

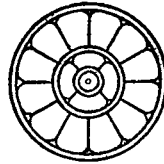
MOTHER INDIA

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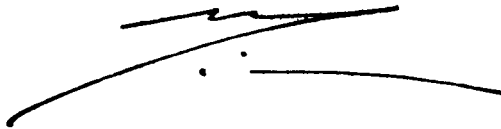


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth.

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER 1
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO ... <i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 2
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO (Translated by Niranjan from the Bengali) 5
SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY 10
<i>The Life Divine</i> OF SRI AUROBINDO : ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS : Classified Excerpts <i>Compiled by</i> ... <i>N. Pearson</i>	... 14
THE LANGUAGE OF RABINDRANATH (Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali) ... <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	... 22
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM : INTERVIEWS ... <i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 26
AUGUST 15 AND ITS CALL TO THE FUTURE ... <i>Poorna</i>	... 33
HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US (Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother) <i>Compiled by</i> ... <i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 36

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THOUGHTS ... <i>Girdharlal</i>	... 37
ECHOES (Poem) ... <i>Godfrey</i>	... 38
THUS SANG MY SOUL : Poems to the Mother ... <i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 39
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE <i>Flame of White Light</i> by T. V. Kapali Sastry ... <i>Review by Chinmoy</i>	... 40
ON HUMAN CONDUCT ... <i>Chunilal Chowdhury</i>	... 41

Students' Section

TALKS OF THE MOTHER	... 46
TALKS ON POETRY : Talk Twenty-one ... <i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>	... 48
AN EPITAPH BY W. B. YEATS : A Comment ... <i>Ravindra Khanna</i>	... 57
THE BREATH OF THE SPIRIT 59
CHAPMAN'S <i>Bussy d'Ambois</i> : A 'METAPHYSICAL' DRAMA ... <i>S. Kandaswamy</i>	... 60
THE CONCEPT OF REBIRTH : SANKHYA AND OTHER THEORIES ... <i>Narendra Nath Das Gupta</i>	... 64

NOTE

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

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

NEVER forget that, as much outside as in the Ashram, if you want to lead a happy life, you must be the master of your lower nature and control your desires and vital impulses ; otherwise there is no end to the miseries and the troubles.

20-9-1960

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★

That knee of yours is still troubling you ? But you must keep in touch with athletics. Otherwise you will become incapable. Do you want to go about with a stick and, in your old age, get all weak and tottering ? Learn from X's example. Look at what he is doing even at his age.

The trouble is not the mere fact of the knee being bad. You have to put your full consciousness there and be obstinate at it. It is by constantly putting your consciousness, day after day, month after month, and by doing exercise, that you can cure the knee. Truly you have to be very obstinate and do consciously the movements which do not allow the dislocation to recur. Of course, you can't go on thinking of the knee all the time. You have to do so many things together. But it is not necessary to go on thinking. You have just to fix the consciousness at the place and it will take care automatically to ward off the forces of accident. This is the only way, and it is by persistently pursuing it that people have cured themselves.

24-8-1960

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TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(This talk is the third of a series from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants after the accident to his leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the usual speakers were : Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal and Dr. Satyendra. As the Notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

MARCH 22, 1940

ADHAR DAS reviewed Anilbaran's *Songs from the Soul* in the *Calcutta Review* and compared it with Saint Augustine's *Confessions*. Sri Aurobindo remarked : "It is not a very great compliment." About the poetry, Das wrote that the book was too much burdened with mysticism and philosophy. Sri Aurobindo said : "Objection to philosophy I can understand, but how can mysticism be objected to in poetry ?"

P : There are many mystic poets.

N : Das objects to too much burden of—

SRI AUROBINDO : But the question is whether it is poetic or not. Maybe the book is overburdened with mysticism but if it is expressed poetically, I don't see how there can be any objection.

N : X has sent another letter. He says that the distinctions between the quiet mind, the calm mind and the silent mind are not clear.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after reading the letter*) : A quiet mind is not necessarily free from thoughts. Thoughts can come but the mind is free from disturbance. The mental activity can go on in a quiet mind without the mind getting disturbed in any way. It is a negative state, you may say. In the silent mind also, thoughts can come but they are on the surface, while the silence remains behind, watching the thoughts without taking part in them.

N : In the quiet mind also thoughts can come ; so can they in the silent mind. What is the distinction then ?

Sri Aurobindo : In the silent mind, the mind may be completely silent without allowing any thoughts to enter at all or, if they come, they remain on the surface and the activity goes on on the surface while the silence remains intact behind. You can say that what is behind is silent while the surface is quiet. Do you understand ? You can call the quiet mind a negative state whereas the silent mind is a positive one. The silent mind is the Purusha and the quiet is the activity of energy or Prakriti in a particular way. My mind is now silent. If I allow the thoughts, they will come in ; they will be just on the surface without touching the silence behind. Of course, if the silence is not strong enough, the activity may disturb the silence.

The calm mind is also a positive state. It is the whole stuff or substance of the mind that is silent in the silent mind. In the calm mind also activity goes on on the surface without disturbing the calmness. It is a sort of fundamental stillness. Peace of the mind is still more positive.

N : All these seem then to be differences in degree.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but very great differences. I have explained all of them somewhere.¹ The silence of the mind is the final stage.

N : And the vacant mind ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The vacant mind may not be necessarily yogic. It may be an inert mind, a neutral state and, in that condition, it may open to anything. Peace and silence in the mind are the result of yoga, a descent from above or a welling from within.

N : X says that he has more or less a quiet mind, not a silent one which can only be had by some descent from above.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, or a welling from within. But not necessarily from Supermind. It can come from spiritual planes.

N : Since he finds it very difficult to get, he said it couldn't be had by any effort but by descent.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is so, but not descent from Supermind.

P : One can have the experience of silence by experience of Sachchidananda in the mind.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course. Didn't he have that experience ?

N : I don't know. He doesn't understand how the mind, in transmitting things, can be passive. He says some activity must be there.

SRI AUROBINDO : What activity ?

N : Thoughts, for instance ; say, in writing. Descent of light or peace etc. can come direct without going through mind.

¹ *Bases of Yoga*, p. 18.

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, in writing ! In writing also things may not pass through mind at all. While I was writing for the *Bande Mataram* etc., they didn't pass through the mind ; they either came direct to the pen and I didn't know beforehand what I was writing or they came just like that (*he drew his hand from the head downwards*). Sometimes they passed through the mind which was quite passive. If the mind takes part then the whole thing will be spoiled. In poetry, it is the activity of the mind that meddles.

N : The quiet or silent mind I can make clear to myself, but not the calm mind. Perhaps it is a matter of experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes ; you have to know the stuff of the mind. Calmness has strength in it. It is the strong man that can be calm, a weak man can be quiet. The gods are calm, you don't say they are quiet.

N : In occupied moments, various loose thoughts come in. They don't disturb. What is that state ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the quiet mind. Vivekananda says that one should allow the mind to run on like that and ultimately it will by itself get tired. I don't think it is always successful.

P : When I used to be disturbed, I used to read *The Life Divine* and other books of yours. The mind would get quiet and I would suddenly experience the mental representation of the ideas expressed.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes ; that was the same thing with me when I was reading the Gita and the Upanishads in jail.

C : People say that Krishna gave the Gita into your hand.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after laughing*) : I think I said or wrote something like that. I didn't know that they would give a material interpretation to it.

N : X says he has tried for 10 to 12 hours to get silence but hasn't succeeded.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know one can get it by trying. It is by descent that one can get it.

N : But descent will only be occasional.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but its effects go on.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Nirranjan from the Bengali of "Patravali II")

OPENING ONESELF—HUMILITY—CALLING THE MOTHER

SIT quietly, remember the Mother and open yourself to Her—this is the rule for meditation.

It is best to employ both the methods. If it were possible to do sadhana from far, then that would have been, of course, best but one cannot always do it. However, the real thing is to make the psychic your stronghold or safe citadel and from there carry on your sadhana—in other words, with calmness and serenity to depend on the Mother instead of getting upset, to say with a glad heart, "What you have said is true—all these little imperfections etc., are now really greater hindrances than the big difficulties." These have to be gradually brought out, imperfections have to be transformed into perfection, and it cannot be done in an instant. So when you see them, you must not be unhappy or disturbed. The Mother's Force will slowly do this work.

The straight path of truth is open in the heart. Whatever is surrendered in this condition rises straight and simple to the Mother, unites with Her Truth, becomes full of Truth.

Do not be afraid or perturbed—this is the rule in Yoga when you have to pass through the obscure condition. Remain tranquil even in the darkness.

Tapasya means only this—to remain unperturbed, to reject quietly but firmly restlessness, despair, passions and desires.

Peace, truth etc., are first established within; afterwards they find expression in the outer action.

You should not be afraid of an empty state. Divine peace comes down in that state of emptiness. The Mother is always present within you; but, unless peace, power and light are established within, one cannot be always aware of it.

MOTHER INDIA

Is it not an inordinate pride on your part to think that all this has happened because of you ? “I am very good, very powerful, everything is being done by me, the Mother’s work cannot be accomplished without me”—this is one type of pride. “I am worse than the worst, everything is stopped because of my difficulties and the Divine cannot carry on His work”—this is the opposite kind of pride.

Always remain tranquil, quietly call the Mother’s Force, give up all anxiety.

COLOURS AND SYMBOLS

Blue is the colour of the higher mind. Blue lotus—blossoming of that higher mind in your consciousness.

White light is the light of the Divine consciousness. Blue, the light of the higher consciousness—silvery light indicates the light of spirituality.

Snake is a symbol of Energy. A higher Energy is present in the higher consciousness above the head.

Water represents consciousness—what rises is the desire or the tapasya of the consciousness.

If it is whitish blue light, then it is my light—if ordinary blue, then it is the light of the higher knowledge.

The colour of the orange means union with the Divine and touch of the supernal consciousness.

Muladhar is the inner centre of the physical. The tank is an opening or a formation of the consciousness. Red lotus is the presence of Sri Aurobindo in that consciousness and the rose-coloured light of love is descending in the inner physical.

Snake is a power of Nature—Muladhar (physical centre) is an important place for it—there it remains coiled up in sleep. When it awakes by sadhana it rises in order to be united with the truth above. By the descent of the Mother’s Force it has become golden, that is to say, full of the light of divine truth.

In all these experiences, the earthly mother represents the terrestrial Nature, she is only a symbol of the outward Nature.

Red Lotus—The Divine Harmony.

Blue Light—The Higher Consciousness.

Golden Temple—The Temple of the Divine Truth.

Remain calm and quiet, then in your external being, your outward nature, in your life, all these things will flower.

White rose indicates loving surrender to the Mother, and as a result of this the light of truth is spreading in the being. White lotus—the Mother's consciousness in bloom on your mental plane. Orange light (red-gold) represents the light of the Supreme Truth in the physical (the Supramental in the physical).

THE PSYCHIC BEING

The child is your psychic being. What rises from your chest and goes down is the obstruction of the external nature. It refuses to recognise the inner truth, wants to keep it covered up.

That spot is in the middle of the spine—place of the psychic being. What you have described, they are all signs of the psychic being.

Yes, the centre of consciousness of man is in the chest at the place of the psychic being.

That straight luminous path is the true path, but it takes time to reach there. Once you get on it, there is no longer any suffering, obstruction or fall.

If you follow the path deep in the heart (the path of the psychic) and remain a child in the Mother's lap, then all these things (sex impulse etc.), if they attack, cannot do anything to you and in the end they will not even be able to come.

I have already answered your question. Remain within, see everything from within and not with the external eyes. If you remain in the outer consciousness, then there is much likelihood of error due to the covering of thought. If one remains within, then the psychic being gradually becomes stronger. Only the psychic being has the perception of truth and fills everything with truth.

These experiences are good—this fire is the psychic flame and the condition you have described is the psychic condition where nothing impure can come in.

MOTHER INDIA

It is a true vision—the path of the psychic lies above in the truth-consciousness; all the planes have made the psychic their centre and at the same time started to turn towards the Divine. That path is climbing upwards and the small child is your psychic being.

This is what is wanted—to have the lotus at the heart always open and the whole nature under the control of the psychic. Only this brings about the new-birth.

Yes, this is the true psychic attitude; whoever can keep this feeling at all times, under all circumstances, goes straight by the destined path.

PRIDE—IMPURITY—SADNESS—DESPAIR

When the consciousness becomes vast and universal, then the Mother can be seen everywhere in the Universe and the ego ceases to exist, then in the lap of the Mother remains your true being, child of the Mother, portion of the Mother.

We have not abandoned you. When depression comes, you think in this way. Sometimes when you come out into the external consciousness, you do not any longer feel the Mother, but because of that you should not think that the Mother has abandoned you. Go inside again, you will feel her there.

