MOTHER INDIA

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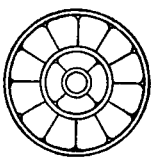
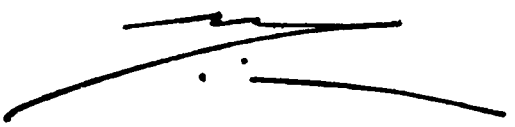


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. IX **No. 9**

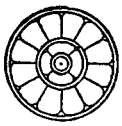
"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

Students' Section

NOTICE

THE NEXT ISSUE WILL BE A JOINT ONE OF
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER.
IT WILL BE PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 5.



Pour exprimer notre gratitude
à Sri Aurobindo nous ne pouvons
rien faire de mieux que d'être la
démonstration vivante de son
enseignement.

To express our gratitude to Sri Aurobindo we can do nothing better than to be a living demonstration of his teaching.

30-9-57 THE MOTHER

* *

For those who use their physical eyes alone, the victory will be apparent only when it is total, that is to say, physical.

Pour ceux qui ne se servent que de leurs yeux physiques, la victoire ne peut être apparente que lorsqu'elle sera totale, c'est à dire physique.

2-10-57 THE MOTHER

THE MOTHER ANSWERS QUESTIONS*

Q. You have said that we must develop "an intimate, a constant, absolute, inevitable union with the vibration of the Supramental forces." How is one to acquire the faculty of feeling this vibration? Has the process of sadhana undergone a change with the creation of a new world and new world-conditions by the Supramental Manifestation? What should a sadhaka do to speed his progress under the new conditions?

A Yes, the Sadhana has undergone a great change, because it is now in the physical itself that you have to do it.

Concentrate on the physical transformation; by physical I mean the mental, vital and body consciousness.

You are trying to get the experience in your mind, but it is not the mind that can get it. Come out of your mind and you will understand what I mean.

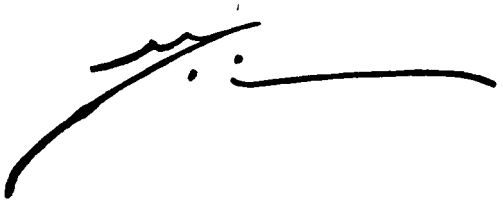
* Our readers are invited to send us questions on sadhana or on spiritual matters in general. (Editor)

ASPIRATION AND SURRENDER

What is exactly meant by a sincere aspiration?

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

12-1-1934



What is the meaning of Surrender?

Surrender means to be entirely in the Mother's hands, and not to resist in any way by egoism or otherwise her Light, Knowledge, Will, the working of her Force etc.

31-8-1933

Sri Aurobindo

"THE BIRD OF FIRE"

An Appreciation

JUST as the true voice of Keats is heard in his later poetry, especially the great Odes and *Hyperion*, similarly the true genius of Sri Aurobindo revealed itself in his spiritual poems and culminated in the epic *Savitri* It is in his spiritual poems that he has fashioned new forms of verse with new techniques to enshrine the new consciousness.

Though the English language has given to the world the richest poetry yet it has all through been lacking in that perfection of form which makes a work of art a finished product, as the result of a perfect fusion of form and matter. The ancient quantitative metres were fixed in their patterns, each one suitable for a particular kind of theme. One could invent new patterns by different permutations and combinations but the principle of quantity was not disputed.

The old English poetry was written in stress metres, with the ictus falling on the head rhyme. Chaucer kept the stress metres but fixed in each line the number of syllables. This resulted in the accentual metres where to complete the number of accents false stress has to be given to syllables. In a line like the following :

The lunatic, the lover and the poet

we have to put an accent on the last syllable of "lunatic" and then on "and". Thus though the line has five accents it has only three stresses. Or the line

Or undiminished brightness to be known

demands an accent on "to" which ought to form the first syllable of an anapaest.

The poem' 'The Bird of Fire" has been written in stress metre. It "is a kind of compromise" as the author says, "between the stress system and the foot measure." Here is the metrical scheme of the poem in the poet's own words: "The stanza is of four lines, alternatively of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth line in each stanza can be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapaests, the first and third, though a similar system subject

to replacement of a foot anywhere by a single-syllable half-foot could be applied, are still mainly readable by stresses."

Let us take the first line:

Gold-white wings a throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went glimmering
over a sun-fire curve to the haze of the west,
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a soundless
wayless burning sea.

The first thing that strikes us about these lines is their power to express a complex movement in all its different phases. Mixed iambs and anapaests with their steady and measured pace followed by a swift tripping of the tongue combine to body forth the flight of the bird in the infinite expanse of the spiritual heaven. The first three syllables, two bearing the stress and the middle one with its length, fix the gaze on the bird which has to be descried in that vast expanse. The bird's pinion-beat is a throb because it is not merely a carrier of the message but is itself the throbbing power of the intense flame that rose out of the blazing soul of the yogi. In the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo it is a common experience that the intense call of the soul rises upwards from the heart-centre like a luminous fire with arms outstretched to embrace the Divine in an utter union. Flame after flame shoots up and then vanishes into the vastness of the spiritual sky. The sadhaka feels an intense yearning to meet the Divine and expects an immediate response to his aspiration. The purity and intensity of the fire generates a certitude that the Grace is sure to lean down to him—it cannot resist such a sincere call because it has itself planted that in the heart's cavern. And the response too starts leaning immediately but between the earth and the heaven falls the shadow and it takes it long to reach the earth. It is remarkable that the anapaest "in the vast" following the preceding iamb does not give an impression of speed but only helps to concentrate our mind on the potent point in the continuum that is immutable. Here there is an interplay of the speech rhythm and the ordinary foot measure. Read according to the speech rhythm it would scan, "a throb | in the vastness." The *vast* gets amplitude because of the two syllables preceding it and one following it. The line moves leisurely, weighted with long vowels and combined consonants till the bird soars past the sunfire curve and darts "to the haze of the west". The second line again takes up the point-

continum imagery with great effect. Having reached the etheric space of the pure consciousness the passage of the bird is a smooth gliding through a tranquil sea which offers no resistance to its flight. The sky has become the calm azure and the bird a messenger sail. The line is crowded with s's—eleven in all—which conveys the breathless hush of the silent Brahman. The sibilants with their fricative voicelessness force us to read the line slowly as we run our gaze over the 'soundless wayless burning sea'. The line recalls another from *Savitri* with equal effect fusing the sound-sight imagery :

> Pacing the silence of eternity

In contradistinction to this we cannot fail to enjoy Clare's appeal to hearing as well as sight in the following description of the cranes :

> Cranking their jarring melancholy cry
> Through the long journey of the cheerless sky.

The wayless burning sea as the sapphire-summer waste also suggests the horizonless Sahara. Edith Sitwell in her elegy on Dylan Thomas compares Death to the vast Africa, and Marvell's lines of rare sublimity also make us feel the endless stretch he is speaking of :

> And yonder all before us lie
> Deserts of vast eternity.

The imagery of "The Bird of Fire" is highly intricate and metaphors of quite disparate natures are juxtaposed and crowded and then welded to produce the effect of a rich and subtle texture. The bird of flame with his throbbing lustrous wings slides into a messenger sail and the sky stretches endlessly as the waste of a soundless wayless burning sea. Notice how the word 'soundless' generates the idea of eternal silence pervading the vast expanse of the Spirit. And yet this sea is a burning mass whence pours down on our dust-bowl the fire that turns it into an altar.

Another instance of the complex imagery of the poem is furnished by the line at the end of the second stanza :

> A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase of
> moon-edged night and rising day.

The bird is first a ruby which in its turn blazes as a flame kindled on an altar. It is also a flower and then the altar changes into a vase and this altar-vase decked

with the moon-sun jewels is silver-gold. Thus the bird of fire as the rising aspiration is a flame and as the congealed concentration of love, a ruby, and, for its spontaneity and delicate beauty, a rose. All these images are telescoped in another line in the poem "The Rose of God" :

> Rose of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
> Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!

Here also the redness embodies a resistless passion, animated with the intense yearning to "break the barriers of mind and life" and

> Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
> thou frontest eyes in a timeless face.

And, as a result this passion,

> Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing
> The hard crag-teeth-world, wounded and nude.

Browning's dedication of *The Ring and the Book* to his late wife is no less suffused with a throbbing heart's purest and intensest passion :

> O lyric Love, half angel and half bird
> And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
> Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
> Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
> And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
> Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—

Here we might profitably give Sri Aurobindo's remarks on his own poem. " 'Angel' is addressed to the Bird. It is the Bird who went out to reach the Timeless Divine and comes late (while the sadhaka and the world have been long struggling and waiting in vain) with the gift : The bird is not mere aspiration; it reaches the Eternal and brings back to the material world that which is beyond mind and life." The third and the fourth line image the return of the bird bearing the riches of the higher planes. The lines run :

> Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour returning
> drift through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,
> Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of the
> waters of Eternity.

Notice how the opening movement of the first line, *i.e.* up to "world" moves with long sweeps and the ear seems to be listening to syllables without any consonants, thus getting an impression of a long wash of the waves on a sea without any rocks to dash upon; this is the tranquillity of the Himalayan evenings where all around is the pervasive calm but the western horizon splashes a myriad hues and the tints dot the sky with floating isles as airy as a romantic's visions. The rest of the line is rich with consonants, thus contrasting the tranquillity that has hushed into silence the waning world with the endless riches dazzling in the heavens. What a variety of consonantal sounds has been lavished as if to outmatch the largesse scattered by the sky! Word on word occurs with consonants coming close on each other so that one cannot fail to remark the rich texture of the line. The alliterating 'b' gives a resonance and force to the ending. This one throbbing flame has the power to go beyond the silent Brahman and enter the supreme mystery of Love which flows out of the supreme Person who is beyond the mutable and the immutable. It not only outsoars the shadow of the night but what the Isha Upanishad calls the greater darkness of the pure self of the Vedantin, whose sheer featureless whiteness girdles the earth as a foam-vest. But, in its passage through it, it stains it with flame and shimmer and for a while brings a blush on its eternal virginity.

