the Panis as an isolated mythus which we can interpret at our pleasure without careful regard to its setting in the general thought of the Veda and the light that that general thought casts upon the figured language in which the legend is recounted.

SRI AUROBINDO

## TWO POEMS

### MARVEL-SWAN

BEYOND Dawn's precipice a marvel-swan,  
Wings in infinity spread, gazes on earth;  
Mysteries awake from deep oblivion  
Like stars that shine on the edge of a new birth.

New rhythms are cast in shape and voices high  
Move in tranquillities of fire; the slow  
Murmur of the wind's echoing symphony  
Fade in the cadenced universal flow.

The dark incidents of necessary pain  
Falling like unescapable blows of fate  
Leave but a trace of an ephemeral stain  
On the closed bar of the heart's diamond gate

Now a flame-vision breaks upon the earth  
That led through myriad curves and dents of space;  
After the deluge comes its aftermath,  
A revelation of the apocalypt-face.

## MOTHER INDIA

### BANYAN TREE

My life a single time-poised banyan tree  
Has stood against the assaults of eternity  
Firm-rooted, clutching its rocky bed of earth  
With ardent claws, a branching loneliness,  
It waited on the fringe of mortal birth  
For the bliss of heaven's intimate caress

Through the long distances of thought and dream  
It spied watching for some invisible gleam  
To visit its shadow-grooves, the sun and moon  
Had dwindled into a mist of nothingness  
And the stars fell into a diamond swoon  
On blank horizons of bare desert-space.

Behind it was a fading universe  
Of chequered memories, in its fruitless years  
Brooded the vision of some magic spark  
Whose touch on the keen edge of solitude  
Shall kindle its shadowy bareness still and dark  
To a luminous ecstasy and flowerhood

A leaden void burdened my secret thought  
As the last flicker of hope's glimmering dot  
And tracts where beauty's wings had left a trail  
Faded in a mass of black infinity,  
In the folds of an impenetrable veil  
Creation throbbled like a star in a nebulous sky

But then you came like a white bird of peace  
And from the caverned slumbering centuries  
A mystic Ray awoke, a buried Flame,  
My life stands now a shrine of silent prayer  
Upon the brink of an apocalyptic Name,  
A marvel of light in a transparent air.

NIRODBARAN

## TO THE SAMADHI OF SRI AUROBINDO

WITH a love-laden heart, full of gratitude, I come to you again, and bow down with a rapture of reverence, O shrine of supreme silence!

As simple, as beautiful, as flowery, as green as ever—yours is a sight which soothes and chastens and cools all the fevers and distractions of my mind, purifies the passions and desires of my nature, and gives my life, my knowledge a meaning and a purpose that set my whole being aflame, aquiver with light and happiness, unseen, unfelt before O, what a mighty shower of awakened, life-quickenning place Thou hast poured on me, my invisible-visible, merciful master! I feel as if electrically touched all over and yet all my limbs, all parts of my nature are in perfect harmony and balance Is this the sweet dynamism of the working of the Divine Force? Is this the descending action of Thy subtle grace? I know not, nor do I strain or worry to know, it is enough for me that Thou hast given us this solid, transforming Wine to drink at all hours, in all seasons, this sweetly incensed, prayer-warm, beauty, this opulent, blue-bright, flower-framed, body of Thine, an altar for men's devotion, to gaze at, love and dream upon, and fill the heart of aspiration full, with the purity of a new creation

To me, as to many others, Thou art the highest conceivable peak of peace and power, the stormless, unshakable haven of all way-lost or way-weary pilgrims, the ceaseless shining light-house to those unwearied courageous souls who have dared to choose once again the ancient sunlit path of crowning glory and immortal life O Thou who art the harbinger of the all-perfect, Truth-Conscious Light, the promise of an all-delightful Life, the hope of ages and aeons of earth-aspiration, speak, even whisper to us, howsoever faintly, whether we have kept faith all these years, whether we have now proved ourselves worthy of the final act of Thy Divine Play

Now is the Divine Mother proclaiming the year of Victory is come, the long, arduous, life-and-death struggle is over, the fulfilment of the Great Promise is begun Thy magnificent Body is strewn today with roses, roses

Hushed is my mind, silent the senses, quiet the body, and at peace each element of my being. I do not even desire to know or realise whether this substance which I feel to be 'myself' is one with the expressionless substance of Truth and Eternity that Thou art. Fallen is the whole robe of my old self—I am a being reborn, remade, recreated. In me now flow the free waters of Thy



immortal Existence; through me pass the splendours of Thy sublime transcendences; my whole being, the very cells are alit with the rays of Thy Truth-radiating Sun. Is this the consummation of Thy bounteous, all-changing love?

Let me, then, fully retain these gripping grandeurs now and for ever in every pore of my body-space. Let me also become a small living monument of Immortality like Thyself; a deathless pin point of thy death-manifested light, full of the pissance of changing the atmosphere as well as the atoms of my life.

Now I know that wherever I am, there lives and expands a spark of Thy sacred blue Flame, a piece of Thy sublime Substance, a settled silence of Thy infinite Peace, a radiant limb of Thy limitless Effulgence, a sweet benediction of Thy inexhaustible Love, a little treasure of Thy capacious, almighty Wealth. O, thousandfold glory to Thee, living symbol of our Master and Lord and Love who "willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us," to Thee "our infinite gratitude".

SHREEKRISHNA PRASAD

## MAN, ANGEL, AND GOD

RAINER MARIA RILKE'S POETIC VISION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

(Continued from the January issue)

### III

LITTLE does Rilke say to us about the relation of the Angels to God. "That He throws their whole radiance again back into them" characterises more the Angels than God and does not say more than that the raying out of the Angels into God is not accepted by Him as a means of their dissolution, rather He out of His Will for creation "throws it back into them" So we may attempt to grasp more deeply from the being of God, as Rilke conceived it, the image of the world and the inner world in order to vision their relatedness to the Absolute

"I began with the *things* that have been the true familiar ones of my lonely childhood, and it was already much that I, without foreign help, brought myself to the animals. But then Russia<sup>1</sup> opened herself to me and presented me with the brotherhood and darkness of God in which alone there is communion. So also I *called* Him that time the God who had broken into myself from beyond and I lived long in the antechamber of His name on my knees. . . Now you would hardly hear me calling Him, it is an indescribable discretion between us and where once there was nearness and penetration new farnesses extend, as in the atom which the new science also conceives as a universe in the small. The graspable vanishes, transforms itself, instead of the possession one learns the relatedness and there arises a namelessness which again must begin with God to be perfect and without evasion." God is a namelessness, the ungraspable to which we are related. And now something very essential: "The feeling-experience steps back behind an infinite lust for everything feelable". Not with this or that inner feeling-experience is Rilke concerned, but with the great readiness for everything feelable. And since there is nothing which would not be feelable, would not be transformable into one's own inwardness, this will is "an infinite lust" for all being.

Earth, thou dear one, I will. Oh believe it would not need  
your springs any more, to win me to you—*one*,

<sup>1</sup> Russia long before Communism, Russia of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (Author).

alas, already a single one is too much for the blood.  
Namelessly I am decided to you from afar  
Always you were right, and your holy idea  
is the intimate death

An all-including readiness which does not give to the single experience an over-emphasised significance but understands it as a part of one's own life-movement spreading out and deepening ever more carries in itself the true will for transformation. God shall not be in man the short moment of an inmost feeling-sensation, but become wholly the all-penetrating basic feeling of his existence. The active consciousness of an immediate relation to one's own soul man shall never leave. So it is necessary to set to work in order not to exclude from the "lust" anything feelable, and to leave nothing unaccomplished behind. It is essential that there should be pure glorious feeling-experiences, as they, if they come out of the inwardness of the soul, show always the true way. But that they one day may become the basis of every further deepening and perfecting of feeling, it is necessary to accept into one's self everything without exception more and more true and pure and to place it into the inmost depth of feeling which is possible to experience, until it can be felt as one's own. It is necessary, in one word, not only to prepare man for a feeling-experience of God, but to make him so inward that some day out of this experience may grow a permanent state. With this, God becomes something that has to be created in the life of man, worked out and figured from within. Each endeavour to make the "visible" "invisible" helps, "bee"-like, the growth of this God who will "carry in himself everything that is effective and essential around us, because he will be the greatest space, full of all power. This only one will attain, but all creators are ancestors of this solitary one. There will be nothing except Him, because trees and mountains, clouds and waves have only been symbols of that reality which He finds in himself. In Him everything has flown together and all powers which otherwise fight each other in a confused manner are trembling under His will. Even the ground under His feet is superfluous. Like a prayer-carpet He rolls it up. He does not pray any more. He is. And when He makes a gesture, He will create, fling into infinity many millions of worlds. In them the same play starts, maturer beings will create themselves and then grow solitary and after a long battle educate at last one who has everything in himself, a creator of this kind of eternity, a very great One in space, One with plastic gestures. Thus each generation tendrils like a chain from God to God and each God is the whole past of a world, its last meaning, its unified expression and at the same time the possibility of a new life." Thus we are then "workmen":

squires, disciples, masters  
 and build you, you high nave  
 and sometimes comes a serious traveller,  
 goes like a splendour through our hundred spirits  
 and shows us, trembling, a new grip

It is not possible here to enter into this grand vision—the realisation of the “No-longer-sayable” on earth. The truth of its core will be proved some day. Its expression points to the height of the level of consciousness from which Rilke has received this inspiration. That God “began Himself so infinitely great on that day” when He began us, who shall be a “garment” to Him, that He now ‘ripens’ and we “may will” Him, that He is only grasped “by action”, yes, that at the bottom every action is only a prayer, for

thus our hands are dedicated,  
 that they may create nothing which would not implore,  
 whether one paints or mows,  
 merely out of the wrestle of the instruments  
 unfolds devotedness—

all this is a magnificent vision whose recognition is not new in the East, and it is absurd to try to understand it in this way that God would have been for Rilke just a son of man, as he presupposes Him in all his annunciations as the “infinite way”, “the direction of love”, the “No-longer-sayable”. But it may very well be confusing and appear as if there were talk about two Gods: one who has been since eternity and the other whom we yet have to build. In truth, He who has already eternally been wants to be built by us, by each single one, so that one day we may with our whole being have dwelling in Him. So each one will work at *his* God independently of all others.

For to each a different God will appear,  
 till they recognise, near to weeping,  
 that through their miles-far opinions,  
 through their perceivings and negations,  
 different only in a hundred of His own,  
*one* God moves like a wave

God will realise Himself in us. That is the mystery of creation, that is its meaning. And on this realisation of God in us we must work without interruption. Then comes “back all deep and inward Here, which the Church has appropriated to a Beyond: all Angels, praising, decide themselves for the earth.”