It means this—a good sadhaka, who is doing good sadhana, carries for a long time even during his sadhana an impression of pride, ignorance and desires. But when that consciousness becomes pure by opening more and more—as it has started doing in you—then all that mixture of ignorance begins to fall away.

All this is meaningless agitation of the vital. One has to follow the path of Yoga with serenity. Sadness and despair should not be given any place.

Of course, many impure movements of the vital can creep in in this kind of talk: unhappiness, dissatisfaction with the Mother, jealousy of others, sorrow and sadness. One should not remain occupied with these things.

This condition and this way of thinking are true and must be always maintained. No longer seeing men and events with an egoistic intelligence,

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

you should look at them with the spiritual intelligence and the vision of the inward psychic being.

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

From the base of the spine (muladhar) to the sole of the foot extends the physical level. Below the foot is the kingdom of the Inconscient.

Many levels exist above and below; but mainly four below—the mental, the psychic, the vital and the physical—and above, there are many levels of the spiritual mind, then the Supramental and the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

If you have to come down, even there remain peaceful and call down the Light and the Force of the Mother. Establish the Kingdom of the Mother within you below, the same as above.

This condition prevails when the consciousness descends to the physical. But it does not mean that the result of all sadhana is lost or has disappeared above—everything is there but behind a veil. The Mother's Consciousness, Light and Force have to be brought down into this obscure physical—when they will be established this condition will never come back. But if you are agitated, depressed or if such thoughts come to you—"I shall not be able to achieve it in this life, it is better to die," etc.—then an obstruction is placed in the way of the descent of the Consciousness, the Light and the Force. For this reason you should reject them with full trust in the Mother, aspire in peace and call her.

SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

VI

(In the article entitled "A Task Unaccomplished", published earlier in this series, Sri Aurobindo had said, "The fundamental idea of the (nationalist) movement as a divine manifestation purposing to raise up the nation not only for its own fulfilment in India but for the work and service of the world and therefore sure of its fulfilment, therefore independent of individuals and superior to vicissitudes and difficulties...has not yet been sufficiently put forward by the organs of Nationalism itself partly because the human aspects of the Nationalist faith had to be established before we could rise to the divine..." In this and some of the subsequent articles to be published in this series, we hope to indicate the position taken up by "Bandemataram," the foremost nationalist journal of the Swadeshi period, which was edited and published under the direct guidance of Sri Aurobindo. It is probable though not absolutely certain that some of these articles were actually from his own pen. There can be in any case no question that they represented his views.)

BOYCOTT AND AFTER*

THE twentieth century dawned on a rising flood of renascent humanity surging over Asia's easternmost borders. The first report of it reached the astonished world in the victorious thunder of Japan. And it spread onward, this resurgent wave of human spirit, swiftly, irresistibly overflowing in a sweeping embrace China, India, Persia and the farther West India received the ablution of the holy waters singing her sacred hymn Bande Mataram that filled the spaces of heaven with joyous echoes heard of the Gods as of old and the nations of the earth listened to the song of unfree India and knew what it was—a voice in the chorus of Asiatic liberty.

The unpremeditated and spontaneous declaration of the Boycott was the declaration of the country's recovery to life from its death-swoon of centuries, of her determination to live her own life—not for a master, but for herself and for the world. All was changed. Patriotism, the half-understood catchword of platform oratory, passed out of its confinement into the heart of the people,—the priest and the prince and the peasant alike—giving to each that

* *Bandemataram Daily*, 15, 7, 1907.

power of sacrifice which has now translated itself according to the confessions of the *Times* into the concrete fact of 42 million yards less of English cotton goods.

And the demonstration of the sixteenth of October joined in by the Hindu and the Mahomedan, the Buddhist, the Jain and the Sikh, the police and the people, through the mystic compulsion of an instinctive fraternity, was the enchanting prevision of the India to be. Such a vision is vouchsafed only to the man or the nation that stands on the threshold of emancipation ; it came to the Rishi filling him with the immortal longing to be one with the Divine, to the medieval monk penetrating him with the life-long love of Christ, and it has ever come at the mature moment to the down-trodden peoples of the earth revealing to them in a flash the mission and the destination of their life.

It remains but a moment, but those that have seen it can never forget or rest ; they pursue the glory, even while it seems to recede into the distance, over the even and uneven walks of life, past the smiles of the tempter, through the prison-gate and exit, on through the jaws of death. Its effect on the individual is immediate, on a whole nation necessarily spread over a longer time during which the seer of it bears its message to him who has not seen. But the progress of the pursuit none can arrest till the vision is reached, realised and reinstalled in all the beauty of its first appearance.

Ever since the Partition day, India has pressed on this path ; the boycott of foreign goods, the return of the weaver to his loom, the dissociation of the people from the government, the strikes, the deluge of meetings all over the land, the insulting of the National leaders, the breaking up of the Barisal Conference, the dismissal of Fuller, the appointment of Hare, the persecution of the boys, the dismissal of the school masters who loved liberty more than money, the foundation of the National Council of Education, of National schools, the institution of technical education, the insolvency of dealers in Bideshu goods, the social excommunication of anti-boycotters, the unbidden repetitions of the Rakhiday fast, the passing of the Swadeshi resolution by the Congress, the prosecution of the *Punjabee*, the Rawalpindi riot, the Mahomedan rowdyism in East Bengal, the loan to Salimullah, Newmania, the changed and respectful attitude of Anglo-Indians towards Indians, the deportation of Lajpat and Ajit Singh, the proclamation, the unmasking of English liberalism, the awakening of Madras, the prosecutions at Rajmundri and Coconada, the continuing prosecutions in the Punjab and Bengal, the admission by the *Times* of the success of the Boycott, the throwing of 150,000 English labourers out of employment and the necessity of easing overstocked markets, are some of the landmarks of the country's progress.

MOTHER INDIA

Before her now lies the valley of the shadow of death full of trials and unknown perils and temptations, but the light that leads her cannot fail ; the inspiration of the Power that gives her strength is irresistible, superior to death ; she will go on till the fulfilment of the vision of the 16th October. There is a Divinity that has been shaping her ends—no mere might of man, for nothing but the renovating touch of Divinity can account for the difference between now and then, between the days before and after the boycott.

THE CRISIS*

...In this grave crisis of our destinies let not our people lose their fortitude or suffer stupefaction and depression to seize upon and unnerve their souls. The fight in which we are engaged is not like the wars of old in which, when the king or leader fell, the army fled. The King whom we follow to the wars today is our own Motherland, the sacred and imperishable; the leader of our onward march is the Almighty himself, that element within and without us whom sword cannot slay, nor water drown, nor fire burn, nor exile divide from us, or a prison confine.

Lajpatrai is nothing, Tilak is nothing, Bepin Pal is nothing. These are but instruments in the mighty Hand that is shaping our destinies and if these go, do you think that God cannot find others to do His will ? Lala Lajpatrai has gone from us, but doubt not that men stronger and greater than he will take his place. For when a living and rising cause is persecuted, this is the sure result that in the place of those whom persecution turns down, there arise, like the giants from the blood of *Raktabij*, men who to their own strength add the strength, doubled and quadrupled by death or persecution, of the martyrs for the cause. It was the exiled of Italy, it was the men who languished in Austrian and Bourbon dungeons, it was Peerio and Silvio Pellico and their fellow-sufferers whose collected strength reincarnated in Mazzini and Garibaldi and Cavour to free their country.

Let there be no fainting of heart and no depression, and also let there be no unforeseeing fury, no blindly-striking madness. We are at the beginning of a time of terrible trial. The passage is not to be easy, the crown is not to be cheaply earned. India is going down into the valley of the shadow of death, into a great horror of darkness and suffering. Let us realise that what we are now suffering is a small part of what we shall have to suffer, and work in that knowledge, with resolution, without hysteria.

* *Bandemataram Daily*, 11.5.1907.

SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

A fierce and angry spirit is spreading among the people which cries out for violent action and calls upon us to embrace death. We say, let us be prepared for death but work for life,—the life not of our perishable bodies but of our cause and country. Whatever we do, let it be with knowledge and foresight. Let our first and last object be to help on the cause, not to gratify blindly our angry passions. The first need at the present moment is courage, a courage which knows not how to flinch or shrink. The second is self-possession. God is helping us with persecution; we must accept it with joy and use that help calmly, fearlessly, wisely. On the manner and spirit in which we shall resist and repel outrage and face repression, while not for a moment playing into the hands of the adversary, will depend the immediate success or failure of our mission.

THE LIFE DIVINE OF SRI AUROBINDO : ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

*Classified Excerpts**

SECTION I — THE ABSOLUTE : THE SUPREME

(i) *The Absolute*

STABILITY and movement, we must remember, are only our psychological representations of the Absolute, even as are oneness and multitude. The Absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity. But it takes its eternal poise in the one and the stable and whirls round itself infinitely, inconceivably, securely in the moving and multitudinous.¹

To us the Absolute is only an intellectual conception of indefinable existence. The intellect tells us simply that there is a Brahman higher than the highest (Parātpara), an Unknowable that knows itself in other fashion than that of our knowledge; but the intellect cannot bring us into its presence. The divine soul living in the truth of things would, on the contrary, always have the conscious sense of itself as a manifestation of the Absolute.²

Our fundamental cognition of the Absolute, our substantial spiritual experience of it is the intuition or the direct experience of an infinite and eternal Existence, an infinite and eternal Consciousness, an infinite and eternal Delight of Existence. In overmental and mental cognition it is possible to make discrete and even to separate this original unity into three self-existent aspects : for we can experience a pure causeless eternal Bliss so intense that we are that alone ; existence, consciousness seem to be swallowed up in it, no longer ostensibly in presence; a similar experience of pure and absolute consciousness and a similar exclusive identity with it is possible, and there can be too a like identifying experience of pure and absolute existence. But to a supermind cognition these three are always an inseparable Trinity, even though one can stand in front of the others and manifest its own spiritual determinates; for each has its primal aspects or its inherent self-formations, but all of these together are original to the triune Absolute.³

* All references are listed at the end of the article.

The Absolute is not limitable or definable by any one determination or by any sum of determinations; on the other side, it is not bound down to an indeterminate vacancy of pure existence. On the contrary, it is the source of all determinations : its indeterminability is the natural, the necessary condition both of its infinity of being and its infinity of power of being; it can be infinitely all things because it is no thing in particular and exceeds any definable totality. It is this essential indeterminability of the Absolute that translates itself into our consciousness through the fundamental negating positives of our spiritual experience, the immobile immutable Self, the Nirguna Brahman, the Eternal without qualities, the pure featureless One Existence, the Impersonal, the Silence void of activities, the Non-being, the Ineffable and the Unknowable. On the other side it is the essence and source of all determinations, and this dynamic essentiality manifests to us through the fundamental affirming positives in which the Absolute equally meets us; for it is the Self that becomes all things, the Saguna Brahman, the Eternal with infinite qualities, the One who is the Many, the infinite Person who is the source and foundation of all persons and personalities, the Lord of creation, the Word, the Master of all works and action; it is that which being known all is known : these affirmatives correspond to those negatives.⁴

The Absolute neither creates nor is created,—in the current sense of making or being made; we can speak of creation only in the sense of the Being becoming in form and movement what it already is in substance and status. Yet we have to emphasise its indeterminability in that special and positive sense, not as a negation but as an indispensable condition of its free infinite self-determination, because without that the Reality would be a fixed eternal determinate or else an indeterminate fixed and bound to a sum of possibilities of determination inherent within it. Its freedom from all limitation, from any binding by its own creation cannot be itself turned into a limitation, an absolute incapacity, a denial of all freedom of self-determination; it is this that would be a contradiction, it would be an attempt to define and limit by negation the infinite and illimitable.⁵

We mean by the Absolute something greater than ourselves, greater than the cosmos which we live in, the supreme reality of that transcendent Being which we call God, something without which all that we see or are conscious of as existing, could not have been, could not for a moment remain in existence. Indian thought calls it Brahman, European thought the Absolute because it is a self-existent which is absolved of all bondage to relativities. For all relatives can only exist by something which is the truth of them all and the source and

MOTHER INDIA

continent of their powers and properties and yet exceeds them all; it is something of which not only each relativity itself, but also any sum we can make of all relatives that we know, can only be—in all that we know of them—a partial, inferior or practical expression. We see by reason that such an Absolute must exist; we become by spiritual experience aware of its existence; but even when we are most aware of it, we cannot describe it because our language and thought can deal only with the relative. The Absolute is for us the Ineffable.⁶

The positives of the Absolute are its various statements of itself to our consciousness; its negatives bring in the rest of its absolute positivity by which its limitation to these first statements is denied. We have, to begin with, its large primary relations such as the infinite and the finite, the conditioned and unconditioned, the qualified and unqualified; in each pair the negative conceals the whole power of the corresponding positive which is contained in it and emerges from it : there is no real opposition. We have, in a less subtle order of truths, the transcendent and the cosmic, the universal and the individual; here we have seen that each member of these pairs is contained in its apparent opposite.⁷

The Absolute is in itself indefinable by reason, ineffable to the speech; it has to be approached through experience. It can be approached through an absolute negation of existence, as if it were itself a supreme Non-Existence, a mysterious infinite Nihil. It can be approached through an absolute affirmation of all the fundamentals of our own existence, through an absolute of Light and Knowledge, through an absolute of Love or Beauty, through an absolute of Force, through an absolute of peace or silence. It can be approached through an inexpressible absolute of being or of consciousness, or of power of being, or of delight of being, or through a supreme experience in which these things become inexpressibly one; for we can enter into such an ineffable state and, plunged into it as if into a luminous abyss of existence, we can reach a super-conscience which may be described as the gate of the Absolute. It is supposed that it is only through a negation of individual and cosmos that we can enter into the Absolute. But in fact the individual need only deny his own small separate ego-existence; he can approach the Absolute through a sublimation of his spiritual individuality taking up the cosmos into himself and transcending it; or he may negate himself altogether, but even so it is still the individual who by self-exceeding enters into the Absolute. He may enter also by a sublimation of his being into a supreme existence or super-existence, by a sublimation of his consciousness into a supreme consciousness or super-conscience, by a sublimation of his and all delight of being into a super-delight or supreme ecstasy.