In the poem "Rose of God" the last stanza whose opening lines we have already quoted embodies the same experience though with a different tone and evocative power. It runs :

> Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,
> Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace !
> Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss :
> Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

Our poem runs into four stanzas, each revealing an aspect of the power and character of the Bird. In the first stanza we see the passage of its flight through the sky and its return when the lights of the world were waning. In the second stanza the poet addresses the Bird in these two lines :

> Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow have
> you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me
> Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or His
> crimson passion of love divine,—

The distribution of the stresses sometimes coming close on each other, sometimes after many unstressed syllables create in this line an effect of a

lingering rhythm which imbues the line with the tone of a voice gentle and yet slightly wearied of long hours of waiting. The words "late and slow" with their liquid l's and long vowels make us listen to the calm accents of one who has lit the fire of sacrifice for the travailing earth and who has been waiting for the Bird to bring some boon from the Timeless which can assuage it. The Yogi here has by his wide compassion kindled the flame of an aspiration which brings the splendour back to his breast. But his anxiety is for the earth which is engulfed in the smoke of hell-fire. Is this not the same Jivanmukta who can say:

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

Also, this Jivanmukta continues to abide here on earth in order to call down the Bird that bears the boons of the Divine for the children of earth. He acts and lives

> Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
> To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
> And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
> Casting down light on the inconscient darkness,

What can be the first expectation from the bird ? For a prisoner the greatest boon cannot but be the glad tidings of release from the narrow prison cell so that he can breathe in the free air of the wide world. Here also the bird is expected to bring either "a spirit silent and free or His crimson passion of love divine". Everywhere in this poem the sound effects are most varied and subtly reinforce the sense. Notice the contrast between the sounds of the words "silent and free" and "crimson passion".

The music of the next two lines combined with the unimaginably luscious imagery and the dactylic rhythm of the second line embodying the majestic beat of the Dancer in Time can only be apprehended after many readings but can never be described:

> White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats
> brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,
> Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time from
> his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine ?

In the last stanza the Bird is again addressed but the tone is now different. The voice is now full and vigorous and animated with a passion that will batter down all barriers and shoot right into the bosom of the Supreme:

> One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;
> Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire thou frontest eyes in a timeless face.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

TWO POEMS

FLAMING PRAYER

O MAKE my life aflame in praise of Thee.
Thoughts gathered, mastered will, surrendered heart,
Light-bearing cells one-voiced repeat, "Thou art !"
This one instant and everlastingly.
In spite of everything, in spite of me,
O Power, life-raking world-transfiguring, dart
Thy straight way through my being's every part
To flower all in Thy rose-ecstasy.

ETERNAL SERVANTHOOD

MOTHER, give refuge to my maddened soul.
Through all the world it wanders aimlessly,
Through woods, winds, houses, hearts in search of Thee;
O gather it under Thy love's control.
To play Thy vessel make its cherished role,
"To be Thy Love's", let its one effort be,
"To be Thy Love's", its one love-seeking plea,
Eternal servanthood its single goal.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

NEW ROADS

THE CONVOCATION OF THE GODS

INDRA

ON earth, the Day went down with flaming hues,
As if a prolonged yearning lit the skies
Of man's aspiring; as if earth's beating heart
Was one with heaven—and all that flame-lit vast
Mirrored its beauty on the breast of the Hour.
Changing, the bright vermilion of ocean and sky
Formed high iridescent haloes of embrace
Constructing new Roadways to Eternity.
The voice of Agni, echoing through the Night,
Created rings of Flame around the earth
To draw the Intermediate Zones above
Into a circuit for the gods and man.
Then through those ever-arching brilliances
The mighty Indra spoke to the Soul of the World.

"Hear me, O Mother ! Flame of the undying Sun !
Hark to the word of Indra, Lord of Swar.
Man's offerings I have drunk as the Soma-Wine
And thy works are freed from the bondage of the earth.
The Golden Source, to which thy heart aspires,
Now lives in a present and in a future Time
Yet rules enthroned for all eternity.
Beyond the frontiers of the three Vedic worlds,
Beyond the barriers of all Time and Space,
A Stranger-Gleam from far undreamed-of spheres
Enters the chaos of this mortal Hour.
A Principle divine of Truth and Light
New-born to earth through thine own Consciousness
Finds now a foothold on the Peaks of Life
To meet the aspiration of the world.

Golden it stands upon thy brow of Might,
A pillar of radiance seeking the unborn stars,
A standard of strength, an oriflamme of Truth
To illumine the valley of uncertain paths
Leading to high-held vistas of the Dawn.
That Dawn which man has ever sought in vain,
The first and constant longing of his soul;
That Hope, that ancient stirring of a heart
Towards the perfection of a greater Truth—
An unmixed Bliss—a godhead of Delight,
The secret Dream of Immortality.

That Dawn is the Seed of thy transcendent Love,
The ancient psychic seed of existent God
Sown in thy heart and the life of aspiring man
To rise from the soil of the inconscient earth,
To seek that origin from whence it came.

Ten millions years have come and passed away,
Ten million years thy soul has measured Time
Between the aeons of uncounted lives.
Thou, Mother of the Worlds, hast borne anew
The burden of this greater Consciousness,
Teaching the soul of earth to rise from pain
And the infinite striving of mortality.
Lifting again the Seed to the light of Day,
Forcing the Inconscient into a vast endeavour,
Forging new weapons for the ancient gods
To fashion Victory out of a labouring earth.
The Heavens declare thy Victory at last !
The Worlds draw near to man as man aspires;
The ancient gods are born to earth anew,
Their Powers surrendered to thy Mother Soul.

O Universal Priestess of the Flame !
O Mediatrix of evolution's urge !
O Luminous Mother of our future Dawns !
Reveal thy Blossom in each heart and mind,
In these thy faithful ones who people the earth—
As the Soma-Wine of earth's Felicity,

Her Light, her Truth and her Beatitude,
Open the petals of thy Love divine !
The Goal, the Purpose of all Victory.
Man's life, before a sacrifice to the gods,
Is now a journey on Roads of illumined Sight.
Climbing to wider plateaux of the Truth
He enters realms of vast complexity
And regions of thought beyond the bounds of earth.
He uses senses out of Time and Space
To gather knowledge of his wider life
And sees within himself a universe.
What was a holocaust to inconscient Night
Is now an Offering to the light of Day—
The outpressings of the Soma-Wine, O Soul !—
And still uplifted to the Powers above,
But free is the mind from the limits of the earth.
Now luminous waves of Truth enter earth's darkness,
Radiant thoughts divine are abroad on the air;
Heavens of Bliss descend upon minds that are mortal,
Pure, from the World of Truth comes thy Dawn-Light.
Sped by the Brides of the Morning, Casters of Heaven;
Sisters who dwell in thy world of purified mind-force
Enter the corridors of illumined thought,
Impelled by the Will of the brave and progressive Thinker,
Urged by the Shakti-Power of Love and Delight,
Snared by thy Voice and the Vision that stirs man to action,
Bound by thy Knowledge of all-victorious Truth,
Seen in the luminous heavens of all becoming—
Known to the Seer of Immortality.

Come, O man ! to the Peaks of the world that await you.
Come to the fields of Perfection extending the Godhead !
Come to this mightier Majesty, Truth manifesting !
Come to the Golden Bliss of the Glory Supreme !"

NORMAN DOWSETT

THE VISION OF THE GOOD IN PLATO

"Plato was a great writer as well as a philosopher—no more perfect prose has been written by any man—in some of his books his prose carries in it the qualities of poetry and his thought has poetic vision."—SRI AUROBINDO.[1]

"Plato exhibits a rare union of close and subtle logic with Pythian enthusiasm of poetry, melted by splendour and harmony of his periods into one irresistible stream of musical impressions which hurry the persuasions onward as in a breathless career."—SHELLEY.[2]

I

Plato is universally admitted to be one of the world's noblest and greatest figures of philosophy. His was a unique personality. He combined in himself the vision of a poet, the ardour of a mystic, the insight of a seer-philosopher and the strength and valour of a wrestler-*cum*-soldier. In a certain sense he represents the optimum development of Greek thought and culture. He has been also the most influential of all philosophers, ancient, medieval and modern. Post-platonic thinkers, even mystics and saints like Plotinus and St. Augustine, are full of admiration and love for him. His influence on modern European philosophy has been so great that Whitehead is led to say that "the safest general characterization of European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."[3] No greater tribute can ever be paid to a genius than this. Idealists, realists, sceptics, materialists, Catholics, Protestants, all have found an unfailing source of inspiration in him. His Dialogues have remained eternal and priceless treasures of the world. To read him and enter into his mind is to explore a kingdom of beauty, sublimity and perfection. To some, as to Emerson, Plato is philosophy, philosophy is Plato.

[1] From an unpublished letter.
[2] Quoted by Will Durant.
[3] Process and Reality.

II

The most revolutionary and powerful concept of Platonic thought is the "Idea of the Good." We shall try here to discuss the various ascepts of this supreme principle and make an attempt to find out what Plato's vision of it means. In the course of our discussion we shall analyse such Upanishadic teachings as seem to correspond to the Idea of the Good in Plato.

The central theme of the Platonic philosophy is the doctrine of Ideas—the Dialectic. The Dialectic forms the crown and consummation of all studies in Plato's scheme of Education. We must discuss for a while the significance and the character of the Ideas, since it is against the background of the theory of Ideas that we have to understand the Idea of the Good—the Supreme Idea.

The Platonic doctrine of Ideas has its birth in the Socratic teaching of the Concept: that which expresses the essence of a thing, that which signifies in a thing what it is, yet which is free from all particular qualities. The world of sense-perception is different from the world of pure thought. Thought fixes its attention not on what is peculiar in things but on the universal, that which is common to all things, which belongs to a kind of being. Thus it is not the particular in each separate thing that is lasting and essential, but that which it has in common with other things of its kind. This common quality which since Socrates we have called the Concept was termed by Plato the Idea. "We suppose an Idea to exist when we give the same name to many things." (*The Republic.*)

This is, however, one aspect of the Ideas: that they are universals. Plato proceeds still further and assigns a deeper metaphysical meaning to the Ideas. According to him, they form a world which exists of itself and is eternal and unchanging and can be only apprehended through contemplation—pure reason. In this free and independent state they have their abode in the supra-celestial place where the soul in its pre-existence has perceived them. Thus the Ideas are transcendental Realities, Pure Forms, and exist apart from the world of sensuous perception. In the *Timaeus* Plato writes; "Wherefore, we must acknowledge that there is one kind of being which is always the same, uncreated and indestructible, never receiving anything into itself from without nor itself going out anywhere, but invisible and imperceptible by any sense and of which the contemplation is granted only to the intelligence.. and there is another nature of the same name with it and like to it, perceived by sense, created, always in motion, becoming in place and again vanishing out of place, which is apprehended by opinion and sense."