“The separatedness, the final beyondness of God has astonished and

disturbed me since I was a child” “Why should those go on pilgrimage, who never left Him?” God is to Rilke the deep subjective which, as it were, begins in the darkness of the unconscious, increases itself—beyond things, animals and men as beings who have become inward, in the “world-inner-space” which slowly widens itself—into the glorious light of His own Angels, and behind which he becomes the “nameless direction of love”, the Infinity into which our “heart-rays” run out ‘parallel’. There is nothing excluded from this most inward unity. Even terror, madness and death are included in this All of Divine Being. ‘To prove the identity of terror and delight—these two faces of the same divine head, yes, this one *single* face, which only presents itself in one way or the other according to the distance out of which, or the condition in which, we perceive it” such was Rilke’s most urgent concern. And we know how right he was, know it from the great ancient tradition of the seers and sages who recognised the Divine in all existence and an existence in the Divine. By a living expression of the overcoming of earthly contradictions, God measures His realisation in man. It does not satisfy Him to continue in a final highest unity beyond the contradictions—beyond good and evil, truth and error, life and death, personality and impersonality. It is His will fulfilling itself as cosmic evolution, to lead creation towards ever greater harmonies. Therefore His demand on man, therefore our task

To partucipate is not presumption,  
 in the indescribable fulfilment,  
 ever more inward becomes the interwovenness,  
 being borne along will not suffice

Stretch your practused powers till they span  
 the gap between two contradictions  
 for the God must find  
 counsel in the man

Still, in the Angels, even if this does not find expression by Rilke, remain last seemingly insurmountable contradictions. But beyond these glorious beings—

Rose, O pure contradiction, delight  
 to be no-one’s sleep under so many  
 lids

Beyond the Angels blooms the Divine Rose, the Bliss of “pure” resolved contradiction, under the budding lids of its revealed petals, sleeps beyond all infinity and eternity a nameless “No-one”

(Concluded)

JOBST MUHLING

Adapted from H. E. Holthusen’s translation

## SCIENTIFIC QUESTIONS

### I

*Is the principle of conservation of energy universally accepted in physical science?*

This principle now admits of energy becoming mass and mass becoming energy, for matter and energy are considered interconvertible—or, rather, energy is regarded as the basic reality and matter as a special form of it. The conservation of this basic reality used to be universally accepted up to the first quarter of this century. It is worked into Einstein's relativity theory. But recent scientific developments have shaken the certitude of scientists about it, though many still refer to it with great respect. The change began with quantum physics. There we are faced with a few situations that make us wonder whether the principle actually holds.

Two charged moving particles within the atom are pictured as interacting because they undergo a change in their states of motion. The interaction is as follows. Charged particle *a* emits a photon at *P*, which charged particle *b* absorbs at *Q*, or *vice versa*, and thus both *a* and *b* go off in different states of motion. On this interaction G. Feldman remarks in *Science News* 35 "It is important to realize that the photon emitted is a 'virtual' photon. This means that a charged particle (e.g. an electron) moving freely cannot emit (or absorb) a photon without violating the firmly established laws of conservation of energy and momentum. Accordingly, this process of a single electron emitting a photon is unobservable and we call the photon virtual."

The point arises. What sort of existence has the virtual photon? The virtual photon is absolutely necessary if the interaction of two charged moving particles is to be understood in terms of light quanta or the smallest units of radiation instead of in terms of the electromagnetic field in which radiation is a wavelike movement. So we have to choose between an intelligible quantum theory of interaction and the principle of conservation of energy.

An argument in favour of the principle is that the photon is unobservable and therefore should not be admitted in science and we should wait for some other explanation. But the trouble is that the present explanation is integrally bound up with the whole quantum theory which it would be most unscientific to drop.

A further argument in favour of the virtual photon is that, as Feldman notes, the uncertainty principle of Heisenberg allows the law of conservation of energy to be violated by an amount  $\delta E$  provided it is "paid back" in a time  $\delta T$  where the product  $\delta E \delta T$  is of the order of  $h$  (Planck's Constant). So, independently of the situation we are discussing, we may take it that the law of conservation of energy can be temporarily suspended. The existence of the virtual photon has to be adjusted with this possible temporary suspension: the virtual photon exists for only a very minute fraction of time and the energy that came out of nothing, as it were, passes into nothing after that fraction and the unincreased and undiminished condition of energy in the world is resumed. But the fact stands that the conservation-principle is violable in theory according to Heisenberg and the virtual photon demands our conceiving of the violation in actuality. To call the photon virtual is only to pay lip-service to a law highly respected in the past.

Quite the opposite is the situation where the particle called neutrino is concerned. J. B. Conant writes in *Modern Science and Modern Man* (pp 42-43): "We have now to consider the willingness of physicists to postulate the existence of a particle, the neutrino, for the sole purpose of balancing the mass-energy accounts, on the two sides of the ledger in certain transformations in nuclear physics. To date, as far as I am aware, there is no experimental evidence for the existence of this particle, nor does it seem likely, I am told, that experimental tests can be devised to establish or disprove its existence. We have the choice of assuming that in certain experiments the conservation of mass and energy fails or that a neutrino is liberated. It is certainly far more convenient to choose the second alternative, the number of instances when this neutrino has to be postulated are few, and everywhere else the mass-energy relations hold within the accuracy of measurement."

The words "everywhere else" are not correct, but it is true that in micro-physics the cases where the conservation-principle can be thought of as violated are few. The cases, of course, differ in importance. Not to assume a neutrino will contradict only the conservation-principle, whose contradiction is already permitted by the Heisenberg-rule. Not to assume a virtual photon will keep the conservation-principle but contradict much of the essence of quantum physics. Under these circumstances, it is the neutrino and not the photon, that should be called virtual.

Even apart from the small latitude afforded by Heisenberg, a violation of the conservation-principle on a large scale is involved in the recent theory of "continuous creation" in internebular space. It is one of the most revolutionary theories in present-day astrophysics and has met with strong opposition, but it is not held by mere cranks or tyros: it has the backing of eminent men like

Bondi, Gold, Hoyle and the Astronomer-Royal H. Spencer Jones. It posits, for various reasons, that new matter constantly appears out of nothing and makes up for the amount that disappears from our ken owing to the expansion of the universe which cosmological observation of many kinds leads us to suppose. R A Kapp urges that a sudden and unaccountable total destruction of matter takes place also. This aspect of the question has not been given great importance, but perhaps it is the logical complement of the other. In any case, a wide-spread and repeated contradiction of the conservation-law is considered perfectly possible and even necessary. Nor can it be said that the theory of continuous creation is out of tune with relativity theory. Hoyle has brought it into line with the relativity equations, though by a reformulation of them which is more complicated than Einstein's scheme because, unlike that scheme, it abandons conservation of energy. But the complication is no argument against Hoyle. So it is really not relativity theory as such that can be said to accept conservation—what accepts it is the strictly Einsteinian structure of the theory.

What, we may ask, is the philosophical significance of abandoning the conservation-principle? We have physical events which have no physical cause. How shall we interpret this situation? We have either to accept causeless physical events or postulate a non-physical cause of them—an effect in the physical universe by agencies from beyond it.

Kapp's version of continuous creation may be taken to save the conservation-principle on the whole, for the energy that originates may be balanced by the energy that terminates when matter is regarded as disappearing. It is a "paying back" as in the Heisenberg formula, but on a grand scale and within large spans of time. Kapp's version, however, does not do away with causelessness—it only augments it by making it a two-way affair and renders the hypothesis of non-physical agencies from beyond the physical cosmos all the more plausible.

K. D. SETHNA



## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The History and Culture of the Indian People.** Prepared under the direction of Dr K M Munshi, President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay  
General Editor Dr R C Majumdar

Volume One The Vedic Age (Upto 600 B C )

Volume Two The Age of Imperial Unity (600 B C to 320 A D )

Volume Three The Classical Age (750 A D to 1000 A D )

Volume Four The Age of Imperial Kanauj (1000 A D to 1300 A D.)

“THIS is the first history of India, written exclusively by her own people. ” That is how the publishers introduce this new and latest series on the history and culture of the Indian people. The series has been planned under the direction of Dr K M Munshi, President of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and enthusiastic exponent of Indian culture. “For many years,” says Dr Munshi in his Foreword to the first volume of the series, “I was planning an elaborate history of India, in order not only that India’s past might be described by her sons, but also that the world might catch a glimpse of her soul as Indians see it. ” The result has been this ten-volume series covering the entire period of India’s history from the remotest antiquity to the present day. The first four volumes relating to most of the pre-Muhammedan era are already out. It has been promised that the subsequent volumes will follow at an interval of six months. A team of over sixty scholars of repute, all of them Indians, have been entrusted with this colossal task, under the general editorship of Dr R C Majumdar, the veteran Indologist and author. This is one amongst the first fruits of Indian Independence, a choice offering on the altar of Mother India.

The task is not easy, and the authors are fully aware of the fact. There are difficulties of chronology, view-points differ, all the source material is not easily accessible. There is the havoc wrought by two centuries of foreign dominion, that has distorted the view of Indian history. And there is the difficulty of maintaining the sense of continuity in a work of this composite nature, a problem that has been sought to be minimised by a running commentary in the shape of a Foreword to each volume by the President himself. The Editor complains of an inherent defect in the history of India, the old European complaint of a lack of vitality and interest in the main figures of political action. But perhaps the main

difficulty which any historian of India has to face is to give his story a living form and a meaning. It would be idle to pretend that all the difficulties have been overcome and that we have a perfect presentation. It is enough that an attempt has been made to give us the best possible under the circumstances. We are grateful that the attempt has been made.

We have here collected in readable form most of the raw material that constitutes our past history. Nowhere else do we hope to find such a comprehensive collection. We get the political history in some detail, a political history that has had to be pieced out with infinite pain out of stray bits of information culled from copper grant and stone inscription, from rare coin and fragile manuscript, — a task which no historian would easily undertake. One may point out that political history occupies too much space and also perhaps that the South has not received its full quota. But political history is a necessary skeleton and the question of North and South is a sectarian question. In any case we must be glad that most of the information on political history that is available to the specialist in the pages of learned journals and monographs has been brought together and a clear picture given of the main trends. In each volume there are chapters that deal with language and literature, religion and philosophy, political theory and organization, art, society, economic conditions, law and education. Some of these chapters, especially those dealing with literature, religion and philosophy are fairly full, although one would wish for fuller treatment, and perhaps a more human approach with citations and life-stories that would make the presentation more attractive. And finally, each volume contains a fairly full account of the contacts of India with the outside world and her cultural expansion beyond the seas. This is sumptuous fare, and the impression is encyclopedic. Each volume gives within a few hundred pages material that needs the study of a dozen monographs. For the student who wishes to pursue his studies, there is a copious bibliography added to each volume. Chronological tables and genealogy, some maps and photographs and an index complete the picture. The get up and the print are excellent.