He can make the approach through an ascension in which he enters into cosmic consciousness, assumes it into himself and raises himself and it into a state of being in which oneness and multiplicity are in perfect harmony and unison in a supreme status of manifestation where all are in each and each in all and all in the one without any determining individuation—for the dynamic identity and mutuality have become complete; on the path of affirmation it is this status of the manifestation that is nearest to the Absolute. This paradox of an Absolute which can be realised through an absolute negation and through an absolute affirmation, in many ways, can only be accounted for to the reason if it is a supreme Existence which is so far above our notion and experience of existence that it can correspond also to our negation of it, to our notion and experience of non-existence, but also, since all that exists is That, whatever its degree of manifestation, it is itself the supreme of all things and can be approached through supreme affirmations as through supreme negations. The Absolute is the ineffable x overtopping and underlying and immanent and essential in all that we can call existence or non-existence.⁸

First, we affirm an Absolute as the origin and support and secret Reality of all things. The Absolute Reality is indefinable and ineffable by mental thought and mental language; it is self-existent and self-evident to itself, as all absolutes are self-evident, but our mental affirmatives and negatives, whether taken separately or together, cannot limit or define it. But at the same time there is a spiritual consciousness, a spiritual knowledge, a knowledge by identity which can seize the Reality in its fundamental aspects and its manifested powers and figures. All that is comes within this description and, if seen by this knowledge in its own truth or its occult meaning, can be regarded as an expression of the Reality and itself a reality. This manifested reality is self-existent in these fundamental aspects....⁹

The next affirmation which we put forward is that the fundamental reality of the Absolute is to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Being which is a supracosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation; for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. All is a manifestation of That; for it dwells even in all that seem to be its opposites and its hidden compulsion on them to disclose it is the cause of evolution....¹⁰

(ii) BRAHMAN

The silent and the active Brahman are not different, opposite and irreconcilable entities, the one denying, the other affirming a cosmic illusion; they

are one Brahman in two aspects, positive and negative, and each is necessary to the other.¹¹

Brahman is the Alpha and the Omega. Brahman is the One besides whom there is nothing else existent.¹²

...if Brahman has entered into form and represented Its being in material substance, it can only be to enjoy self-manifestation in the figures of relative and phenomenal consciousness. Brahman is in this world to represent Itself in the values of Life. Life exists in Brahman in order to discover Brahman in itself. Therefore man's importance in the world is that he gives to it that development of consciousness in which its transfiguration by a perfect self-discovery becomes possible. To fulfil God in life is man's manhood. He starts from the animal vitality and its activities, but a divine existence is his objective.¹³

Sad Brahman, Existence pure, indefinable, infinite, absolute, is the last concept at which Vedantic analysis arrives in its view of the universe, the fundamental Reality which Vedantic experience discovers behind all the movement and formation which constitute the apparent reality....Ancient Vedanta seized this message of the Intuition and formulated it in the three great declarations of the Upanishads, "I am He", "Thou art That, O Swetaketu", "All this is the Brahman; this Self is the Brahman".¹⁴

When we go behind and examine only the intensity of the movement of which quality and quantity are aspects, we realise that this Brahman dwells equally in all existences. Equally partaken of by all in its being, we are tempted to say, equally distributed to all in its energy. But this too is an illusion of quantity. Brahman dwells in all, indivisible, yet as if divided and distributed.... To Brahman there are no whole and parts, but each thing is all itself and benefits by the whole of Brahman.¹⁵

Brahman is not only the cause and supporting power and indwelling principle of the universe, he is also its material and its sole material. Matter also is Brahman and it is nothing other than or different from Brahman.¹⁶

The Supreme Brahman is that which in Western metaphysics is called the Absolute: but Brahman is at the same time the omnipresent Reality in which all that is relative exists as its forms or its movements; this is an Absolute which takes all relativities in its embrace. The Upanishads affirm that all this is the Brahman;...Brahman is the Consciousness that knows itself in all that exists;

Brahman is the Force that sustains the power of God and Titan and Demon, the Force that acts in man and animal and the forms and energies of Nature; Brahman is the Ananda, the secret Bliss of existence which is the ether of our being and without which none could breathe or live. Brahman is the inner Soul in all; it has taken a form in correspondence with each created form which it inhabits.¹⁷

...Brahman is at once void of qualities and capable of infinite qualities, the Lord and Doer of works, yet a non-doer and a silent witness of the workings of Nature.¹⁸

The ancient sages spoke indeed of Brahman negatively,—they said of it, *neti, neti*, it is not this, it is not that,—but they took care also to speak of it positively; they said of it too, it is this, it is that, it is all: for they saw that to limit it either by positive or negative definitions was to fall away from its truth. Brahman, they said, is Matter, is Life, is Mind, is Supermind, is cosmic Delight, is Sachchidananda; yet it cannot really be defined by any of these things, not even by our largest conception of Sachchidananda.¹⁹

Integral Brahman possesses both the passivity and the activity simultaneously and does not pass alternately from one to the other as from a sleep to a waking:...For obviously we do not mean, when we speak of his possessing them simultaneously, that he is the sum of a passivity and an activity, an integer made of those two fractions, passive with three fourths of himself, active with one fourth of his existence.²⁰

Brahman, as he exceeds the passivity and the activity, so too exceeds the unity and multiplicity. He is one in himself, but not with a self-limiting unity exclusive of the power of multiplicity, such as the separated unity of the body and the mind; he is not the mathematical integer, one, which is incapable of containing the hundred and is therefore less than the hundred. He contains the hundred, is one in all the hundred. One in himself, he is one in the many and the many are one in him. In other words, Brahman in his unity of spirit is aware of his multiplicity of souls and in the consciousness of his multiple souls is aware of the unity of all souls. In each soul he, the immanent Spirit, the Lord in each heart, is aware of his oneness. The Jivatman,* illumined by him, aware of its unity with the One, is also aware of its unity with the many.²¹

* The individual Self

The Brahman, the Absolute is the Spirit, the timeless Self, the Self possessing Time, Lord of Nature, creator and continent of the Cosmos and immanent in all existences, the Soul from whom all souls derive and to whom they are drawn,—that is the truth of Being as man's highest God-conception sees it.²²

(III) NIRGUNA AND SAGUNA

A purely impersonal existence and consciousness is true and possible, but also an entirely personal consciousness and existence; the Impersonal Divine, Nirguna Brahman, and the Personal Divine, Saguna Brahman, are here equal and coexistent aspects of the Eternal. Impersonality can manifest with person subordinated to it as a mode of expression; but, equally, Person can be the reality with impersonality as a mode of its nature : both aspects of manifestation face each other in the infinite variety of conscious Existence.²³

If we pursue the Nirguna into a farthest possible self-experience, we arrive at a supreme Absolute void of all relations and determinations, the ineffable first and last word of existence. If we enter through the Saguna into some ultimate possible of experience, we arrive at a divine Absolute, a personal supreme and omnipresent Godhead, transcendent as well as universal, an infinite Master of all relations and determinations who can uphold in his being a million universes and pervade each with a single ray of his self-light and a single degree of his ineffable existence.²⁴

When we perceive Its (the Reality's) deployment of the conscious energy of Its being in the universal action, we speak of It as the mobile active Brahman; when we perceive Its simultaneous reservation of the conscious energy of Its being kept back from the action, we speak of It as the immobile passive Brahman, —Saguna and Nirguna, Kshara and Akshara : otherwise the terms would have no meaning ; for there is one reality and not two independent realities, one immobile, the other mobile.²⁵

Compiled by N. PEARSON

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¹ (A)—American Edition.

² (U)—University Edition.

THE LANGUAGE OF RABINDRANATH

IF Bengali has become a world language transcending its form of a provincial sub-tongue, then at the root of it there is Rabindranath. To-day its richness has become so common and natural that we cannot conceive immediately that it was not so before Tagore's mighty and ceaseless creation worked at it for half a century. I am not speaking of the literature, I am speaking only of the richness of the vocabulary, the diversity of the speech form, its modes and rhythms. The capacity of a language lies in its power of expression: that is to say, how many subjects can it express itself on and how appropriately? In the gradual progression of the Bengali language Bankim Chandra was one of the main and foremost stepping-stones. But in Bankim's time Bengali was only in its adolescence—at best, its early youth—its formation and movement were rather narrow, experimental and prone to uncertainty. In Rabindranath we find it in its full-blossoming, mature capacity, definiteness and diversified genius. The growth and spread of Bengali has not reached its culmination, the process is still in full swing. And I need not dwell here upon its still more advanced stage and maturity in the future. Up to Bankim's time, the modern and therefore somewhat European way of thought and expression did not come naturally to Bengali—it became difficult, laboured, artificial: *e. g.* 'An enquiry into the relation between other phenomena and human nature' of Akshay Kumar Dutta or even 'Bodhodaya' of Ishwar Chandra. It was Bankim Chandra who was the pioneer in whose hand this line of development attained something like an ease and naturalness of manner. Even then it was no better than a beginning. But to-day Bengali possesses the capacity to express easily and adequately any literature from Greenland to Zululand, from the most ancient Egypt and Babylon down to modern Europe and America. The goddess of speech who inspired Tagore is a maker of miracles. It was Tagore who, it might be said, all by himself worked this mighty change and transformation.

Directly—and more indirectly, that is to say, through an impalpable influence—it was his personality that lay behind this achievement.

Should a catalogue be ever made of the new words coined by Rabindranath it would be a very instructive lesson. Numerous are the words—old words found only in the dictionary—that he has made current coin. In the same way innumerable are the words—used one time colloquially or in a regional dialect—that Rabindranath has elevated to the level of literary distinction. Moreover,

he had a special genius in coining words and that expressed a characteristic trait of his creative genius. Primarily, his words seem to spring from the heart from the *élan vital*, natural to the Bengali consciousness. There were two rocks on his way to linguistic transformation. And he beautifully escaped and eluded them both. On the one hand, there is no heaviness in him, none of the massiveness of correct and flawless words composed by pedants and grammarians. On the other hand, there is no grotesqueness, nothing of what personal whim and fancy and idiosyncrasy engender. If his words in their structure break certain strict rules and regulations, they yet are quite in tune with the inner nature and form of the language; if free, they are still natural. Secondly, the grace and beauty of the words raise no question. A word, in order to fulfil its role, must have an easy and inherent power of expression—it must be living and full of vitality. Still more it must be sweet and beautiful. In the lexicography of Tagore all these qualities are in abundance. Moreover, in his language there is nothing squalid, lifeless, heavy, feeble, harsh and jarring to the ear; indeed, his language is perfectly graceful, beautiful and non-pareil from all sides—

“Graceful, more graceful, the most beautiful surpassing all beautiful things.”

