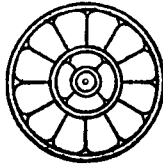


MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER, 1959

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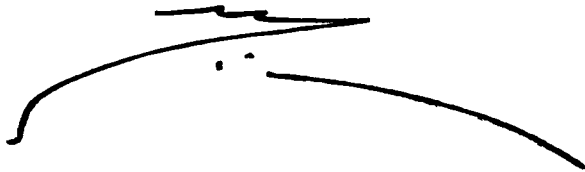


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XI

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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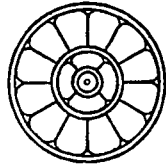
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NOTE

The next issue will not be of November but a joint one of November and December, which will be published on December 5



WORDS OF THE MOTHER

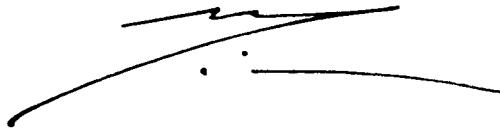
It is only those who have come for sadhana and really do sadhana, who can be happy and satisfied here. The others have constant trouble because their desires are not satisfied.

2.10.1959.

*
**

To begin a work and to leave it half done and to start another work elsewhere, is not a very wholesome habit.

5.7.1959



LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

To overcome all anger will be very good and also the resolution to have no attachments, only to be plunged in the Mother's affection and be her instrument.

*

Why should the Mother be obliged to treat everybody in the same way ? It would be a most imbecile thing for her to do that.

*

You are putting the cart before the horse. It is not the right way to make the condition that if you get what you want you will be obedient and cheerful. But be always obedient and cheerful and then what you want will have a chance of coming to you.

*

An occurrence like that should always be taken as an opportunity of self-conquest. Put your pride and dignity in that—in not being mastered by the passions but being their master.

*

You are mistaken, শুচিবাবু¹ is not given by God, it is a human creation—anger and vital disturbances also are not divine presents, they are the play of the lower nature.

*

When you come to the Divine, lean inwardly on the Divine and do not let other things affect you.

*

All faults and errors are redeemed by repentance. Confidence in the Mother, self-giving to the Mother, these if you increase them will bring the change in the nature.

¹ cleanliness-mania

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

It is absurd to suppose that the Mother would catch you by the throat with anybody's hand. But if whatever happens one keeps turned to the Divine, then one can draw good results out of all experience favourable or adverse.

*

No, I did not break your glass cover with any intention; but your covers somehow sit so lightly on the dishes that at the least touch they try to fly about like birds. I have had many narrow escapes before from breaking them, but this time it flew too quick for me to catch it !

*

No objection to the *रान* (hot curry) except that it is too fiery for us to swallow. Fire-eating like fire-walking needs training and habit.

(to Mridu)

EXPERIENCE, DIRECT PERCEPTION AND REALISATION

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Niranjan from the Bengali Letters in "Patravali")

EXPERIENCES are not useless—they have their place; in other words, they prepare the direct perception, help the being to open and bring knowledge of other worlds and different planes. Integral experience and establishment of the divine peace, equality, light, knowledge, purity, vastness, Presence, experience of the Self, divine felicity, experience of the universal consciousness (which destroys ego), desireless pure divine love, vision of the Divine everywhere etc. bring the true realisation. The first step leading to these experiences is the descent of peace from above and its firm foundation in the being and all around it.

These experiences are valuable and contain some truth and help one to progress in the sadhana. But these are not enough—what is wanted is the realisation, the divine peace, equality, purity, the descent and establishment of knowledge, power and Ananda of the higher consciousness—that is the real thing.

Plants have a life and a consciousness. It is easy to exchange feelings with them.

This feeling is very good. One has to feel what the Mother is giving within—people make so many mistakes by looking at the outward appearance. They forget to accept the inner gift or are incapable of receiving it.

The diamond light is the Mother's light at its strongest. It is only natural for this light to come out of the body of the Mother like this and fall on the sadhaka if he is in a good condition.

This to happen in the head means that the mind has fully opened and accepted the higher consciousness.

This is what is wanted—the external things going inwards, becoming one with the inner and accepting the inner attitude.

EXPERIENCE, DIRECT PERCEPTION AND REALISATION

It is good to look upon the body in this way. However, even if the consciousness does not remain confined to the body and becomes vast and limitless, still one should consider the body as a part of the consciousness and an instrument of the Mother and one should transform the physical consciousness as well.

It is a very good sign; the lower consciousness is rising to unite with the higher.

This is your *ājñā cakra*, that is to say, the centre for the inner intelligence, thought, vision and will-power. Owing to the pressure, it has now opened and become luminous to such an extent that it has joined with the higher consciousness and spread its influence throughout the being. No, it is not imagination and it is not false either. The temple above is the higher consciousness, the temple below is the transformed consciousness of this mind, vital and body—the Mother has come down and erected this temple below and from there she is spreading her influence everywhere within you.

Good, the higher consciousness has to be brought down in this way, as a calm universalising of oneself, first in the head (in the mental plane, then in the emotional vital and the psychic in the heart), next in the navel and below the navel (in the vital), finally in the entire range of the physical.

This change (in the back) is very good. Often attacks of this nature come from behind but if the Mother's force and consciousness are there, they cannot enter any more.

A white lotus signifies that the Mother's consciousness is manifesting there.

The place of the higher consciousness is above the head. It starts just above the head and rises upwards to infinity. You are experiencing the presence of the vast peace and silence that are there. One has to bring down all this peace and consciousness into the entire being.

This greater plane may be the spiritual consciousness with the temple of truth in it. A connection has been established between your vital and that plane, and the higher force is going up and down as if over a bridge.

Many do not get the experience of the awakening of the Kundalini, some have it ; the purpose of this awakening is to open up all the planes and join

MOTHER INDÍA

them to the higher consciousness, but this purpose can be served by other means as well.

An emanation or a part of Her being and consciousness comes out of the Mother to each sadhaka and as her image and representative remains with him to help him. In fact, it is the Mother Herself who comes out in that form.

You have to live above in the vastness you are experiencing and inside in the depths, you have to live within that alone,—moreover, you have to bring down that vastness everywhere in nature, even in the lower nature. Then the transformation of the lower and the external nature can be permanently established. For, this vastness is the infinity of the Mother's consciousness.

When the narrow lower nature is liberated into the vastness of the Mother's consciousness, it will then be transformed to the very roots.

ASPECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

V

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

THE Congress to which Sri Aurobindo first directed his attention was neither Indian in its origin or inspiration nor did it speak for the nation. It had been founded by a British ex-official in the interests of the Empire ; its methods continued to be unfruitful because it did not carry the nation with it ; it had finally to be broken, in 1907, under Sri Aurobindo's orders, in order to make it truly national.

At the same time its creation had served a useful purpose, which Sri Aurobindo recognised in the very first of his articles in the *Indu Prakash* series.¹

“If then any one tells me that the Congress was itself a miracle, if in nothing else, at any rate in the enthusiasm of which it was the centre, I do not know that I shall take the trouble to disagree with him...”

In the next article, he goes on to add :

“My own genuine opinion was expressed, perhaps with too much exuberance of diction,—but then the ghost of my ancient enthusiasm was nudging my elbow—when I described the Congress as a well of living water, a standard in the battle, and a holy temple of concord.

It is a well of living water in the sense that we drink from it assurance of a living political energy in the country....But I have also described it as the standard under which we have fought ; and by that I mean a living emblem of our cause the tired and war-worn soldier in the mellay can look up to and draw from time to time fresh funds of hope and vigour.... But besides these, it has been something, which is very much better than either of them, good as they too undoubtedly are ; it has been to our divergent races and creeds a temple, or perhaps I should be more correct in saying, a school of concord.

¹ We are deeply indebted to Professors Haridas and Uma Mukherjee of Calcutta for having brought out these articles in their recent work on Sri Aurobindo's political thought.

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In other words, the necessities of the political movement initiated by the Congress have brought into one place and for a common purpose all sorts and conditions of men, and so by smoothing away the harsher discrepancies between them has created a certain modicum of sympathy between classes that were more or less at variance.

Here, and not in its political action, must we look for any direct and really important achievement ; and even here the actual advance has as a rule been absurdly exaggerated. Popular orators like Mr. Pherozshah Mehta, who carry the methods of the bar into politics, are very fond of telling people that the Congress has habituated us to act together. Well, that is not quite correct : there is not the slightest evidence to show that we have at all learned to act together ; the one lesson we have learned is to talk together, and that is a rather different thing....”

This in fact was precisely what the founder of the Congress had originally intended.

*

The Indian Congress owes its birth to the genius of a Scotsman, a high official belonging to the non-Indian Civil Service.

“It was one of these, one endowed with all their good gifts, it was Mr. Allan Hume, a man acute and vigorous, happy in action and in speech persuasive, an ideal leader who, prompted, it may be by his own humane and lofty feelings, it may be by a more earthly desire of present and historic fame, took us by the hand and guided us with astonishing skill on our arduous venture...”¹

It may be well to pause here a little and consider the circumstances that led Hume to undertake this venture. We have ample testimony on the point from his biographer, Sir William Wedderburn, another veteran of the old school who loved to be considered a friend of India in the early years of the Congress.

“A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised....I have always

¹ “New Lamps for Old” : *Indu Prakash*, March 6, 1894.

ASPECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

admitted that in certain Provinces and from certain points of view the movement was premature, but from the most vital point of view, the future maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire, the real question when the Congress started was, *not*, is it premature, but is it too late—will the country *now* accept it ?”¹

These words of Hume, written in 1888 in answer to a charge of prematurely disturbing the peace of the empire which was levelled against him by another highly placed official in the Indian Service, give us a clue to his motives. His biographer explains the position in the following words :

“Towards the close of Lord Lytton’s viceroyalty, that is, about 1878 and 1879, Mr. Hume became convinced that some definite action was called for to counteract the growing unrest. From well-wishers in different parts of the country he received warnings of the danger to the Government, and to the future welfare of India, from the economic sufferings of the masses, and the alienation of the intellectuals. But happily the arrival of Lord Ripon revived hope among the people, and produced a lull; and Mr. Hume postponed definite organisation until, by his retirement from the service [which took place in 1882], he should be free to act, and able to take advantage of the growing improvement in the popular feeling produced by Lord Ripon’s benign presence....”²

Hume expressed himself thus on the “dangers” that faced the country and on the solution which he thought was most appropriate :

“It is the British Government in their noble enthusiasm for the emancipation of this great people—God’s trust to them—from the fetters of ignorance, who by the broadcast dissemination of Western education and Western ideas of liberty, the rights of subjects, public spirit and patriotism, have let loose forces which, unless wisely guided and controlled, might, nay sooner or later certainly must, involve consequences which are too disastrous to contemplate.

And it is precisely to limit and control these forces and direct them, while there is yet time, into channels along which they can flow auspiciously, bearing safely the argosies of progress and prosperity on their heaving waves, that this Congress movement was designed...”³

¹ W. Wedderburn : *Allan Octavian Hume* (1913 edition), p. 77.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

MOTHER INDIA

He had seen at first hand, in 1857 during his early official career in north India, what it meant to be caught unawares in a Mutiny; and he had no intention of repeating that experience for his fellow-countrymen. What he wanted most was the safety of the Empire. The Congress was to act as the safety-valve. Says Sri Aurobindo :

“He must have known, none better, what immense calamities may often be ripening under a petty and serene outside. He must have been aware, none better, when the fierce pain of hunger and oppression cuts to the bone what awful elemental passions may start to life in the mildest, the most docile proletariat.”¹

For, as the biographer tells us :

“Intimately acquainted with the inner life of the Indian village, and a witness of successive famines with all their horrors, he was familiar with the sorrows of the impoverished peasantry, and in a pamphlet entitled ‘The Old Man’s Hope,’ he thus made an impassioned appeal to the comfortable classes in England :

‘Ah men ! well fed and happy ! Do you at all realise the dull misery of these countless myriads ? From their births to their deaths, how many rays of sunshine think you chequer their gloom-shrouded paths ? Toil, toil, toil; hunger, hunger, hunger; sickness, suffering, sorrow; these alas ! alas ! are the key-notes of their short and sad existences.’ ”²

But his object was not so much to save the peasantry as to let the British empire in India continue indefinitely. This he made abundantly clear in the Preliminary Report that was issued to the Founder Members of the newly formed National Union which was to become the parent body of the Congress.