Naturally, there are deficiencies. A glaring one is that the Vedic Age suffers in the hands of Indian scholars as it has hitherto done in Europe. Indian scholars continue to follow St. Petersburg and Sayana, and castles are still being made on sand. The Secret of the Veda remains a secret. Nor can it be said that the Upanishads receive the attention they deserve. Perhaps there is the excuse that Sri Aurobindo's commentaries have not yet been read. Still, a history which will be taken by many as their text might at least enter a caveat and leave the question of Vedic interpretation open, for that affects the very foundations of Indian culture. Further, the reader is entitled to ask: What exactly is the import of all this age-long effort of India? What has she been trying to express

throughout her long career? Has she a mission for the world? In any case, one would like to feel a better man after reading about her past

Writing for the *Bandemataram* on the "Beginnings of History Again", Sri Aurobindo had said, 'A nation politically dead has no history. If our history is to be made up of the achievements of our own people, if Indian history is to have a real meaning, then we must again bring about the conditions under which alone higher activities are possible. If Indian history is to cease to be a tale of plague and poverty, of famine and malaria, of suffering and death helplessly and pitifully borne, if it is not to refer to only the capricious laws and measures of a handful of foreign rulers, if it is not to talk of mere oppression and repression, if it is not to depict our sorrow, degradation, misery, humiliation and shame, if it is not to chronicle the partition of a province carried out in utter defiance of the wishes of the people, if it is not to sing the paeans of foreign administrators and rulers, but to deal with the intellectual and physical feats of the children of the soil, to recount their spiritual progress, their activities for the advancement of humanity, then it must once more be the history of a free nation.'<sup>1</sup>

This was half a century ago. We shall hope the authors of this series will tell the world that the *Bandemataram* once existed, and what it taught, and that the history of a free nation began earlier than in 1918

A CHATTERJEE

<sup>1</sup> Bandemataram, Weekly Edition, September 15, 1907

## SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, DELHI BRANCH

### The Great Thing That The Mother Told Me

(From "*Basant*", Spring—1956)

THROUGH the pages of the 'Basant', I wish to share with my colleagues and other friends the greatest joy of my life that came to me recently. The house built on the Mehrauli Road in the year 1939-40 has stood there too conspicuously to have escaped the notice of anybody who has happened to go towards the Qutab Minar. My colleagues and friends have also known that the same had been offered to the Mother and named "Sri Aurobindo Niketan".

Lately I had turned to the premises with a keen desire to develop them. Hence on 15th August, 1955—Sri Aurobindo's Birthday—I commenced work on a number of small projects including the compound wall, an electrically operated automatic tube-well, sanitary and water installations, sewage lines, and a septic tank for 100 persons, all of which have been happily completed. Electricity and power for the premises were obtained and the land round about has been turned into a number of grassy lawns and beautiful flowerbeds as well as playfields. This quick growth astonished me and my heart was filled with hope. Many more ideas of further development occurred to me and I reached the Ashram last December with a head and heart full of ideas and hopes.

I obtained an interview with the Mother and sought to present to Her how things had progressed at the Niketan House, and asked for a constitution for the Sri Aurobindo Niketan to regulate its further growth. The Mother answered me graciously, "There is no need for a special constitution; it will be 'Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch' and it will be a part of the Ashram here".

I can hardly describe the state of my mind when I heard these words. And further when She agreed to have a Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo here too (a monument with relics), you can well imagine my happiness and wonder. She also agreed to our developing an educational institution and then, after deep consideration, fixed 12th February, 1956 as the day of inauguration of the Delhi Branch. This is the good news I bring to you.

This will not be merely a centre as many others, working under the inspiration of the Ashram, but a part, a limb of the Ashram at Pondicherry, under the

Mother's direct contact and guidance and Presence Obviously, the decision to open a direct branch of the great and unique Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, was a new departure in the history of the spiritual work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

I returned from the interview with a joy altogether overwhelming What a fulfilment for me! What an opportunity for Delhi and North India as a whole! I was happy beyond measure A branch of Sri Aurobindo Ashram means a substantial extension of the atmosphere and the power of the Ashram of Pondicherry That amounts to making the influence of the Ashram physically available in Delhi What a privilege!

I have been full of these thoughts and feelings ever since that interview with the Mother And I can have nothing better to share with my colleagues and friends, and I do this on the auspicious occasion of Basant, the happiest season of the year

May we all, ever more widely and deeply, open ourselves to the influence and the power that has become available to us in and through this Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and seek more confidently the true joy and fulfilment of life

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR

# *Students' Section*

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## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

*(To the Children of the Ashram)*

Q *Are not dogs more faithful than men?*

Yes, for it is their nature to be faithful and they have not man's mental complications. What prevents men from becoming faithful is the complexes of their mind. Most men are not faithful because they are afraid of being dupes, afraid of being cheated, exploited. Also behind the faithfulness they have there is always a large dose of egoism hidden, there is a bargaining more or less conscious, a give and take. 'I am faithful to you. You too must be faithful to me, in other words, you must be nice to me, must not exploit me etc.' Dogs do not have these complexities, for they have a very rudimentary mind. They have not this marvellous capacity of reasoning which drives man to commit such foolishness. But, of course, we cannot go back to the dog state. What we have to do is to rise higher, to become a super-man, to have the dog's quality on a higher level, if I am allowed to say so, i.e. instead of being faithful instinctively, blindly, half-consciously, through a kind of binding need, it must be a conscious, willing, deliberate faithfulness, above all, free from egoism. There is a point where all the virtues meet: it is the point that is beyond egoism. If we take faithfulness or devotion or love or the will to serve,—all these when they are above the level of egoism are similar to one another in the sense that they give themselves and ask no return. And if you get up a step higher, you see they

are done not through the sense of duty or abnegation but out of an intense joy that carries its own reward, which needs nothing in exchange, for it is joy itself. But for that you should have risen very high where there is no longer any turn-back on oneself, these movements that draw you down—that kind of sympathy for oneself, the self-pity that one feels for oneself and says “Poor me!” This is a most degrading sentiment and it pulls you immediately into a dark hole

You must leave that far behind if you will have the joy of faithfulness, the joy of self-giving, that does not notice at all whether it is properly received or not, whether there is an answer or not. Never to wait for a return in exchange for what one does, wait for nothing, not through asceticism or the sense of sacrifice, but because of the joy of being in that consciousness that is sufficient, that is much more than what one can receive from anything outside.

23-6-1954

# MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

## ILLNESS—ITS PREVENTION AND CURE

29-3-1934—20-9-1934.

SELF: What is the true inner character of the illness that has overcome me?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an attack on the body with probably something in the vital accepting it and allowing it to increase.

SELF: I am going through a state in which the illness seems to have stopped all aspiration, all concentration. Is such a state inevitable?

SRI AUROBINDO: It need not come if one is able to detach oneself from the body and the sense of illness.

SELF: Would detaching myself be of any help to the illness itself?

SRI AUROBINDO: By detaching yourself you must make it easier for the Mother's Force to work on the body—that is the object.

SELF: Why does this illness keep recurring?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose your vital physical has opened to the attack and does not make any reaction to shake it off.

SELF: Yes, that is correct. What should be done?

SRI AUROBINDO: Reject the movement of the vital physical and affirm the principle of health. The vital desires to be ill—throw out the desire.

SELF: How has the vital physical become like this. Formerly it did not want the illness.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was the mind that did not want it; this vital when left to itself often wants illness, it finds it dramatic, thinks it makes it interesting to others, likes to indulge the *tamas*, etc., etc.



SELF: Should I rest on account of my rheumatism?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is no use stopping work because of rheumatism (unless it is of the kind that disables one from working),—it only makes things worse

SELF: Does the Mother want me to consult the doctor?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you consult the doctor he will probably give you salicylate which will cure the pain but tends to spoil the stomach—if you *can* shake it off by the Force, that is the best

SELF: The pains appear to be moving from part to part

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what they do at first, when one drives them out of one place, they go to another. It is better than their fixing in any place.

SELF: I have been training the vital and now I am not conscious of its response to the illness. Still, the pains have come

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the physical then that responds. You must put into the physical a will not to respond

SELF: I have not been sleeping sufficiently. Now a cold seems about to come. And the rheumatism also has returned. Do the adverse forces throw these attacks directly on the physical?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. If you don't sleep enough the physical system becomes more open to these attacks. If it is kept in good condition, then usually it repels them automatically and one does not notice even that there has been an attack

SELF: How can one repel an attack if one does not even notice it?

SRI AUROBINDO: I said that when the body is in good condition it automatically repels any attack of illness which is in the air without the mind even having to notice that there is an attack. If the attack is automatically repelled what is the need of dealing with it?

SELF: My pains seem to be steadily there and my consciousness is not able to deal with them.

SRI AUROBINDO: D. says it is sciatica you have—that is a little difficult to get rid of and sometimes long, unless you can use the Yogic method to send it off.

SELF: What is the Yogic method?

SRI AUROBINDO. To separate yourself from the thing and call in the Mother's Force to cure it—or else to use your will force with faith in the power to heal, having the support of the Mother's Force behind you. If you cannot use either of these methods then you must rely on the action of the medicines.

SELF I think my consciousness is separate from the vital movements, and yet it suffers.

SRI AUROBINDO If it is separate it should not suffer from them. Even for the pains, the body may suffer but the consciousness should not feel itself suffering or overpowered.

SELF. If my pains are nervous, surely they can be thrown out by an act of will on my part?

SRI AUROBINDO Sciatica is something more than nervous—it affects the movement of the muscles through the nerves. It can be got rid of at once, however, if you can manage to direct the Force on it.

SELF After the evening meditation all the pains vanished. Does this mean that the being allowed the Mother's working freely?

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

SELF In spite of complete relief yesterday evening, I have got the pain again after last night's sleep.

SRI AUROBINDO You had opened your consciousness, so the pain disappeared. If it came back during the sleep, it must have been because you lost touch and fell back into the ordinary consciousness. That often happens.

SELF. I have given up medicines. I suppose you will sanction this. Medicines seem to be permitted only because there is some lack in one's faith in the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, if the faith and opening are there, the medicines are not indispensable.

SELF: This afternoon, as soon as I started working, a recent cold that had completely gone reappeared in a very strong form. Immediately after the work it vanished!

SRI AUROBINDO: An attack—not a real cold.

SELF: Yesterday, after writing to you about the disappearance of sciatica, it suddenly came again, though only in one side of the body.

SRI AUROBINDO: These things always try to come back until the body is so responsive to the Force that it at once rejects them.

It often happens that one side is (temporarily) more receptive to disturbance than the other—or less receptive to the Force.

NAGIN DOSHI

## WHEN EVENING FADES

When evening fades  
On the sky-rim  
Like a golden laugh  
From lips of dream

And secret, slow,  
The darkness steals  
Over the heart  
Of voiceless hills,

I sit alone  
By the desolate sea  
Where long waves march  
Unwearily,

And sense and feel  
The lone night throng  
With a hush that makes  
The soul of my song.