Tagore’s Goddess of speech is a pinnacled exquisiteness of beauty, harmony, balance and skill. Bankim’s language also is beautiful and graceful—it is not rough and masculine; it is also charming but there is not in it such profusion, intensity and almost exclusiveness of grace, sweetness, beauty and tenderness as are found in Rabindranath. Prodigality, luxuriance and even complexity are hall-marks of Tagore’s style. Bankim’s is more simple and straight and transparent, less decorating and ambulating. There is in Bankim what is called decorum, restraint, stability and clarity, qualities of the classics; he reminds us of the French language—the French of Racine and Voltaire. In Rabindranath’s nature and atmosphere we find the blossoming heart of the Romantics. That is why the manner of his expression is not so much simple and straight as it is skilful and ornamental. There is less of transparency than the play of hues. Eloquence overweighs reticence. Echoes and pitches of many kinds of different thoughts, sentiments and emotions intermingle—his language moves on spreading all around sparkling at every step. Subtlety of suggestion, irony and obliquity, a lilting grace of movement carry us over, almost without our knowing it, to the threshold of some other world. Rabindranath’s style is neither formed nor regulated by the laws and patterns of reason, the arguments and counter-arguments of logic. It is an inherent discernment, the choice of a deep and aspiring idealism, the poignant power of an intuition welling out of a sensitive

heart that have given form and pace to his language. Reason or argument in itself finds no room here. That is only an indirect support of a direct feeling, a throb in vitality. This language has no love, no need for set rules, for a prescribed technique, so that it may attain to a tranquil and peaceful gait. It has need of emotion, impetus and sharpness. It is like the free stepping of a lightning flare, an Urvastee dancing in Tagore's hall of music.

But it does not mean that this language is overflowing with mere emotion. Here too there is a regulated order and restraint. The final growth and perfection of a language has something of the rhythm of an athlete's body in movement—in the steadied measure of the strides of a sprinter, for example. The transparency of intelligence as reflected in the classical manner, the firmness and fixity delivered by reason, the simplicity of syllogistic orderliness are not to be found here. But in our poet's creation, even in his prose the logic of intelligence may not be evident but there is a logic of feeling which is still cogent and convincing, yet more living and dynamic.

As regards the third creator of Bengali literature, I mean Saratchandra, we may notice here the difference between him and Tagore. The language of Saratchandra is as straight, translucent and simple as that of Bankim; but Bankim was not always averse to decoration and embellishment, whereas Saratchandra was wholly without any ornamentation. But the pressure of reason and rationality is not the cause of Saratchandra's simplicity. It is because he has shaped his language to suit the common thought, the available feeling, a natural life. But he has polished it in his own way and made it extremely bright, often scintillating. With all its clarity and directness Bankim's language is for the cultured mind—urban or metropolitan. Saratchandra's manner can be called rural. It will be wrong to call it vulgar even in the Latin sense (plebeian or popular), that is, commonplace—or a language of the country-side. The similarity between Saratchandra and Tagore is that both are progressive, rather very progressive, speedy, rather very speedy, but there is a dissimilarity in the manner of their progressiveness and speed. Tagore's Muse moves speedily but in a zigzag way, observing all sides, throwing out various judgments and opinions, scattering flashes of a curious mother wit. Here are all the playful lines of a baroque painting at its best. Saratchandra goes straight to his goal—as straight as it is possible for a romantic soul to be. He allows himself, we may say, a curvilinear path, as that of an arrow heading direct towards its goal. There is a vibration lent to it by the drive of a subtle Damascus blade. It is flexible and yet firm. The flow of Tagore can be compared to that of a fountain—it is rich in sounds and hues. Saratchandra's is the light-pinioned bird that flies in the sky in silence. We find in Bankim a wide calm, happiness, clarity and beauty. In Tagore it is a tapestry woven by the free outpourings of the mind and the

heart. In Saratchandra it is the dynamic simplicity of a vitality meaning business.

I spoke of Rabindranath's ornamentation. But we must bear in mind that this ornament is not a material one. Not in the least heavy, loaded, luxurious like that which an old-world beauty carried on its limbs. It is as light as the jewellery which a belle puts on to-day. The tapestry of myriad forms has been wrought in gold threads, made thin and fine and almost tenuous and yet firmly holding together. This embroidery is the beautiful itself, for it is a work subtle and refined and meant to be beautiful. It is a beauty requiring no outer grandeur, no wrought-out gold and satin of volubility and rhetoric. It bears in its own limbs, as it were, the glow of an inherent grace and charm.

To-day the Bengali language is eager and zealous to go forward for an ever new creation. It is quite natural that it may go astray at times in the hands of many of its adorers. In this connection it is good to bear in mind and to keep to the fore the example of Rabindranath as a supreme exemplar even if one does not want to follow or imitate him. Rabindranath himself has also created many new things from his aristocratic pedestal, even he came down and attempted the ultra-modern style. But his speciality and power lie here that he has never transgressed the limit of the beautiful and the appropriate. Besides, wherever or however far he might have ranged, he has given beauty its supreme place. In following the new and modern style he has founded everywhere beauty and bloom and fulfilment. He laid bare his inner soul.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA,

(Translated by Chinmoy from the original Bengali in "Rabindranath".)

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

INTERVIEWS

THE one thing that we all love and silently cherish is to sit at the Feet of the Mother, breathe her atmosphere, meditate with her, receive her inspiring touch and drink in her words.

To know her, to see her grandeur, to feel even a little of her divinity, the approach must be from the depths of the heart, there must be some opening of the inner being. Even a child of 8 or 9 gets an opportunity to see her and she speaks to him lovingly. In fact she seems to be more at home with the younger people because they are made of a substance which is more responsive to her influence and plastic enough to be moulded and shaped to her liking.

In the beginning, access to Sri Aurobindo was easier than to the Mother. She used to remain almost in seclusion ; her meetings with others were few and far between. When Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry he did not want anybody to see him except for a special purpose. When he was at Shankar Chetty's house, he lived in a room upstairs, coming down very rarely. His coming to the South had been predicted by a famous Tamil Yogi Nagai Japata to his disciple Sri K.V. Rangaswami Iyenger that "thirty years later a Yogi from the North would come as a fugitive to the South and practise there an integral Yoga (*Poorna Yoga*) and this would be one sign of the approaching liberty of India."¹ K.V.R. Iyenger came in quest of a Poorna Yogi and was the first to see Sri Aurobindo.

On Sri Aurobindo's arrival at Pondicherry, there used to be séances in the evening for a few months in which automatic writing was practised. The book *Yogic Sadhan* was a collection of these writings. Mr. Iyenger bore the cost of its publication. Later Sri Aurobindo declined to recognise it as his own, though the writing had come through his pen ; he stopped its circulation from 1927.

Paul Richard happened to visit Pondicherry from France in 1910. He managed to have an interview with the Master with the help of Zir Naido and had talks with him for two days, two or three hours a day.

Through K.V.R. Iyenger came V. Ramswamy Iyenger who was later known in Tamil literary circles as "Va Ra". Sri Aurobindo had seen him

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, P. 338

in a vision: "I saw him not as he was when he actually came but as he became after a year's residence in my house. He became the very image of the vision." (24-10-1934)

From 1913 Sri Aurobindo began to meet people a little more freely. At 9 a.m. every day he would read *The Hindu*, give replies to letters, grant interviews to those who sought them. From the records available it appears that his birthday was celebrated for the first time in Pondicherry in 1912. On that occasion those present passed by him one by one. Some sweets were distributed.

The following lines are from Sri Aurobindo's poem *Invitation* :—

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me ? Who will climb with me ?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow ?

Our Secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta was perhaps the first to respond to his call and give the reins of his life into the Master's hands. Writing work was given to him from the beginning. While in Calcutta he had started learning French from Sri Aurobindo. The first book chosen by the Master was Molière's *L'Avare*. The copy with Sri Aurobindo's markings is still there in our Library. After his coming to Pondicherry in November 1910 Nolini started learning Latin and Greek from Sri Aurobindo (1911). To-day he is an authentic exponent of Sri Aurobindo's thought, an author whose writings are aglow with profound insight no less than scholarship.

Much later, after 1927, Dyuman, when he settled here, used to write French in Gujarati script and Sri Aurobindo made his pencil corrections also in the same script. Dyuman came for the first time in 1924 and stayed for six weeks. Within this period he had four interviews with the Master. In his first interview he was 55 minutes with him. When his father dissuaded him from coming to Pondicherry his wife said, "If you want him to live let him go. He will go by any means."

V. Ramaswami came from Tanjore. He met Sri Aurobindo daily in the evening. Though a friend of Ramaswami, Amrita then a boy of 17 had his in 1912 first contact with Sri Aurobindo in 1912 through Bijoy Nag. He came to stay with the Master for good in 1919. He used to have long talks with him. Sri Aurobindo would read to him selected passages from Browning, Shakespeare, Kalidasa and others. Sri Aurobindo's great Epic *Savitri* was begun when he was at Baroda. It was the one book which commanded his attention again and again till the last year of his life. Amrita was the first to hear one canto of its early version from Sri Aurobindo's own lips.

In those days Pondicherry was a place of political asylum. Several British Indian revolutionaries and political refugees stayed here. One of them was the renowned Tamil poet Subramaniya Bharati (in whose honour postal stamps were issued by the Government on 11th September this year). The other was V.V.S. Aiyar who had managed to come to Pondicherry in the disguise of a devout Muslim from France. Among others were Chandra Shekhar Ayya, an Andhra intellectual, and Srinivasachari to whom Sri Aurobindo had written to arrange for his stay at Pondicherry. From time to time they used to meet the Mother in the evening.

Those staying with him could meditate in his presence between 4 and 4-30 p.m. After that, there were evening talks. Casual visitors also were allowed to join. Haradhan was one of them.

When the Mother came for the second time this routine continued. Her birthday on February 21 was first celebrated in Pondicherry in 1915 but on account of the First World War she had to leave for France the very next day. When Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry he was 38 and the Mother was at the time of her first visit 36.

How the Mother felt Sri Aurobindo's presence from afar is thus described by her :

“When I came here for the first time, I felt the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo, felt materially, at a distance of ten miles, ten nautical miles, not kilometres. It was very sudden, very concrete, an atmosphere, pure, luminous, light, light that lifts you up.”

The first time she was present on Sri Aurobindo's birthday was August 15, 1914. The most significant event during this first visit of the Mother was the publication of the monthly *Arya* on this day.

Sri Aurobindo stayed only six months in the house secured by Srinivasachari. In October 1910 he shifted to Sunder Chetty's house. From there he changed his residence to St. Louis Street in 1911. Because of financial difficulties he had again to go to a smaller house in Mission Street at Rs. 15/-a month.

In 1913 Nagen Nag, a cousin of Bijoy Nag, selected Pondicherry for a change of climate at the instance of Bijoy Nag. He rented a well-ventilated house at 41, rue François Martin. Since then it has been known as the *Guest House*. Then Sri Aurobindo and others came over and stayed here till 1922. This house now forms part of the Dortoir but the room lived in by Sri Aurobindo has been kept apart as sacrosanct, used only for meditation by the Dortoir children. It was from this house that the *Arya* was published. At that time there were only two chairs, one which was very old and shaky he used while writing, the other at the time of giving interviews.

Writing was an organic part of his mission. But his writing is a unique

expression at once of yogic vision, scientific precision and literary vividness. The scientific turn in Sri Aurobindo makes him the master-yogi of modern times. He takes up into his thought all that concerns itself with the world of life and matter. The scientific turn not only gives him a critical acumen which is proof against narrow dogma and ignorant creed : it also gives him a practical life-power that builds carefully and securely. He has written :

“We do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane”¹

But of course, the light and power of his knowledge is fundamentally spiritual—a direct vision and realisation of things that are at the basis of the universe.

When a question was put to him how he could manage to write on seven subjects at a time in the *Arya* he said that he could write seven issues of the *Arya* every month for 70 years and still the Knowledge that came from above would hardly be exhausted.

A hint about the nature of this Knowledge may be given by saying that for Sri Aurobindo not even the great realisation of the Self was all. “There are many things beyond that,” he has said. “The divine guide within urged me to proceed, adding experience after experience, reaching higher and higher, stopping at none as final, till I arrived at the glimpse of the Supermind.” (29-12-1938)

To return to the subject of interviews. Bharati’s connection with Sri Aurobindo grew most intimate. He read the Vedas under Sri Aurobindo’s guidance. Kapali Sastry who came as a pilgrim to Pondicherry in 1917 sought an interview with the Master through him. He felt surprised when he heard Bharati repeating Vedic Riks. On enquiry Bharati told him that he had learnt the Veda from Sri Aurobindo.