“The Union, so far as it has been constituted, appears to be absolutely unanimous in insisting that unswerving loyalty to the British Crown shall be the key-note of the institution... It holds the continued affiliation of India to Great Britain, at any rate for a period far exceeding the range of any practical political forecast, to be *absolutely essential* to the interests of our own National Development.”³

¹ *Indu Prakash, loc. cit.*

² *Wedderburn, op. cit., p. 61*

³ *Ibid., p. 53.*

ASPECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

He had in his possession unquestionable evidence from trusted sources that the proletariat was seething with unrest, and that "we were then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution."¹

"Yet he chose practically to ignore his knowledge; he conceived it as his business to remove a merely political inequality, and strove to uplift the burgess into a merely isolated predominance. That the burgess should strive towards predominance, nay, that for a brief while he should have it, is only just, only natural : the mischief of it was that in Mr. Hume's formation the proletariat remained for any practical purpose a piece off the board. Yet the proletariat is, as I have striven to show [in an earlier article], the real key of the situation....

But Mr. Hume saw things in a different light, and let me confess out of hand that once he had got a clear conception of his business he proceeded in it with astonishing rapidity, sureness and tact. The clear-cut ease and strong simplicity of his movements were almost Roman; no crude tentatives, no infelicitous bungling, but always a happy trick of hitting the right nail on the head and that at the first blow....

Roman too was his principle of advancing to a great extent by solid and consecutive gradations. To begin by accustoming the burgess as well as his adversaries to his own corporate reality, to proceed by a definite statement of his case to the Viceregal government, and for a final throw to make a vehement and powerful appeal to the English Parliament, an appeal that should be financed by the entire resources of middle-class India and carried through it by stages with an iron heart and obdurate resolution, expending moreover infinite energy,—so and so only could the dubious road Mr. Hume was treading could lead to any thing but bathos and anticlimax.

Nothing could be happier than the way in which the initial steps were made out."²

We shall examine in some detail the steps that he took to launch the Congress on its way.

(To to continued)

"PUBLICUS"

¹ *Ibid.*, p 80.

² Sri Aurobindo in *Indu Prakash*, *loc. cit.*

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US*

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the last issue)

(20)

SHE MET MY FAITH WITH HER GRACE

OUR Guru was a Jain Sadhu. Three days after his death, he appeared to me in a dream and asked me to go to Pondicherry and accept in future Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as my Gurus. I did not then know that one required previous permission to go to the Ashram. I went to the Ashram, but as the Darshan Day did not fall within my stay, I had to return without having the blessing glimpse of Sri Aurobindo.

The next year I came for the Darshan and saw Sri Aurobindo. Since then I visit Pondicherry every year for a fixed number of days, whatever happens.

Now each time I was about to leave for the Ashram, circumstances conspired to put my faith to the test. But I had made up my mind that whatsoever came in my way, I would not desist from going to Pondicherry : surely Mother and Sri Aurobindo would help me.

Once when I was preparing to leave, an accident took place : a day before my departure my son fractured his wrist-bone. It was a serious case, but I left just the same, as planned. And everything went well in my absence.

Another time, one baby in the house got typhoid just the day when I was to leave. In Pondicherry I received the news that three days after my departure the baby had recovered completely.

Once again my son had a leg-fracture a day before my departure. I left as usual without flinching in my faith. My son recovered remarkably in my absence by the Grace of the Mother.

* Readers are invited to send their experiences to the Editor or the compiler—or directly to the Mother.

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

LONG-PERSISTING HABIT GONE

I started smoking in 1923-24. Then I hardly used to smoke more than twice or thrice a month. But by 1932 this habit had such a strong hold over me that I used to smoke nearly three packets of high-quality cigarettes a day. During that year my wife died. She had not liked my smoking. For four years I did not touch a single cigarette. But again in 1936 I slid back, smoking about three-four packets every day when in town and about six-seven packets when out of it.

In 1952, an Ashram sadhak came to the Sri Aurobindo Circle of our town. While talking about the Ashram, he said, "Smokers are not allowed to go before Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi." Those were the days when I was seriously contemplating to go to the Ashram during the month of May.

A struggle ensued within my mind. "I want to go to the Ashram ; what is the use of going if I won't be allowed to see Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi? But if I have accepted Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, can I not give up smoking if she does not like it?" This mental conflict went on for eleven days. On the 11th day I decided to smoke as many cigarettes as I could and say good-bye to this deep-seated habit for ever.

The last cigarette that I smoked was at 11.15 p.m. Then I went to my Meditation Room, bowed before the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and prayed to the Mother, "Today I am giving up smoking entirely. Grant that never in the future I may touch a cigarette." Later I retired for the night.

And, wonder of wonders, utterly against my expectations, when I got up in the morning, I felt absolutely no craving for smoking. I did not even once think of it. Since then I have not only abstained from smoking but when somebody smokes near me, I have either to move away from there or to request him to stop it or move away from me.

And all this happened by a strange mystery of the Grace, the mystery of the misstatement of the Ashram sadhak. Instead of saying that smoking is not allowed in the Ashram, he had said innocently, "Smokers are not allowed near the Samadhi." But this proved to be a divine boon for me.

CURE WITHOUT OPERATION

The year was 1934. I was suffering from unnatural bone-growth in the ring-finger of my right hand. I consulted a doctor. He said that I needed an operation : the upper phalange of the ring-finger had to be cut off. But I did

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not like the idea of getting part of my finger so excised.

I went to an Ayurvedic physician. He also said that there was no way out except to get my phalange cut off.

To relieve my pain, I was applying hot onion, although that did not work any miracle.

I wrote a letter to the Mother with my left hand mentioning that I did not want to be minus a phalange.

I posted the letter personally at 11 a.m., and at 4 p.m. the same day the swelling of the finger burst and the bone came out apart. And within a few days my hand was completely cured.

(To be continued)

Compiled and Reported by
HAR KRISHAN SINGH

NISHIKANTA: POET IN CRISIS

News arrived that Nishikanta had fallen ill. I must go and see him. There was nothing unusual in this. Illness has been his constant companion since many years and in case of necessity he calls for my non-medical help, though I have long given up medical practice. Two serious maladies seemed to have made a permanent lodging in his physical tenement : gastric ulcer and diabetes. Their virulence had been checked by the Guru's force, but they could not be dislodged, as personal cooperation is needed to achieve that object. They had not, however, broken down the inexhaustible vital energy of this human asura. He had bled red and dark blood profusely through two natural channels. And he had composed poems on the dark blood which seemed to him symbolic of the torrential bleeding from the decapitated body of Mother Bengal during the Partition in 1947. These poems were read out to Sri Aurobindo. From the date of this illness I used to carry his health bulletins to the Guru.

Here I might just mention the story of another ulcer patient. He too was vomiting blood by buckets. My dark face grew pale white, but the patient gave me hope and said, "Have no fear, Doctor. I won't die." And he didn't, by the Guru's Grace.

It would not be irrelevant to trace back my past connection and friendship with Nishikanta. Though somewhat long, the story would be highly interesting, even illuminating from human, Yogic and occult points of view, and would justify my title "human asura" for him. Some twenty-five years ago, a young man carrying a small suit-case came to see me. His dress was simple, a bit dirty, the chaddar folded across the shoulder, bobbed hair, big dreamy eyes and of dark complexion. The build seemed to be heavy compared to the age, the gait self conscious and the nature apparently calm. Since no stranger was allowed inside the room, I offered him a seat in the verandah. The facts that I gathered from him then and afterwards are as follows :

Since childhood, he had been brought up in Shanti Niketan. Poet and artist, he became at once Tagore's favourite. Tagore initiated him into the subtleties of Bengali literature with care and affection. In Art, Abanindranath and Nandalal were his masters. What a unique opportunity indeed ! He had also the innate capacity to see visions. The secrets of the occult worlds in the form of light and colour, gods and goddesses were flashed upon his inner eye, even the figure of the Mother was familiar. The novelty and wonder of these visions wove an

unearthly beauty and originality into his poems. Tagore, utterly baffled by their mystery, remained fascinated by their spell and bade him show all his poems to him.

One day, on being asked by Tagore to give a name to one of the heroes of his novel, Nishikanta blurted out, "Nirodbaran !" Even as he uttered it, a bright face loomed before him. The face was mine, not the brightness. Tagore pleased with the name said, "Very fine, but not *baran*; I will change it to *ranjan*, for Nirodbaran means dark cloud whereas Nirodranjan means lightning."

But all these faculties and favours failed to satisfy his inner yearning. The Poet tried his best to keep him in Shanti Niketan, but good counsel falls flat on a madman's ears. He has been touched by a mystic fire, he would set forth in search of that flaming star. So, making a bonfire of all his poetical works, he flew away from the golden cage of Shanti Niketan. His blind wanderings led him to Bodhgaya where he met a distant relative of mine and came to know about me. "Nirodbaran is his name? Is he whom I have seen in my vision? Then I am bound for Pondicherry". My relative also added fuel to his desire, as if Pondicherry Yoga hospital was the best asylum for anyone who was distracted by a *vairāgya* mania. No permission nor consideration of *adhikāra* was needed ! It was hardly known to the outside world that the Ashram was a sanctuary where none could stay, not even enter without a previous permission. With peace in his soul, one day he went to meditate on the banks of the river Niranjana. Plunging deep for hours and hours, he saw the luminous figure of Buddha appear and tell him, "Though I have obtained my realisation here, I am not confined within its four walls." When he spoke about this vision to the local Buddhist priests, they refused to believe it on the ground that one who had attained Nirvana could not return to this earth. He started now for Saranath. The pundits were very hospitable to him and offered him a permanent abode. But if Tagore's spell could not bind him, how could the pundits' *māyā* succeed particularly after Buddha's solemn utterance ? No, Sri Aurobindo's spell was drawing him on. Thus he was in Pondicherry at Nirodbaran's door !

But I fell into a dilemma. A novice myself, I did not know what arrangements to make about him. After a talk with the secretary, it was decided that Nishikanta could hire a room outside and stay there. Meanwhile word went round that a 'big' poet had come to the Ashram; his poems had been published in the *Vichitra*. Dilip Roy and Suresh Chakravarty went to see him. N's fortune was made. For Dilip Roy took him under his large wings. He wrote to Sri Aurobindo about Nishikanta's accomplishments and sent up some of his poems.

The Mother used to walk on the terrace in the evening. One day she observed Nishikanta standing on the road while he too seeing her cried out,

“Why, this is the Mother I have seen in Shanti Niketan !” He saw also an aura of blue snakes around the Mother’s head. Dilip Roy communicated all these details to Sri Aurobindo and asked permission for his stay. Sri Aurobindo replied in effect, “This Yoga is not his path. He will have to face tremendous difficulties here. It will be better if he goes elsewhere.” But he did not. Dilip advised him to stay on till the Darshan, hoping perhaps that after seeing him Sri Aurobindo might relent and grant him the boon. The Mother for some reason sent the secretary to enquire from him if he had lived with any sannyasi. Surprised by the question he divulged that at the age of about fourteen he had left his home in search of sadhus and sought initiation from a sannyasi. The sannyasi stoutly refused, saying, “Child, I can’t accept you. My hearth is not meant for you. I see distinctly behind you your Gurus, a mighty Person and the mighty Mother. You are their disciple, not mine. You will meet them in time. Now, my child, go back home.” Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip that since the poor fellow had undergone so much tapasya he might be given a chance but at the same time he should be warned that he would come to know and see many things, as he had the eyes of a visionary but he must be on his guard.

Thus began his Ashram life and he was given a room. It was on the ground floor of the house on whose first-floor lived Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, then in the full flood of his poetic inspiration, composing a dozen poems a day on the typewriter itself, while Nishikanta writing in Bengali was almost a close rival. The Ashram was humming with admiration of these two phenomena. Sri Aurobindo’s Force had undoubtedly touched Nishikanta and unsealed some hidden spring, for his poetry was alive with a spiritual beauty in thought, feeling and rhythm which had not been there before. This was the creative period of the Ashram, in music, art etc. Apart from Dilip Roy, there were many who with the help, direct and indirect, of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s Force were creating for the first time. They used even to correct our raw exercises. It would perhaps sound poetic to say that the blind had blossomed into an artist, the dumb into a musician and the dumb and blind into a poet, but it is true. On this singular achievement I quote Sri Aurobindo’s own words : “It has always been supposed since the infancy of the human race that while a verse-maker can be made or self-made, a poet cannot. Poeta nascitur, non fit, a poet is born, not made, is the dictum that has come down through the centuries and millenniums and was thundered into my ears by the first pages of my Latin grammar. The facts of literary history seem to justify this stern saying. But here in Pondicherry we have tried not to manufacture poets, but to give them birth, a spiritual, not a physical birth into the body.” Wonderful were those days !