Modern scholars like Jackson, Windelband and Burnet hold that the doctrine of Ideas as found in various Dialogues is not really a consistent and

homogeneous doctrine and that there is an earlier view and a later view. The earlier Dialogues are primarily Socratic, and Plato here merely repeats the distinction between sensibilia and concepts. Hence Burnet distinguishes Socratic Dialogues from Platonic Dialogue in which Plato outgrows the cramping influence of his master. Even, in his book *Platonism* Burnet opines that the entire doctrine of Ideas is Socratic. In the later Dialogues like the *Theaetetus Parmenides, Sophists, Statesman, Philebus,* the Ideas are considered as things in themselves and become principles of explanation, the universals, that are embedded in the particulars, giving a unity to the multiplicity of things. On the other hand, Jowett points out that there was no earlier or later draft of the theory of Ideas, that there was no real contradiction in Plato's exposition of his doctrine, that at bottom the teaching of Plato constituted a consistent piece of theory. According to Jowett, the doctrine of Ideas underwent a certain development in the various Dialogues, but that makes no difference in the original theory. Jowett supports the view that the Ideas are suprasensible entities and belong to the transcendental world.

Zeller holds that in the Platonic philosophy the doctrine of Ideas has a threefold significance: ontological, teleological and logical. Ontologically the Ideas represent the real being, the thing in itself, the pure forms. The teleological significance of the Ideas is this : that all becoming, including human conduct, has an end to be reached and finds its ultimate sense in being. Its end can only be in the realisation of that in which thought recognises the unchanging primary pattern of things. As such the Ideas are like the ideal images intuitively apprehended by an artist to which he endeavours to give a natural form. To this extent the Ideas have also the meaning of causes and moving forces which make the things of the world what they are. In their logical aspect the Ideas enable us to bring order into the chaos of the individual being, to recognise the similar and distinguish the dissimilar and to apprehend the One and the Many. Further, Zeller adds that these aspects are by no means of equal importance in Plato. In his later works their logical side gradually takes precedence without however the other two and, in particular, the ontological ever being abandoned.

According to Whitehead the Ideas of Plato are the same as his (Whitehead's) "Eternal Objects" which he calls the pure potentials. But in Plato's vision the Ideas are the ultimate realities and, as such, cannot be treated as pure potentials. The Ideas do not become real when they get themselves "actualised" in the world of experience. The "actual entities" of Whitehead, in relation to which he calls the Ideas pure potentials, are, from Plato's point of view, very poor stuff as compared with them. The reality of what Whitehead calls "the actual entities" is for Plato far inferior to that of the Ideas.

Hartmann is right when he calls the Ideas values but deviates from Plato when he attaches so much importance to the *realisation* of the Ideas in the empirical world. Of course the more an individual or thing partakes of an Idea, the more it expresses or realises that particular truth, and Plato encourages such expression, but the Ideas do not strive to realise themselves in the world of becomings and their Ideahood does not depend on how much they are realised in Matter. Both as Truth and Value they are real in their own being.

No doubt, Plato has not given us a consistent theory of Ideas. In his later Dialogues he identified the Ideas with the Pythagorean numbers. Of course the Ideas are universals, types, categories, forms or concepts of the mind but they are not merely mind's forms or abstract concepts. From the parable of the Cave it appears that the Ideas constitute a pure realm of forms, archetypes, essences and as such belong to the bright kingdom of the upper hemisphere. This world of 'substances' appears to be the causal world (*kāran jagat*) of which the Upanishads speak. This is the region from which the entire creation proceeds. "The true name of this causality is the Divine Law and the essence of that Law is an inevitable self-development of the truth of the thing that is, as Idea, in the very essence of what is developed,..."(Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 133.) Plato has got an intuition of this causal world of pure Forms but he does not give us a clear picture of it; for, the directly spiritual vision of it is lacking.

III

The doctrine of Ideas brings up a number of problems. The first question which arises is: How does the world of finite objects participate in the Ideas and how are the finite things created? Plato points out that the world is a creation of God who creates it after the pattern of Ideas. This, again, gives rise to the problem of the relation between Ideas and God. Besides, are there many Ideas or one Idea? It is here that Plato brings in the Idea of the Good as the greatest unifying and synthesising principle in which all Ideas get resolved. The multiplicity of things is resolved in the unity of the Idea, the multiplicity of Ideas also gets resolved in ever broader Ideas till in the end they all meet in the Idea of the Good. Thus the Idea of the Good constitutes the vital part of Plato's metaphysics. But this, then, raises another important question: what is the relation of God to the Idea of the Good? Is God in Plato a derivative, a representative power of this Idea ? The search for a solution of all these questions leads us naturally to the discussion of Plato's theory of creation and the determination of the status of God in his system with particular reference to the Idea of the Good.

Plato's theory of creation occurs in the *Timaeus* and here is an account of it as given by him in this famous Dialogue :

Tim : Is the world created or uncreated? That is the first question. Created, I reply, being visible and tangible and having a body and therefore sensible, and if sensible then created; and if created, made by a cause and that cause is the ineffable father of all things who had before him an eternal archetype. For to imagine that the archetype was created would be blasphemy, seeing that the world is the noblest of creatures and God is the best of causes. And the world being thus created according to the eternal pattern is the copy of something and we may assume that words are akin to the matter of what they speak.

Sim : Excellent, Timaeus, I like your manner of approaching the subject, proceed.

Tim : Why did the Creator create the world ? He was good and therefore not jealous and being free from jealousy he desired that all things should be like himself.

(*The Timaeus* 29-3, Jowett's translation)

The most fundamental question, in this connection, according to Jowett, is : In what relation does the archetype stand to the Creator himself ? In other words, how is God related to the Ideas ? It is definitely clear from the above description of the *Timaeus* that God himself is not an Idea, for God is conceived as creating the world in accordance with the pattern which is fixed by the Ideas. The Ideas, moreover, are immobile and have no power of creation or generation. Taylor, in his celebrated work, *Plato, the Man and His Work*, strongly emphasised the fact that the God of the *Timaeus* is not a form but a soul. He says, "God and the forms are to be kept distinct in Plato, for the simple reason that the activity of God in producing a world 'like' the forms is the one explanation Plato ever offers of the way in which the participation of things in forms is effected. If God simply meant the same thing as the forms, why should there be any becoming at all ?" (p.442.) Thus the God of the *Timaeus* is a theistic and personal God creating the world according to some pattern or design. Moreover, from this discussion it is evident that God as the creator, as the Demiurge, is subordinate to the Idea. His position is in many respects similar to that of the Ishwara of the Adwaita Vedanta. Like the timeless, spaceless, immobile, transcendent, supra-cosmic Brahman of the Adwaita, the Ideas are static and devoid of creativity. But it is the Ishwara who is the principle of creation and activity and it is he who is treated as the Creator of the world of becoming and change. But we may well ask :

is he just the Lord of Maya and is he *māyāsavala*, or *māyāvisīsthat*, tainted by Maya ?

Plato is not consistent in his conception of God in all his Dialogues. For example, in one passage in the *Parmenides* (134 D) God alone is said to have absolute knowledge. Similarly in a passage in the *Theaetetus* he is said to be absolute righteousness. Again, in a significant passage of the *Republic* (597) Plato holds that God is the Creator of Ideas. Here God is spoken of as the Creator of the Ideal bed which is nothing else than the Idea of bed. We can see clearly from these accounts that Plato oscillates between two conceptions of God. On the one hand, God is conceived as a subordinate principle to the Idea, and on the other hand God is conceived as the absolute. principle—the author of absolute knowledge, absolute righteousness, even the author of Ideas. It is in the latter sense that God is identical with his Idea of the Good. According to S. K. Maitra, Plato's oscillation between the two conceptions of God is due to a conflict in his system—the conflict between reason and intuition. Maitra remarks, "The logic of the theory of Ideas requires that the Ideas should maintain their supremacy and even God should be made subordinate to them, but Plato's philosophical insight seemed to revolt against this and hence the oscillation, which is the first sign in him of a conflict between intuition and reason. Plato remained to the end true to the Greek spirit and never deserted the path of reason....Plato did not also want to leave the guidance of intuition and hence the conflict." (*The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy*, p. 295.) Further, Maitra adds that this conflict deepened in his Idea of the Good. Let us now turn to this Idea.

K. C. PATI

(To be continued)

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

Some Criticisms and Suggestions

16

WHAT remains for us to do is to recognise the Macedonian prefects in the Vahlıkas of the Meherauli Pillar, whom Chandra vanquished after crossing the mouths of the Indus. Let us ask where exactly these Vahlikas are to be located. S. N. Majumdar[1] writes in a note to Ptolemy's *Geography* : "Reference in Sanskrit Literature clearly indicates the Bāhlikas, or rather the two tribes of them, as dwelling in the Punjab. One of these tribes was closely connected with the Madras, for Śalya, a king of Mādra (with its capital at modern Sialkot), is also called lord of the Vāhlikas (Mahābhārata, Ādi CXIII, 4425-40; LXVII, 2642) and his sister Madri is called Vāhliki also (Ādi, CXXV, 4886). The other people of this name appear to have been connected with the Daradas (Dards of Dardastan) (Bhisma, CXVIII, 5484 etc.). Thus one Bāhlika was situated in the plains of the Panjab alongside the Madradeśa, *i.e.*, between the rivers Chenab and Sutlej; and the other among the lower slopes of the Himālayas, very possibly between the Chenab and Beas." The people living round Balkh or Bactria are also known as the Vāhlikas. Then there is the dynasty of three Bālhika rulers placed by the Puranas in the region of Mahisamati on the Narmada.