It was during his stay at Pondicherry that Sri Aurobindo turned to the Vedas both for historical indications and for spiritual hints. He writes : “It was, therefore, with a double interest that for the first time I took up the Veda in the original, though without any immediate intention of a close or serious study....I found, first, that the mantras of the Vedas illuminated with a clear and exact light psychological experiences of my own for which I had found no sufficient explanation either in European psychology or in the teachings of Yoga or of Vedanta, so far as I was acquainted with them

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, pp. 377-78.

and, secondly, that they shed light on obscure passages and ideas of the Upanishads to which, previously I could attach no exact meaning....”¹

Kapali Sastry has to his credit the achievement of the first great commentary in Sanskrit on the lines of Sri Aurobindo’s studies in the Vedas. He had been following with profound interest Sri Aurobindo’s sequences on *The Secrets of the Vedas* in the issues of the *Arya*. Long after he felt it necessary to let the wider world know the inner meaning of the great Vedic Truths as revealed by the Master. When he expressed his intention Sri Aurobindo approved of the idea and at his request agreed to listen to his book. Purani read the draft of *Siddhanjana*—the Bhashya on the first Ashtak of the Rig Veda. It is a pity that Sastryji was not spared to us for long to carry his noble pursuit right up to the end.

Though Sri Aurobindo had retired from active politics, the country had not forgotten him. Several attempts were made by national leaders like C.R. Das and others to make him return to politics. In 1920 Dr. Moonje came to Pondicherry to persuade him to accept the Presidentship of the Congress Session at Nagpore but he could not accede to his request.

In 1925 Lala Lajpatrai came with Purushottamdas Tandon to seek his views on politics and had a talk with him for about 45 minutes separately.

Some remarks of Sri Aurobindo’s to both Lajpatrai and Tandon may be quoted as most pertinent even today : “The lust for power will always be there. You cannot get over it by shutting out all positions of power; our workers must get accustomed to it. They must learn to hold their positions for the nation. This difficulty would be infinitely greater when you get Swaraj. These things are there even in Europe. The Europeans are just the same as we are. Only, they have got discipline—which we lack—and a keen sense of national honour which we have not got....What you have to do is to bring about that discipline and that sense of national honour in our people.”²

After 1926 only on rare occasions did Sri Aurobindo grant an interview to any one and that too for special reasons. The first to have this privilege was Poet Tagore in 1928. Next was Sylvain Lévi, the famous French Indologist, in 1929. Then came Maurice Magre, a well-known French poet and thinker (1938). His impressions are recorded in his book *A la Poursuite de la Sagesse (In Pursuit of Wisdom)*. Dilip Kumar Roy met Sri Aurobindo on two occasions, once in 1943 and once later.

M. Maurice Schumann was deputed in 1947 from Paris to see Sri Aurobindo with a proposal to inaugurate an institute for the study of Indian and European

¹ *On the Veda*, pp. 45-46.

² A. B. Purani, *Evening Talks*, p. 65.

Cultures with Sri Aurobindo at the head. The Press report of this interview runs :

“On Saturday last when Maurice Schumann, leader of the French Governments’ Cultural Mission, and Mr. M. Baron, French India Governor, visited the Ashram Sri Aurobindo again broke his silence and spoke to them for three quarters of an hour.”

Sri Aurobindo in his “very pleasant talk” stated to his guests that France was the country which he loved next to his own. He suggested to his French visitors the opening of a University in Pondicherry where facilities and opportunities might be afforded to all students from every part of the world to study Aryan and Dravidian civilisations.

K. M. Munshi was the last person to have a fairly long talk with the Master. The Maharaja of Bhavanagore who came for the November Darshan of 1950 had special permission to see him, but only to pay his respects in silence. The Maharaja stood before him for a while in a spirit of adoration.

Surendra Mohan Ghose M.P. was the only person lucky enough to have talks with the Master “twenty or twenty-two times”, to use his own words.

Mention may be made here that during the 40 years of his stay in Pondicherry, there were only five or six occasions when Sri Aurobindo happened to go out of his residence to oblige persons like Jules Rassendren, David, Srinivasachari and Sada and that too before 1920; after that not even once did he come out of his rooms.

Except those who attended on him, none of us, living here, could have a chance of even hearing his voice, during the whole period of his secluded life. The utmost we received was his smile on the Darshan days, yet what he had done for us has no parallel, even in the Vedic age. Time has not yet come for the eye to see.

On attaining the great Siddhi of 1926 Sri Aurobindo did not walk out from the “cave of his sadhana” into the outer field of life as had done most of its past Saviours. He said, “My sadhana is yet far from fulfilment. To bring the highest Truth down into the earth I have to dig into deeper depths.” He resolved to make an exclusive concentration on the one pursuit—the golden marriage of Earth and Heaven.

...he yearned to call for ever down
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.¹

¹ *Savitri*, Book III, Cañto 2.

MOTHER INDIA

And the Mother took up the sick and sorrow-racked earth to nurse it into a new life of Light and Bliss, and "leaned to bear the human load."

In a sense India was raised to the high position of world-teacher for the first time by the light brought down by the Buddha. Great countries like China and Japan bowed their heads before her in reverence. India was called the land of philosophers, the land of gods. It became the shrine of half of humanity.

Now we shall have to go a step forward. The great past cannot be brought back in its own form. Now we shall have to raise India to such a summit that no assault however severe can bring her down, no anti-divine upheaval can shake her position. The greater the work, the greater must be the force behind it. The world has gone far ahead. Previously we used to light a fire by rubbing stones, now we do so by pressing a button. The present is not an age of the oil lamp but of the searchlight—of Mahaprakash.

Will a spiritual Mahaprakash burst forth on the whole life of India? Asuric propensities may be suppressed by social or political means but never changed. The true change can only come when man sheds his animal self and grows into divinity. Without this change there can be no permanent gain. However one may try, what is within will come out. Dip the neem twig as often as you like in honey, its bitterness cannot go. A way has to be found to change neem into sugarcane. If once this could be achieved even in a few, a new principle will be established in the earth-consciousness and the gate will be opened for those ready to tread the Path.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

AUGUST 15 AND ITS CALL TO THE FUTURE

(Concluded from the September issue)

THE last shining dream of Sri Aurobindo was the upliftment of the consciousness to a higher level by effecting a new step in the evolutionary process. In his message on August 15, 1947, Sri Aurobindo spoke of it as "still a personal hope and an idea and ideal". But now it can be said that it has become an actuality. For the Mother, who in her depths is one with Sri Aurobindo, delivered a message on the 24th of April, 1956, in which she declared in unequivocal terms: "The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no mere promise but a living fact, a reality." And to those who are in the habit of harbouring and fostering Doubt, specially in regard to matters like this great "living fact", she announces in the same beautiful message with a tremendous force and a towering certainty:

"It (the Supramental Power) is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it."

From this immensity of assurance it is evident that invisibly from behind the veil and, from the bottom up, the upliftment of consciousness is being effected by the Supramental Force. Thus it has now begun to work out man's age-old dream of "individual perfection and perfect society."

This spiritual evolution in man and society "must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness". Here too, Sri Aurobindo says, "the initiation can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be here."

Sri Aurobindo once spoke also of the many difficulties that were in the way. He hoped that they would be overcome if the Supreme Will was there. And the Supreme Will that is the Divine Mother is here and now in the midst of us all in flesh and blood. Sri Aurobindo, himself guiding and helping from behind the scene, has left the task in her hands for its completion. She, through the divine voice of Savitri, assures us:

I keep my will to save the world and man.

Sri Aurobindo declares that the fulfilment of this great ideal depends on “this new and free India.” The people of New India, especially those who are at the helm of affairs, those few who generally come forward to decide and shape things in the name of the many and for the many, have constantly to keep in their minds that India’s re-aring “is not to serve her material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race”.

For, unless India kept in the forefront her ancient spiritual ideal which is her Swadharma, “we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us”. Further, Sri Aurobindo exhorts us : “It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not be and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there.” So Indian statesmen may well be on their guard against rushing into any “tempting directions.”

Sri Aurobindo holds forth no facile prospects. He tells us: “No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India’s true destiny.”

On the future role of India the Mother also has spoken: “The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating spiritual knowledge in the world. The Government of India ought to recognise this significance of India and plan their actions accordingly.”

And here is Her clarion call to India : “India must rise to the height of her mission and proclaim the Truth to the world.”

May this inspiring Call capture our hearts and work in our life as a catalytic agent and thus guide us to the higher heights the Divine Mother intends us to climb ! May we become worthy of this sovereign mission and fulfil it in life. Then alone shall we have the power to announce in one victorious voice that the truth and significance of the 15th of August will have been fulfilled, the effulgence of which will fall eternally not only on India but on the whole world for the welfare and well-being of all.

The Mother in a nutshell puts before us the golden way by following which India can rise high and fulfil the great mission ordained for her by the Divine Will. She, in her prophetic ringing voice, proclaims :

AUGUST 15 AND ITS CALL TO THE FUTURE

“There must be a group forming a strong body of cohesive will with the spiritual knowledge to save India and the world. It is India that can bring truth in the world. By manifestation of the divine Will and Power alone India can preach her message to the world and not by imitating the materialism of the West. By following the divine Will India shall shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of truth and organise world unity.”

POORNA

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER (26)

THE Divine has His own mysterious ways of pulling us ignorant mortals towards His Love and Grace which we resist with our utmost blindness.

For two years I was suffering from a disease which could hardly be diagnosed. There was blood-coagulation and excessive increase of red corpuscles. I was unable to walk even ten or fifteen feet. My diet was cut down to a small quantity of fruits only. No treatment helped.

A friend of mine happened to visit Pondicherry where his sister stays. He came into contact with a homeopath of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, to whom he casually related the symptoms of my disease and whom he wanted to give some medicine for me, if possible. The doctor got the Mother's consent to take up the case.

It may be well to recall what Sri Aurobindo says about the use of medicines in illness. They are "a *pis aller* that have to be used when something in the consciousness does not respond superficially to the Force." "Illness marks some imperfection or weakness or else opening to adverse touches in the physical nature and is often connected also with some obscurity or disharmony in the lower vital or the physical mind or elsewhere."

"It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and Yoga-power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the whole nature is not open or able to respond to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond, but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or, if the mind and the vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a particular illness, and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to,—not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body."

When my friend returned from Pondicherry, he brought with him some medicine through which the Mother's Force was to work. I used it for a week or so. Amazingly, the disease just walked away and I was sufficiently cured to come to the next Darshan falling on the 24th April. I remained in Pondicherry up to the 1st of May and by that date even the lingering remnants of the ailment vanished and I was entirely free from my sufferings.

Thus did the Mother not only cure me of my malady but also bring me into the light of her presence.

Compiled by Har Krishan Singh

THOUGHTS

I WANT the base to marry the top. I want Cape Comorin and the Himalayas to join their hands in wedlock. I want to see the legs both of the South and the North so strong that the South in one stride can reach the North and the North in one stride can reach the South.

I aspire that the sense-enmeshed turbid life of man should become as pellucid as the life in Brahmaloaka and the spiritual life as diversely rich as the mundane life.

*

*

I offered my whole self to Him whose name I knew not, and said : “Come ! Take this.”

He came. And without uttering even a single dispensable word He too spoke like me : “Come, take this.”

I said : “Yes. But why don’t you take from me first?” He replied: “Bring it then.” So I offered and He accepted.

But then He instantly put in my hand with a smile all that He had brought with Him together with all that I had offered.

He had brought the Philosopher’s Stone. I had offered worthless sundry articles made of iron.

Today I do not lack even a single thing out of those I had. But all of them have changed into gold.

GIRDHARLAL

(From the Author’s Gujarati “Uparāma”)

ECHOES

THE day is o'er.
Now the long shadows fall and the grey light
Dulls the mirrored brightness of the sea.
The air is still,
And pallid infant stars persuade the night
To spread her velvet mantle of infinity.

My heart is sad.
Some silver threads there were still yet to sever
That held me to a past I had forgot.
The echoes live,
Their friendly voices linger in the ether
Telling of a joy that once they brought.

So must it be.
We live and love and share awhile our dreams,
On life's green sward we've gambolled gay and free.
But then we part,
To follow each his star that beckoning gleams
Or find at last his homeward way to Thee.

GODFREY

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(30)

VII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

(Continued)

57. OWN ME INTO THY HEART OF GRACE

FOR days and hours together
Following the trail of Thy footfalls' tread,
I have lingered on my longings' wearied way, O Mother,
At every step to stumble, sped
Into pits of failure and pools
Of deep dejection.
Captive Thy vision has held my heart; Thy farness cools
My hands that seek to capture
Thy high-receding train of Love. No more the rapture
Of Thy owning touch of tenderness rare
Or hints of intimate affection
Filling the heedless stifling and burdening air
With Thy breath of grace and divine attraction,
Of entrancing and enthralling bliss. O climb
Not back beyond the bounds of Time,
Draw not away Thy Robe of Grace that Thou hast condescended
To lend my sorrowful soul, and fallen; nor
Thy lotus Hands of Compassion, extended
Low unto my back-slided brittle birth. No more,
No more now keep Thyself so hidden
Behind Thy Maya; O come, ridden
Upon Thy miracling wings of Wonder, pour,
O Sweet, Thy grief-exiling nectar of loveliness,
And own me, earth and soul, into Thy heart of Grace.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Flame of White Light By T. V. Kapali Sastry. Pub. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pp. 59 Price Rs. 7.