Nishikanta’s genius made me cap him with the title of “kavi, kaviraj” and

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the name caught the popular imagination. But I was not yet intimate with him, I was just then a versifier. He was more in contact with Dilip, passed most of his time in his house, writing, reading, even cooking, for he was also an expert in that art. By and by, circumstances brought us together, Sri Aurobindo serving as the catalytic agent. I was his physical doctor, he was my poetry physician. Above this mundane relation was the spiritual one which brought him through my mediumship into a closer contact with Sri Aurobindo, for it was my exceptional delight to have his poems sent, commented on, sometimes explained by Sri Aurobindo. His poems had taken a mystic spiritual turn which was more in my line. Thus our days were winging with bright colours through the poetic world, no thought of "pain or separation anywhere" crossed to mar our glowing flight. That there was something more to do or achieve did not enter our passionate heart. Strenuous Yogic efforts were left to the care of the Guru. He kept us for the time being absorbed in the joy of creation: Moon-lit promenades on the sea-shore or sleepless nights on the terrace, though not a part of Yoga, were a creative relaxation of the poetic life. What a prodigious quantity he had composed in the first few years of his Ashram life ! Much of it is still unpublished. Sri Aurobindo wrote : "He got a touch here which brought out in him some powerful force of vital vision and word that certainly had not shown any signs of existing before....Nishikanta came out in much the same way, a sudden Brahmaputra of inspiration."

The divine inspiration from Sri Aurobindo and the human help from Dilip and Nishikanta brought my own Muse a little more to the front. Sometimes Nishikanta's corrective zeal left nothing of my own stuff and I could hardly pass it off as my creation. Of course, a few touches here and there cannot disturb anybody's poetic conscience—but where the emendations are too flagrant ? Our Guru would then cry out : It is too Nishikantonian ! About one such sample he wrote : "My God, he has pummelled you into pieces and thrown away all but a few shreds. No, you can't call it yours. Perhaps you can label it, "Nirod after being devoured, assimilated and eliminated by Nishikanta." On another occasion he wrote : "It is certainly difficult to keep them together, specially as Nishikanta's stanzas are strong and fiery and yours are delicate and plaintive. It is like a strong robustuous fellow and a delicate slender one walking in a leash—they do not quite coalesce." Defining our poetic characters he said : "Yours is a flute, Nishikanta's is a drum." But these excesses apart, Nishikanta is really a master in correction too, a worthy disciple of Tagore. Poets there are many but poet teachers like Tagore and Sri Aurobindo are few. We know how slight touches from Sri Aurobindo changed the whole complexion of a poem and yet left our original stamp intact.

Nishikanta now aspired to be an English poet, though his knowledge of English was limited. He translated as a first attempt one of his Bengali poems. After getting it touched up by Amal I sent it up to Guru. He replied : "It is very beautiful. Amal has much worked upon it, so it is so surprisingly perfect. The original form is very poetic, but it is only the first two lines of it and the first two also of the second stanza that are quite successful. All the same it is a remarkable endeavour." With this push he started writing original poems. Here, too, the power of expression and imagery combining the poet and the artist astonished us. As Guru had said : "His poetry comes straight from the vital vision and knocks you in the pit of the stomach....He does not repeat his images...and they are exceedingly striking and powerful." He knew nothing of English metre and rhythm, but his ear was remarkable. With some knowledge of English and so much blood, sweat and tears we could scarcely get two verse-petals from the lotus grove of the Muse, while to him, an unlettered man, came "Inspiration from her lightning tops" in thousand-petalled glory. My rational mind, always perplexed by such mysteries, applied to the Guru for an explanation. "Nishikanta says," I wrote, "before painting or writing he just bows down once before the Mother and yourself. If that is the trick, why, I will bow a hundred times !" Guru's reply covered the mystery with a greater one. He said : "It depends on how you bow." Either for knowing the trick or for being a foster-child of the Goddess his peacock-boat began to glide along with dream-white sails, charged with the cargo of English poems, and in no time a book entitled *Dream-Cadences* glowed into our vision, each one of the dreams shaped into an artistic whole by Guru's masterly touches. And we were still turning bends and eddies, our sails torn, boat and rudder worn out.

Not satisfied with poetic achievements, he now assiduously took up painting, driving sometimes two horses together, sitting in one place, for hours on end. Wash after wash was given to a piece till everything was washed away and quite a new piece emerged. What struck me most was his intense sadhana in this field too. Once the demon settled upon his shoulder, he must be given total satisfaction. Nishikanta would then sit in half *padmasana* with his Ganesh-like paunch darkly shining, half discarding the artificial beauty of the worn dhoti and applying the brush with brooding eyes while the glossy jet-black curls were rhythmically swaying like tender infant snakes around his neck. At about three or four a quick splash-bath, some hurried morsels of food and then again water-colour till the colour of the day lasted. Then perhaps at midnight a hearty Gargantuan meal cooked by himself. This was his sadhana in art. I heretically branded it art-disease, and prophet-like I warned him that if he did not mend his ways he might flower into an artist,

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but it would be a sick rose, a diabetic rose. Who cared ? The demon takes away our reason. He had decided that within a fixed time he must finish so many paintings of many different sizes, some of card-size, others bigger etc., etc., and show them to the Mother. The job was accomplished, so was my prophecy. About that anon.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

WORLD-LITERATURE

(I)

'REAL poetry, the acme of poetical art,' says Victor Hugo, 'is characterised by immensity alone.' That is why Aeschylus, Lucretius, Shakespeare and Corneille had conquered his heart. Had he been acquainted with Sanskrit literature he would have included Valmiki and the Vedic seers. As a matter of fact, what we want to derive from poetry or any other artistic creation is a glimpse of the Infinite and the Eternal. When the heart opens wide, it soars aloft to clasp the whole universe with its outspread wings. In the absence of the spirit of universality any work of art, however fascinating, exquisite, subtle or deep, is incomplete ; it betrays an imperfection. And where this element of immensity is present, we get something superior even if it contains nothing else ; whether it is charged with a grand significance or not, we get something that surpasses all other virtues and we see our heart full to the brim. Whatever be the matter, the subject, the thought, the emotion or anything else, that does not touch the core of poetry. Through all these or reaching beyond them what is required is a glimpse of the vast, the waves of delight pervading the universe.

When we read these lines of Shakespeare,

...and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge—

or these from Hugo himself,

Le pâtre promontoire au chapeau des nuées
S'accoude et rêve au bruit de tous les infinis,—

we are borne on the bosom of a shoreless Deep. The same immensity pervades those verses of Valmiki, which may be rendered :

Know us as Kshatriyas carrying on their duties while roving in the forest.
We desire to know you, who are roaming in the Dandakas—

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and that phrase from the Vedic seer Sunahsepa,

These constellations set high above, that are seen at night,
Where were they during the day ?
The works of Varuna move unhindered,
The Moon comes nightly revealing them.

When we hear these sacred words, do we not feel that all the bondages of our being break to pieces as it happened to Sunahsepa ? It seems Lord Varuna has lifted from over our head a veil of cloud, a strong current released from some unknown quarter flows on inundating both the banks of our heart. In fact, this water-god Varuna himself is the fount of the seer's vision and the poet's creative genius. In the Vedic hymns we always come across three gods together ; these three in unison, with combined power, guide man and the world to a continuous progression and the ultimate success. This Trinity is Varuna, Mitra, Aryama. Varuna is the vast, the immense, the eternal, the infinite, and absolute, beyond all limitation. Mitra is union, harmony, beauty, bliss. Aryama signifies strength, power, dynamis. In poetic genius too these three gods are at once present. Varuna forms the basis on which stand Mitra and Aryama—in the vast expanse of freedom, in the wide unbarred progress of the spiritual vision heaves up in surges the gracefully rhythmic dance of the forces.

Therefore the first principle of poetry is freedom from all narrowness. The poet will adore the universal ideas and expressions that can be appreciated and welcomed by all without any distinction of race, caste or creed. No doubt, the poet also is a man and every man is endowed with individual as well as collective traits. Life and conduct, social laws and customs, culture and education, that is to say, the materials from which literary themes are derived differ in different climes and times. Every language has its own characteristic and special genius. The poet has to make use of all these things. In this world we do not find any class of people known as cosmopolitans who do not belong to a particular nationality. There is no one language known as the world-language. But it is a matter of no consequence. The poet's genius consists in his ability to show the universal in the particular : that is to say, how a thing limited in time and space can be used as the symbol of the Eternal and the Infinite; how a glimpse of the Infinite can be made to manifest itself in the finite. Just as a poet has not to view a temporary truth confined to a small area to be the absolute truth so also he must not have a bias for the abstract philosophical truth which does not come into contact with a particular time, space and the individual. In fact, the formless universality that does not or cannot

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bear the touch of the physical world is particularly a matter of philosophy. The philosophical truth always likes to shun the local colour, for its purpose is not to exaggerate or make a display of the truth. But the poet seeks for a living image of the truth. An image must exist and must have a contour, yet the poet has to bring in the universal in the image itself, the Infinite has to be made living and visible—that is the exclusive art of his genius. For example, take the famous line from Virgil

Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem
(Such huge labour was needed to found the Roman race.)

Here we find the pride of a particular nation displayed—the dangers and difficulties that had to be faced and the endeavours undergone to build the city of Rome. Here there is nothing expressly universal. But the poet has made use of these words in such a way that he does not seem to speak either about the city of Rome or obstacles and difficulties met with in building that city. This we forget *in toto*. There is a world-encompassing, stupendous and prodigious effort standing erect before our vision, before the eyes of the world. The city of Rome and the goddess Juno and the hero Aeneas are mere symbols and excuses to express a great universal truth.

In a parallel manner, the epics of Dante and Milton have specifically dealt with the Christian ideas. To us, modern intellectuals and adorers of material science most of the ideas of these two poets may seem not only grotesque but also superstitious—at least they will appear unfamiliar and strange. But once we cross the barrier of words and enter the realm of the spirit, leaving behind the outward theme, we are in contact with the inner soul and we come across something altogether different which is vast and intensely near and intimate to our own heart. Thus,

Jehovah thundering out of Sion, throned
Between the Cherubim

is kindred to our own Vedic

Dawn or the head of the sacrificial fire.

However foreign and unfamiliar the words and images used by the poets; however skilfully they may conceal themselves under mystic symbols, still we can hear and feel the secret of their heart that lies beyond names and forms.

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...Above the Olympian hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing !
The meaning, not the name I call —

A poet is not bound by any clime and time. That does not mean he neglects them. He utilises the elements supplied by time and space to create a world-literature which is eternally infinite, true for ever and everywhere. On the other hand, the kind of literature which is solely confined to time and space, the suggestiveness of which has been exhausted in a particular form and name, in which the universal spirit fails to move about freely, may at best be called a rural parochial literature and can never claim to be world-literature.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali)

THE OPEN ROAD

THE open road, the inviting path to new and wondrous places, the winding ribbon of adventure leading over hill and dale and by side of murmuring brook, the magic key to new experiences in unfamiliar worlds, the anodyne for jaded restless hearts. Who has not known the lure of the open road that visits equally the well-accoutred motorist and the care-free shiftless tramp, the lure which tempts the hiker and the cyclist to find what lies beyond the distant hill, which prompts the seasoned traveller to venture yet again into some other place to seek refreshment with the brightly strange and the divertingly different.

With what intensity to the city-bound worker can come the call of the open road, when to escape for a brief respite from the milling throng, the demands of daily toil, the compelling obedience to the Clock, is not merely a desire for pleasure but an insurance against a civilization-created madness; which is as much the prompting of a beneficent and protecting Nature, as a deeper call to replenish the weary soul. (For when Industry forgets that those in her employ are souls and not machines, it participates in a tyranny that inverts all basic values and converts mankind to well-fed soul-starved automatons.)

Then comes the open road as a passport to freedom where we can shuffle off the impositions of our burdens and exult as a bird released from its cage.

We shall lie in the shade of a tree, regardless of time, and spin a web of dreams among the green sheltering leaves; we shall sit in some wayside stall and sip a cup of nectar we had formerly called tea; we shall pause as long as we will to watch the wonder of the setting sun, or linger long over the changing light after the sudden rain.