The last can be rejected immediately since these rulers are to the east of the Indus and do not involve its crossing. The people living round Balkh are also to be rejected because, as Allan[2] correctly points out, the inscription cannot mean that "Chandra's arms penetrated to Balkh, the route to which would not be across the mouths of the Indus." An attempt is sometimes made to get round this difficulty by saying[3] that Chandra is merely referring to the four limits of the territory traversed by him in the course of his *digvijaya* : the eastern limit is Vanga, the southern the southern sea, the western the seven mouths of the Indus and the northern the Valhikas. In

[1] *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, p.395.
[2] *Catalogue of Coins, the Gupta Dynasty* etc; Introduction, p. xxxvi.
[3] Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 276, note 4.

support of this it is sought to be proved[1] from numerous inscriptions and literary works that Chandra's claim of having conquered the *chakravartikshetra* is the conventional claim of a digvijayain and would call for just those four limits. But all such arguments completely overlook the syntax of the sentence concerned. Even R. C. Majumdar[2] who is for Balkh is forced to translate the sentence thus : "he defeated a confederacy of hostile chiefs in Vaṅga and, having crossed in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu, conquered the Vāhlikas." Further, the sentence leaves the southern sea entirely out, as if the intention were not in the least to mark the four limits of the conquered territory : the southern sea comes in considerably later in another sentence. The interpretation "Balkh" is quite gratuitous.

Even the Balhikas of north-western India, the two peoples in the upper Indus-region, cannot serve : they too do not need to be reached across the mouths of the river. The enemy is undoubtedly to the west of the Indus and must be one with whom the fight had to begin at the mouths and get essentially decided there, even if it had to spread subsequently along the whole Indus-region and officially terminate in the north where the celebrating Pillar was mounted on the Vishnupada hill which—as Sircar[3] tells us—was not far from the Kuruskshetra and the Beas.

An unconventional meaning has to be found for the term "Vahlikas". Of course, the possibility is there that, as S. N. Majumdar[4] conjectures, the indigenous Vahlikas themselves migrated southwards near the mouths of the Indus. But nowhere in Sanskrit Literature do we have the slightest hint of such a migration. Many tribes are put in various divisions of India or various parts of the same division. Thus[5] not only are the Kiratas placed in the East as well as in the North-west but the Mahabharata places the Trigartas in the southern no less than in the northern part of the North. The Sudras and the Ramathas (known also as the Ramanas) whom the Epic locates in the southern part are located by the Markandeya Purana in the northern.[6] Many tribes were widely diffused. The Valhikas are not among them. No less than the Epic and the Puranas, the *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* mentions them with northern peoples.

Raychaudhuri[7] claims to find a people that can be called Vahlika just where it is wanted : he says, "The Vahlikas beyond the seven mouths of the Indus are apparently the Baktrioi occupying the country near Arachosia in

[1] *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Letters, Vol. V, pp. 407-15.
[2] *The Classical Age*, p. 20
[3] *Select Inscriptions*, p. 277, note 5.
[4] Mc Crindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, edited by S.N. Majumdar, p. 395.
[5] Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part I, pp. 101-2.
[6] *Ibid.* [7] *The Political History of Ancient India.* (3rd Ed.), p. 364 footnote 2.

the time of the geographer Ptolemy." There is a mistake here : Ptolemy does not state, as Raychaudhuri suggests, that the Baktrioi are between the mouths of the Indus and Arachosia. What comes between is the country of Gedrosia (modern Baluchistan) and here in the maritime parts immediately adjoining the Indus the Arbitai are put by Ptolemy;[1] in the north of this country, not far from the Indus, are the Rhamnai (the Indian Ramanas). Then we have Arachosia itself to the north-west of Gedrosia. The tribes of south Arachosia who would be nearest to—though distant enough from—the lower Indus are the Rhoploutai and the Eoritai.[2] And only between Arachosia and Drangiana (Seistan) to the west of Arachosia are the Baktrioi.[3] It is impossible to identify them with the Vahlikas of the Meherauli Pillar.

The sole alternative left is a suggestion made by Allan.[4] He opines that in the time of Chandra "the name Vāhlika had acquired a more general significance and was used like Pahlava, Yavana, etc., of a body of foreign invaders of India". Allan had no intention of identifying the Vahlikas of the Meherauli record with the prefects of Alexander : so his opinion comes with an independence most helpful to our view and saves our view from seeming biassed. And we may add that the movement we have inferred of the flight with the Vahlikas is precisely such as we have attributed to Chandragupta I if he were Sandrocottus—a movement starting from the Lower Sind territory, where Arrian's Kokala and the *Kaumudīmahotsava*'s Karaskara country were situated, and carrying the fight up to the northernmost part of the Beas where also the Macedonian prefects ruled.

Nor is the identity of movement as between Chandra and Chandragupta the sole one to be marked. To Sandrocottus himself our historians attribute a like military progression. "It is significant", writes Mookerji,[5] "that at the partition of Alexander's empire at Triparadisus in 321 B.C. nothing is said of Sind, the satrap of which, Pithon, son of Agenor, was transferred to the north-west, but no one else was appointed in his place. At the time of this arrangement the ruler of Taxila and Porus were practically left supreme in their domains with added power and territory. This virtual surrender of Indian possessions in 321 B.C. was due to the feeling freely expressed, that 'it would be dangerous to circumscribe the jurisdiction of the Indian rulers except with the support of an expedition equipped on a scale of the first magnitude and commanded by a general of the highest capacity ! There is thus no doubt that the Indian situation had materially changed for the worse in 321 B.C. and possibly as early as 323 B.C. when the first partition was made of Alexander's empire."

[1] *Op. cit*, p. 320. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 316. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 313. [4] *Op. cit.*
[5] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 58.

Then Mookerji gives what seems "the most reasonable explanation"—namely, that Sandrocottus "had begun the war of liberation, most probably in the Lower Sindhu valley, before 321 or even before 323 B.C." So the Lower Sindhu valley is the starting-point. The ending-point of the war of liberation is indicated by Mookerji : "This task was not probably completed before 317 B.C. ; for Eudemus, the commander of the garrison in Western Punjab, ...left India in that year with all his forces to join the coalition of the Eastern satraps, never to return again." Western Punjab is the ending-point—not far from the place where Chandra's Pillar was planted after his victory over the Vahlikas.

All lines converge not only on the possibility of Chandra being the first Gupta but also on the possibility of foreign invaders being called Vahlikas and of the Vahlikas in Chandra's inscription being the Macedonian prefects and their garrisons. How apt the designation is for them is apparent the moment we ask : By what route did Alexander swoop down on India ? After noting that in the eastern and north-eastern provinces of the Persian empire Alexander built a chain of garrisoned outpost cities among which was "Alexendria-under-the-Caucasus", *i.e.* at the foot of the Hindu Kush, where three routes to Bactria converge, Mookerji[1] writes : "From the Kabul valley Alexander proceeded towards the north up the Panjshir valley and through the Khawak Pass. At the beginning of 327 B.C. he had completed the conquest of Eastern Irān beyond the Hindu Kush by overrunning Bactria and the region now known as Bokhara, as far as the Syr Daria (Jaxartes). In May 327 B.C. he advanced towards India. He returned through the Kushan Pass and made a descent upon Alexandria, where he deposed the satrap for misgovernment. Then he moved to Nicaea. From Nicaea, as the outpost nearest to India, he despatched emissaries to the king of Taxila (Takshaśilā) and other princes to the west of the Sindhu, informing them of his intentions and inviting them to meet him to discuss terms which might obviate his contemplated invasion." Clearly, the descent through the Kushan Pass which lies in the Hindu Kush was from Bactria[2] and the advance to Alexandria-under-the-Caucasus where three routes to Bactria converge made all the more his army of invasion an enemy from Bactria (Balkh), so that the general name Bahlika or Vahlika for a body of foreign invaders suited it to the ground. Further, the establishment of Macedonian power centrally in the upper Indus-region, with the Beas for its eastern boundary—that is, in the region traditionally associated with the old indigenous clan Vahlika—confirmed the suitableness of the general name. Need we then be surprised that the prefects left behind should also be Vahlikas ?

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4. [2] *Ibid.*, *vide* Map 2.

We may add that Seleucus Nicator is also known to have "passed into India" after conquering Bactria.

It may seem intolerably novel to some minds that the Macedonian invaders of India could be known as Vahlikas rather than as Yavanas. But only if Asoka's R.E. II and R.E. XIII where the Yona raja Amtiyoka is mentioned are taken as inscribed between 259 and 256 B.C. can we claim the latter appellation for them. No other ground can be conceived of. Mere uncritical habit has rendered it natural-seeming to apply this appellation. The moment we identify the first Gupta instead of the first Maurya with Sandrocottus we open up a new view in which there is nothing absurd in speaking of the Macedonians as Vahlikas. The Greeks as Yavanas are heard of with any definiteness in only the second and the first centuries before Christ : for example, in the Besnagar inscription of the "Yavana Heliodorus". And it is interesting to remark that even the Greeks who came to be called Yavanas in those centuries were the Greeks who were Bactrians or Indo-Bactrians—themselves Vahlikas in the strict sense. When these Greek Vahlikas entered India after a sufficiently long settlement in Bactria they carried with them the label Yauna which the Persians had given the Greeks from the end of the sixth century B.C. and which was phonetically matched by the Indian labels Yona and Yavana, designations once for an indigenous tribe settled on the west and north-west but later for foreigners from a western or north-western direction. The Macedonians who entered India from Bactria without any prolonged settlement in that province had no reason to be described as Yavanas rather than as Vahlikas.

A further point in the identification of Chandra with Sandrocottus no less than with Chandragupta I is that the war with the Vangas in the east preceded the war with the Vahlikas in the west. We may recall the words of Raychaudhuri, Majumdar and Datta[1]: "The use of the term *deinde* ('thereafter', 'some time after') in connection with the war against the prefects of Alexander suggests that the acquiescence of Indians in a change of government and the establishment of a new sovereignty is quite distinct from the war with the Macedonian prefects. There was an interval between the two events, and the Macedonian War came some time after the change of government among Indians." By "change of government among Indians" is meant the assumption of sovereignty by Sandrocottus both in "the plains and uplands of the Indian interior" and in "the lower Indus valley." As sovereignty in the lower Indus valley is connected with the campaign against the prefects we may legitimately put it subsequent to sovereignty in the Indian interior, attained by instigating the Indians "to overthrow the existing government" which was that of Xan-

[1] *An Advanced History of India*, pp. 100-1.

drames. Thus we have a broad parallel to the formation of the basic Gupta dominion from a part of Bengal and from the Magadhas up to Oudh in the west and, during this formation with the help evidently of the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi's followers, the fight against the Vanga confederacy on the eastern front and, after the formation, a western extension culminating in the conquest of the Indus-region from the Vahlikas.