We knew T. V. Kapali Sastry as a profound scholar in Sanskrit, we knew him as a man of letters, we knew him as a man of abundant simplicity, but very few of us were fully aware of his high spiritual longing. *Flame of White Light* is the most clear proof of his genuine spiritual thirst.

The Mother aspect of the Divine had the greatest appeal to his heart.

I cannot help reproducing a few momentous words of his from M. P. Pandit's preface. In reply to the latter's query as to what came of the 'elaborate, complicated and quite strenuous Sadhana he had pursued since his childhood,' the author sat up with a bound and said : "Here it is. It has brought me to the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother," implying that there could be nothing greater than 'to breathe in the physical atmosphere of the Mother and bask in the sunshine of Her Smile.' Sastry 'invoked in her Person Maheshvari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasarasvati and got their response in an unmistakable manner.'

Sri Pandit has been skilful in selecting the caption of this brochure. The extracts he has taken from the letters and other writings of the truth-seeker Kapali are apt.

The book is especially precious for containing no less than 27 soul-stirring pictures of the Mother, right from her childhood to the present day.

Finally, the book can well be proud of having the following lines written by the Mother on herself :

22-6-1958

Do not ask questions about the details of the material existence of this body; they are in themselves of no interest and must not attract attention.

Throughout all this life, knowingly or unknowingly, I have been what the Lord wanted me to be, I have done what the Lord wanted me to do. That alone matters.

THE MOTHER

Needless to say that this simple statement of the Mother Divine on her earthly cloak has infinitely enhanced the value of the book. In silence we pay our homage and offer our heart's gratitude to the One who is *A Flame of White Light*.

CHINMOY

ON HUMAN CONDUCT

(Based on Sri Aurobindo)

MAN, after his long travel through the ages, has reached a stage when he appears to be perplexed and disturbed by the thought of what next. His rational mind with the help of scientific investigations has revealed to him many secrets of physical nature and he has made their utmost use by inventing diverse means for vital luxuries and material comfort and well-being. He has also gained mastery over demonic methods of death and destruction. But there is no denying the fact that he has during his long history consciously or unconsciously borne within him a seeking for something high and lofty, some ideal of absolute beauty and perfection. A balanced and healthy social order, with a spontaneous inner growth and rhythmic vibration of the All-beloved, still appears to be a distant dream.

Is it actually so ? Will it be wrong or an over statement to say that humanity is now on the verge of a new orientation which, when it culminates, will satisfy his agelong gropings for an ideal order ? A study of his conduct in relation to social growth from the beginning may help us to see the subject in its true perspective.

Man is a social being and he cannot help living in a society. To live a normal life, he has the need of a society for his growth and development. His progress is very much conditioned by the growth and development of the society of which he is a member; similarly the improvement of the society also is dependent on the progress of the individuals constituting it. It is so because all existence itself proceeds by the mutual interaction between the whole and its parts, the collectivity and the individuals. The individual generally conforms to the standards of conduct laid down by the society and the society manages to maintain them by its members' sanction behind all its customs, and laws. But the difficulty arises when the individual finds the moral, religious and political rules prevailing in the society an external compulsion on him and a hindrance to his own law of nature. In such cases he is put to the test whether he will break the law for his individual self-fulfilment or sacrifice his individuality at the altar of the society. If he breaks the law, from what point of view may he have his justification ? This is a question of great importance. It is worthwhile to consider the question in detail now that there is a stress laid on collective living even at the cost of individual freedom and growth of Spirit.

The greatest light we can have about the subject is from Sri Aurobindo's views on standards of human conduct and their limitations. According to Sri Aurobindo, the social rules of conduct should not be taken as an end in themselves because the true meaning of existence is the manifestation of the Divine in all its aspects and it is that which nature is trying to fulfil throughout the process of evolution. To quote Sri Aurobindo : "The Divine Will acts through the æons to reveal progressively not only in the unity of the cosmos, not only in the collectivity of living and thinking creatures, but in the soul of each individual something of its divine Mystery and the hidden truth of the Infinite." If that is accepted, then the conduct which expresses the Divine Will in an individual must be pursued even when it does not agree with the set social, mental and moral rules. But it is not an easy job to know and judge the Divine Will. Individuals in the society are very often prone to disregard the social rules and moral laws for the egoistic satisfaction of their mental, vital and physical needs and desires. Social laws and codes are of immense value and importance insofar as they put a restraint on such motives.

The Divine manifestation in the creation advances through various steps and stages and as such there cannot be any fixed standard of conduct for all and at all times. So the best thing is to study the successive standards which developed in the course of evolution and then to note which of them govern the different stages of the human march and finally to see how they stand in relation to a standardless spiritual conduct of living.

According to Sri Aurobindo, there are four main standards of conduct which come up one after another in the history of the human race. The first is the standard of personal need, preference and desire; the second is the law of collective good and well-being; the third is an ideal ethic and the highest and last, the divine law of nature. The first two are the animal and vital laws of conduct of humanity in its infancy. The main object of man on earth is to attain and express the Divine in him and in his type. But at first he is ignorant of this inner aim of his life. In the crude physical stage, he knows his material and vital needs and desires and their dictates as the only guides to show him the purpose of his life. But this first law of satisfaction of personal needs and desires is counteracted by the same demands from the family, tribe, pack or community of which he is a member. Thus the second law of his conduct, *i.e.*, the law of the good and well-being of the collectivity, evolves. This second law is in no way superior in status to the first one. It is simply an extension of the vital and animal principle of the elementary man. The existence of the group is essential for his own existence. All available records about him show him to be a social animal and not an isolated being. But from the psychological point of view, the personal law of desires and needs is primary and the

social law comes in as a secondary ruling principle. Perhaps man in his primary phase found that his needs and desires could be better satisfied by the formation of groups or packs and was thus obliged to give the needs, desires, motives and habits of the group a dominant position, keeping his own in subordination. This is how a sense of the collective whole grew in the mass consciousness.

But the two main impulses of man, one individualistic and personal and the other social and collective, are always at work, and at any time there is a possibility of their opposition. The attempt to reconcile these two propensities is said to be at the basis of our civilisation. As already stated, the external social law is at different times both an advantage and a disadvantage to the development of the Divine in man. When it goes to suppress and immobilise the individual self-development, nature in the individual reacts. The manifestation of this reaction may occur in various forms. It may be in the form of vital revolt of the criminal or the complete renunciation of the ascetic. It may also impose a new social idea and bring about a compromise between the social and individual demands. But a compromise is never a solution of the problem.

At this stage a new principle is called in which is higher than these conflicting needs, demands and desires of both the individual and the society. That is a moral law which controls or even covers these conflicting interests and establishes an ideal order. Thus a door is opened to man to enter from vital and material to mental life. This new law is not a product of the mass mind but an individual standard developed in the nature of the individual by the culture of mental and moral qualities like justice, love, right reason, right power, truth, beauty etc. At the subconscious or half conscious stage of the society, the individual who is a thinker formulates and accepts these ideals as a ruling principle of life. But gradually those who are influenced by his thought movements begin to practise the new ideals and in the long run, when more and more persons in the society are influenced, the society itself absorbs the influence and tries to modify and reshape its institutions into new forms according to the higher ideal. We can appreciate the fact by seeing how at the advent of the individualistic age the society changed itself accepting the mental ideal of justice, communal sympathy and right reason. It is needless to state in detail how magnificently this new law has contributed to social progress. We can have its testimony in every walk of life. But it has its drawbacks as well. The tendency of the society is always to translate the ideas into pattern forms and turn them into external social compulsions. To quote Sri Aurobindo, it "is more intent upon status and self-preservation than on growth and self-perfection". The attempt of the thinker at leading the society can be successful only when he can persuade the collective whole

to govern the external by the internal instead of binding the inner spirit by the compulsion of the outer form or structure.

Another defect in the mental and moral rules as a standard of conduct is that they do not pay any heed to the principle of individual vital needs and desires nor to that of the social, thus creating a disharmony or discord between the moral law and the law of needs and desires. The ethical standard set up by the moralist becomes too rigid and binding to allow any new movement of action to rise and have a free play in the individual or in the society. To him, the doctrine of truth, love and justice becomes an all-important affair and even the safety and the most pressing interests of the society have no place against it. But it is possible neither for the individual nor for the society to satisfy such demands since Nature will not allow them to do so. The ignorant and arbitrary mental construction of the moralist is not always the expression of the eternal truth of the spirit. The desires and impulses in man contain in them invaluable elements which no ethical formula can fathom or grasp within its limits. Besides, whatever truth such a formula can grasp cannot become a practical fact of life unless it yields and sympathises with the way the society or the individual intends to make use of it. If the mental and moral ideals like love, justice, right reason, power, truth etc. are professed with an uncompromising insistence, they remain in the air and cannot become a practical reality.

The third defect of these ideals is that they themselves in their application conflict with one another. The demand of justice neglects the essential principle of love. Right reason by its impartial study of human relations puts forward such rules of living as are incapable of admitting absolute justice or beauty. In fact man's mind is one-sided and rigid in its constructions. It cannot cope with the subtler truth of things and the plasticity of life. That is why humanity moves in a roundabout way and fails to follow that which the highest spirit demands of it. The solution of this chaotic disorder and the harmonious fulfilment of the ideals lie elsewhere and not in the rational or ethical mind.

Exceeding the mental being in us there is a greater being which is spiritual and divine. A direct experience of that leads one to a wide vastness and freedom of spirit in which all mental constructions dissolve and in that spiritual vastness one can find the harmony amongst the different powers and qualities which the human mind strives to frame in the moral laws in a very distorted manner. There only can our mind, life and body discover their secret source and have a reconciliation of their conflicting moods and motives. In the light of the supreme knowledge, love, truth, justice and beauty can have their proper play without any clash. Beyond the external law of the society, there is a

ON HUMAN CONDUCT

divine law secret in the heart of each human being which is the truth of his own essential nature. That truth has a double aspect. It is the law of the spiritualised collective life, the determinant of the social relationship, and also the guiding light of each one in his individual life. Diversity in oneness is the divine principle of action.

This divine law cannot be discovered by the ethical idealist nor by any religious endeavour which fixes a supreme type of conduct. The only way to find it is by personal experience. On the one hand it is an imperative law ; on the other, an absolute freedom, because it is the Dharma of our inner self which governs all movements in us but in each case in accordance with the plasticity of our nature. The ethical law is reached by the individual in his mind ; so also the supreme law must be discovered by him in his Spirit. But like the former it cannot be extended to others by mental ideas. It is only through a spiritual influence that its effect on others can be brought about.

The Divine Will is secretly leading man throughout his long and arduous career. First it expresses itself in the law of needs and desires and then in the mental and moral rules of the idealists. Now it is preparing man to exceed both these formulæ to attain a divine and spiritual law of nature. In this new state of his conduct, the essential needs and demands of the previous ones will not be rejected or suppressed. On the contrary, rising above them, it will bring about a synthesis of all those which are divinely true in their spirit and purpose. Maybe, the principle of needs and desires will be transformed into divine Will and Ananda and the mental and moral aspiration into the powers of the divine Truth, Beauty and Perfection. Moreover, there is the infinite possibility of the descent into earth nature of other powers of the Supreme the splendours of which have not perhaps even been dreamt of by humanity at large.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

Students' Section

TALKS OF THE MOTHER

Mère, qu'est-ce que la théorie de la relativité ?

Mother, what is the theory of relativity ?

Pavitra, voulez-vous expliquer cela à ces enfants ?

Pavitra, will you please explain it to these children ?

C'est que la description de l'univers varie avec chaque observateur. En une phrase.

It is that the description of the universe varies with each observer. In short.

C'est tout ! Pourquoi fait-on tant d'embarras avec cette découverte ?

That's all ? Why do they make such a fuss over this discovery ?

Mais c'est une révolution, Mère.

But it is a revolution, Mother.

C'est une révolution ? Que ce qu'on voit dépend de qui voit ? Eh bien, moi....

It's a revolution ? That what one sees depends on who sees ? Oh well, I...

Ce que l'on mesure dépend de l'univers physique, au point de vue des sciences physiques.

TALKS OF THE MOTHER

What one measures depends on the physical universe, from the viewpoint of physical sciences.

Sciences physiques, oui, Pour mesurer l'univers, chacun le mesure à sa manière.

Physical sciences, yes. To measure the universe, each one measures in his own way.

Mais, comme complément, on a trouvé aussi qu'il y a, derrière, quelque chose qui est indépendant de l'observateur.

But, as a complement, they have also found that there is, behind, something which is independent of the observer.