DHANANJAY

## I

# THE FOUR AGES OF INDIA'S CULTURAL CYCLE

## II VEDIC MYSTICISM AND THE MYSTICISMS OF OTHER NATIONS

"EARTH life is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of a being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, but includes in it also the manifold diversity of a self-achieving spirit. There is an all-seeing purpose in the terrestrial creation: a divine plan is working itself through its contradictions and perplexities which are a sign of the many-sided achievement towards which are being led the soul's growth and the endeavour of Nature"

Thus wrote Sri Aurobindo about forty years ago in the 'Arya' under the title "The Life Divine". It was the time of the first world war and, in the then circumstances of life, no signs either of the all-seeing purpose and plan of the divine could in the least be seen by the best of thinkers, nor could the signs of the evolutionary unfolding of a being that reveals a supreme light and power and joy and a oneness and includes in it the manifold diversity of a self-achieving spirit be recognised anywhere by the best of believers in a higher life for humanity. Let alone the spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, even the human ideas and ideals of unity, brotherhood, freedom and equality, which are really characteristics of the godhead in man, were not to be found anywhere in their pure action, free from human ignorance and egoism. They had found no place with any dynamic capacity either in the inner being of even the best of men or in the external conditions of human life and society. All these are at last found, it seems, in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who actually create new forms of human life with spiritual realisation as the basis, and are not content with having shining ideals only which break down at the first touch of actuality. We see that their ideals regarding a united world expressing truth and harmony, unity and mutuality are also on their way to realisation. We see before us the manifold nations of the earth with all their diversities trying to march towards human unity through the instrumentality of a U N O. and the good services of India. Everywhere, a great number of statesmen, thinkers, and even masses of men are loudly calling for such a unity with diversity, which fulfils the characteristics of freedom, brotherhood and equality

in human life. Perhaps the hour has come for man to conceive of the spiritual light and power, promoting oneness among mankind. The question is, is there really a divine plan working itself through all these contradictions and perplexities of earthly happenings that we have been seeing, not only during these forty years, from the time of Sri Aurobindo's statement of it, but also through the whole period of the cycle of civilisation?

It is in answer to this question, that these articles are being written as a history of India's culture through its four ages which may well be the historical pattern of the whole humanity through its different civilisations. The data available for this history will be what all the sciences, physical, vital, mental and spiritual may provide to us. As regards what happened in the evolutionary unfolding of man's life during these forty years, from the time of Sri Aurobindo's statement, the data available to us to know the facts will be his own writings and the Mother's writings. These also will have to be considered later on in the course of these articles.

In arriving at a true estimate of the evolution of human life through the prehistoric period of many millenniums, data has been made available to us by the archaeological findings, the Sciences of Geology, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Comparative Philology, Comparative Mythology, Comparative Religion, etc.. All these Sciences have helped thinkers in their attempt to build up a theory of evolutionary unfolding of plant, animal and human life on earth, in a way that may harmonise all the different ideas and the truths arrived at by each of these Sciences. Most of these Sciences have been observational, based on the physical senses, and some of them, specially the last three, have been conjectural up to now. But the words "Science" and "Scientific" can be applied not only to any system of thought and knowledge that is developed through observation by the physical senses, but also to any other system of thought and knowledge that is developed through the concepts of Reason or by means of spiritual experience, provided that ultimately in its results on physical life it is verifiable by the physical senses. Since we are considering here the process of evolutionary unfolding of life only through the present receding cycle of human civilisation and not through the whole period of earth's existence, only what is required for this purpose with regard to these theories will be taken up for consideration. Now there is one school of thought that says that the evolution of human civilisation and culture moves in a straight line, and there is another school which says that it moves in a psychological cycle, and a third that it does so in a spiritual cycle. So of these three schools of thought, the findings of that school must be upheld as true which stand up to verification. It may be that any of these schools may base its conclusions either on the physical sense-observational Sciences or on the

intellectual sense-observational Sciences or on the spiritual sense-observational Sciences, or on all the three Sciences together, that should make no difference in accepting a theory as true

Now as to the conclusions of the cyclic theory of the present receding civilisation, much more than all the sciences mentioned above, it is the clues given by Sri Aurobindo to the Science of Comparative Mysticism or Mysteries that have helped the formulation of the theory of spiritual cycle. These clues were found by him from his own spiritual experience and it is his study of the Vedic and Vedantic mysticisms in their light that made perfectly intelligible the progressive development of the earliest religions and philosophical thought of this earlier cycle into the later religions and philosophical thought, not only of India but also of Greece. Sri Aurobindo has written something about this subject in 'The Human cycle' and 'The Ideal of Human Unity', though the first book deals with the cycle of human civilisation, it is not a history of it, it is a tracing of the psychological development of the collective man, based on principles of psychology, through all the four ages. Yet only forty pages have been devoted to the psychological development of the collective man through the first three ages and about two hundred and sixty pages have been devoted to developing the idea of the evolutionary unfolding of the collective man's inner being during the 1st age of this cycle, and to the way of its entering through a transition period by successive stages of subjectivism into a new cycle with spiritual life as the aim of the collective man. The second book deals firstly with the idea of the development of human unity through bigger and bigger human aggregates beginning from the individual, the family, the clan, the tribe, the city-stage, the regional kingdom, the empire and a possible world federation, secondly with the idea of how a living psychological unity was brought in the formation of nations as they are at present, by geographical conditions, common culture, and political unity and lastly how a process of living and free unity of all individuals and nations of the world can be achieved first through an intellectual religion of humanity and finally through a spiritual religion of humanity. Yet this also has not been written with the idea of writing a regular history of the cycle of human civilisation. Both these books give us an immense psychological and physical data in writing such a history. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their writings and talks have thrown out ideas here, there and everywhere which may serve as seeds of thought and vision on which thinkers can concentrate their minds for discovering new truths, not only on this subject but on many other subjects. Perhaps it may be possible for one interested in the spiritual view of things to collect all their seed-ideas on each subject and then develop them into a theory of that subject other than the one current at present.

Now, let us see how the Science of Comparative Mysticism, as can be developed from Sri Aurobindo's writings may help us to vindicate the cyclic theory. Sri Aurobindo has dealt in greater detail with the Indian Mysteries and to some extent with the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, the Mysteries of the Egyptian and Chaldean priests, and the Persian Magi. There are other mysticisms too of ancient nations like those of China, Japan, of the Hebrews, of the Celts, of the Teutons and of the Romans, etc. From all these ancient Mysteries, great mythologies and great religions developed and lived for a long time on the face of the earth. Though most of them along with their civilisations have not survived, the results of all their life and culture have been inherited by mankind and some to the building up of the younger civilisations that succeeded the earlier ones. There are also other Mysteries of uncivilised ancient nations or tribes which may have developed beyond the primitive exterior religions, all over the earth and which have not been able to evolve into a mental or civilised life, or to influence the cultures of other civilised nations. Most of these uncivilised mysteries along with their tribes have either disappeared or merged with other civilisations and the same fate will overtake those that are still left.

Sri Aurobindo says that in the beginning of the present cycle of civilisation "there was almost everywhere, (all over the earth), an age of the Mysteries, men of a deeper knowledge and self-knowledge established their practices, significant rites, symbols, secret lore within or on the border of the more primitive exterior religions. This took different forms in different countries, in Greece were the Orphic and the Eleusinian Mysteries, in Egypt and Chaldea the priests and their occult lore and magic, in Persia the Magi, in India the Rishis." At another place, he says, "there has been going forward along with the mental evolution of man, the early process of another evolution which prepares the spiritual and supramental being. Again this latter has had two lines, one the discovery of the occult forces secret in Nature and the other, the discovery of man's spiritual self and soul. Atlantis took the first line and India the second line through the mystics or the Rishis of the Vedic age, its form was intuition on the spiritual plane, which can be attributed to a rapid emergence of essential gains brought down from a previous cycle." From these quotations it cannot be said definitely whether the two civilisations of the Atlantis Occultists and of the Indian Mystics began at the same time or at different times. About the Atlantis civilisation, he says at another place. "According to the dim traditions and memories of the world the civilisation of the old Atlantis was that of an Asura, using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal, and when its greatness and its wickedness became too heavy a load for the earth to bear, it submerged beneath the ocean and our own legends of Asuras represent a similar consciousness of a



great but abortive development in humanity” This tradition of Atlantis came through Egypt to Greece, and Plato has written about it There is also another book, “Atlantis Rising”, written by Daphne Vigers, a British woman who says she got a knowledge of it by the projection of her inner consciousness into the past and its actual condition of existence From a reading of it one finds that it is not a piece of laboured intellectual writing, a knowledge acquired by the method of Reason or an objective view of life, evidently it is a book written from some psychological experience Then again Will Durant in ‘The Story of Civilisation’ says Scythemann, a resurrector of Troy, believed that Atlantis had served as a mediating link between the cultures of Europe and Yucatan, and that Egyptian civilisation has been brought from Atlantis Perhaps America itself was Atlantis and some pre-Maya culture may have been in touch with Africa and Europe in neolithic times Possibly every discovery is a rediscovery’

From the traditions of Egypt, one sees that the age of the Mysteries in that country began with a Mystic by name Hermes in about 18000 B C The civilisation built on these mysteries was kept in continuity by the priests of Egypt and lasted till about the beginning of the Christian era The civilisations of Sumeria, Crete, Babylonia and Assyria have all arisen after the Egyptian civilisation and seem to belong to the same class of mysteries It is significant to note what Sri Aurobindo says about this class of Mysteries ‘Religion, ethics, and occult mysticism in ancient times which had no *spiritual experience* produced the priest and the mage, the man of piety, the just man, the man of wisdom, many high points of mental manhood All that the mental human being could reach was a familiarity with the idea of things beyond him, with the possibility of other-worldly movement, with the ideal of some ethical perfection, he may have made too some contact with greater Powers or Realities, which help his mind or heart or life But it is only *after spiritual experience* through the heart and mind began that we see arise the Saint, the Prophet, the Rishi, the Yogi, the Seer, the spiritual sage and the mystic, and it is the religions in which these types of spiritual manhood came into existence that have endured, covered the globe and given mankind all its spiritual aspiration and culture”. It is evident from the above quotation that Sri Aurobindo makes a distinction between spiritual mysticisms and non-spiritual mysticisms In another place he has said that the solemn and occult religions of the Egypto-Chaldean civilisations are more sumptuous and materialistic In comparison to these civilisations, he says, ‘the Celtic, Teutonic, Greek and Indian cultures which are supposed to have arisen from the Aryan culture, have a certain pure and high simplicity in their outward life and its organisation, a certain concreteness and vivid human familiarity in their conception of and relation with the gods they worshipped and

have a type of their own distinguished from the more sumptuous and materialistic Egypto-Chaldean civilisation and its solemn and occult religions. But those characteristics are not inconsistent with a high internal culture. On the contrary indications of a great spiritual tradition meet us at every point and negate the ordinary theory that they were originally undeveloped and barbarous." Again apropos the effect of the doctrines of the mystics in Europe on the different nations through the succeeding ages, Sri Aurobindo says "The secret doctrines of the Grecian mysteries of Orpheus and Elusenia prepared the rich soil of mentality out of which sprang the intellectual schools of philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato. The extraordinary vitality of these early (Indo-European) cultures which still determine for us the principle types of modern man, the main elements of his temperament, the chief tendencies of his thought, art and religion, can have proceeded from no primitive savagery. They are the truth of a deep and puissant prehistoric development".