We shall see with soul-freshened eyes the loveliness of common things which only poets capture : the lush green of the paddy fields, the waving fronds of palm against a darkening sky, the happy encounter of a chance wayside bloom.

The sounding hush of the countryside will bring to our machine-dunned ears the sweet refrain that only Nature sings, and she will gently re-attune our souls to truer, purer songs. We shall rest our limbs on the honest earth and relish the comfort of her wholesome touch; we shall dream our idle dreams and in our dreaming come closer than in our waking to the Ever-free. Bound to none we shall be brother to all, attached to nothing we'll claim relation with the Universe.

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But yet we must pause and wisely question whether we are deceived by so facile a solution as travel, whether we pursue a beautiful shadow that promises a joy that never palls, a pleasure that never poisons though it please. Oppressed by the confining walls of our little life, do we not seek escape in a mere outer distance ? And in the end is it not only to return to our self-created prison ? Perhaps the lure of the road is only the outer semblance of an inner need, a quest that means a journey of another kind; and how are we to know that all this while we have but been beguiled and charmed, led by a secret flute whose tender notes are known only to the inmost soul ? A secret chord is struck within our depths and the stirred heart blindly yearns for what it does not know; while Krishna smiles and smiles and calls us ever closer to his home ...within us.

GODFREY

NOMINAL RHYMES

WHAT is the gold in this imaginary rain ?
It fills the pools where angels stir the waters.
The beggars must leap in to heal their sores.
But wounded kings who fish, must fish in vain.
Among the beggars you may find kings' daughters
While in the palaces are painted whores.

Oh come from the past, come out of the dead seed.
The sun-flower knows no parents—cares for no sister plants.
It turns all day, when grown, towards the sun
And never counts its generation from the weed.
So now let go the previous incarnations' dance,
Let be what you have been, being now new begun.

Or if dark ladies and still centres,
Sources of power between one day and another,
Figures of beauty mothering their times,
Passive channels, where the Shakti enters,
Seem perennial symbols, like a father—lover,
Look to the Numen, not the nominal rhymes.

DICK BATSTONE

AN INVOCATION TO KUNDALINI

O SLUMBERING Force, awake !
Erect thy coils, O Snake !
Upward now turn thy look
From Matter's hidden nook.
Dumb Mother of things
With thunderings
Pierce the knots that halt thy dance of light.

In thy billowing rise of power
Let drooping lotuses flower.
Reveal that wondrous tree,
The body's infinity,
The worlds that bloom
Behind this gloom,
The thrice-veiled Flame that burns in the crypt of Night.

Let thy descent be Peace,
A rain of joy and ease
Of the upper hemisphere,
God-spaces vast and clear.
No more adrift,
But conscious, swift,
Let life embrace the harmony of the height.

PRITHWI SINGH

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(Continued from the previous issue)

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VI. AGONY OF SEPARATION

(Continued)

41. NO MORE THY SEPARATION

MOTHER, no more, no more Thy separation !
Soul-blind, love-lost for years and days on end
I fumbled on world's foamy ways, O rend
Thick clouds that keep me closed to Thy compassion.

No more can now my heart afford to be
Removed from Thee in ostentations whirled,
Give world to them who hanker for the world,
O let Thyself alone suffice for me.

Let every cell's pulsating core enjoy
The thrill and taste of Thy felicity,
With one touch turn to golden purity
My being's lightless dull and dense alloy.

Lord, let me all forget and solely crave
The joy to glimpse Thy face forevermore
And let my each surrendered body-pore
Delight to be Thy bearer and Thy slave.

My dwarf and fettered yearning may be weak,
Yet my mad-souled dream-eyed mute-hearted moves
Have one incessant aim : "To be Thy Love's."
O spurn me not, for Thee alone I seek.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

INDIA OF THE AGES

“ India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word.”

SRI AUROBINDO

I

THE INTERPRETERS

Origins. Our origins are still shrouded in mystery in spite of the long milleniums of recorded history. Our ancient ancestors sought to trace our origins in the sun and the moon. Modern Indologists assert with almost equal plausibility that we are descended from fair primitive “Aryans” who entered India about the middle of the second millennium before Christ from the arid tracts of Asia Minor and Iran, or else that we must claim descent from the much more civilised but darker-skinned “Dravidians” who had created the civilisation of Mohenjodaro and Harappa about a thousand years earlier.

Sri Aurobindo points out, however, that “the indications in the Veda on which this theory of a recent Aryan invasion is built, are very scanty in quantity and uncertain in their significance....It is always possible that the bulk of the peoples now inhabiting India may have been the descendants of a new race from more northern regions ; but there is nothing in the Veda, as there is nothing in the present ethnological features of the country to prove that this descent took place near to the time of the Vedic hymns or was the slow penetration of a small body of fair-skinned barbarians into a civilised Dravidian peninsula.”¹

The evidence of the Indus Valley ruins is shaky in the extreme, for we do not yet know in what language the seals discovered there were engraved ; nor has it been possible, as the learned editors of the latest work on our cultural heritage have explained, “to reach the lowermost strata . and get particulars about the origin and antecedents” of the Indus valley culture.² It seems that until we know more about the Indus Valley people and are in a position to form a comparative estimate with the ancient Vedic culture, the question of our origins may have to be left open.

¹ *On the Veda*, pp. 30-31.

² *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Revised Edition), Volume 1, p. xlvii.

Vedas. We are faced with another problem when we deal with the Vedas. Here the difficulty is about their meaning, for the meanings given to these ancient texts have been as varied as their interpreters.

The earliest interpreters whose work has survived were the authors of the *Brahmanas*, the old texts on the Vedic ritual which sought to find a justification for the forms of sacrifice current at the time. They found themselves at a loss to grasp the sense of many of the important words. The language had obviously undergone a change and the clue to the old Vedic symbolism forgotten. Where they did not understand, they had free recourse to fancy, invented myths, gave the most unlikely etymologies and relied on pure guesswork where other means failed. Therefore, says Sri Aurobindo, "the *Brahmanas*, though full of interesting hints, help us very little in our research."¹

Nor do we get much help from the Rishis of the Upanishads. "They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuition and perceptions. They knew not or they neglected the etymological sense and employed often the method of symbolic interpretation of component sounds in which it is very difficult to follow them. For this reason, while the Upanishads are invaluable for the light they shed on the principal ideas and on the psychological system of the ancient Rishis, they help us as little as the *Brahmanas* in determining the accurate sense of the texts which they quote".²

From the next considerable work on Vedic exegesis, the *Nirukta* of Yaska (who is usually supposed to have lived a short time before the Buddha) we gather that in the meantime there had developed a number of different schools, such, for example, as the historical school, the school of *parivrājakas* (who followed perhaps the line of the Upanishadic meditation), the ritualists, the grammarians and the etymologists, all of whom gave to Vedic words and verses their own peculiar interpretations. We are indebted to Yaska for the meanings of some rare words which he has preserved, but his etymology was in most cases fanciful.

Sayanacharya's great commentary written in the fourteenth century still survives as the most authoritative among orthodox circles in India. "Sayana and his helpers had to work upon a great mass of often conflicting speculation and tradition which still survived from the past.... The first element was the remnant of the old spiritual, philosophical interpretations of the Shruti which were the true foundation of its sanctity. A second element is the mythological... A

¹ *On the Veda*, p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

third element is the legendary and historic...More important is the element of naturalistic interpretation.. .But it is the ritualistic conception that pervades.... It is the most egoistic and materialistic objects that are proposed as the aim of the sacrifice,—possessions, strength, power, children, servants, gold, horses, cows, victory, the slaughter and the plunder of enemies, the destruction of rival and malevolent critics....It is the final and authoritative binding of the Veda to this lowest of all its possible senses that has been the most unfortunate result of Sayana's commentary."¹

"The modern theory of the Veda starts with the conception, for which Sayana is responsible, of the Vedas as the hymnal of an early, primitive and largely barbaric society crude in its moral and religious conceptions, rude in its social structure and entirely childlike in its outlook upon the world that environed it....The obvious identification of the Vedic gods in their external aspects with certain Nature-Powers was used as the starting-point for a comparative study of Aryan mythologies; the hesitating identification of certain of the less prominent deities as Sun-Powers was taken as a general clue to the system of primitive myth-making and elaborate sun-myths and star-myth theories of comparative mythology were founded. In this new light the Vedic hymnology has come to be interpreted as a half-superstitious, half-poetic allegory of Nature with an important astronomical element. The rest is partly contemporary history, partly the formulae and practices of a sacrificial ritualism, not mystic, but merely primitive and superstitious."²

One may conclude that here is still scope for "a new view of the ancient problem."³

Upanishads : The culminating point of Veda is *Vedanta*, the name usually given to the second highest achievement of the Indian spirit, the Upanishads. "But what the Upanishads are," says Sri Aurobindo,⁴ "very few really know. When we speak of the Upanishads, we think usually of the philosophical systems of the commentators, such as Shankaracharya's school of Advaita-Monism, the qualified Monism of Ramanuja, the Dualism of Madhwa. We seldom care to ask : what does the original text of the Upanishads contain ? what is its true significance ? how could the six mutually antagonistic systems of philosophy, the Darshans, derive from this common source ? is it possible to discover in these treasures of wisdom any deeper meaning beyond the reach of those systems ? For a thousand years we have been accepting the interpretation left

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ *Dharma O Jatiyata* : "Upanishad" (in Bengali)

to us by Shankara; his commentary is our Veda, our Upanishad. Who would take the trouble to read the Upanishads in the original ? Even if we do, we reject immediately as false any interpretation which does not tally with Shankara's. And yet, the Upanishads contain not only the knowledge to which Shankara had access, but all spiritual experience and knowledge of the Reality, which has been attained or will be attained in the past, present or future, recorded there in extremely terse and deeply significant phrase by the great Yogins and Aryan Rishis....We should not therefore limit ourselves to the commentary of Shankara or another, but try to ascertain the true import and deep integral significance of these Upanishads .. To try to understand them in the sole light of the logical intelligence is to peer at high tree-tops in a dense jungle with candle-light."

This was precisely what has been done in the course of the long centuries. The mind of the succeeding ages has been predominantly intellectual; its tendency was towards analysis. Hence its failure to grasp the synthetic turn of these intuitive records of vision. The Upanishads, as Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly emphasised, "are not at all philosophic thinking, but spiritual seeing, a rush of spiritual intuitions throwing themselves inevitably into the language of poetry, shaped out of fire and life, because that is their natural speech."¹ It is the failure to grasp this important truth which has led to a misunderstanding of these great works. We in our own day have not yet got over this intellectual malady. We are still trying to construct philosophical "systems" out of this infinity.

Gita : The next great achievement of the Indian mind, the Gita, has shared a similar fate in the hands of commentators. It too has been used as a weapon of offence and defence in their polemics. Each finds in the Gita his own system of metaphysics; "all agree in each disagreeing with all the others."²

"Thus, there are those who make the Gita teach, not works at all, but a discipline of preparation for renouncing life and works....Others again speak of the Gita as if the doctrine of devotion were its whole teaching....At the present day. the tendency is to subordinate its elements of knowledge and devotion.... and to find in it a scripture of the Karmayoga, a Gospel of Works...of works as they are understood by the modern mind,...action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal, social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals....Very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind."³

¹ *The Future Poetry*, p. 45.

² Sri Aurobindo . *Essays on the Gita*, First Series. Chapter 1.

³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

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The reason for this misunderstanding is partly to be sought in the fact that the Gita has been read very often without its epic context. The Gita, as the text repeatedly suggests, forms an inseparable part of the epic story, and its meaning can be understood if we remember always the psychological crisis out of which it sprang. That crisis was the bankruptcy of all the usual standards of conduct in face of the stupendous slaughter that loomed before Arjuna. In that crisis, the Teacher proposes a solution which takes man behind the outer appearances into his innermost soul : he has to act from his soul and not from his outer mind, and he will then find the true law of action and a solution to the problems that confront him. This deepest intention has been overlooked, the commentators have battled over the metaphysics of the Gita and this great manual of spiritual works has lost its main value.