Ah ! on a découvert ça ! Une révolution encore plus grande ! Bon.

Ah ! they have discovered that ! An even greater revolution ! Good.

30-9-1953

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 pieces, 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 TWENTY-ONE

So the Quarterly Examination has come and gone, and we are together again. We were as if enemies for a while : now once more there is peace between us and we can look back calmly on wounds given or taken. But is it really a fact that you felt the Quarterly Examination as Keats had felt the *Quarterly Review* in which his *Endymion* had been attacked ? Surely you can't picture me as a sort of Jeffreys exulting in the sight of your discomfiture? Besides, I was not solely responsible for the paper. The second question asking you to comment on the statement that "poets are born, not made" was neither born from me like a spontaneous sword trying to see how it could be borne by defenceless you, nor was it made by me with a devilish deliberation to watch how dismayed you could be. I merely assented to it. My hand in the business was directly confined to the first question :

"Write on the importance of Form in poetry and comment from the standpoint of Form as well as in general on the poetic qualities of :

(1) And on a sudden lo ! the level lake
And the long glories of the winter moon.

(2) And mighty poets in their misery dead.

How would (2) strike you if it were rewritten ?—

And mighty poets dead in their misery."

I found your answers a mixed affair. Some of you have tried your best to exercise the critical faculty, but as this faculty has not been active enough in the past its joints were somewhat creaky. Also, you do not have sufficient technical knowledge. And how indeed can there be the full necessary equipment when you are new to the subjects on which I am lecturing? I have no right to be disappointed if your answers to unaccustomed questions were not quite adequate. Many of you had the correct feeling about certain things in the two quotations, but you could not exactly give a living body to it. Well, both to set you on the right track and to give you the consolation that I am not idling while you had to sweat, let me make a comment on the Tennyson lines as well as on the Wordsworth.

Face to face with the former, we have first to get an unthinking aesthetic impression by trying to enter into the general sense. Flung before us, revealed all at once and not by degrees, is a night-view of water and sky. At one moment, nothing; at the next, the full view: the white loveliness of the lake beneath the white beauty of the moon, both of them quietly shining in a clear immensity. The intuitive feeling we get through the visual impression is of a vast silence in which earth and non-earth are lying in a luminous harmony. Something sensitive in earth's being to the beyond, some capacity of answering to non-earth seems suggested in the vision of the lake at night, as if in the dull sleep of the earth-consciousness a secret eye got unexpectedly opened and was rapturously responding to a never-sleeping eye in the ethereal distances. As soon as we catch the imaginative turn of the lines, our outer eyes tend to shut and the inner consciousness starts enjoying not a landscape or waterscape or skyscape but a soulscape.

And the dominant aspect of this soulscape is a bright monotone: the lake and the sky and the moon are a spacious oneness of illumined mood. From that oneness the lines have arisen to lay out the contents of it in diverse related details of word-painting and word-music. That oneness is the inner form exteriorised in the form of two pentametric blank-verses achieving pictorial and melodious language.

Let us consider the elements of the melodiousness. All of you have noticed the recurrent *l*. If you had not noticed it I would have committed suicide in sheer heart-break over your lack of perception. You have saved me from that fate and actually gladdened my heart by saying that the *l* produces a liquid effect which goes aptly with the lake-theme. But I should add that the repetition of *l* suggests not only water and water and water: it suggests also a certain uniformity in the state of the water—a certain continuous unchangingness. Of course, we can have unchanging mobility no less than unchanging stability. But when there is the word "level" the recurrent *l* is seen to be enforcing the

suggestion of something that continues to be static, with no rise or fall, no sway or sweep, over a large area and through a protracted time. Here the art of the word "level" calls for a small comment. The word begins and ends with the same consonant *l* : it indicates a liquid sameness floating all through, and the two short *e*'s bring a flatness of vowellation, adding to impress on our minds through our ears the straight unmoving surface of the water.

A further point in connection with the recurrent *l* is that its presence in "long glories" connects up the moonlight with the lake and immediately throws on us the steady sheen of the moon not only from the sky but also from the reflecting lake-water. This is an instance of what may be termed poetic logic. In poetry we do not always have clearly expressed connections, intellectually justified sequences. It is the way the words are used, the way the words sound, the way they are linked to one another that logicise a poetic statement. Tennyson does not tell us that since the lake is stretched out under the sky the light of the moon is both above and below : he simply takes the smoothly liquid consonant that has been associated with the prospect of the lake and puts it into the words he has employed for the moon's radiance : at once the intuition in us is touched through the aesthetic sense and we know what has happened by the collocation of moon and lake. Further, in "glories" we have the reiteration of the sound "lo" which has served to direct our gaze to the lake : our gaze, therefore, on meeting with the "glories" is recalled phonetically to that expanse of water and made to catch the radiance there. Nor does the artistry of poetic logic end here. You will notice that in "long glories" we have on the one side the *l* which joins the words to what has gone earlier and on the other the consonants *n* and *r* which join them to what comes later—"winter moon" : thus "long glories" are a meeting-place, as it were, of what is below and what is above : they have a double reference and inform us that we must understand them at the same time in relation to the lake and in relation to the winter moon. Tennyson was a conscious artist and he must have been well aware of what he was doing. He has exploited a similar technique in the line :

Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

Here too a connection was to be established, making it perfectly natural that what applied to the river on earth applied also to the stars in the sky. Tennyson convinces us of the twofold application by so fashioning his phraseology that the same dominant consonants occur in the words about the river and the stars. In "loud stream" and "trembling stars" we have in common the sounds : *l, st, tr, m*. The aesthetic intuition feels immediately convinced that the two things spoken of must be hanging together.

TALKS ON POETRY

Now for the role of vowels in our two-lined quotation. Many of you have considered this role, but you have not yet realised what vowels are long and what are short. Let me present you with some guidance in general. In the following list are words starting with the consonant most in evidence in the quotation and containing the long and the short versions of every vowel :

lake,	lack.
lethal,	letter.
light,	lit.
lo,	long.
lute,	lug.
loot,	look.

The first half of our opening line has short vowels : "And on a sudden..." Even the indefinite article "a" is a slurred sound, neither as in "lake" nor as in "lack" but somewhat like the *u* in "lug". Even if it were long, it would be unobtrusive because the indefinite article is a very minor word and here it becomes all the more so by standing where in a pentametric blank verse there is a natural slack, an unstressed syllable. Yes, two and a half feet of our line have short vowels—and then we have the exclamatory word "lo" with its long *o*. The impression is of a vision emerging abruptly into an openness, and the rounded sound of the long *o* suggests a kind of horizontal circling far and wide and a vertical circling far and high. The suggestion gets filled out when we have finished reading the two lines and realise that the scene includes the moonlit heavens as well as the broad lake. The suggestion of the far and wide horizontal stretch is supported by the very word "lake" with its long *a*, and that of the vertical breaking into farness and highness is supported by the long *o* of "glories" and the long *oo* of "moon". I should say that when we have finished reading the lines and filled out the initial suggestion of "lo" we feel instinctively also that the moon could not be anything except at the full, a silver rondure. Our feeling is aided, of course, by the phrase "long glories" and the deep-toned noun "moon", but it would not be complete without that "lo".

Perhaps you will submit that the short-vowelled "long" is a slight slip on Tennyson's part and that an adjective like "large" with its vowel-length would have been more appropriate. But Tennyson was no slave to the craft of vowel-suggestion. "Large" has not the *n* needed for the connection with "winter moon" though it does bring the *l* which is significantly operative in "long". In addition, "large" has a reference only to space : it has no pointer to time. The nights of winter are a drawn-out stretch of time : during winter the moon shines for more hours than at any other

season. How is the special span of time-sheen to be suggested together with the extended space-flush? No epithet except "long" will perform the twofold function. No doubt, it would have been better if the *o* here had possessed intrinsic length, but Tennyson has done his utmost to compensate for the missing effect by making the *mot juste* that is "long" a part of a spondaic foot—"long glo"—so that it is an element in a metrical movement creating by a pair of consecutive stresses an impression of massiveness and unbroken continuity: the shortness of the *o* is forgotten and transcended. I may observe that the spondee's impression is consummated at the line's end by the deep-toned "moon".

One or two of you have remarked that the lake must have been frozen since the season was winter. In the poem, *Morte d'Arthur*, from which the lines are culled, it was not frozen. But if the lines stand by themselves we have no indication against frozenness. You would be quite justified in choosing to take the surface of the lake to be a smooth expanse of gleaming ice.

Now for the second quotation, the Wordsworthian. I should say at the very start that in this line—

And mighty poets in their misery dead—

the word "dead" refers to "poets" even though it stands next to "misery". I found that one of you was misled by its position, as well as by the epithet "mighty" applied to "poets", into thinking that it is of dead misery, misery conquered and killed by "mighty poets", that the line speaks! Naturally, with this misconception one could say straight away that the changed version—

And mighty poets dead in their misery—

would turn the theme topsy-turvy. But Wordsworth actually means what the changed version makes perfectly clear: only, the way he puts things is deeply poetic while that version puts them in a manner clearly prosaic in spite of the metrical mould. We shall come to this difference. At the moment, let me say that the original line carries a tremendous pathos because it packs into a small space of accurately ordered words a lot of tragic significance. Each word is a world of meaning and the complete phrase is a powerful gloss on what may be called the meaning of the world.

Take the very first important word: "mighty". It connotes something great, something sovereign, something grandly capable, and this connotation intensifies the contrast intended in the two later terms: "misery", "dead". Our world is such that even the mighty have to be miserable and to be so

helpless as to die as a climax to their miserableness : nay, our world is such that especially the mighty ones have to suffer a dreadful doom. The absolute alliteration of the opening sound *m*, as well as the closing sound *y*, in “mighty” and “misery”, the close alliteration of the dentals in “mighty” and its companion “poets” with those in “dead”—these enforce the sense of the special bearing of the Shakespearean “inauspicious stars” and the Hardeyan “crass casualty” on the choicest beings upon earth. Here again we have the subtle yet irresistible play of poetic logic. Change the word “misery”, put anything else without the twofold alliteration, or employ an epithet for poets without the strength of a dental letter in it to be echoed at the line’s end : the picture and feeling of tragedy will not go home with so piercing, so profound a power.

Now we come to the noun “poets”. It has a particular affinity with “mighty” and “misery” by its own labial, its lip-consonant *p*. All the three words hang together indispensably with a fundamental poetic logic, as if nobody except poets could be utterly mighty and utterly miserable. And I may observe that the running of a lip-consonant through the three words contributes to the appropriateness of the term “poet” which implies one who speaks beautiful words, one who uses his lips in a mighty manner. But, of course, this term is the right note in the tragic message of the line for other reasons too. A poet is believed to bring us the light and the delight of a “world far from ours” by his inspired and revelatory art of language. His work is just the opposite of what is signified by “misery” and “dead”. A divine Ananda makes him its mouth-piece : a secret realm of immortal beauty is expressive through his verbal creations, creations which are themselves undying. But, though his songs are heavenly, his life is a hell in a world unappreciative of his gifts. And, though his creations tower above the destructive touch of time, he himself is beaten down most ignobly by the neglect of his fellows and by the merciless march of selfishness and ugliness and cruelty—a march that hurts him all the more because his heart is sensitive with chords that vibrate at once—as keen to feel the smite of earthly sorrow as to feel the caress of unearthly felicity.

At the very head of European literary history we have Homer, a poor blind beggar wandering with his harp and dying without a home. After his death, seven cities disputed with one another to be considered his birthplace ! Then there is Dante, exiled from his beloved Florence, homeless for nearly fifteen years, depending on the fickle favours of moody and even boorish patrons. Poignantly he has quintessenced the feeling of his humiliation in those lines :

Tu proverai sì come sa di sale
Lo pane altrui e com'è duro calle
Lo scandere e'l salir par altrui scale—

MOTHER INDIA

lines which have been Englished by Binyon:

Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares
Upon another's bread—how steep his path
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs.

There is a story that once the Abbott of a monastery was awakened in the middle of the night by a knock at the door. When he opened the door, he saw a gaunt old man with weary eyes, who, on being asked what he wanted, said just one word: "Peace." This man was Dante, the greatest poet of Mediaeval Europe. Not until he died did Florence wake up to his worth. And when he was gone it urged its claim for his body upon the city of Ravenna where he had been buried. Byron has referred to the poet's resting-place at Ravenna:

I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid,
A little cupola more neat than solemn
Protects his dust...