The one objection that can be based on Greek sources is that, while the Meherauli Pillar mentions seven mouths of the Indus, Arrian recounting the history of Alexander mentions only two. In Chapter II of his *Indika*[1] he says that the Indus pours its waters into the ocean by two mouths : "these mouths are not close to each other like the five mouths of the Ister (Danube), but diverge like those of the Nile, by which the Egyptian delta is formed. The Indus in like manner makes an Indian delta, which is not inferior in area to the Egyptian, and is called in the Indian tongue Pattala." As this chapter is part of the section based on Megasthenes the discrepancy is serious to all appearance. In his *Anabasis of Alexander*[2] he speaks, in Chapter XVIII, of the Indus dividing near the city Patala into "large rivers both of which retain the name of Indus as far as the sea" and in Chapter XX he repeats the same information in other words. In his own time, however, there was Ptolemy[3] who gives the mouths as seven and just before his own birth there was the author of the *Periplus*[4] who gives the same number as Ptolemy. So we have either to believe that the number increased from two to seven between the date of Megasthenes (*c.* 300 B. C.) and that of the author of the *Periplus* (*c.* 70-80 A.D.) or consider Arrian mistaken or else understand him in a special sense which does not exclude the possibility of seven mouths

The increase is not ruled out, since McCrindle[5] noted in 1885 that the mouths were eleven in his day. But the possibility of it does not impose itself in view of the fact that, in connection with rivers, Arrian is at variance with others who too base themselves on Megasthenes. Thus unlike Pliny, he[6] does not take as a tributary of the Ganges the river Jamuna called Jobares by him and Jomanes by Pliny and said by both to be flowing between the town Methora and the town called Chrysobora (or Carisobora) by Pliny and Kleisobora by Arrian. Again, in Chapter IV of the *Indika*[7] he enumerates seventeen tributaries of the Ganges whereas Pliny counts nineteen. In the same chapter he names only thirteen tributaries of the Indus, but in his own *Anabasis* he numbers them as fifteen which is also the number given by Strabo but is less by four than that found

[1] McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 183.
[2] p. 321,323 (Chinnock's translation).
[3] Mc Crindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, edited by S.N. Majumdar, p. 83.
[4] *Ibid.* [5] *Op. Cit.*, p. 187. [6] *Ibid* p. 98 [7] *Ibid.* p. 141.

in Pliny.[1] Arrian is thus contradicted by even himself in matters about rivers and can differ by as large a number as five from another writer drawing upon Megasthenes. Can we then accept as a critical difficulty his two mouths instead of the seven we require ? It is very likely that he is mistaken. The possibility of a mistake strikes us forcibly when we see even an avowed geographer like Ptolemy[2] mentioning only three tributaries of the Ganges in contrast to the seventeen of Arrian and the nineteen of Pliny. Should we believe that between the date of Megasthenes and that of Pliny the Ganges lost fourteen or sixteen tributaries? Further, we read at one place in Pliny[3] that the Indus before falling into the ocean forms two islands, "an extremely large island which is called Prasiané, and a smaller one, called Patalé." As the delta is evidently spoken of, this would imply at least three branches of the river joining the sea and lead us to doubt whether Megasthenes has mentioned only two.

Perhaps Arrian is not contradicted at all by the *Periplus* and the *Geography* if we understand him to refer merely to the bifurcation that took place at the city which he calls Patala in the *Anabasis* and which gave the name Pattala to the whole delta in the *Indika* : the difference between the Ister and the Indus would lie in that the former split at one point into five branches not widely separated and the latter split into two far apart like the branches of the Nile. Below that one point there may have been minor splittings ignored by Arrian, towards the sea from the two main branches of the Indus, whether inside or outside the enclosed area. Their presence would not vitiate the comparison with the Nile and the contrast to the Ister. And it is clear that by "mouths" Arrian means not precisely the places of immediate entry into the sea, for he speaks of the divergence of the mouths, thus implying the high-up common point of parting, and he speaks also of the large delta formed by the mouths, thus implying the whole triangle made by that point and the points of entry into the ocean. Arrian's "mouths" are simply the two main oceanward forks of the lower course of the river from the city Patala sufficiently distant from the ocean and do not necessarily preclude offshoots from the forks within the delta or without it. We begin to suspect the non-preclusion when we read in Ptolemy[4] exactly the same information about the two branches. Referring to the delta made by them he writes in almost a paraphrase of Arrian: "The insular portion formed by the bifurcation of the river towards its mouth is Patalene." This information does not prevent Ptolemy from giving the Indus seven mouths. Why should its occurrence in Arrian be taken to limit the mouths to just two in his day ? The records about Alexander used by him in the *Anabasis*

[1] *Ibid*, p. 191, foot note.
[2] *Op. Cit.*, pp. 96-97.
[3] *Op. Cit*, p. 141.
[4] *Op. cit.* p. 136.

were concerned only to describe Alexander's exploration of the seaward route *via* both the main forks of the river from the city Patala and may have stopped with them without mentioning the smaller mouths neglected and untraversed by Alexander. In the *Indika*, at the end of Chapter XVII which closes the section based on Megasthenes, Arrian declares : "Since my design in drawing up the present narrative was not to describe the manners and customs of the Indians, but to relate how Alexander conveyed his army from India to Persia, let this be taken as a mere episode." What led to his omission of the seven mouths in the one book can be legitimately thought to have worked also in the other to the same effect.

Looking at the problem from all points of view, we cannot plump for an increase of the number of mouths from two to seven in the four centuries from Megasthenes to the author of the *Periplus*. The two other alternatives are as credible, if not even more. The apparent discrepancy between Arrian and the Meherauli Pillar has therefore to be disqualified as an argument against us.

In the context of the "running fight" across the mouths of the Indus, we may make a reference to the lion which in Justin's account served as an omen, from the Gods, of Sandrocottus's future royalty. The sponsors of the first Maurya have seen in Sandrocottus's encounter with a lion and an elephant a concordance with the Indian tradition that Chandragupta Maurya was residing in the Vindhya forest when Chanakya, fleeing from the Nanda king, repaired to it also, ultimately meeting him there. We have considered this point flimsy in itself, but if any weight is to be attached to it we may ask for greater attention to the fact that the Gupta Chandragupta's coins[1] depict on their obverse a goddess seated on a lion. The king-symbol and its divine source, as indicated in Justin's account, are both precisely present, linking, as it were, Chandragupta with Alexander. And even Justin's story of a wild elephant offering itself to Chandragupta for a ride as if it were a tame one may be fancied as remembered in a coin[2] supposed to have been struck by the first Gupta's great grandson; Kumaragupta I. There a king rides on a splendid elephant. But since, in Mookerji's words,[3] "there is no clue to connect this coinage with Kumaragupta", we may well conceive the king to be Chandragupta I. Justin's statement that Sandrocottus, after replacing the prefects, showed himself equally autocratic and forfeited the name of liberator, finds some echo in an Indian tradition that the Guptas were severe rulers. We need not regard all of them as such nor any one of them as such everywhere and always. But a belief about their severity persisted up to the time of Alberuni[4] who writes : "People say that the Guptas

[1] *The Classical Age*. p. 13.
[2] Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, p. 380.
[3] *The Gupta Empire*, p. 89.
[4] Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, II, p. 7.

were wicked powerful people." In the Buddhist *Manjusrīmūlakalpa*[1] Samudragupta is described as follows : "He was lordly, shedder of excessive blood, of great powers and dominion, heartless, ever vigilant (mindful) about his own person, unmindful about the hereafter, sacrificing animals; with bad councillor he greatly committed sin." A suggestive point here is that the *Manjusrīmūlakalpa* which starts the Guptas with Samudragupta is speaking about the founder of their dynasty.

When we come to Justin's phrase about the possession of India by Sandrocottus and to Plutarch's about the overrunning and subduing of all India by him we cannot think more appropriately of any Indian king with a name like his than the Meherauli Pillar's Chandra about whom Mookerji notes from the inscription not only conquest of the Vanga countries and of the Vahlika but also spread of fame as conqueror up to the southern seas and achievement of sole supreme sovereignty in the world by the prowess of his arms. This very fact, since Sandrocottus cannot be identified with Chandragupta II nor Chandra of the Meherauli Pillar with Chandragupta Maurya, should strongly recommend the identification of Chandra with Chandragupta I and of Chandragupta I with Sandrocottus.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

[1] Ed. R. Sanktyayana, appended to Jayaswal's *Imperial History of India*, p. 48, verses 649ff.

Students' Section

THE MOTHER ANSWERS A CHILD'S QUESTTIONS

1

Q. Quand le Seigneur Suprême t'a dit de faire le monde, comment as-tu su ce qu'il fallait faire?

R. Je n'ai rien eu à apprendre pour cela, parce que le Seigneur Suprême contient toute chose en Lui-même : le monde tout entier, la connaissance du monde et le pouvoir de le faire. Quand Il a décidé qu'il y aurait un monde, Il a d'abord fait sortir la connaissance du monde et le pouvoir de le faire et cela c'est moi et alors Il m'a commandé de faire le monde. (25-9-1957.)

2

Q. Pourquoi es-tu venue comme nous sommes? Pourquoi n'es-tu pas venue comme tu es vraiment?

R. Parce que si je n'étais pas venue comme vous êtes, je n'aurais jamais pu être proche de toi et je n'aurais pas pu te dire : "Deviens ce que je suis." (27-9-1957.)

Q. When the Supreme Lord told you to make the world, how did you know what had to be done?

A. I had nothing to learn for that, because the Supreme Lord contains everything in Himself : the whole world, the knowledge of the world and the power to make it. When He decided that there should be a world, He first brought forth the knowledge of the world and the power to make it and that is I and then He commanded me to make the world. (25-9-1957.)