Buddhism. The Gita had insisted on action as the means of liberation, “an insistence, unfortunately, which could not prevail in India against the tremendous tide of Buddhism, was lost afterwards in the intensity of ascetic illusionism and the fervour of world-shunning saints and devotees and is only now beginning to exercise its real and salutary influence on the Indian mind”.¹

“At one time indeed it seemed as if a discontinuity and a sharp new beginning were needed and would take place. Buddhism seemed to reject all spiritual continuity with the Vedic religion.”² It denied the authority of the Veda as the supreme scripture, it sought to abolish the Vedic sacrifice, it stressed the importance of the individual’s own efforts to exceed his lower nature, it gave great encouragement to the use of the local vernaculars in place of the old hieratic tongue. Buddha’s mission was “to bring to all men a new spiritual message and a new law of divine growth and spiritual realisation ;” his work led, after he had finished his earthly manifestation, “to a profound and powerful change not only in the ethical, but in the social and outward life and ideals of the race.”³

And yet India finally rejected Buddhism from the land of its birth ; the doctrine was denounced as “false teaching”.⁴ “Buddha himself does not seem to have preached his tenets as a novel revolutionary creed, but as the old Aryan way, the true form of the eternal religion.... But what hurt Buddhism and determined in the end its rejection, was not its denial of a Vedic origin or authority, but the exclusive trenchancy of its intellectual, ethical and spiritual positions...It was a high creed but not plastic enough to hold the heart of the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Chapter 9.

³ *The Foundations of Indian Culture* : Book III, Chapter 2.

⁴ *Essays on the Gita*, First Series, Chapter 17. *Vishnu Purana*, Part III, Section 18.

people. Indian religion absorbed all that it could of Buddhism, but rejected its exclusive positions and preserved the full line of its own continuity, casting back to the ancient Vedanta."¹

Purana-Tantra. This continuity is most visible in the Purano-Tantrik phase of Indian religious culture which followed the Buddhist interlude. The Puranic tradition is as old at least as the oldest Upanishads. We know for example that Purana, though not obviously in its present form, was included as an important part of the old Vedic curriculum.² The existing Puranas claim to have been based on the original work of the great Vyasa.

As Sri Aurobindo has observed,³ "the ancient knowledge and learning passed down from generation to generation constitute the Smṛiti (traditional lore) and Purana is first among Smṛiti ... The spiritual truths of the Upanishads appear in the Puranas in the form of parable and myth ; they contain a good deal of valuable material on the history of India, the gradual evolution and progress of the Hindu religion, the social conditions of ancient times, their customs and manners, forms of worship, yogic practices, ways of thought. Moreover all the Puranic authors were either initiates or men with spiritual realisations ; the Puranas contain a record of their knowledge and spiritual experience. Veda and Upanishad are the original scriptures of Hinduism ; Purana is their commentary..."

The function of the Puranas was to "bring home to the common man the knowledge of Veda and Upanishad, explain it to him, discuss it in full, try to make it applicable to the minor details of life."⁴ "In their avowed intention they are popular summaries of the cosmogony, symbolic myth and image, tradition, cult, social rule of the Indian people continued, as the name Purana signifies, from ancient times. There is no essential change, but only a change of forms."⁵

"All the Puranic tradition," says Sri Aurobindo,⁶ "draws the richness of its contents from the Tantra....It [the Tantra] seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of life in our divine scope as the Lila (the Cosmic Play) of the Divine; and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful, for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine

¹ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Book III, Chapter 2.

² *Chhandogya Upanishad*, VII.1.2.

³ *Dharma O Jatyata* : "Purana" (in Bengali).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Book III, Chapter 14.

⁶ *Essays on the Gita*, First Series, Chapter 1.

knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes. Moreover it grasps at that idea of divine perfectibility of man, possessed by the Vedic Rishis but thrown into the background by the intermediate ages, which is destined to fill so large a place in any future synthesis of human thought, experience and aspiration. We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis.”¹

“The psychic and spiritual mystic endeavour which was the inner sense of the Vedic hymns, disappeared into the less intensely luminous but more wide and rich and complex psycho-spiritual inner life of Puranic and Tantric religion and Yoga.”² It is this “vulgarisation” of the old mystic doctrine and practice that has been primarily responsible for the discredit in modern times of this valuable tradition. “Much however of this depreciation is due to an entire misunderstanding of the purpose, method and sense of the medieval religious writings. It is only in an understanding of the turn of the Indian religious imagination and of the place of these writings in the evolution of the culture that we can seize their sense.... It is to be observed that the Puranas and Tantras contain in themselves the highest spiritual and philosophical truths, not broken up and expressed in opposition to each other as in the debates of the thinkers but synthesised by a fusion, relation or grouping in the way most congenial to the catholicity of the Indian mind and spirit....”³

Later Work. “Afterwards,” says Sri Aurobindo, “there came the lofty illusionism of Shankara at the close of the two greatest known millenniums of Indian culture. Life thenceforward was too much depreciated as an unreality or a relative phenomenon, in the end not worth living, not worth our assent to it and persistence in its motives....The later Indian mind has been powerfully impressed by his idea of Maya ; but popular thought and sentiment was never wholly shaped by it. The religions of devotion which see in life a play or Lila of God and not a half sombre, half glaring illusion defacing the white silence of eternity had a closer growing influence. If they did not counteract, they humanised the austere ideal.

It is only recently that educated India accepted the ideas of English and German scholars, imagined for a time Shankara’s Mayavada [the Illusionist doctrine] to be the one highest thing, if not the whole of our philosophy, and

¹ *Ibid*

² *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Book III, Chapter 2.

³ *Ibid.*, Book III, Chapter 14.

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put it in a place of exclusive prominence. But against that tendency too there is now a powerful reaction, not towards replacing the spirit without life by life without the spirit, but towards a spiritual possession of mind, life and matter.¹

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ *Ibid.*, Book II, Chapter 3.

SHUNASHEPA'S STORY IN THE "AITAREYA BRAHMANA", AND ITS SYMBOLISM IN THE "RIGVEDA"

If there is any truth in the old legend of Shunashepa bound as a victim at the altar of sacrifice, it is quite certain, as we shall see, that in the Rigveda the occurrence or the legend is used as a symbol of the human soul bound to the triple cord of sin and released from it by the divine power of Agni, Surya, Varuna. (Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, p. 183.)

The story of Shunashepa, as narrated in the *Aitareya Brahmana* is said by the author of this *Brahmana* to have been a real occurrence in the times of the Rigveda, in which there are seven Suktas of about hundred Mantras by Shunashepa. This story is first narrated in this Brahmana and later in some Puranas. Shunashepa was the son of one Ajigarta who was not a Rishi but belonged to the clan of Angirasa Rishi. At that time there was a king by name Harishchandra who got a son named Rohita by worshipping Varuna and promising him that with his son as an offering he would worship Varuna. The son was born and, till he reached the age when he could conscientiously take his own decision about consecrating himself to the worship of Varuna, he was not insisted upon either by his father or Varuna to keep his father's promise. However, when he reached that age and was reminded of his father's promise to Varuna, he refused to fulfil his father's promise and, leaving his father's palace with a bow, went to the forest. On this account Varuna caused a stomach disease to Harishchandra. Rohita learnt of it and after roaming in the forest for six years he found Ajigarta with his wife and three sons suffering from starvation. He bargained with Ajigrata for a hundred cows to send along with him his second son Shunashepa that he might live a life of dedication to Varuna. It was agreed and he took Shunashepa with him to his father. Both Harishchandra and Varuna agreed to have Shunashepa as an offering of Harishchandra's worship to Varuna, in place of Rohita. At that time a Rajasuya sacrifice was being performed by Harishchandra with an animal to be killed as a victim. Varuna himself suggested then that instead of an animal a man might be used. Preparations were made for the sacrifice and Shunashepa was to be tied as the victim. His father took another hundred cows and bound him to the sacrificial post and then took a third hundred cows to slaughter him on the altar. In this sacrifice the great Rishis Vasishtha, Visvamitra, Jamadagni and Ayasya acted as the four priests. Seeing that preparations were being

made for killing hiim in the sacrifice, Shunashepa prayed to the gods Agni, Savitri, Varuna, Indra, Aswins and Usha in seven Suktas and then by the power of the gods the bonds fell away of their own accord and Harishchandra also got cured immediately. By these praises he attained Rishihood.

The above is a summary of the translation of this story in the Brahmana from Sanskrit into English by Martin Haug.

Now it is contested by some that there was killing of human beings in Vedic sacrifices, and by others that there was no human killing in those sacrifices; in either case they say that the symbol of the human soul getting released by the worship of the gods is a farce. Sri Aurobindo says that even if there was any killing at all of human beings in sacrifices it was still used by the Vedic Rishis as a symbol for the release of the human soul from the triple bondage of body, life and mind.

To arrive at the solution to the problem we have set to ourselves, we have to examine the original texts of these two narrations in the Veda and the Brahmana and see what they themselves say about it. But to reach the true meaning of these texts we must know their background with regard to life, ideas and culture.

"In the Veda the Recovery of the Light is first effected by the Angirasas, the seven sages, the ancient human fathers and is then constantly repeated in human experience by their agency." (*On the Veda*, p. 176.)

Of the four hundred Rishis who have composed the hymns of the present historical record of the Rigveda that we possess, about one hundred and fifty belong to the clan of the Angirasas. Shunashepa who became a Rishi by self-culture and his father who did not or could not become a Rishi, both belong to the Angirasa clan. The Rishis of the Angirasa clan have about one third of the hymns in the Rigveda to their credit. Apart from this clan the other important ones are of Vashishtha, Visvamitra, Atri and Bharadvaja; they and their sons and descendants number more than a hundred and nearly half of the Rigveda is composed by them. All the other three Vedas also are composed mostly by the Rigvedic Rishis and their descendants.

It is the Angirasas who first established Universal Truth in Universal Thought through the Rik Mantra; this Rik Mantra, as it repeated itself in the experience of the other Rishis, is the Rigveda that we possess. It is the Angirasas that brought down, through Yajus, the Word of power, which rightly ordained the action of Universal Truth in Universal Thought; this Yajus, as it repeated itself in the experience of the subsequent Rishis, is the Yajurveda that we possess. So too Saman, the Word of calm and harmonious attainment for establishing the divine desire of the Spirit, was first brought down by the Angirasas; this experience, as it repeated itself in other Rishis, is the Sama

Veda that we have. They who were seven in the beginning were joined by two other Rishis and they became the Nawagwas; later they were joined by another and they became Dasagwas. The Rik, the Yajus, and the Saman together form the Mantra, the Creative Word, the Veda. What was established by the ancient Human Fathers, the spiritual fathers of humanity, and fixed in the earth consciousness was continued to be experienced by other Rishis through a system of self-culture. The detailed process of that system is lost to us. If they have uttered anything of it in these Mantras it is a secret meaning covered with words of symbolism; by them "everything, their own names, the names of Kings and sacrificers, the ordinary circumstances of their lives were turned into symbols and covers for their secret meaning". (*On the Veda*, p. 183.)

Broadly speaking, the human soul is bound in man's consciousness to his physical being, the result of which is obscurity, doubt, disbelief, stupidity and unwillingness to change; it is bound to his vital being, the result of which is passions, jealousy, greed and lust etc.; it is bound to his mental being, the result of which is prejudices, prepossessions, attachment to one's own ideas and ideals. If the soul of man is to be released from these three bondages one can get released from all life and if he likes he can live a universal life. Yet this was not sufficient to enable one to utter the creative word, the Mantra, which reproduces the same vibrations in others that repeat it. For all these different achievements in the inner being of man, even as there are now methods of inner discipline so too there must have been systems of inner discipline of which we do not know. This Mantra coupled with the sacrificial system was used by them to organise the social, political and economic life of man for a spiritual way of life; to continue this method of sacrificial system the Rishis had to train others as priests. The priests who uttered the Rik, the Yajus and the Saman were called respectively Hotra, the summoner, Adhvarya, the ordainer, Udgatra, the singer. Before the Rishis could disappear from the field by entrusting the sacrificial system with the Mantra to the priests, to safeguard any mistake that might have been committed in the utterance and use of the Rik, Yajus and Saman, they had to form a fourth kind of Mantra called Brahma; this too they did, and the priest who uttered this Mantra was also called by the same name.

So long as the society was limited, the social, political and economical life of this Aryan community went on well. With its expansion, where there were no restrictions to anybody's following any profession he liked, whether it was to preach, or to defend, or to produce, for the sound working of these professions on a spiritual basis the necessity arose to form a caste system based on profession and the priests had to devise a new method of sacrificial system, yet based on what they knew of the Vedic culture to suit the altered conditions

of the society. This new system is what is contained in the Brahmanas, of which the Aitareya Brahmana is one.