From all the above quotations, it is plain that there was everywhere on the face of the earth an age of the Mysteries of various kinds and that the Supreme Divine had adopted three methods for the evolutionary unfoldment of human life through different peoples in different parts of the earth and at different times. (i) The overt mental evolutionary process by Nature-Force in almost all the primitive tribes which had taken the form of external religions, which in their turn must have developed in earlier times from some degenerate mysticisms. (ii) The occult or mystic mental evolutionary process by Nature-Force, through occultists and non-spiritual mystics who organised their religions in selected places in selected tribes and at different times, these religions developed into esoteric forms for the initiated and exoteric forms for the profane. The training that the initiated got by these inner disciplines enabled them to develop into men of wisdom or of piety or of justice or even into priests, which were all types of high mental manhood. (iii) The spiritual mystic evolutionary process by Spiritual Force through spiritual mystics who also organised their religions in selected regions in tribes at different times. These also had esoteric and exoteric forms of religions and inner disciplines, the latter were capable of developing spiritual manhood in those that practised them.

In history, we see that the examples of the first method are all the uncivilised tribes spread all over the earth to this day. The examples of the second method are the ancient people of Atlantis and the ancient nations of Western Asia and the Mediterranean coast; the examples of the third method are India, China and the ancient Indo-European nations. But the Indo-European nations, after some centuries, discarded spiritual culture and, of these, Greece developed dynamic intellectual philosophies and a dynamic

intellectual culture; Rome soon joined it with its own intellectual culture. However, they could not maintain their cultures for a long time, owing to internal dissensions, external attacks of barbarous peoples and the powerful influence of the newly arisen Christian religion, all the spiritual and intellectual characteristics of the Indo-European cultures were lost. With the Renaissance of Graeco-Roman culture in the Middle Ages, the whole of Europe recovered and from then the nation-building work began, and now with the old tendencies reviving, it seems that each nation is recovering the ancient Nation-soul that moulded the different peoples at the beginning of the cycle. India alone, and perhaps China, each from the very beginning of its cycle did not lose sight of its spiritual ideal, and now with the recovery of political freedom, India is striving for a new synthesis of spiritual life.

Here it will be illuminating to note the Mother's idea about 'Nation' and 'Nation-soul'. "Even as the individual has a psychic being which is his true self, governing more or less openly his destiny, each nation too has its psychic being which is its true self, moulding its destiny from behind the veil, it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountain-head of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of a country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. It is this which in India has been made almost into a divine being and all who love truly their country call it 'Mother India' ('Bharat Mata'), and it is to her that they daily address a prayer for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolises and incarnates the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world. One would like to see in other countries too the same veneration for the national soul, the same aspiration to become the instruments for the manifestation of its highest ideal, the same ardour towards progress and perfection leading each people to identify itself with its national soul and so find its true nature and role, making thereby each one a living and immortal being in spite of all accidents of history".

Now out of the three kinds of mysticism, the degenerate mysticisms, the non-spiritual mysticisms and the spiritual mysticisms that man has used for his evolutionary unfoldment, it is the last that has helped to evolve civilisations in which men with some higher life-ideas and soul-ideas organised the collective life on the basis of those ideas and which have endured, and will endure. Another quotation from Sri Aurobindo's works written forty years ago denotes what the future civilisation of humanity on earth will be. "The earth is in travail now of one common, large and flexible civilisation for the whole human race into which each modern and ancient culture shall bring its contribution and each clearly defined human aggregate shall introduce its necessary element of variation. In the working out of this aim there shall necessarily be

some struggle for survival. The fittest to survive will be here all that can best serve the tendencies Nature is working out in humanity,—not only the tendencies of the hour, but the reviving tendencies of the past and yet the inchoate ones of the future”

Up to now we have dealt with the part played by the different kinds of Mysteries<sup>1</sup> of the world in the civilisation of man so far as we could go into the past. With regard to the part played both by non-mystic historic spiritual religions like Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity and Mohammedanism etc. and also by the non-mystic intellectual philosophies of Greece like the great Pre-Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies in the evolution of human life through the historic ages, we may for the present keep aside this subject and take it up at its proper place in the course of India's spiritual history. For the present we will also close our remarks on Comparative Mysticism by simply quoting Sri Aurobindo about the influence they have left on us to this day.

“Indian civilisation has throughout been the prolongation of tendencies and ideas sown in us by the Vedic forefathers.”

“Indications of a great spiritual tradition meet us at many points and negate the ordinary theory. The old Celtic races certainly possessed some of the highest philosophical conceptions and they preserve stamped upon them even to the present day the result of an early mystic and intuitional development which must have been of long standing and highly evolved to have produced such enduring results”

Now we resume the history of India's Mystic age, Satya yuga, the age of the Rig Vedic Rishis. This age which is also called the Veda Yuga begins with the Rig Veda, passes through the period of the other three Vedas, the Brahmanas and Aranyakas and ends with the Upanishads; these last are called the Vedanta, which means the end of Veda or the essence of Veda. As already said in the previous article, according to the cyclic theory of man's evolutionary progress each cycle of human civilisation begins with a certain figure of the Divine in man, and this cycle began with the “Over-mental divine”. This phrase is a technical word in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> The reader may note here that the difference between the Mysteries, whether of historic or of pre-historic period, and the historic religions is that always the teachings of the former are symbolic and the teachings of the latter while being spiritual are non-symbolic. It is also true that in historic times mystics are born both in religious and non-religious communities and even these have taught their ideas in symbolic language. It is well known that neither Buddha nor Christ nor Mohammed gave their teachings in the symbolic way in which the Rishis, both of the Veda and of the Vedanta, gave, or the ancient mystics of the other countries of the world.

and yoga, the meaning of which may not be commonly understood. So to put it in a simpler language and that too in Sri Aurobindo's own words, the figure of the Divine in man at the beginning of the cycle was "Intuition on the spiritual plane which can be attributed to a rapid re-emergence of essential gains brought down from a previous cycle". This small quotation contains several seed-phrases which are new to the modern world and which form Idea-truths and Idea-visions for many new philosophies and many new theories to be developed from. For instance, what is "Intuition on the spiritual plane"? What is the nature of "a previous cycle"? Is it possible that the power of intuition emerged at the end of "the previous cycle"? By what process was it "brought down" at the beginning of this cycle? Such innumerable questions arise out of this quotation of two lines. Each seed-word in this small sentence in relation with every other seed-word is a world of knowledge and only when the total knowledge of the whole sentence is realised, its complete significance with regard to the cyclic theory of evolution and the figure of the Divine in man can be understood. We all know that the word "intuition" means the knowing of the truth of a thing without the means of either physical sense or intellect. That such a faculty of the consciousness exists may not be believed by all, but our Science of modern psychology too admits its presence in man. Mostly Science deals with the three principles of Matter, Life and Mind which comprise Nature. Intuition which is beyond these is a fourth principle of cosmic existence. Perhaps thinkers say that it has developed from one of the three principles of Nature. For our purpose here it is sufficient that it is admitted as having developed newly. Then the meaning of this quotation will have to be understood thus: this new faculty, "Intuition", was brought down by some mystics at the end of the previous cycle and it was brought down a second time by the Vedic Rishis at the beginning of the present cycle. If the straight line theory of evolution of life and of man on earth asserts that in the history of life's evolution on earth, the principle of life developed on earth at a certain stage of its history, and the principle of mind developed at a later stage of its history, we all believe it as a true phenomenon of Nature. The facts of the world also prove it. Then when it be said that this new faculty or principle of Intuition also emerged at a certain period of man's evolution on earth and when facts prove it, we have to believe it. Sri Aurobindo has perceived the truth of it by his spiritual sense and has interpreted the texts accordingly, on account of which enough data have become available which serve as facts of the world and prove the theory. The data available in the texts of Rig Veda prove that intuition was brought down by the Rishis and was used to organise the whole life of the primitive Aryan community to achieve progress in all aspects of life by basing them on spiritual truths of existence. We know that the other line

## THE FOUR AGES OF INDIA'S CULTURAL CYCLE

of overt mental evolution of man by Nature-Force has been proceeding all along, to this the power of intuition is made to join by some external and internal methods to help man's evolution for a spiritual progress on all the planes of his being.

By the end of the first age in the cycle, the duration of which we do not know at present, a certain progress was achieved in the Aryan community on all the planes of man's being and in all the aspects of his life. But the Aryans were unable to sustain this effort and got fatigued and there was a need of a respite, intuition on the spiritual plane receded and a set-back came in the progress. It is at this stage that a new effort and a new synthesis was attempted by the Upanishadic Rishis who brought Intuition down to the plane of the intellect which by that time had developed. The intellect was spiritualised and organised by Intuition, the result of which was the synthesis of Upanishadic spiritual philosophy, the collective life of the Aryan community proceeded on the basis of this new synthesis and there was a further progress in all aspects of the communal life. Then again the same incessant effort, the same fatigue, the same respite, the same withdrawal, to be counteracted by a fresh effort of bringing Intuition down to the planes of emotions and aesthetic feelings. This time, yoga systems relating to the heart and to will-power developed. In the previous age, the mental was linked with the spiritual at the top, this time the heart too was linked with the spiritual. Then the same round of progress, fatigue and a new effort of bringing down intuition to the plane of sensation took place. Thus in the four ages, the four planes of human being, the spiritual, the mental, the emotional, the sensational are taken up by the power of intuition and the evolutionary progress achieved. At the end of the fourth age and for the beginning of a new cycle, not only the physical being of man has to be taken up, but also a new figure of the divine has to be brought down for the evolutionary progress of man. This in short is the principle on which the work of the present cycle has gone on and it is based on a more intimate knowledge of the different planes of man's being and of the cosmos with its planes of existence which correspond to them.

We have to see if the history of India's culture from the data available in its ancient texts, which are fortunately preserved for us, proves it. But apart from what the history of India's cultural cycle might say, and as the man of the science of psychology knows and admits, it is Intuition, working on reason and organised for active work by intellectual man on his surface consciousness, that has created all the spiritual and intellectual philosophies of the world; it is Intuition, working on emotional and aesthetic feelings of man and organised for active work by them on his surface consciousness, that has created all the great Arts of the world, it is Intuition working on the sense-mind of man and

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organised for active work on his surface consciousness by his sense-mind, that has given us all the discoveries and inventions of Experimental Science. So knowing the power of Intuition thus in the new creation of all these things by man through all these ages of human civilisation we cannot ignore this faculty brought down to the earth consciousness by the Rishis at the beginning of India's cycle of civilisation. We have to open to it, to get at it, to develop it into a Science even as the Rishis did, and then with its help we may be sure to read all the spiritual and psychological contents of their inspired and mystic writings. Thus having recovered the ancient knowledge of the soul and spirit we may proceed on a new life on earth with new forms of Philosophy, Science and Art.