2

Q. Why did you come like us? Why did you not come as you truly are?

A. Because if I did not come like you, I could never be close to you and I would not be able to tell you : "Become what I am." (27-9-1957.)

THE GARBA

(The introductory speech to the performance given before the Mother on September 8, 1957, by the girl-students of the Ashram, accompanied with music by the boy-students.)

THE Garba of Gujarat is its special cultural feature in which the worship of the Divine Mother as the supreme creatrix takes the form of a folk-dance, accompanied by a large variety of sweet musical tunes and the clapping of hands to supply Tala to the circling steps. A graceful swinging movement of the expressive body, a fervour of love for the Mother whose presence is invoked, and the gushing joy of the music and the dance and the beat of Mridanga and the like, give to Garba a charm of its own that takes possession of the aesthetic and the devotional being in man and transports him to a plane of holy pleasure, far superior to the one to which our natural self is accustomed.

The bright half of the month of Ashvin is in Gujarat, as in Bengal, the brightest period of the year, and men and women, small and great are filled to overflowing with the spirit of the autumnal moon, that makes them sing and dance round the holy Light of the Divine Mother; as represented by the Garba, a beautifully decorated big earthen pot with hundreds of holes through which the loving Light burning within reaches out to all the aspiring souls arround. It is a symbol of the one central Divine Light that manifests itself in all the universe.

Our children to-day in their modest capacity will perform the Garba-dance, and also one with the rhythmic beating of Dandia, the sticks of the circular play-dance in humble imitation of the Rasa of Vrindavan.

This is only a poor beginning; but in the near future we hope that by the Mother's Grace the Garba will go on developing more and more, with more and more non-Gujaratis joining the circle of joy around our most adorable Mother.

PUJALAL

TO THE DAWN

Tell me, O bright and brightening Dawn,
Where hast thou got his glow
That melts the night and makes the lotus
Bloom in the lakes below ?

Who has bestowed upon thy lips
This gold-red smile of heaven,
For which our earthly glooms are yearning,
Banished from the ecstasies seven ?

O Bride of the Brightest, by whom are these
Thy garments woven with wonder ?
Say, didst thou raid God's ruby-realms
And His hidden treasures plunder ?

O Fawn of the farthest emerald-world,
Leave not, leave not so soon;
Our hearts, in love with thy colour and call,
Implore thy Presence' boon.

PUJALAL

THOUGHTS ON WORDSWORTH

"I AM nothing", said Wordsworth, "if I am not a teacher". This kind of self-declaration makes any reader feel that Wordsworth found himself a dedicated spirit. Indeed Wordsworth had a great consciousness of a mission, not self-chosen, but inspired by an almost supernatural source. He himself says so in *The Prelude*:

> Ah ! need I say, dear Friend that to the brim
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.[1]

No wonder Wordsworth assumes the dignity and the authority of a Prophet !

> Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
> A lasting inspiration, sanctified
> By Reason and by Truth. What we have loved,
> Others will love; and we may teach them too,
> Instruct them how the mind of Man becomes
> A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
> On which he dwells, above this frame of things...

Further, in a letter addressed to Lady Beaumont, he writes,

"There is scarcely one of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment or to some general principle, or law of thought or of our intellectual constitution".

All these things go to convince us that the great poet was also a great teacher of humanity. The subject matter of his teaching is the realisation of

[1] Bk. IV. L. 333.

the Vision of Unity of Life with a profound emphasis on wise passiveness and on the positive value of the senses and the Imagination. Equal emphasis is given to the profound distrust of the logical faculty and to an appreciation of the Science of Feelings. The educative value of communion with Nature is the third feature of his teaching. "The Recluse", which may be taken as the key to the life-work of Wordsworth, throws much light on his teachings. He declares the theme of his poetry in these words:

> How exquisitely the individual Mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external World
> Is fitted: — and how exquisitely, too—
> Theme this but little heard of among men—
> The external world is fitted to the Mind;
> And the creation (by no lower name
> Can it be called) which they with blended might
> Accomplish: — this is our high argument.

Hence we see that the theme is the grand Unity of Man with his environment or the Absolute Harmony of all Creation. Wordsworth valued much the state of man's consciousness when the simple truth of absolute harmony is revealed to the Individual Man. In his own poetic way he termed it the experience of "unknown modes of being" or "that serene and blessed mood."

When one has the Vision of this Unity, one feels 'the joy that is in widest commonalty spread' and "a peace that passeth all understanding". Finally "spiritual love of universal birth from heart to heart leaps", as he expresses it in his poem entitled "To my Sister". In these "Vigils of Contemplation", in this unique state the old distinctions marked and boundaries drawn between Nature and Man, Man and Mind, fade before his piercing gaze. The dawn of Truth is perceived because of the heightened consciousness of Man. But Reason, "that humbler Power" which carries on its own inglorious work, by ogic and minute analysis becomes a bar in the realisation of this total Vision. It divides things, analyses them, instead of giving a composite or in the modern phrase a "Synoptic vision". He speaks of the meddling intellect which murders to dissect. In *The Excursion* he speaks of the same faculty which views all things in 'disconnection'. So it becomes necessary that if Man wants to have the Vision of Unity, he has not to proceed with his intellection, but cultivate a wise passivity. Passivity again consists in the suspension of analytical awareness. In short, alert non-intellectual awareness[1] is the suggestion as brought out in the poem "The Poet's Epitaph."

Wordsworth believes that women, children, and unsophisticated people among the rustics have this wise passiveness naturally and spontaneously. This is not to say that Wordsworth had no faith in the work of Science. Science as an attempt at discovering the Absolute Truth or as a unifying Principle, Wordsworth has admired. He speaks of Poetry as the Science of Feelings, and "the impassioned countenance of all Science." Man has to proceed by his reliance on the senses and the Imagination. Prof. Garrod helps us to understand this point better. He remarks :

"The mysticism of Wordsworth is rooted in *sensationalism.* The eye cannot choose but see. When I talk of sensationalism, I have to distinguish between the sensationalisms of Wordsworth and Keats. For Wordsworth, the senses are to be relied upon, very ardently, for they kindle the creative imagination and point to a world beyond the senses with the impressions they had gathered on the level of the mighty world of the eye and the ear. This quality is the texture of the romantic imagination and, for a romantic, imagination means a faculty to see directly and immediately the truth behind appearances.

"For Keats, it is difficult to get out of the *sensuous* experiences, he loses himself in the afflatus whatever the soaring heights of his imagination may be. As an instance, in his *Ode to Melancholy*, he says,

> Imprison her soft hand and let her rave,
> And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

Or again take the lines,

> Pilllowed upon my fair love's ripening breast
> To feel forever its swell....

But the delight on the level of the *senses* points to nothing sensual or sensational in it for Wordsworth. It is not as though imagination is opposed to Reason, but itself becomes an instrument of the perception of Truth—'Reason in her most exalted mood' becomes the handmaid of his faith."

For Blake and Coleridge imagination is the be-all and end-all. Blake says, "Mental things are alone real, what is called corporeal nobody knows of its dwelling place, it is in fallacy and its experience an imposture. Where is the existence out of mind or thought ? Where is it but in the mind of a fool ?" In the case of Coleridge "The Mind is the image of the Creator". Wordsworth accepts the independent existence of the external world, and says that the imagination must in some sense conform to it.

A plastic power
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood—
A local spirit of his own at war
With general tendency, but for the most
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed.

The imagination must be subservient to the external world, for that world is not dead but living with a soul distinct from the soul of man. Man's task is to enter into communion with this soul. Though, for Wordsworth, this world has an independent reality, there are some moments when he leaps beyond the bounds of this world, and passes into some other order of being vaster and more wonderful.

The light of sense
Goes out in flashes, that have shown to us
The Invisible World" (Bk.IV.Prelude).

What Wordsworth prized most in Nature was its capacity to open to him another world through vision. Inevitably it follows that it inspires man with spiritual love.

Thy love is human merely, this proceeds
More from the brooding soul, and is divine,
This love more intellectual cannot be
Without imagination, which, in truth
Is but another name for absolute strength
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the moving soul
Of our long labour.

The educative value of the Teacher is fulfilled not only because of his definition of Creative Imagination but because of the progressive steps along which he takes us to that state of Imaginative awareness. First of all, this imagination can be evoked by communion with Nature. Nature, according to the poet, can give man the integral culture that all parts and planes of his being are in need of. It gives man the senses, the emotions, the moral being and the spiritual Awakening. In the Lucy Poems we see how Nature delights

the senses and the emotions of the Poet. The distinctive feature of Wordsworth's view on the educative value of Nature is : 1) The Vision of Unity. 2) The Power of Nature to influence and mould man's moral being. Wordsworth believes that the moral structure is nothing but the expression of a state of harmony of man's faculties. Nature gives in a state of joy the harmony of the inner self, which governs all our actions and doings.

The Tintern Abbey poem which has been rightly said to be 'the consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith' expounds this creed of the poet more elaborately than any other poem. There are three movements in the poem, namely : 1) The circumstances of the poet's past, causing the spiritual experience, 2) the actual experience through nature and the various stages leading to the final consummate realisation, 3) the effect of the experience which enabled him to utter a promise and a message plus the invocation to Nature to educate his sister as she has educated his own self. The sense of a vast superhuman Life rolling through all things is fused in this poem with an exquisite insight into the condition of struggling and suffering man. Looking at the godhead in Nature, wonderful and mysterious, 'whose dwelling is the light of setting suns', he yet is mindful of 'the still sad music of humanity.' A critic has said : "Pause for a moment—'the still sad music of humanity'. It bears the full accent of Wordsworth's poetry. We can say of it that its music echoes in exact equivalence the emotional perception the words express. The vowels and consonants are musically combined but the force of the line comes from the conjunction of a purely 'emotive phrase' like still sad music with a word of vague but immense associations like 'humanity' ".