So what has been mentioned in this Brahmana as an occurrence to a Rigvedic Rishi may have come to a priest from mouth to mouth of the Rigvedic priests of this Rigvedic Brahmana, or he might have learnt of this occurrence by a certain inner experience, a revelation as it is called; the hearsay or the revelation of this Brahmanic priest may be true or false; the narration of the Rigvedic occurrence in the Brahmana may have been sufficiently clear to the people of the Brahmanic days and it may not be clear to us on account of want of details, or a difference in the diction of the Sanskrit language from what it is now.

So before examining the texts, we must also know the diction in the Rigveda and the Brahmana on one side and the diction in Classical literature. In the Sanskrit of the Rigveda and the Brahmana there are more numerous case-forms of the nominal and pronominal inflexion and more numerous verbal forms of roots than in Classical Sanskrit. There are certain emphasising and other particles in the Veda which give a new turn of meaning to words; these also are not in use in Classical Sanskrit. So too the forms of participles, gerunds and infinitives are more numerous in Vedic Sanskrit. All this does not mean that there is no regular system of law and order followed in these things just as in Classical Sanskrit: an order and law are found. The Western Vedic scholar has systematised Vedic Grammar more thoroughly than Panini, Katyayana, Patanjali and Bhattoji Diksit. After these persons there seems to be no Vedic Grammar systematised by any Indian Vedic scholars. So far all the Indian Vedic scholars who have translated the Rigveda (except Sri Aurobindo) say, wherever there is a difference in the case-forms and verbal forms in the two Sanskrit languages, that the difference in Vedic Sanskrit is an exception to the rule of Classical Sanskrit grammar and in translating that word they give a meaning according to any grammatical construction they like on the plea of there being no grammar in the Veda.

Then with regard to Vedic etymology, the Vedic language demands that the meaning to a formed word must be given in accordance with that of the root of that particular word. In classical Sanskrit we see many formed words having acquired meanings different from root meanings. In Sri Aurobindo's translation of the Rigveda we see a lot of words with such difference in meanings.

Then again the Rigveda was written with an inner psychological and spiritual meaning for the initiate and an external meaning for the layman. For this convenience they adopted a method of symbolism to cover the secret meaning. This symbolical meaning of the words also must be known to understand the Veda correctly.

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Finally the difference between the spiritual and psychological doctrine of the Vedas, its main side, and its ritualistic doctrine, its less important side, has to be known. From Sri Aurobindo's translation of the Rigveda one can see that a translation in accordance with the main side shows always a coherency in the meaning given to the words and a continuity in sense from clause to clause in a sentence, from sentence to sentence in a Mantra and from Mantra to Mantra in a Sukta. If we believe that the Rishis were as rational beings as we are we must expect their utterances also to have a continuity in sense in accordance with their doctrine. Where we are not able to understand we may admit it, but not find fault with the Rishi.

So one who approaches the Veda with mere intellect, must be equipped with a knowledge of (1) the doctrine of the Veda as followed by the Rishis, (2) its symbolism, (3) its grammar, (4) its etymology. However, for one who can raise himself and identify his consciousness directly with the consciousness of the Rishi who composed the hymn, all these four branches of Vedic study automatically fulfil themselves. I see that Sri Aurobindo's translations are done as much by this method as by the intellectual one.

(To be continued)

NARAYANA C. REDDY

Students' Section

TALKS ON POETRY

(These Talks were given to a group of students starting their University life. They have been prepared for publication from notes and memory, except in the few places where they have been expanded a little. Here and there the material is slightly rearranged in the interests of unity of theme. As far as possible the actual turns of phrase used in the Class have been recovered, and, at the request of the students, even the digressions have been preserved. The Talks make, in this form, somewhat unconventional pièces, but the aim has been to retain not only their touch of literature and serious thought but also their touch of life and laughter.)

TALK NINE

THE critic of Keats's *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*, for all his show of learning, might as well have been the young lady who has become memorable with the question : "What are Keats ?" The ignorance displayed of the world of poetry could have been compared also to that of the old lady who went to a lecture on Burns and came back disappointed that the lecturer throughout shot away from the subject and, instead of giving advice on how to treat the effects of flame-heat or of boiling water on the skin, kept talking of some Scottish poet. Today we look far more appreciatively at *Endymion* than did the eye of the notorious Jeffrey. It is a wonder how the very first touch of the poem with its glorious opening line—

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever—

did not stir his imagination to sit up and take sensitive notice and get ready to respond to the authentic beauties that play in and out among the immaturities of that lushly lovely allegory.

If Jeffrey had possessed the slightest discrimination he would hardly have picked out for ridicule some of the finest things in *Endymion* together

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with its several lapses of poetic taste—things like the splendid “Hymn to Pan” in which we find the Forest-Spirit addressed :

Be thou the unimaginable lodge
Of solitary thinkings such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain...

Jeffrey could make nothing of this : all in his mental world was evidently conceivable and formulable, there were no gleams or shadows of the unknown and the mind-transcendent. Jeffrey even went out to criticise the choice of words. “Dodge”, to him, was a most inappropriate undignified turn in poetry, dragged in merely to supply a rhyme to “lodge”. We nowadays consider it a vivid borrowing from common speech. It is a word without determined etymology : nobody can say where it hails from. It seems to have neither a Latin root nor an Anglo-Saxon. But it is alive with the suggestion of quick yet skilful and persistent evasion or escape, and has in the present context a directness which is admirable. There are other effects of a similar kind in *Endymion*, but Jeffrey lumped them with whatever faults of taste he could spot, and he exploited to his own advantage the fact that Keats came from a common family and was a Londoner who had never had higher education but was a mere physician’s assistant. Jeffrey’s verdict was that Keats the illiterate Cockney compounder should stick to his master’s dispensary and not dabble in the making of poetry : the dictations of the Muse could not be followed by an intelligence fit only for the apothecary’s prescriptions.

Jeffrey’s attack was in such ferocious and venomous terms that all readers thought it would drive Keats to abandon poetry for good. But Keats was a tough little fellow who had quite a self-critical mind that knew both his own defects and his own finer possibilities : he never swerved from his sense of poetic destiny, any more than Wordsworth gave up his poetic career as a result of Jeffrey’s “This will never do”. A belief, however, continued that Keats’s early death by tuberculosis was caused by the psychological wounds inflicted by the *Quarterly Review*, and Shelley’s elegy on him, the celebrated *Adonais*, is written under the impression that he fell a victim to the malevolence of critics. Shelley, himself one of the pioneer Romanticists in England, had been attacked too, for his high-flying lyricism as well as for his supposedly loose morals : so his heart went out in greater sympathy to Keats, and his own resentment at the bitterness of non-Romanticists against the new poetry lent itself easily to the idea that Keats had been mortally hurt by the injustice and abuse of Jeffrey and his crew. Shelley also did not live long, but nobody could

imagine he died of a heart broken by book-reviewers. The story of his drowning can, however, break our hearts and I shall not recount it to you lest you should drown in tears and make my lecturing impossible. To make you laugh is a safer course. So let me switch back to Wordsworth. Wordsworth could never have been suspected of having died from any critic's onslaught, for he outlived all his critics and went on into a serene and even stolid old age filled with the acclamations of a new epoch of critics and crowned with the Poet-Laureateship. Nobody could say any more that in his *Lyrical Ballads* there was not a word's worth of poetry !

There was also acceptance of the contention in his provocative Preface that the worth of a word did not lie in its being remote from common speech. No premium was put any longer on false Poetic Diction. Poetic Diction is false when archaic words are unnecessarily dragged in, allusions to Classical mythology indiscriminately made, and roundabout ways adopted in order to avoid a common expression. Always to employ "quoth", for instance, instead of "said" or "spoke" is false Poetic Diction. In the eighteenth century many poets could not refer to the breeze except as the "zephyr". A girl could not be termed a girl : she had to be a "nymph". Woman had to be called "the fair". Sheep were "the fleecy care". Fish as human food entered poetry only as "the finny prey". And, as for rats, their mention was thought to be something like a hydrogen bomb which would explode to bits the whole world of poetry. They had to be brought in by a detour as "the whiskered vermin race". Suppose Shakespeare had subscribed to this method : how would he have written Lear's question —

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life... ?

Wordsworth swept away all the artificial conventions. But he went at times to the other extreme and became so bald in his diction that merely the metrical form remained in his poetry to mark it out from prose. At his best he blends a naturalness with elevation and poignancy, to practise a direct style which is almost unique. The other Romanticists were not as careful as he to avoid the heady effects of some of the springs released by the new movement. They fell into vague colourfulness or high-faluting volubility or a too precious artistry. But the revolt against pseudo-Classicism created room again for not only simplicity and straightforwardness but also genuine splendour.

In the true type of Poetic Diction the words are meant to convey a sense of realities not ordinary, not accessible to day-to-day consciousness, or to bring out the inner nature of a situation with the help of highly-coloured or poly-

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syllabic phrases which would throw it strongly upon the outer eye and ear. An excellent example of the latter purpose is in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in the scene where Macbeth's wife has left him with an injunction to remove the filthy evidence of his misdeed, the blood-stains on his hand after the murder of the sleeping King Duncan. Macbeth soliloquises :

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand ? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

You might think that here is only a memorable purple patch. But you will be mistaken if you think so. The purple patch is organic to the idea : without it the logic of the poetic moment would be absent. Let me dwell a little on the meaningful artistry of these lines.

The unusual verb "incarnadine" is, of course, the centre-piece here. It signifies : "to dye flesh-coloured or crimson." It has a strongly melodious effect on the ear and creates a vivid impression on the eye. But its purpose goes far beyond all this. Macbeth has let his imagination soar. He has put, in rivalry with the bloodiness of his human hand, the power of "all great Neptune's ocean", and he has increased the audacity of his contraposition by throwing into relief the greatness of the ocean with the help of the thirteen-lettered epithet "multitudinous" : the challenge, as it were, of Neptune's washing vastness has been openly accepted by Macbeth in order to suggest the enormity of his own crime, an enormity against which the combined cleansing powers of the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans would not avail. But the suggestion would remain abstract—merely conceptually forceful—unless the enormity were somehow brought out to the senses and rendered concrete. He has made one side of the competition very concrete by the epithet "multitudinous" : it must now be balanced by a concreteness on the other side. Only a strikingly big word with a rich resonance can prove competent to match that word in which the ocean-idea comes to its full. "Incarnadine" rises to the occasion with unerring success. We at once feel that the evil which stains the hand is vast enough to pollute with its indelible heinousness the whole world of waters. The logic of the contraposition is complete and, as if to proceed systematically no less than to produce a surprise and to lay special emphasis, the order of the words is inverted and instead of saying,

Incarnadine the multitudinous seas,

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Macbeth is led to say

The multitudinous seas incarnadine.

The most important word is put at the end, effecting a *grand finale*.

When we have reached this *grand finale* we have illustrated true Poetic Diction, but not appreciated totally the artistry of Shakespeare in the passage. Shakespeare could very well have stopped when his initial purpose had been served. Having accomplished what was psychologically required he could have done without the three-foot line which prolongs the sentence by a participial clause. Lady Macbeth who now re-enters does not even finish it with the remaining two feet of the necessary pentameter, and Shakespeare by omitting the clause would have got an obvious climax. We know from Ben Jonson's famous dictum that Shakespeare never blotted a word he had once written. But he never blotted anything because mostly he wrote the perfect, the inevitable poetry which called for no correction or omission. And here too, after having penned the three-foot phrase, he failed to run his quill through it in the interests of a resounding climax, because he was a poet-dramatist beyond the ordinary: his imagination had often a complex logic and felt at this place that while the immediate necessity of expression was answered at the end of the line couched in markedly poetic diction a deeper and subtler need remained unsatisfied. Shakespeare divined that, since the hand that had committed the murder was a small thing in itself though its offence was tremendous, the implication of the tremendousness of the offence by an unusual and ringing polysyllable was not enough while treating the ocean-idea : the sea in its turn must somehow appear small and become capable of being stained by a human limb. Hence the sonorous is succeeded by the simple, and, even as "multitudinous" was matched by "incarnadine", "green" is contraposed to "red". It is a device that at the same time stresses more explicitly the colour-contrast between sea-water and blood and pulls Macbeth's soaring and widening imagination back to the reality before his eyes—to a mood expressing, without obliterating his great inner sense of guilt, his desire to deal practically with the limited outer symbol and evidence of his crime : the stained human hand.