C NARAYANA REDDY

## “CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

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

### V

LOOKING at certain elements of the Renaissance Romanticism—the curious, the audacious, the subtly sweet, the drive towards the intimately inward and strangely symbolic or at least allegoric and away from the pressure of the rational as well as the dogmatic—we might be disposed to mix up with it the Romanticism which came much later and to consider as almost its revival in a new garb that revolt against a pseudo-Classical Age of Reason by writers of the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. But the voices of the new Romanticism are the beginners, as Sri Aurobindo says, of “poetry as the fullness of imaginative self-expression of the entirely modernised mind ... They are the free, impetuous but often narrow sources of these wider flowings. We see the initial tendencies which undergo a rapid growth of meaning and changes of form in the subsequent decades, until now all their sense and seeking have reached a tense straining on many lines to find some last truth and utterance which must end either in a lingering decadence or in a luminous and satisfied self-exceeding. From the beginning this modern movement, in literature as in thought, takes the form of an ever widening and deepening intellectual and imaginative curiosity, a passion for knowledge, a passion for finding, an eye of intelligence awakened to all the multiform possibilities of new truth and discovery. The Renaissance was an awakening of the life spirit to wonder and curiosity and reflection and the stirred discovery of the things of the life and the mind; but the fullness of the modern age has been a much larger comprehensive awakening of the informed and clarified intellect to a wider curiosity, a much more extensive adventure of discovery and an insistent need to know and possess the truth of Nature and man and the universe and whatever may lie hidden behind their first appearances and suggestions. .. The soul of the Renaissance was a lover of life and an amateur of knowledge; the modern spirit is drawn by the cult of a clear, broad and minute intellectual and practical Truth; knowledge and a power of life founded on the power of knowledge are the dominating necessities of its



being Poetry in this age has followed intellectually and imaginatively the curve of this great impulse."

That the essential note of the new Romanticism was not of the creative Life Force but of the creative Intelligence can easily be marked if, just as we juxtaposed Shakespeare and Milton, we compare certain lines from the supreme Elizabethan with those of the later poets. Harken to Shakespeare talking of passing away from the turmoil of human life—a verse already cited in the earlier comparison—

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Then hear how Keats talks of dying with the nightingale's song a final music falling on deaf ears:

To thy high requiem become a sod

Again, here is Shakespeare on release from the obstructive tangibilities of earth-existence by body-dissolution

O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

See now Shelley utter a thought of reaching safety from life's ravage:

From the world's bitter wind  
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.

Or mark the way Shakespeare expresses a sense of oppression and misfortune:

Who would fardels bear  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life?

and compare it to Wordsworth's confrontation of universal mystery:

The heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world.

Then, note how Shakespeare articulates the peace of death as an end to human fret:

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well,

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and compare his speech with Shelley's about the transcendence of time's blind passage by Keats's soul:

He has outsoared the shadow of our night.

Or take Shakespeare's panegyric to the power of pleasing which Cleopatra's beauty possessed

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety. other women  
Cloy the appetites they feed. but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies,

and put this praise side by side with that famous general reflection of Keats's:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever  
Its loveliness increases, it will never  
Pass into nothingness.

Or try upon your artistic sensibility that Shakespearean "idea":

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we may,

and compare the response to it with what Wordsworth draws by.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music, there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society.

In Shakespeare at all times we have a quiver of the Life Force, a passion of the entrails, as it were, an impact on the sensational being, a most vivid vibrant word. In Wordsworth and Shelley and Keats we have a calmer fineness, the more conceptive intensity starting from the brain proper in imaginative action.

Not that to write from the poetic intelligence as the basic plane is to be unemotional. A Romantic like Shelley seems often one long stream of emotion, and all the Romantics of his period insisted on the free flow of feeling. There is emotion in the Classical poets too. Indeed without a moved language

no poetry can exist just as no poetry can exist without the wings of the imagination in the word. Both may be controlled, both may be let loose—but they must be present. In the Greeks and Romans, in Dante and Milton, Corneille and Racine, they are controlled, though often very intense—and the controlling actually adds at times to the effect of the intensity. In the Elizabethan Romantics they are mostly let loose, though even in the letting loose there is the Shakespearean way and there is the Chapmanian, the way of the outbreak whose pieces are as it were still held together when they fall and that of the disintegrating eruption. The later Romantics frequently stand midway in this matter. They have often the overbrimming of the Elizabethans, but it is the thought-mind that yields to the cry of the heart and the entrails, and not the heart's or the entrails' cry that seizes on the mind of thought. This leads to a certain change in the emotion which is apparently drowning it. Just as, on the contrary, the intelligence proper undergoes a change with the Elizabethans in being gripped by the emotion. The feeling-tone of the later Romantics becomes tinged with the thought-mind leaping into it and tends to be shimmering sentiment rather than the brave colour and surge of the passionate nature. Further, into this sentiment enters the stress of a plane beyond either the life-soul or the mind-soul and creates the subtlest, the profoundest shade of the new Romanticism. Within an emotional appearance the final and total result is illustrated to perfection by one of the most beautiful of Shelley's lyrics:

O World! O Life! O Time!  
 On whose last steps I climb,  
     Trembling at that where I had stood before,  
 When will return the glory of your prime?  
     No more—oh, never more!

Out of the day and night  
 A joy has taken flight  
     Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar  
 Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight  
     No more—oh, never more!

The basic plane here, on which the emotion has played so poignantly but which yet softens the poignancy to a touch of deeply wounded thought and into which steals an indescribable unearthliness that is at once an ache and a glow, is the same as the one we find, with the thought unsubdued by the emotion and the unearthliness acting from behind a veil, in that passage from Shelley's own Hymn to what he significantly calls Intellectual Beauty, meaning thereby

that the Beauty he worships needs for its apprehension a philosophical intuitiveness such as makes an important part of the core of his being:

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate  
 With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon  
 Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?  
 Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,  
 This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?  
 Ask why the sunlight not for ever  
 Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,  
 Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,  
 Why fear and dream and death and birth  
 Cast on the daylight of this earth  
 Such gloom           ?

To drive home to our critical sensibility the common basis of both these excerpts in the creative Intelligence, the one highly charged with feeling, the other more tempered in its heart-cry as well as a little lower in poetic quality, we may take a pair of stanzas from each of two Sonnets by Shakespeare. In these stanzas Shakespeare mixes reflection and emotion, but the basic life-plane declares itself in the response which “our nerves of mental sensation” at once return to the word-texture and the rhythm-movement.

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
 But sad mortality o'ersways their power,  
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?  
 O how shall summer's honey breath hold out,  
 Against that wrackful siege of batt'ring days,  
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
 Nor gates of steel so strong but Time decays? .

That time of year thou mayst in me behold,  
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang  
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
 Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang  
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day,  
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
 Which by and by black night doth take away,  
 Death's second self that seals up all in rest..

The reason why a Romantic like Shelley is not easily recognised as functioning on a basis of the creative Intelligence is well hit off broadly by C M. Bowra "The Romantics were far from thinking that intelligence is unimportant or that thought is not necessary to poetry, but they insisted that this thought must be imaginative and not abstract and that it must look at all the qualities of things and not at their general natures. But in their distrust of reason, as the eighteenth century understood it, the Romantics found themselves almost forced to concentrate on something which is not indeed irrational but might become so in less powerful hands. The result is that their poetry lacks that element of strict prolonged thought which gives an additional strength not merely to the great Greeks but to such writers as Racine and Goethe, whose strictly poetical power owes a great deal to the hard thought which has preceded composition and is indeed transcended in the poetry, but none the less is invisibly present and powerful. The Romantics have their moments of inspiring thought and wonderful insight, but they lack this special strength which comes from uniting sustained mental effort to poetry."

In Romantic poetry, unlike as in Classical, thought does not stay for long within its own proper sphere. It either plunges into emotion or draws beyond the Intelligence towards spheres which the Classical poet receives influences from but never approaches—at least never with a conscious straining. The Romantic's approach, however, is not sufficiently assured that is why his thought gets attenuated without his achieving very frequently the directness and clarity native to what is beyond it, and that is also why that directness and clarity are not able in him to keep strong thought going in an intuitive way and without its getting limited by the Intelligence's range of thinking. On the other hand, the plunge into emotion diffuses the thought and, in comparison, the thought of even the Elizabethan poet may seem more precise in spite of being values of the life-force etching themselves out into idea-patterns. Part of the thought-diffusing emotionalism that is at times identified with Romanticism by some critics is due to a deliberate attempt by the intellectual being to undo its intellectuality and restore the passion and feeling and sensuous gusto that it has chilled and thinned away into sentiment verging at its extreme on an unreal fineness. "There is then an attempt", says Sri Aurobindo, "to get back to the natural fullness of the vital and physical life, but the endeavour fails in sincerity and success because it is impossible, the mind of man having got so far cannot return upon its course, undo what it has made of itself and recover the glad childhood of its early vigorous nature. There is instead of the simplicity of spontaneous life a search after things striking, exaggerated, abnormal, violent, new, in the end a morbid fastening on perversities, on all that is ugly, glaring and coarse on the plea of their greater reality, on exaggerations

of vital instinct and sensation, on physical wrynesses and crudities and things unhealthily strange. The thought-mind, losing the natural full-blooded power of the vital being, pores on these things, stimulates the failing blood with them and gives itself an illusion of some forceful sensation of living." Much Romanticism on the European Continent took this way and acquired the taint which led Goethe to brand it as "disease", and much in post-Romantic literature, whether avowing itself as Romantic or no, has gone thus "decadent" in various forms. The makers of the English Romantic Revival seldom went far on the road to decadence. But even on that road the accent of the intellectual being is distinguishable from that of the Life Force. And in the English Romantics the true substance and form of thought can be traced more distinctly in the midst of all emotionalism and show these poets to be initial voices of the entirely modernised intellect imaginatively deployed.

Anticipations of the modern intellectual movement's incipient tendencies in poetry may be watched in three places. One is in certain post-Elizabethan poets of what has come to be labelled as the Metaphysical School for its fusion of intricate thought with sense-impressions and of far-fetched scholarship with immediate feeling and of supra-physical longing with fanciful sentiment. The chief names here are Donne, Marvell, Crashaw, Herbert, Vaughan. Mostly they fall between two stools—they have not the Elizabethan verve to carry off their ingenuities nor the real intellectual self-possession which can fulfil their striving beyond the Elizabethan tumult of the Life Force. But now and again, through the twisted nervous labour both sensuous and imaginative of Donne's wit and wisdom and through the at once homely and colourful, idealistic and amatory piquancy of Marvell, we get the anticipation of a later mental subtlety, and more often, through Herbert's simple yet not unpenetrative fervours and Crashaw's lyrical many-hued religiosity and Vaughan's intellectual vision's luminous attempt at transcendence of itself, there glimmers out a preage of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats.