Perhaps even greater than the Tintern Abbey poem is the famous Ode. "In no poem are the poetic conditions more perfectly fulfilled than in 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early childhood.' The theme is for him the central theme, the immortal nature of the human spirit, intuitively known by the child, partly forgotten by the growing man, but to be known once more in maturity through intense experience of heart and mind". The intense experience of the poet is not an ordinary state, but a question of travel in the realm of the In-conscious and looking at the normal life with the *enthousiasmos*, as psychologists term it. Therefore the poet is able to charge the very word he uses with a greater life. There is an element which transcends the limit of space and time. This we know from our movements in dreams in larger conceptions of time and space. If we go more and more inward, we pass beyond space and time, and ultimately reach the state of Immortality or God-Conscious State. This is said in one straight expression—"The Kingdom of God is within". The more we progress in the In-conscious realms, we come face to face with an ordered whole. To have the realisation of

harmony in that state is the attainment of the Immortal State. The warm light of intuition of a mystic is necessary to move and roll in that state of Godliness. The next nearest to that great state of Godliness or Immortality is surely to have the *Intimations* of Immortality. So we can say that Wordsworth had the glimpse of the Eternal but not the permanent experience of it.

Later, he seems to have lost even the glimpse. Then he turned orthodox Anglican theology. It has become customary to distinguish two Wordsworths. The natural distinction is between the early, the young Wordsworth, and the late, the elderly and old; the revolutionary, the radical and the pantheist who was to the conventional Christian a semi-atheist—and the conservative, the orthodox, the defender of Church and State. The two Wordsworths meet, they often join forces, but they are not, alas ! one. And Lowell remarked that this William Wordsworth, Esq. of Rydal Mount is one person, and the William Wordsworth he so heartily reverenced quite another.

Critics have explained the evident decline in Wordsworth's poetic powers after the great decade in various ways. Some attribute it to his conversion to orthodox Christianity, others to his failure to adopt the full Christian faith, others to his abortive love affair with Annette, which ought to have led to marriage, and a recent writer thinks that his marriage with Mary Hutchinson was a cardinal mistake, and that he would have fulfilled his destiny if he had stuck to Dorothy. The question they are all trying to answer is : Why did he not go on writing great poetry till the end of his life? It may be that there is a psychological answer to such a question. But the answer cannot be more than what we call nowadays anybody's guess. But the safe answer would be "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth." When it ceases to blow, or blows but feebly and fitfully, what is a poet to do? Wordsworth took the way that was inevitable for him, he doggedly pursued his vocation, pursued it as a man with a moral purpose and as a self-respecting craftsman. Every great poet was for him a teacher: "I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing. And I yield to none in love for my art. I therefore labour at it with reverence, affection and industry". Prof. Elton speaks of Wordsworth as the supreme seer of Pantheism. A pantheist is one who identifies God with the Universe, and denies the Transcendence of God. The Christian on the other hand says, "Our Father who art in Heaven" and believes that the Father once descended into this world and embodied himself in flesh, out of love for the redemption of the whole of mankind.

God is in Man, and God is in Nature and yet God transcends both; and the theme of Wordsworth's Nature poetry is not so much the divine spirit manifested in nature as the simpler and happier relation of natural things to God, to the inner law of their being. Therefore Wordsworth's turning from

Pantheism to Orthodox Christianity is not a violent break. The influence which shaped Wordsworth's teaching were—(1) Rousseau and the French Revolution, (2) Hartley and the English Associationistic School of Thought, (3) Coleridge and the Inluence of Godwin: to plunge into metaphysics when there is the dullness of the spirit—Reason as the Panacea for all evils, (4) the indirect influence of Plato—through Coleridge. But he is original, as his experience is far more superior to that of those who influenced him.

Contact with Coleridge definitely enabled Wordsworth to understand partially the great experience of his childhood. While Dr. Selincourt and others speak of two Wordsworths, Batho holds that Wordsworth was from the first a Christian. But so far as we see, there is a definite and clear expression of Wordsworth's inclination to talk in terms of Grace and God in his later years. He attempted the revision of the "Prelude", and the mystical experience is partly made to coalesce with the Christian Theology. Turning from his story of the Revolution he invokes once more the powers of Nature:

> Ye motions of delight, that through the fields
> Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe
> The Breath of Paradise, and find your way
> To the recesses of the soul.

To place beside these lines the version of 1850 is to measure how much was lost in psychological truth when Wordsworth revised his poem:

> Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
> Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs
> Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
> Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race
> How without injury to take, to give
> Without offence.

The bold fact of the first statement is omitted, the influence of the breeze expressly moralised. What Wordsworth has ejected in the process of revision is the naked fact of the soul of man meeting God in Nature. One more passage will throw light. He altered the lines:

> The feeling of life endless, the great thought
> By which we live, infinity and God

to

> Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
> Of human being, eternity and God

The feeling of life endless, his own personal intuition comes to be called Faith in life endless, a faith which he shared with the Christian Church. The great thought by which we live—infinity and God—becomes the Christian thought of human immortality.

With regard to the affinities with the teachings of other poets and prophets, we may refer to T.S.Eliot in our own day. The wise passiveness of Wordsworth and the stillness aspired for by T.S.Eliot have a close affinity. T.S.Eliot is an Anglo-Catholic. The experience of Wordsworth is not the product of living in a tradition. T.S.Eliot's is the product of living in the Catholic Tradition. Eliot is influenced by the Author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and St. John of the Cross. His inspiration is profoundly religious and Christian. For example, the opening of *Ash Wednesday* and the end are in a mood of Penitence.

> And pray to God to have mercy upon us
> And I pray that I may forget
> These matters that with myself I too much discuss.
> May the judgment not be too heavy upon us.
> Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.
> Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

The consciousness of the sinfulness, selfish narrowness, and petty arrogance of human life, and the intense aspiration for a state of absolute humility, charity and self-surrender to the supreme Maker—this is the essence of Religion. This outlook is not present in Wordsworth. T.S.Eliot of *The Waste Land* shows a keen awareness of the disillusionment of the modern world, and the absence of values in modern life. But even here the values of Religion are in the background. Modern Life is evaluated on the basis of religion and mysticism—which brings about a grand unity, for a time. *The Waste Land* was regarded as the expression of a modern Hamlet. But *Ash Wednesday* solved the problem with the beautiful lines.

> Teach us to care, and not to care
> Teach us to sit still...

The ego which makes man think of himself as the centre of the Universe has to be stilled and surrendered to the Divine Consciousness which considers man as the instrument of the Godhead. The wise passiveness of Wordsworth means just the suspension of the meddling intellectual activity. Both the master-minds aspire for the experience of the timeless in their own ways.

The influence of Wordsworth's teaching can be seen in his own day when Keats speaks of the "Chambers of Thought" and the negative capability which

he calls the chief instrument of his experience. Arnold takes refuge in Nature for peace whereas it is joy in the case of Wordsworth. The contemporary situation with its feeling of frustration, disillusionment and the failure of established traditions of Religion seem to have an immediate urgency to the Teaching of Wordsworth. The message has been given to us through his poetry. No quarrel is necessary with regard to the greatness of his poetry and philosophy. We do not know, as Herbert Reed concludes in his essay on Wordsworth, where the philosophy of Wordsworth begins and his poetry ends. They are both complementary, halves of one whole. Though we accept Wordsworth as the supreme English poet of Spiritual experience yet he had not attained the Unitive Stage which Miss Evelyn Underhill speaks of as the essence of mystical understanding and joy. Then perhaps he would have had a large-idea'd utterance like Sri Aurobindo's :

> Thought lay down in a mighty voicelessness;
> The toiling thinker widened and grew still,
> Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart :
> His soul could sail beyond thought's luminous bar;
> Mind screened no more the shoreless infinite.
> Across a void retreating sky be glimpsed
> Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars
> The superconscient realms of motionless peace
> Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
> And the Unconceived lies pathless and lone.

C. SUBBIAN

GREEK TRAGEDY

AMONG all the city-states of Greece Athens played the most important part for enhancing and glorifying the Hellenic culture and civilisation. Not only did she save Greece from the Persian invasion but soon after, inspired by the great victory, gave to Europe one of the most artistic and at the same time complicated and difficult forms of literature, the drama.

But before we try to investigate the origin of the Greek drama let us see what we actually mean by drama. A representation of life and action, the interplay of vital passions and emotions or the clash between the psychological make-ups of two characters are merely its outward form. There must be something deeper behind the actual facts, dialogues and actions, something which would seize us not only with a vigorous outward grip but by a more profound sentiment of identification with the life-power and soul-power of the characters. "It (the dramatic poetry) must have, to begin with, as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit idea of life and the human being; and the vital presentation which is its outward instrument must arise out of that harmoniously, whether by a spontaneous creation, as in Shakespeare, or by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will, as with the Greeks."[1]

The Greek dramatists had undoubtedly this interpretative vision or we should rather say that it was inherent in the Greek intellect and was evolving slowly to reach its culmination with Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, the three tragedians, and Aristophanes, the only great Greek comedian. The Dionysian cult itself seems to have borne the seeds of this vision of life—the Bacchic festivals were a symbolic representation of an overwhelming vital resurgence. Through centuries these festivals interpretated the real significance of life as conceived by the Greeks. The dramatic poets had in their very life-blood this idea of life and expressed it harmoniously "by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will". They had not the spontaneous and overflowing emotional enthusiasm which could, as in the romantic poets, naturally, instinctively and harmoniously mould the thought or vision into the unalterable form. But they had an intellectual aspiration for the perfect beauty, an inherent intuitive will to grow more and more towards the highest perfection. Therefore the harmony

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry.*

and inevitability of their words come from a conscious aesthetic endeavour to express lucidly and beautifully their interpretation of life. A sort of intellectual idealism mingled with a cult of beauty and perfection was the basis of all Greek art.

We see then that the Greek dramatists were not miracles like Shakespeare but the natural offspring of an evolving consciousness. They were the final out-come of a long tradition which was struggling to express the inner meaning of the terrestrial existence.

The origin of the Greek drama can be traced far back into the religious ceremonies associated with the god of wine, Dionysus who was one of the most amiable divinities of the Greek. He "symbolised the spirit of fertility, of generation and regeneration, which mark the season of spring and he also came to be identified with the vine". He was worshipped with ecstatic and mysterious rites as the god of eternal cheerfulness and revelry, a "god of the romantic dreamer and daemonic enthusiast." The worshippers of Dionysus found the exuberant beauty of Nature and wanted to merge themselves and forget the world in riotous carousals and wild pleasures lifted to the dignity of a religious cult. In these spring-festivals men and women with "wreathed ivy round their brows" danced and sang the ecstatic hymn, the dithyramb in honour of Dionysus. Tragedy was the solemner part of the carousal that accompanied the worship. In the beginning it had not the definite form in which we know it today or as it has been defined by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. It began with the chanting of choral odes based on the ancient Heroic legends by a group of bacchanals dressed like satyrs.