By the way, you should catch properly the function of the word "one" in the phrase : "Making the green one red." You may be inclined to take "one" as the noun to which "green" forms the adjective. All the force of the phrase would then be lost. "One" is itself an adjective and qualifies "red" : both together connote "a whole, total, single, undifferentiated, all-through redness." A similar connotation is there in Browning's

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Sunset ran one glorious blood-red reeking into Cadiz Bay.

Another instance of true Poetic Diction may be studied from Keats. It too introduces the seas. Keats has felt, in the nightingale singing one night, the essence of an immortal music that has been haunting human hearts throughout history, a music that has also haunted not only the crowded passages of man's life but also far-away places and has often

Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.

If you put "windows" instead of "casements" you do not disturb the rhythm by the non-poetic diction, but the spell is broken. Windows are too much of earth's daily life : the rarer word "casements" brings just the suggestion of remoteness and strangeness which could accord with "magic" and lead on to the picture of faery lands. Likewise, to substitute "dangerous" for "perilous" would be no rhythmic fault, yet the light of common day would at once be reflected by the seas upon the magic casements. A correspondence between the former and the latter has to be maintained, and this is done, I may add, not only by the less prosaic word "perilous" but also by the echo of the letter *p* in it to the *p* which is in the present participle "opening" that shows us what the casements are doing in connection with the seas foaming under them. Again, the *l* in "perilous" makes a sympathetic music with the *l*'s in "lands" and "forlorn", just as the *r* does with the *r*'s in both "fairy" and "forlorn". Further, the combination of *r* and *l* and *s* in "perilous" makes more liquid and sibilant music suitable to "seas" than merely the *r* and *s* of "dangerous".

I may mention that originally Keats had put "keelless" where now "perilous" stands. "Keelless" is good poetic diction and makes with unusual means the suggestion of seas that are solitary, over which no ship's keel has passed. A keel is the lowest timber-piece on which a ship is built, and in poetry the word "keel" does duty for the ship itself. "Keelless" coming with "seas" which are touched by the lowest timber-piece of a vessel is quite appropriate and would make the right music by its *l*-sound and carry on by its *k*-sound the initial note of the hard *c* in "magic" and "casements". But somehow the long *e* of "keel" does not harmonise with the long *e* of "seas" : it does not harmonise precisely because the very identity of the two sounds prepares us to think of a sea full of keels, so that to say "keelless" is to violate the logic of the poetic rhythm. Besides, the movement of the word is metrically flat : the seas seem to be undisturbed, an unbroken surface of water—a very apt suggestion

in itself if the purpose is to bring home the picture of a sea uncrossed by any ship. But Keats felt that though the faery lands have to be forlorn their forlornness can be brought out without saying that no ships sailed to them : it can be brought out simply by saying that the seas were so full of dangers that no ship could sail. In addition, the natural movement of the seas is left unpictured by "keelless" and the visual hint in "foam" of the effect of the natural movement is left unsupported by it, even contradicted. The second and third syllables of "perilous" make with "seas" what is called a glide-anapaest : there is a "glide" because the "i" is half-articulated but the half-articulation is enough to create a tremble in the metre and import the vibration of the water. Moreover, this vibration answers in terms of metrical motion exactly to the vibration connected with "opening", the word with which "perilous" has already a relation by its *p*-sound. There too we have almost a glide-anapaest, for the word "on" which is usually unstressed carries a small stress here and takes the weight of the voice in the foot whose first two syllables are the closing two of "opening".

The terminal phrase "fairy lands forlorn" is another masterpiece of Poetic Diction. Not only the slight unusualness of "fairy" and "forlorn" makes it so. It is also the inversion, the adjective "forlorn" coming after "fairy lands", that takes us away all the more from lands that are not fairy—and then there is the final drawn-out mournfulness of this adjective's sound, holding distances of a poignant dream in it and dying away on a deep yet delicate bell-like note.

We may, with this note, await the far-from-delicate ringing of our School bell and, concluding our morning's literary luxury, return to the workaday world and our common natures. It will be in tune with Keats's own attitude to that adjective: for the very next stanza opens—a bit too self-consciously, according to many critics — with the lines :

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self....

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SOCRATES

(Continued from the last issue)

AMONG the many views of Socrates, his doctrine of "Virtue is Knowledge" is perhaps the most important. This doctrine can be interpreted in two ways, according as we attach different meanings to the words "Virtue" and "Knowledge". We shall deal with them one after the other.

(1) Traditionally, it is held that the ethical problem is a double one: first, the problem of knowing what is right and, second, the problem of doing what is known to be right. But, according to the first interpretation, Socrates identifies Knowledge, the first problem, with Virtue, the second problem. According to Socrates, it is maintained, knowing and doing cannot be separated. If a person knows a thing to be right, he cannot but do it. Or, in other words, a person cannot voluntarily do wrong.

Knowledge, on this view, means the knowledge of what is good and this knowledge is the intellectual apprehension. And by virtue is meant any good deed of an agent who has apprehended it to be good.

The plausibility of this interpretation depends upon the two dialogues, *Charmides* and *Iaches*, in which the Socratic doctrine is expounded to a certain extent. In *Iaches*, Socrates says in effect that it is not the case that the brave man is never afraid, but in spite of his fear he advances, rushes the slopes and captures the enemy's weapons. Why does he? Because he is afraid of certain things even more than of the weapons—such things as the doing of what is disgraceful, of feeling shame, of the reputation for cowardice, of betraying one's comrades. What then is the difference between a coward and a brave man? The difference is that while the brave man knows what is really to be afraid of, the coward does not. Hence the knowledge of the right makes the former courageous.

The argument in *Charmides* is that it is the knowledge of the mean between extreme indulgence and extreme asceticism that makes a man temperate or sober. These two dialogues give a clue, it is said, as to what meaning is attached by Socrates to the word "Knowledge". Here there is no reference to the knowledge of the whole reality or of the Highest Good; it is therefore not mystic or intuitive knowledge which is an attribute of spiritual experience. Knowledge is, therefore, concluded to be intellectual apprehension of the right in a given particular situation.

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The Socratic doctrine thus interpreted is liable to obvious objections. First, the doctrine can be disproved by an appeal to actual facts. Actual facts tell us that any good action presupposes the knowledge on the part of the agent of what is good, but not *vice versa*, that is to say, knowledge of what is good is not always followed by a good action. Drunkards, for instance, know the evil consequences of drinking and know the value of sobriety, and yet they are not able to resist the temptation to drink. St. Augustine, when he was a boy, knew that stealing was a sin in the sight of God and yet he used to be tempted to steal apples from an orchard. He used to repent for the act, used to weep and cry over it and still could not be free from that vice for many years. How, on the Socratic doctrine, are we to explain this fact ?

Secondly, it follows that a good deed is a result of the knowledge of what is good as well as the *will* to do what is apprehended to be good. It may therefore be argued that while Socrates recognises the problem of knowledge he forgets to recognise the problem of volition.

But it may be held that the traditional interpretation of the doctrine does not do full justice to it. The account of virtue given by Socrates and the stress put upon the state of freedom in doing a good action are not considered fully. Moreover, if we consider the philosophy of Socrates as a whole, we may come to doubt whether the connotation of the word "knowledge" should be restricted to mere intellectual apprehension.

We are thus led to a different approach to the doctrine.

(2) There are two peculiarities of the Socratic virtue. First, according to Socrates, virtue is not an art. It is not an outward accomplishment. Art can be used in a good way as well as in a bad way. A doctor can cure as well as murder a patient by his knife. But for a doctor, who is good as a man also, there is only one way open and it is to cure. A virtuous man can and must do only what is good. He is too free to have alternatives.

Secondly, there is, according to Socrates, unity of virtue. A virtuous person is one who has developed all the virtues and harmonised them in such a manner that they make a unity among themselves. Whatever action springs from such a person is always good. Corresponding to this unity of virtue, there is the Socratic view of the unitary knowledge, the knowledge of the Good, which is not piecemeal or particular but a universal and unified vision of the Highest Reality.

Moreover, we have to note the Socratic doctrine of Freedom which comes close to the Hindu idea of Moksha or Liberation. Such liberation is obtained by freeing oneself from the bonds of spiritual blindness which is the cause of all evil. The state of liberation is the state of illumination spoken of as Knowledge by Socrates. Both in Socrates and Plato, there is a distinction between

opinion and Knowledge ; opinion is an apprehension of the particular which is partly real and partly unreal, whereas Knowledge is the comprehension of the universal which is wholly real. It is the knowledge which, according to Socrates, liberates man from the bonds of ignorance and evil.

What in effect have we arrived at ? Virtue is not this virtue or that virtue and knowledge is not the apprehension of a particular good. What Socrates seems to be stating is that there is a state of consciousness where there is a totality of Knowledge which manifests spontaneously in the forms of virtuous actions. Indeed this state does not belong to the moral plane ; for in the moral plane we cannot speak of having attained to the totality of Knowledge and unity of virtues. There the state of IS is always contrasted with WHAT OUGHT TO BE. This contrast ceases when the *Summum Bonum* or the Highest Good is attained in the state of spiritual illumination. Indeed even in the spiritual field, there are degrees and progression ; but the essential knowledge is present at every stage which prevents evil in Will. With reference to the spiritual man therefore we can say : Virtue is Knowledge.

We have to remember that although Socrates initiated the rational movement in Western Philosophy through his method of dialectic, he was essentially a mystic. As we saw, he used to go into a state of trance quite frequently, and he is reported to have been guided by his Daemon, the inner light and guide. To such a man, indeed, no given action is good unless it is a manifestation of the integrating experience which is also the true knowledge. In the *Republic* of Plato, when we read the myth of the den, where the way by which the Highest Good is realised is described, what we get is the symbolic description of spiritual experience. That realisation is not intellectual apprehension, but that in which cognition, affection and conation are fused together and transcended. It is, then, we may conclude, the knowledge obtained on this transcendent level that is referred to by Socrates in his doctrine "Virtue is Knowledge".

One of the important consequences of the Socratic method was to arrive at definitions. What therefore the Socratic doctrine states is the definition of Virtue ; it does not enunciate the principle of the development of virtue. It is not an answer to the question : "How to be good ?" It is rather an answer to the question: "What is the definition of Good ?" If therefore we argue against the doctrine by appeal to the facts of moral struggle in which there is a constant division between what one knows to be good and what one does, that would be irrelevant. For what Socrates seems to have been concerned with was to give a definition of Virtue, not a guiding principle of moral development.

MOHINI M. DADLANI

DARSHAN

WHEN I look at You
The shadows disappear, the dark night ends,
And all my stupid fears are chased away
Like phantoms at the break of day.

When I look at You
The clasp of Pride is loosed, and I am free
To love again ; the heart grown light
Forgets the pain, sings like a child a simple rhapsody.

When I look at You
The world is new again ; it wears a robe of splendour
That was hid, until I drank the Nectar from Your eyes
That made mine see again.

When I look at You
I'm no more me, but somewhat else, that is,
That's other, more than I, my other me that's You,
All that I have to be, I see,
When I look at You.

GODFREY

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO TO INDIA (IN 1907)

(On seeing the portrait of the patriot Sri Aurobindo by Promode Kumar Chatterji.)

“AWAKE, O Mother Ind, awake !
To burn the Spirit's fire
In the heart of the mortal's mire
Where flowers of New Dawn shall break.
Awake, O Mother Ind, awake !
To save the dying earth
With the flood of nectar-birth
And stop the agelong dance of the Snake.”

SRI AUROBINDO AT UTTARPARA (1909)

(On seeing the portrait of Sri Aurobindo the pioneer leader of the Revolutionary Movement by Promode Kumar Chatterji.)

A MESSAGE high I would declare.
In the cell of Alipore
This dawned within my core.
I yearn this truth with you to share.
Krishna I captured—Soul of soul—
With the human hunger of love
Within, below, above—
The Pole Star and our actions' Goal.
Often profuse I drank His lore
In a boundless silence-main :
O friend, to you I fain
Would ope to-day my reveries' door.
Without demand for fruit, endeavour;
Renounce your blind self-will.
In triumph or foil one thrill
Of joy your self-less heart must savour.
Our nation's secret Soul shall rise,
No trampler on the poor and weak,
But, with the vision of the peak,
Lifting the wide world to the skies.

CHINMOY

SOMEONE HAD PRAYED

THE day was long, the burden I had borne
Seemed heavier than I could longer bear;
And then it lifted—but I did not know
Someone had knelt in prayer—
Had taken me to Mother that very hour,
And asked the easing of the load, and She
In infinite compassion, had stooped down
And taken it from me.