A forerunner more immediate in time as well as in several moods is the effort made by poets like Gray, Collins, Thomson, Chatterton, Cowper in the third quarter of the eighteenth century to break away, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "from the prison of the formal metrical mould, rhetorical style, limited subject-matter, absence of imagination and vision imposed by the high pontiffs of the pseudo-classical cult", Dryden and Pope and Johnson. "Some pale effort is made to recover something of the Shakespearean wealth of language or of the softer, more pregnant colour of the pre-Restoration diction and to modify it to suit the intellectualised treatment of thought and life which was now an indispensable element, for the old rich vital utterance was no longer possible, an intellectualised speech had become a fixed and a well-acquired need of a

more developed mentality Romanticism of the modern type now makes its first appearance in the choice of the subjects of poetic interest and here and there in the treatment, though not quite in the grain and the spirit Especially, there is the beginning of a direct gaze of the poetic intelligence and imagination upon life and Nature and of another, a new power in English speech, the poetry of sentiment as distinguished from the inspired voice of sheer feeling or passion But all these newer motives are only incipient and unable to get free expression because there is still a heavy weight of the past intellectual tradition There is no sign of the sudden uplifting that after a few decades was to come as if upon the sudden wings of a splendid moment "

A third precursor of the new Romanticism's general psychological source is the poet to whom these singers looked back sometimes in the manner and movement of their verse and who was mainly responsible for the establishment of an authentically intellectualised speech in English poetry Milton Particularly in the early Milton of *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, *Lycidas* we have a richness and flexibility and supple penetrativeness which are almost lost in the later Milton's grandiose epic chant Here is a blending of Elizabethan Romanticism and the old Classicism and it looks forward to the nineteenth-century Romantic mind's composite manner But the poetic intelligence, unlike as in most of the Metaphysicals who came before Milton, is already master of the Life Force, though not aloof from that power's characteristic play Only, this poetic intelligence is still of the old type and not of the modern variety All the more is its alignment with the Graeco-Roman spirit visible in *Paradise Lost* where in his own style of packed Latinesed English Milton presents us with imaginative structures of the inspired reason and the chastened and enlightened aesthetic sense To this spirit we can no more return than to the Romanticism born of the impetuous Life Force which cared nothing for thought except as it enriched its own colourful swell Not that the inspired reason and the enlightened aesthetic sense are absent in the new Romantics In relation to their work Sri Aurobindo has written "English poetry has got away from the Elizabethan outbreak nearer to a kinship with the mind and manner of the Greek and Latin poets and their intellectual descendants, though still, it is to be noted, keeping something, a subtle and intimate turn, a power of fire and ether which has become native to it, a legacy from the Shakespearian speech which was not there in its beginnings This imaginatively intellectual basis of speech remains constant down to the end of the Victorian era " Wordsworth's "resort to the straightforward force of the simplest speech dependent on the weight of the substance and thought for its sufficient source of power" has, at its best, something of true Classicism about it, as also has in its high moments the not infrequent recourse by him to a semi-Miltonic diction without Milton's

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compactness Shelley in sections of *Adonais* and in large tracts of *Prometheus Unbound* (minus the lyrics), Keats in *Hyperion* and even Byron in some of his rare forceful sincerities have to a marked degree the same source of inspiration. But there has entered into that source a totally non-Classical afflatus, because of two things. First, the modern intelligence is of another mould than the ancient Classical and is far removed from even the Miltonic mind whether in its initial delicacy and suppleness of a semi-Spenserian sort fused with the Classical lucidity and poise or in its final Classicism of power and massiveness and sheer intellectual vision. Secondly, as never before in so consistent a shape in occidental literature, there falls upon this poetic mind a higher light which occasions temporarily a speech which is sheerly from above the human mentality.

The modern intelligence, says Sri Aurobindo, “sets more comprehensively to work, opens itself to all manner of the possibilities of truth and to a crowding mass and stream of interest, a never satisfied minuteness of detail, an endless succession of pregnant generalisations.” It is too thronged “with subtle thought-matter, too brooding, sensitive, responsive to many things”—often things “not easily expressible”—to be capable of “a new Parthenon, either in the white marble subdued to the hand or in the pure and lucid spacings of the idea and the word.” Turned on Nature, this mind, in its functionings outside poetry, has led to “the immeasurable development of the observing and analysing eye of Science.” Turned on man in his external visible being, it has been the cause of a large and minute enquiry “into the origins and antiquity and history of the race, into the sources of its present development, into all its physical, psychological, sociological being and the many ideal speculations and practical aspirations of its future which have arisen from this new knowledge of the human being and his possibilities.” Turned on man in his internal invisible part, it has been the mainspring of “a growing subjectivity, an intense consciousness of the I, the soul or self, not in any mystic withdrawal within or inward meditation, or not in that pre-eminently, but in relation to the whole of life and Nature. This characteristic distinguishes modern subjectivism from the natural subjectivity of former times, which either tended towards an intense solitary inwardness or was superficial and confined to a few common though often strongly emphasised notes. Ancient or mediaeval individuality might return more self-assertive or violent responses to life, but the modern kind is more subtly and pervasively self-conscious and the stronger in thought and feeling to throw its own image on things, because it is more precluded from throwing itself out in action and living. This turn was in fact an inevitable result of an increasing force of intellectualism, for great intensity of thought, when it does not isolate itself from emotion, reactive sensation and aesthetic response, as in



science and in certain kinds of philosophy, must be attended by a quickening and intensity of these other parts of our mentality ”

No doubt, the strong scientific *penchant* in the age has set up an ideal of objectivity, of an outward-gazing vision and brought about in literature the phenomenon of so-called Realism. But always “the self-conscious thinking of the modern mind which brings into prominent relief the rest of the mental personality and stamps the whole work with it” gets into the way of the strictly objective or realistic ideal. And the subjective trend betrays itself all the more when the love of close and minute observation that distinguishes the age is channelled into psychologising. For, the moment we begin to psychologise closely and minutely in relation to whatever human situation is held up for objective study and especially the moment we go below the surface “we are at once preparing to go back into ourselves. For it is only through our own psychology, through its power of response to and of identification with the mind and soul in others that we can know their inner psychology, for the most part our psychological account of others is only an account of the psychological impressions of them they produce in our own mentality. This we see even in the realistic writers in the strongly personal and limited way in which they render the psychology of their creatures in one or two always recurring main notes upon which they ring minute variations ” Also in its main notes there is “an exaggeration and overstressing which betrays its true character, the post-nomous child of romanticism perverted by a pseudo-scientific preoccupation ” Even its fondness for the littlenesses, imperfections, uglinesses, morbidities in man’s life and psychology as if they were the whole or the greater part of him and as if life “were a psychological and physiological disease, a fungoid growth upon material Nature”, is not unconnected with Romanticism which too ‘laid a constant stress on the grotesque, diseased, abnormal, but for the sake of artistic effect, to add another tone to its other glaring colours. Realism professes to render the same facts in the proportions of truth and science, but being art and not science, it inevitably seeks for pronounced effects by an evocative stress ” The subjective trend is betrayed by this pressing towards a conspicuous vividness as well as by the original choice of one or two main notes for expressing “reality”

In poetry with its deeper founts of creation, objectivism is even more shot with the subjective personality and the work becomes a history of the poet’s own soul in the guise of objective expression. The attempt at deliberate impersonal presentation shows itself, on a near scrutiny, to be the shaping of everything by a strong subjective personality into a mask-reflection of its own characteristic moods. And where—not only in poetry but in all imaginative literature—the ideal is not avowedly objective or realistic, the creative mind, conscious

with greater acuteness of the self within that really does the whole work everywhere, tends often "to turn to it for a theme or for the mould of its psychological creations, to a conscious intimate subjectivism" Then we have a constant sifting of delicate shades of desire and reverie, a pressing towards more and more inward realities, a plunging or rising by the intellect itself towards hidden fountains beyond it in order to bathe its own faculties in a finer light, an emphasising of the desiring, dreaming, aspiring intuiting individuality and of its rights and ideals against all outer powers, a defence of the personal self's precious uniqueness against social order or traditional authority.

The modern mind's close and minute eye and touch upon outward Nature has led in poetry to an imaginative and sympathetic concentration on her sights, sounds, objects, sensible impressions, a detailed and intimate visualisation of her appearances and an effort to go beyond appearances to a close communion with her soul, as it were "The older poetry," writes Sri Aurobindo, "directed an occasional objective eye on Nature, turning a side glance from life or thought to get some colouring or decorative effect or a natural border or background for life or something that illustrated, ministered to or enriched the human thought or mood of the moment, at most a casual indulgence of the imagination and senses in natural beauty. But the intimate subjective treatment of Nature, the penetrated human response to her is mostly absent or comes only in rare and brief touches. On the larger scale her subjective life is realised not with an immediate communion, but through myth and the image of divine personalities that govern her powers. Nature now lives for the poet as an independent presence, a greater or equal power dwelling side by side with him or embracing and dominating his existence. Even the objective vision and interpretation of her has developed, where it continues at all the older poetic method, a much more minute and delicate eye and touch in place of the large, strong and simply beautiful or telling effects which satisfied an earlier imagination." But where modern poetry "goes beyond that fine outwardness, it has brought us a whole world of new vision, working sometimes by a vividly suggestive presentation, sometimes by a separation of effects and an imaginative reconstruction which reveals aspects the first outward view had hidden in, sometimes by a penetrating impressionism which in its finest subtleties seems to be coming back by a detour to a sensuously mystical treatment, it goes within through the outward and now not so much presents as recreates physical Nature for us through the imaginative vision."

Sri Aurobindo continues: "But the direct subjective approach to Nature is the most distinctly striking characteristic turn of the modern mentality. The approach proceeds from two sides which constantly meet each other and create between them a nexus of experience between man and Nature which is

the modern way of responding to the universal Spirit. On one side there is the subjective sense of Nature herself as a great Life, a being, a Presence, with impressions, moods, emotions of her own expressed in many symbols of life and stressing her objective manifestations. On the other side there is a sensitive human response, moved in emotion or thrilling in sensation or stirred by sheer beauty or responsive in mood: a response of satisfaction and possession or of dissatisfied yearning and seeking, in the whole an attempt to relate or harmonise the soul and mind and sensational and vital being of the human individual with the soul and mind and life and body of the visible and sensible universe."