Tragedy must have, according to Aristotle, six fundamental elements : Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Song. Of these plot is of primary importance and then comes characterisation. Neither of them were found in the early choral lyrics which were too simple, devoid of all intricacy and interaction of characters. "Tragedy," says Aristotle, "is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play, in the form of action, not a narrative, through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these and similar emotions". In this definition two words are to be noticed, "imitation" and "purgation" —Mimesis and Katharsis. Mimesis or imitation refers to the creation of the play itself. Aristotle here does not mean by mimesis an exact and faithful copy of life and nature; by it he understands a transmuting process that is at work when the artist creates. The tragedian imitates the universal principle that is behind the phenomenal appearance of the model; the supreme Idea of which are born the separative and individualistic forms. And he maintains that the diction

and the song refer to the medium of imitation, and spectacle to the manner of imitation. These three elements were present, in a more or less degree, even in the ancient choric rhapsodies, but plot, character and thought which refer to the objects of imitation were introduced much later when from the "goat-songs" emerged the new literary form which we call "tragedy".

Kathersis or purgation refers to the function of tragedy. The drama purges the soul of man from unhealthy sentiments by evoking in him the emotions of pity and fear. It at first arouses, then vigorously stimulates and finally purges pity, fear, jealousy and other such human emotions. In the dithyramb there was hardly any such element; its main object was to arouse the passions and give a sort of highly romantic and almost daemonic ecstasy.

This element of Katharsis came in much later with Aeschylus who also introduced plot, character and thought. Any act, however catastrophic, cannot be the subject of tragedy, anyone, however great, cannot be its hero. Tragedy must involve a sudden and unexpected orientation in the life and character of the hero who must himself be "highly renowned and prosperous, but one who is not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement of frailty.[1]

The Greek tragedian discovered such characters and actions in the ancient Heroic Legends. They found in them also the possibility of expressing the psychological movements of man and the inner significance of his existence. And thus they succeeded to a great extent in fulfilling the essential requisites of "very great drama". "In all very great drama," writes Sri Aurobindo,[2] "the true movement and result is really psychological and the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are only either its symbol or else its condition of culmination. Finally all this has to be cast into a close dramatic form, a successful weaving of interdependent relations, relations of soul to soul, or speech to speech, of action to action, the more close and inevitable the better, because so the truth of the whole evolution comes to us. And if it is asked what in a word is the essential purpose of all this creation, I think we might possibly say that drama is the poet's vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma, in an extended and very flexible sense of the word; and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathein*, 'the doer shall feel the effect of his act....' "

[1] Poetics.

[2] The Future Poetry.

The great Greek tragedies satisfied most of these difficult conditions not by an intellectual awareness but by a surer intuitive knowledge of the complex world act. The tragedians found,—maybe half-obscurely and tentatively,—the relation between two actions, two movements, the interdependence of all human souls linked by one supreme principle, fate. They had also a sure and instinctive grip over the technique which almost automatically and miraculously developed from the crude "goat-songs", so that the outward form became a fit vehicle for the inmost truth, the interpretative vision of life and human nature.

The first step towards the creation of actual tragedy was made by Thespis when he introduced the first actor in the play in 536 B.C. He also invented the mask, enabling the actor to play several parts. This actor would conduct a dialogue with the chorus-leader. But, as we can easily conceive, it did not have the real dramatic effect, it perhaps made the narrative more vivid and interesting. Tragedy had to wait for a few decades more for its rapid and miraculous development in the hands of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

Aeschylus (525-456 BC), first of the great trio, found drama in its most archaic, unformed state, a half-rustic ceremony, sometimes fantastic and riotous. The loose structure of the dramatic poetry was gradually crystallising and was taking a definite shape preparing thus the coming of Aeschylus who gave it the touches of a master-artist and lifted it to the heights of immortal literature.

Before Aeschylus there was no complexity in the plot, no effort at characterisation. It was all simple narration for the simple folk who believed firmly in the gods and the titans. Aeschylus with his great dramatic talent gave altogether a new orientation, a new life to these lifeless recitations. He introduced the plot, the character and the thought. He added also a second actor and thus diminished the importance of the chorus and increased the vividness and naturalness of the real action. The characters of Aeschylus became real men and women, living titans and gods; coming in conflict with one another, loving, hating. They had now the strong passions and emotions of living human beings with all their weakness and strength, purity and perversity. But yet they acted on a higher level than ordinary men. Their defects as well as their virtues were magnified. Even the gods were lifted to a higher status where both their virtues and their vices loomed more prominent. The Aeschylean gods were very much different from the vulgar conception of the Greek gods which can be summarised briefly in the following words : "... the Greek gods were pleasant and homely people who lived a family life on the heights of Mount Olympus. Having few public duties they spent most of

their time in disputes, in intrigues, in having love-affairs with mortals and in furthering the ends of their various favourites." [1]

The stories of the plays were drawn from the rich heritage of the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey or from ancient Greek mythology. These stories which were grand in themselves were fitted more closely to life by the dramatist so that they could more adequately discuss the problems of life, social, moral, aesthetic, political, administrative and religious. Aeschylus seized upon the means and with the gift of his great poetic talent fused skilfully the philosophy of life and religion with the artistic and dramatic expression.

The gods had a very prominent part to play in the Greek drama. In most of the tragedies we find the inevitable necessity of the divine intervention. The dramatists were faced with such problems as they could not solve with their intellect, so they had to bring in a supraphysical power which would account for all the unsolved riddles and paradoxes of life and human nature.

The dual problems of good and evil, of justice and injustice could not be solved by them. And if these things were considered as divine impositions on man then the nature of the gods became very complex. People could not understand why a virtuous man should suffer or evil survive the good. In the tragedies we find this problem dealt with over and over again; every poet tried to hit at an appropriate solution, but as they had not the higher spiritual intuition and penetrating soul-vision, their interpretation was in terms of our human activities. They endeavoured to bring out the relationship of the human and the divine and justify the nature of God's ways to man.

The fundamental trend of Aeschylus' mind was towards theology and religion. He was in search of righteousness and wanted poetic justice though he found that in life there was none. Prometheus suffers for his wisdom, fortitude and goodness; Agamemnon dies at the hands of a wicked wife. Aeschylus, as also his two successors, had a sufficient insight into the human nature and an understanding, analytic enough, of the human self. He probed into the hitherto unknown complexities of life and of the psychological being in man. This is clearly evinced in the analysis of Clytemnestra's character. He has laid bare the intricacies of her nature, the complex workings of a woman's mind and how she brooded constantly over vengeance and at last succeeded in carrying out her ghastly plan.

Two sentiments are predominant in Aeschylus, pathos and ruthlessness. These two contrary feelings are intermingled so as to produce the varied effect of sympathy and hatred. The murder of Agamemnon is full of horror, apathy

[1] Kenneth Walker:, *Only the Silent Hear.*

and cruelty, but on the other hand the suffering of Promtheus, the benefactor of mankind, and of Io, an innocent maiden, is depicted with almost a heart-melting pathos.

Among the three tragic poets Aeschylus was the most romantic and most sensitive to beauty. His descriptions of Nature have the invigorating subjective touch of profound feelings. His personal sentiments loom out from the garb of words, but this intense subjectivism was not marked in the others who were more intellectual and more lucid in their expression.

There is a loftiness of thought and an eloquence of speech which was natural to Aeschylus alone. He had a strong imagination that gave him a wider freedom. Aeschylus created his own world; his God was omnipotent yet limited and imperfect in knowledge, his titan Promethus weaker than Zeus in power but greater in knowledge, his men with heart and mind greater than of any human being, reaching to the stature almost of titans and gods.

He had everything of his own, he made his own language to suit his expression; he made his own style that could translate adequately the grandeur and sublimity of his conception. He had a rich and virgin realm of language from which he could draw ever new images original and suggestive.

The chorus which formed the greater bulk of the ritualistic drama retained a very important place in Aeschylus. It was the mouthpiece of the poet for expressing his thoughts and ideas. It was an indispensable element in some of the Greek plays because it linked the entire dramatic action into a coherent and logical whole. Beautiful and imaginative in description and poetic in utterance, it bore, however, a weakness in its very constitution. Lyrical and operatic,—in fact some of the choruses of *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon* can be arranged along with the finest Greek lyrical poetry,—it made the dramatic action run slower and interrupted the continuous and vigorous current of circumstances which constituted the vital rapidity and coherence of the tragic action. "And unfortunately," says a critic, "this lyric, operatic element lent itself to some of the worst weaknesses of Attic tragedy—those orgies of lamentation, those ecstasies of self-pity, those interminable caterwaulings, conjugating the verb 'to be wretched' in every person, tense and mood, which make some passages of Greek drama tediously contemptible beside the nobler restraint of Homeric epic or Icelandic saga."

Apart from the plot or thought or the chorus there is one element which gives real vitality to drama and especially to tragedies. It is the clash of characters. Aeschylus did not develop very fully the psycho-analysis of an individual; the clashes in his plays are therefore between two powerfully contrasted personages—clash between Zeus and Prometheus, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra or Clytemnestra and Cassandra. We have to wait for Euripides for

the inner psychological conflict, clash between two powerfully irreconcilable elements of the same being.

Along with the romanticism and the philosophical trend of his mind we should also mention the realism of Aeschylus which can invoke an extreme sense of horror, disgust and repulsion. Aeschylus studied life in many different perspectives and so was able to disclose at once the grotesque and the beautiful, the evil and the good. His sensitiveness to beauty and romanticism did not shut his eyes to ugliness, filth, falsehood, unfaithfulness and treachery of human nature. Therefore in passages we find horror mingled with a terrible beauty of nether romanticism—beauty like that of Dante's Hell perhaps. This feature of Aeschylus can best be illustrated by what Clytemnestra says just after she has murdered Agamemnon, her husband :

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

RANJIT

(To be continued)