We cannot tell how often as we pray
For some hurt one, bewildered and distressed,
The answer comes—but many times these hearts
Find sudden peace and rest.
Someone had prayed, and Faith, a reaching hand,
Took hold of Mother, and brought Her down that day;
So many, many hearts have need of prayer—
Oh, let us pray !

SUDHANGSHU BHUSAN PAL CHOUDHURY

THE OPENING SCENE OF "HAMLET"

(An analysis and some points of dramatic interest)

A SENSE of dreadful mystery and of portentous darkness, death and tragedy is the essential note of the opening scene of *Hamlet*. And the very beginning is unusual and transports us into an atmosphere of dark suspense. The scene opens with the changing of guards on the tower on the borders of Denmark. Francisco is on guard when Bernardo makes his entry; but instead of the guard challenging, it is Bernardo who shouts out, "Who's there?" This puts the audience in a state of amazement and wonder. After that there is a talk between the two and Bernardo's remark, "It's struck twelve," signifying the darkest and deadliest time of the night, and Francisco's reply, "It's bitter cold" and "I am sick at heart", points to the gloom and depression that is everywhere. Again, Francisco's answer to Bernardo's question if he had had a quiet watch: "not a mouse stirring," points to the calm that waits to give place to something terrible. And finally, when Bernardo asks Francisco to tell the rivals of his watch to make haste, we have a clear suggestion that something is going to happen and the audience is held up in suspense.

And then enter Marcellus and Horatio, the rivals of Bernardo's watch. And Horatio's question, "Has the thing appeared to-night?" and his remark, "Tush, tush, it will not appear," intensify the suspense and yet there is no hint as to what is to come. But the climax of this suspense is reached when the ghost makes his dramatic entry and an immediate exit leaving everyone bewildered and everything unexplained.

Then there is an anti-climax; there is a sudden calm, and normality prevails everywhere. An ordinary conversation takes place between the three about how Denmark is threatened from outside by enemies. But this is a normality and ordinariness which prepares the abnormality and extraordinariness of the dramatic re-entry of the ghost just at the time when Horatio was speaking about the horrors of the night of the death of Caesar; a downward curve is suddenly shooting forth and overpassing the previous height. But again, just as the ghost is about to speak, the cock crows and he fades away. The expectancy, gloom and horror of the spectators are enhanced, and this time without any hope of an early solution of the mystery.

THE OPENING SCENE OF "HAMLET"

Characterisation is a most difficult task for a dramatist. And yet we find Shakespeare drawing each character minutely and with care. Each character is distinguishable; there is, for example, a clear distinction between the modes and levels of the conversations of Bernardo and Marcellus on the one hand and of Horatio, on the other. Bernardo and Marcellus behave like ordinary men, superstitious and frightened, while Horatio who is a philosopher always attempts to reason and employ the methods of logic. In the beginning, to a question, "Is it Horatio?" he replies, "A part of him." We observe further that he never makes any bold statement but speaks always in terms of "may be". And finally, Shakespeare brings out his poetic nature when he describes the beautiful morn.

These are some of the points of dramatic interest in the first scene which take the audience or the reader into the very spirit and motive of the play. The first scene is, as it were, a faint imprint of the whole play, a "small writ" of the large.

VIJAY PODDAR

(An answer given in a recent Test by a student of 8A)

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

STUDY No. 4 : A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM : OR LOVE-IN-IDLENESS

(continued)

CHARACTER GROUPS, ELVES AND SPIRITS

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM is a play of Comic situation and not of Comic Characters. Character is replaced by Character groups, Elves and Spirits without individual traits in clear definition.

The characters of the Outer Ring are Theseus, Egeus, and Hippolyta; of the Intermediate Zone Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, Helene and Bottom and his actors; and of the Inner Ring Oberon, Titania, Puck, and the Fairies.

THESEUS : EGEUS : HIPPOLYTA : THE FIRST CHARACTER GROUP

Theseus, Egeus, and Hippolyta—the first character group—are free of the eccentricities of early love. Egeus is colourless and exempt of emotion. Hippolyta wooed by the sword but won by love is cool, quiet and objective. She is brief and self-possessed :-

Hipp : But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesses than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Theseus is a rationalist and a sceptic. Royal, aloof, serene, merry, just, wise, he lacks imagination. His pleasures are masques, hounds, hunts and festive lamps. Yet his Court is ringed by the dances of the Fairies of Oberon and Titania. The strong realism of his character is a contrast to the unsubstantial kingdom of Elfland.

LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, HELENA : THE SECOND CHARACTER GROUP

Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena form the second character-group; their individual characteristics are not, as in the latter Comedies, sharply

marked. They are whimsical and emotionally unbalanced. They love and hate with equal vehemence. They change violently and are for Puck a potent source of merriment. Hermia seeks Love by flight, Helena by pursuit; Lysander by persuasion and Demetrius by compulsion. Puck confounds them; Oberon frees them; Theseus pairs them off and marries them !

BOTTOM AND HIS ACTORS : THE THIRD CHARACTER GROUP

Bottom, Quince, Snug Flute, Snout, Starveling, and Philostrate, the master of the revels, are the third character-group. Their rehearsal is a Farce. Bottom carries a sense of queer authority, and when transformed into an Ass brays with royal grace. On returning to his companions he resumes an air of borrowed majesty. The recitals are possibly a skit upon the actors of the day and perhaps, in a sense, an anticipation of the acute directions of Hamlet to the players of Elsinore. Except for a certain clumsiness and clownishness, the character group has no distinguishing feature. Bottom alone by reason of his part in the court of Titania stands out in relief.

BOTTOM

Bottom, swaggerer and all-knowing stage-manager of the Farce of Pyramus and Thisbe, hunter of the humble bee and honey-bags, transformed and transported into the Fairyland of Titania, dwells in a double world of fancy and fact.

In the gross-physical, he appears to be the authoritative judge, critic, and director of the play of Pyramus and Thisbe. He selects the site of the rehearsals, distributes the parts, recomposes the text, arranges the scenery, and teaches the actors in the art of the drama. He is therefore the heart of the rehearsals. When he is snatched away by Puck, the Farce collapses. His character has a comic slant. His authority is a cover. He is neither a writer nor actor nor tutor. His bragging conceals ineffectiveness, his tuition is humour. He cannot decide whether to play the part of the lover, the maiden, or the lion. He is too weak to storm, too shy to blush, and too frightened to roar. The fear of the ladies is his own alarm. His delicate regard of their sex is a disguise of his own embarrassment. He is solely conscious of himself ; he must publish that Bottom plays the lion. In crisis he displays bravado. When his companions flee in terror from Puck, he sings to distract his fears and thereby awakens Titania drugged with the juice of the Flower of Idleness.

In the subtle world of the Fairies, he assumes the mask of easeful royalty. Titania has a passion for Bottom, Bottom has no passion for Titania. He is

MOTHER INDIA

ill at ease in Elfland. He salutes the fays with regal formalities. His thoughts are of the gross world. He has no share in the dream-kingdom of Titania. The prickers of the honeybees are his servants ; he is not their master. The bewitching beauty of Titania, entangled by a spell in the monstrosity of Bottom—neither man nor beast nor elf—is the focus of laughter. Bottom is the foil of Titania.

On his awakening from his sleep, Bottom maintains the solemnity of his character. He refuses to divulge his dream to his companions. Bottom is the soul of the follies of Titania and the mirth of Oberon.

OBERON, TITANIA, PUCK AND THE FAIRIES : THE FOURTH CHARACTER GROUP

Oberon, Titania, Puck and the Fairies are the fourth character group.

OBERON

Oberon, the merry monarch of Sylphs, Gnomes and Fairies, has a crystal vision. He sees what Puck cannot see :

Oberon : That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.

He has transparent sight by which the lovers in the woods are visible to himself ; whilst he is invisible to them. It is by his hidden powers that he checks the mischievous Puck and tames proud Titania. His jealousy conceals a tenderness, his wrath a humour, his appeasement a ripple of delight. The quarrel with Titania, as all else that pertains to the Fairy kingdom, is without substance. Yet his outer face—an ungovernable fury—is sufficient to frighten the Fairies.

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Oberon : Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.
Tita : What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, skip hence :
Oberon : Tarry, rash wanton : am not I thy lord ?
Tita : Then I must be thy lady : but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida.

The differences of Oberon and Titania are touched with the gleams of Fairyland :

Oberon : How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus ?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished ?
And make him with fair Aegle break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiope ?

Titania's reply is coloured with the springs, hills, and dales of Elfland.

Tita : These are the forgeries of jealousy :
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
Or on the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with the brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

Titania has a self-conscious pride ; Oberon a majesty which sways with a gracious and gentle breath :

Oberon : My gentle, Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shoot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

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He has an eye of Harmony, and even when crossed, a wink of merriment; he corrects errors; links hands, and sprinkles the dews of love in the hills and valleys of Athenian air. He sheds a rare tear for Titania :-

Oberon : ...See'st thou this sweet sight ?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity :
For meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Stood now within the pretty flower's eyes
Like tears, that did their own disgrace bewail.

He releases the fairy Queen with a joyous blink in his eyes :

Oberon : ...Think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.
Be as thou wast wont to be :
See as thou was wont to see
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.

TITANIA

Titania, whether by plashy fountain or running brook, whether in moonlight revelry upon the glancing meadows, whether in her bower of musk-rose and eglantine lulled by dances and delight, whether by the margin of the salt sea-sand smiling upon her changeling in the Indian spiced air, is a Vision of the valleys and the Woods. She is a Spirit and not a character. She holds in the hues of her auric lights a shimmering train of elves of the hills and groves, creatures of goosamer-wings and aerial substances, who start at a sound or hide their heads in acorn-cups at the steps of Oberon. Her home is among the inhabitants of the wild thyme, the oxlip and the violet. She is a stranger to the din of cities or to the touch of mortal flesh. Her pleasures are upon the hills in the deepening shades of twilight upon the moon-blanchd green where Spirits trace their silver Rings. She appears first in the Forest where she meets Oberon in Moonlight; second when she dreams of Bottom; and third when she awakens

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

from the spell of Love. A halo of poetic charm spreads from her forehead wherever she goes. The Queen of the many-walked woods checks the taunts of Oberon with a swelling flood of ills—blighted harvests, contagious fogs, and freezing streams which flow from their dissensions—till Oberon retires to his “gentle Puck” and to the charm of Cupid’s Flower. Oberon cannot bend the pride of Titania. In the arms of Bottom she loses nothing of her Fairyhood. She throws upon him the moonlight and the marvel of her woodlands. He is almost purged of his grosser essence :

Tita : I’ll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep;
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

In her direction to her elves, she retains the sweet perfection of her charms :-

Tita : Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm’s eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

On the passing of the spell, it is Bottom who is transformed not Titania. The Dream leaves untouched her supernal grace. Titania, shedding pride and attachment, is wiser by the touch of Cupid’s shaft and Dian’s Bud.

PUCK

In the opalescent dominions of Oberon there is no Ariel. Puck is an emancipated Spirit of the air, a minister but not the slave of his sovereign. His offices are the offices of tenderness. The gentle Puck does not stir the winds to wrath, scorch with fire the heavens, harry the seas or wreck the wandering bark. It is upon dreaming lids that he spills the Purple Juice of Love. He skips among the flowers frightening the Fairies with the puckered brows of Oberon and the fiery glances of Titania. He is innocent merriment appearing in swiftly-changing

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shapes, a crab in a bowl of ale, a neighing foal, and a three-footed toppling stool from which the house-wife slips. He is the middle-headed jester of Oberon who, in mischief or in error, pours love's liquid into unwary lashes. He obeys with a twinkle in his eye, a nimbleness in his feet. He is not a sure messenger of the lord of Fairyland. He confuses Lysander with Demetrius, Helena with Hermia. He is happy in his mistakes, happier in the removal of his errors. He is Robin Goodfellow, the shrewdest, merriest and most knavish of Spirits.

THE FAIRIES

Cobweb, Moth, Pease-Blossom, and Mustard-Seed, the Elves of Titania, are an indistinguishable throng. To kill the canker in the rose-bud, to war upon the mice for their furry coats, to check the hoots of the Night-Owl, to pluck dewberries, to trap the treacle of the honey-bees, to strip butterflies of their many-tinted wings, to fan moonbeams from resting eyes, to lull the lids of long-eared Bottom and beauteous Titania into sleep, is the labourless delight of the Fairies in the land of dreams.

(Concluded)

SYED MEHDI IMAM