Man's modern outlook on himself, in the warp and weft of Space and Time and in the stress of the universe and in ail that is meant by his present, past and future, started poetically by an elevated responsive valuing of, as Sri Aurobindo recounts, "all that had been ignored and put aside as uncouth and barbarous by the older classical or otherwise limited type of mentality. It sought rather all that was unfamiliar and attractive by its unlikeness to the present, the primitive, the savage, the mediæval man and his vivid life and brilliant setting, the Orient very artificially seen through a heavily coloured glamour, the ruins of the past, the life of the peasant or the solitary, the outlaw, man near to Nature undisguised by conventions and uncorrupted by an artificial culture or man in revolt against these conventions, a willed preference for these strange and interesting aspects of humanity, as in Nature for her wild and grand, savage and lonely scenes or her rich and tropical haunts or her retired spots of self-communion. On one side a sentimental or a philosophic naturalism, on the other a flamboyant or many-hued romanticism, superficial mediævalism, romanticised Hellenism, an intellectual or an ideal transcendentalism, are the salient constituting characters. They make up that brilliant and confusedly complex, but often crude and unfinished literature which forms a hasty transition from the Renaissance and its after-fruits to the modernism of today which is already becoming the modernism of yesterday"—the literature which stretches in France from Rousseau and Chateaubriand to Hugo and takes on its way Goethe, Schiller and Heine in Germany and covers in England Burns and Byron and the five names that stand out in the annals of the second phase of Romanticism and give to it not only, as the others do, its distinction from both Classicism and the post-Renaissance Romantic outburst but also a new character pregnant with the promise of an utmost luminosity in future poetic expression.

That luminosity is almost with us in a few poets gifted with an exceptional insight, who seem to be helping the Day of the Spirit to widen out of the dawn-flush spelled by those five names. But the modern mind, turning to look for things beyond Nature and man, met with a long-persistent blankness due to the growth of scepticism and denial in the wake of science. A protracted fight

ensued between the old faiths and the new sciences, in which often the former could make only a difficult self-defence or keep to past beliefs with “a doubtful and tormented, a merely intellectual or a conventional clinging”. Now, however, the atheistic and materialistic cry does not ring defiantly any more and there has been a revolution in scientific thought itself compelling a more plastic, more speculative approach. Outside this thought, “with the return of subjective intuition and a fresh adventuring of knowledge and imagination into the beyond, modern poetry is beginning in this field too to turn the balance in its favour as against the old classical and mediaeval literature.” The spiritual vision it is gaining is nearer, less grossly human, more authentically supernatural, “the new symbols it is beginning to create and its reinterpretation of the old symbols are more adequate” The promise is being slowly fulfilled of the time when the ebb of positive faith was to some extent compensated for by a light and force of inspiration that came into the work of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and carried again and again the influences then abroad beyond themselves.

The influences thus uplifted were those which had found expression in the vehement idealism of the French Revolution and in German transcendentalism and Romanticism. They too were, in several respects, a help against the growing sceptical bent, but they were intellectual in their idea and substance though not untouched with keener fires than the intellect commands. In the understanding of these influences that underwent in the minds of those five English poets, each a remarkable individuality, a sudden transformation, we must look upon Rousseau as the key figure. Of both the French Revolution and much in German Romanticism and, indirectly, of even the transcendentalist philosophy in Germany he is the original inspirer and he has in him, amidst much miasma, some vague breath of

An ampler ether, a diviner air

that came into the world of European poetry with Wordsworth

But before we turn our gaze to this key-figure we may distinguish a trend of mind which ran parallel with Rousseauism and contributed to the Romantic Movement a nuance sometimes blending with Rousseauism and sometimes standing as an additional ingredient of the post-Rousseau mentality. Wordsworth himself, in a passage of his *Prelude* recollecting “the golden store of books” devoured during holidays from Cambridge, has indicated that trend as part of his own being.

The tales that charm away the wakeful night  
In Araby, romances, legends penned

For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;  
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised  
 By youthful squires, adventures endless, spun  
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,  
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes  
 In which his youth did first extravagate,  
 These spread like day, and something in the shape  
 Of these will live till man shall be no more  
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours  
 And they must have their food Our childhood sits,  
 Our simple childhood sits upon a throne  
 That hath more power than all the elements.

The preparers of the precious food, the servitors of childhood's royalty are blessed by Wordsworth and hailed as "dreamers" and "forgeis of daring tales",

Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,  
 An empire, a possession,—ye whom time  
 And seasons serve, all Faculties to whom  
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,  
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,  
 Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once

Romanticism as the triumphant magic of bold or tender reverie wandering over the past and the remote, relishing even the sombre and the weird, was a slowly growing force independent of Rousseau. But it matured as a world-factor when it entered into the Movement whose originator was that earthquake of a Frenchman

To pierce to the very centre of Rousseau's significance we must recall the extraordinary experience he had in 1751. He has described it in a letter to M. de Malesherbes eleven years later: "I was going to see Diderot, then a prisoner at Vincennes; I had taken in my pocket a *Mercure de France* and I glanced at it as I walked. I came on the question set for discussion by the Academy of Dijon which gave occasion for my first essay. If ever anything could resemble a sudden inspiration, it was the movement which took place in me at that moment, all at once I felt my mind dazzled by a thousand lights; crowds of ideas appeared there at the same time with an inexpressible force and confusion, I felt my head seized by giddiness, like that of drunkenness; a violent palpitation oppressed me, my breast heaved. Not being able to breathe while walking, I let myself fall down under one of the trees in the avenue and spent there a half-hour of

such agitation that on rising I found the front of my vest bathed with tears I had no idea I had shed. Oh, dear Sir, If I could ever write a quarter of what I saw and felt beneath that tree, how clearly could I present all the contradictions of our social system, with what force I could reveal all the abuses of our institutions, with what simplicity I could show that man is naturally good, and that it is through these institutions alone that men become wicked ”

The main points standing out of the episode are first, the experience is mystical and charged with illumination and intuition, a breaking from some psychological region of direct sight and direct feeling beyond the human into the normal consciousness, second, the part which receives the supernormal vision and truth-touch is the thinking mind where immediately the “thousand lights” become a crowd of ideas simultaneously present, third, the complexity and force with which the mystical experience occurs creates a brilliant confusion and a violent stir both emotional and nervous. The thinking mind is the dazzled and disordered recipient of truths that go home to it from above itself and it is the medium of them to the heart and the vitalistic being which at the same time give a most moved response and are quite thrown off their balance. And the truths with which the thinking mind is seized revolve round the seeing and feeling that man holds within him in his ultimate nature the essence of goodness and that this essence is covered up by an artificial growth of complicated and iniquitous externalities miscalled civilisation and that, if the externalities could be removed and free spontaneous expression allowed to man’s core of being, all problems would be solved. The truths may be summed up in the cry which Rousseau subsequently spread over Europe: “Back to Nature”—and they may be interpreted to mean a return from the outward rigidly and intricately patterned consciousness to some inward and basic soul-simplicity and from the mazy over-development of the arts and sciences of civilisation to a poetic primitiveness, a simple and uncorrupted life in imaginative accord with elemental earth, in which there is utter freedom of the individual and yet a collective harmony, a blissful blend of anarchy and order, the establishment of a Golden Age such as the myths and legends of all humanity report to have existed in a pre-history when the human was not divorced from the divine.

A general aspect to note is that here we have an experience which is mystical without falling into the framework of conventional Christendom. Rousseau is the first individual in Christian Europe who, according to Havelock Ellis, “presents a typical picture of ‘conversion’ altogether apart from any conventional religious creeds.” By “conversion” Ellis must not be understood to mean anything comparable to what happened to the great spiritual mystics, a new subsequent living in the depths close to the Light revealed to them: Rousseau’s “conversion” resembles theirs in only the kindling up of the being, as if by some

power beyond it, to its principal life-work, the highly inspired receiving of a "mission" and the subsequent unescapable sense of it.

What happened to Rousseau and the significance of the happening are in their fundamental form a seed-gleam of English Romanticism at its intensest. This significance, as developed by Rousseau himself and as it took shape in the movement he started, was something much less profound though extremely powerful, a mixed mass which also contributed several shades to English Romanticism itself no less than to the Romanticism of the Continent. The illumination and intuition from beyond the intellect got confused with the warm chaos their sudden descent had awakened in Rousseau's emotive and instinctive parts. The suprarational did not altogether disappear, but it got inextricably swirled into the infra-rational. The intellect which was meant to be the vehicle of the former put itself at the service of the latter. The soul-simplicity towards which the higher truths were driving was identified with the untutored heart of a love that knows no restraint, an extravagance of impassioned sentiment. The innocent and harmless freedom that is the soul's natural life grew the more dubious fight of the individual ego against all restrictions, social, political, moral, religious. The nostalgic cry of 'Back to Nature', instead of evoking the original unencrusted image of the divine in the human, argued the human itself in its primitiveness to be the divine and conjured up the picture of a "noble savage" happy amidst wild sceneries. The mystical experience which had stood clear of Christianity and indeed of all established religion changed into an exclusive cult of the private conscience. God and the dwelling by the individual on his own ethico-religious impulse were taken to be the same thing so that ultimately whatever ethico-religious self the individual felt within him replaced the sense of deity and the whole of ethics and religion was summed up in the formula "Il faut être soi", which signified that all one's duty lay in being one's self without contradiction, without any other need than to attain one's own happiness. The inner life which the utilitarian philosophers had scorned and towards which Rousseau directed men's minds came to be intended by him not, as by the Saints, to put men into contact with their supreme origin and their Lord, but rather to halo every person's singularity and to justify every idiosyncratic revolt.

However, through the entire low-pitching, by Rousseau's temperament, of the revelation he had enjoyed ran still a great and glimmering idealism with a democratic sweep, and the vast vague emotions and instincts which pulled that revelation down and took hold of his intellect could win almost the whole age to his side by the very force of that intellect and by the sudden flash within it as of an axiomatic verity. His intellect was often the artist of a specious logic, but while the argument might be debated the words carried a ring of sincerity.

and conviction, a rhythm as of a prophet's passionate directness, and there was an easy perfection of form which added to his persuasiveness and often round an emotional statement hung the nimbus of an ecstatic vision caught by a mind of thought tending to move with a brooding as well as soaring intricacy. It is the conjunction of all these factors that made him the progenitor of the French Revolution fired, amidst its various excesses, by the grand slogan of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which arose from the political formula given by him in his *Contrat Social* to his Utopian reveries—the inspirer of German transcendentalism in which his insistence on the inner subjective determinant and judge played so decisive a role that Kant, who demonstrated the innate thought-categories and the conscious self as the unifiers of experience into a totality and who argued a God-given moral imperative within each heart, used to hang on the walls of his bare study no picture except the portrait of this Frenchman—the initiator of modern Romanticism and its “solitary thinkings”, its “divine discontent”, its communion with Nature, its drive towards ineffable depths of sentiment, its semi-philosophical push to exceed the mere Reason, its dreams of an ideal futurity on earth, its apotheosis of individuality on one hand and of universal sympathy on the other. Even the profoundest species of this Romanticism, the English, which escaped much of the violently hectic and bizarre, or else the effusively melancholy, to be found in France and Germany as the offspring of Rousseauism on the debit side, owed many of its poetic ideas and urges in their germ form to the prose-writer of the *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, *Émile*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the *Réveries* and the *Lettres à Malesherbes* no less than the *Contrat Social* and the *Confessions*.

(To be continued)

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