Think, again, of Keats, the most extraordinary young genius in the domain of English poetry—Keats, attacked by brutal critics, loving in vain a woman who hardly realised either his love or his genius, suffering not only from heart-break but also from consumption, spitting out in blood-clots the lungs which had breathed forth the passionate enchanted music of the *Ode to a Nightingale* and the serene yet intense symphony of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*—Keats who died at the age of twenty-four and voiced the depth of his disappointment by offering for his own epitaph the sentence: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." In the eighteenth century, a little earlier than Keats, there was the English poet on whom Wordsworth himself has two touching lines, the youth who lived so poor and yet so disdainful of begging that he had to commit suicide:

I thought of Chatterton, that marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul which perished in its pride...

Even Shelley, though he did not die of physical misery or poverty, lived scorned by his fellows to whom he sang of light and love and liberty. Shelley died young too, by a mishap in the gulf of Spezia: sightless Nature-forces swept his life away at a moment when he was reaching his ripest poetic vision and expression. All who came into contact with him felt a radiant presence and yet he was reviled as atheist, corrupter of morals, enemy of mankind: he was

denied even the custody of a child of his. No wonder Shelley never laughed : the load of a world of men blind to beauty lay too heavy on that heavenly heart—the heart which, when his body was burning on a pyre by the Italian sea that had drowned him, was plucked from the flames by a friend. Leigh Hunt, Moore, Byron, Trelawney were there on the beach. It was Trelawney who saved the heart from burning. But during the poet's life it had burned enough—at the same time with love for

The Light whose smile kindles the universe

and pain at the scorching abuse thrown on it by bigots. The ashes of the author of *Adonais* were buried in the same cemetery at Rome where Keats had been laid earlier. Shelley's grave bears the most Shelleyan epitaph possible : *Cor Cordium*—"Heart of Hearts".

Yes, the world has not been very kind to its poets and for the nectar brought by them it has often forced poison on their lips. This anomaly is penetratingly and puissantly uttered once for all by the closing cadence of Wordsworth's line. The word "dead" comes with a finality of climax and, by the same hard consonant at the beginning and at the end, conveys the dull darkness of an unescapable and everlasting loss of life. We almost hear a thud as of a body helplessly, senselessly falling. The device of putting at the end of the line the word indicating with such expressive conclusiveness the end of a poet's life renders [any] change of the position of "dead" a fatal flaw from the artistic standpoint.

The variant—

And mighty poets dead in their misery—

is not unrhymic or meaningless, yet all the subtle or forceful quality of the verse is gone. The distancing of "misery" from "mighty" weakens the alliterative suggestions on which we have dwelt. And the placing of "dead" right in the middle of the line robs the line of its prolonged pathos and mars the development of the tragedy: the phrase about misery seems tagged on, an afterthought if not even a superfluity. Besides, there is a weak trailing away of the metrical movement: the stress in "misery" is on the first syllable, the third which closes the verse takes only a minor accent which would be meaningful if one were talking of an indefinite process but is hardly right when death has already been mentioned: we are not referring to a continuous rotting away after death but of a grief and pain and privation preceding it and culminating in the agony of life's own end. A constructed instead of a created line is what we get

MOTHER INDIA

by the shifting of Wordsworth's final word. The electricity of the inevitable expression is missing. You can see from this how important are the arrangement and the rhythm of words, how full of vital meaning is the form. Not a single syllable is altered and yet merely because a monosyllable that comes at the close of the fifth foot is placed at the close of the third, what strikes us is not the terrible irony of great singers falling into protracted suffering and irrevocable silence but the ironic phenomenon of a line about death failing to convey livingly its sorrowful substance and itself falling half dead upon our ears by using the word "dead" halfway through the run of the verse.

As metrical rhythm, the new line is quite harmonious, perhaps even more musical—but it is an empty music because there is an absence of inner form. The original line echoes or embodies Wordsworth's inner posture of vision, inner movement of feeling—it is true to the poetic intuition and becomes thereby a sovereign instance of a poet's expressive might and a devastating verdict on the crassness of our common world.

If this world is like that, surely a new light, a new life, is needed—a moon of Divine Ananda must shed its "long glories" here and a "level lake" of the soul in us must be rapt in them, covered over and permeated with the wonderful whiteness. Then there would be in the night of our Ignorance an image of what Sri Aurobindo has made King Aswapati vision in the Supreme Knowledge:

Rapture of beatific energies
Joined Time to the Timeless, poles of a single joy;
White vasts were seen where all is wrapped in all.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. Sethna)

AN EPITAPH BY W. B. YEATS *

Draw rein, draw breath,
Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by.

W.B. Yeats

First of all you must remember that it is an epitaph—words inscribed on a headstone. Try to imagine the dramatic situation that the poem conjures up before you. The deceased is addressing a horseman. Often the poets use the dramatic form to make their deepest thoughts and emotions vivid by giving them a resonant human voice. Imagine a man full of vigour and strength astraddle his horse suddenly drawing up before this epitaph. The whole situation is packed with an endless suggestive richness. One can weave a hundred things round the image of the horseman—a knight burning with passionate love and galloping apace to the trysting place, a hunter wrapped up in the thrill of the chase, a gallant flushed with the joy of adventure and so on. The blood is hot in him and the hour of thought has not yet struck.

These few but bold strokes portray the character of the speaker powerfully and he stands before us full of dignity and calm restraint. He does not indulge in any debile sentimentality over a life that is now extinct nor does he crave the sympathy of the horseman.

Do you know who is a sentimentalist? A person who displays emotions more effusively than the situation demands, and who enjoys wallowing in his sadness and 'whose emotions are on hair-trigger,' as Cleanth Brooks puts it. And he further goes on to add, "An almost inevitable accompaniment of sentimentality is this obsession with one's own emotions—an exclusive interest which blinds the person involved to everything except the sweet intensity of the emotion in question." Something of this sentimentality you will observe in the Epitaph written by Thomas Gray at the end of his *Elegy* :

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And melancholy marked him for her own.

* A lecture given to the students of English in the Higher Course.

MOTHER INDIA

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

Even the rhythm, in the two poems, significantly embodies the strong masterful personality of the first and the melancholy lifeless regularity of the other.

Gray's *Elegy* is through and through sentimental with the result that a reading of the poem does not in any way elevate you or spur you to think about the mystery of man's sojourn here but on the contrary saps your will to live with its melancholic mood.

Yeats wants you to 'cast a cold eye', detached, calmly gazing and seeking to penetrate into the secret meaning of life and fathom its mystery. Yeats does evoke your sympathy towards himself but wants you to rise above emotions and to impersonalise yourself by universalising yourself and then to take up the reins of your horse which is a symbol of the life-energy and to reorientate your life with a heightened, widened and deepened consciousness.

The poem is very powerful because of its dramatic force and every word in the first and the third lines falls with its full momentum and the pauses reinforce the impact of each syllable and give us time to ruminate. 'Draw rein, draw breath' has the suggestive implication that the horseman should not allow himself to be carried headlong by the onrush of the flood of life but should be able to bring it to a standstill and curb it to his own will.

In his search for the expressive word the poet has achieved a rare compression in the phrase 'cold eye'. An eye become piercing by its single-pointed focus, an eye that has achieved a dispassionate gaze by its intense heat, an eye grim and resolute set to the task of stripping the opaque screen of mystery that shrouds our existence because it has felt too poignantly the 'lacrimae rerum' to be allured by the outer show of things.

The poet has kept us in suspense till the fourth line when we come to know whom he is addressing. 'Pass by' with its open vowels brings us into the wide expanses of the new dimension of Thought which has been rightly defined as 'that activity of mind which aims directly at truth'.

The poem is a fine example of dignity and restraint and a perfect fusion of thought and emotion.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

THE BREATH OF THE SPIRIT

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal.

NIETZSCHE

If only they were to forsake me, and observe my teachings!

WORDS PUT IN THE MOUTH OF GOD—"THE TALMUD"

Neither abstinence from flesh or fish, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dressing in a rough garment, nor covering oneself with dirt, nor sacrificing to Agni, will cleanse a man who is not free from delusion.

BUDDHA

Our Lord says to every living soul, "I became man for you. If you do not become God for me, you do me wrong."

MEISTER ECKHART

Nor can we fall below the arms of God, how low soever it be we fall.

WILLIAM PENN

Freedom is to be in possession of oneself.

HEGEL

What you are you do not see,
What you see is your shadow.

TAGORE

CHAPMAN'S *BUSSY D'AMBOIS*: A 'METAPHYSICAL' DRAMA

(Continued from the September issue)

4

"WHAT oft was thought" by the common reader "was never so well expressed" as in the words of T. S. Eliot who observed :

"In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne."¹

The verdict of criticism through decades has been that Chapman is undramatic in his dramatic works.² But we who live in the climate of this century have had the opportunity of probing into the very core of Chapman's dramatic sensibility. The essence of drama is "character in action" and interaction. That involves a quality of detachment by which the dramatist should disengage himself from the personalities involved in the drama. We know pretty well that Chapman, at least once in his dramatic career, succeeds well in being both an observer and a participator in his *Bussy D'Ambois*. That such a fine experience when it sought to crystallize itself came to be embodied in a peculiar structure that seemed to be undramatic, is no surprise at all. As Mr. Eliot has admirably put it, Chapman's is "the drama which is the most independent in its tendency toward a dramatic form—although it may seem the most formless and indifferent to dramatic necessities."³

¹ Essay on the Metaphysical poets, *Selected Essays*, p. 272.

² For this view, see :

A. C. Swinburne : Essay on "Chapman's Poetical and Dramatic Works". Also his article on "Chapman", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 5.

Also Macneile Dixon—"Chapman, Marston, Dekker" (*Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. VI).

Also Dr. David Patrick's article on "Chapman" in *The Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, Vol. I.

Also Janet Spens—"Chapman's Ethical Thought" (*Essays and Studies*, Vol. XI).

³ T. S. Eliot—"Four Elizabethan Dramatists", *Selected Essays*, p. 117.

Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* moves between two worlds—the world of political "Policy" and Romantic Passion as opposed to the world of Virtue. The "violent wheels of Time and Fortune" are contrasted with the still centre of "Reason". This central perspective of the play is stated even in the opening lines where Bussy says :

Fortune, not Reason, rules the state of things,
Reward goes backwards, Honour on his head;
Who is not poor, is monstrous; only Need
Gives form and worth to every human seed.

Bussy, a man of virtue and reason, naturally looks upon the world of politics as something artificial and man-made. According to him, the politicians are "merely men great" with "all the spawn of fortune" at their command. Colossal statues (I, i, 15), heroic forms (I, i, 16), unskilful statutaries (I, 1, 7) are the images that Bussy employs to describe them. But then they

Within are nought but mortar, flint, and lead.

They are "cedars beaten with continual storms". Storms, Neptune's deep invisible paths (I, i, 21), the waves of glassy Glory (I, i, 28-29), the gulfs of State (I, i, 29) and shipwreck (I, i, 33)—these impetuous images point to the violence that prevails in the world of politics and to the unknown destiny that awaits Bussy. Haven (I, i, 24) and safest port (I, i, 33) point to the world of virtue.

Naturally to a politician like Monsieur, brother of King Henry III of France, involved in the world of politics with its flux of fortune, the path of virtue appears to be artificial unless it helps him to rise in fortune. So he tells Bussy :

Leave the troubled streams,
And live, where the thrivers do, at the well-head.

So then, to a politician, the path of virtue appears to be "the troubled streams" and the only way out seems to be to retire into what he considers "the well-head". Thus at the very outset, the dramatist helps us to see the two worlds and see them in terms of each other.

MOTHER INDIA

It is no surprise that we find such a politician as Monsieur aspiring to his "well-head", the position of the king. This ambitious politician, to whom

in a King

All places are contained

and

There's but a thread betwixt me and a crown,

seeks the help of Bussy, "a man of spirit beyond the reach of fear". But Monsieur's is a "seed-land soil" as opposed to Bussy's which is "a smooth plain-ground" that will never nourish any "politic seed". Seed-land soil, smooth plain ground, plow (I, i, 130)—these are images from agriculture which tell us the way in which the political seed is sown in a virtuous soil. The natural consequence of such a sowing is that Bussy, the poor virtuous soul, is caught in "Time's restless wheel" (I, i, 124) and in "blind Fortune's powerful hands with wings". Thus, early in the tragedy is hinted the catastrophe that is to come : Bussy's acceptance of three thousand crowns sent by Monsieur is a sufficient preparation for the violent fate that befalls him in the end. As Maffe says,

These crowns are set in blood; blood be their fruit.

Bussy's entry into the court causes a great stir. He tries to win the favours of the ladies in the court, particularly of Elenor the Duchess of Guise. The Duchess is averse to his "blunt behaviour" and says that "he is guilty of bold extremity".

This advance on the part of Bussy prepares us for the second theme of the play, namely the theme of Romantic Passion. Actually Bussy is not in love with the Duchess of Guise. He has already given his heart to Tamyra, the Countess of Montsurry.

To whom my love hath been long vow'd in heart,
Although in hand for shew I held the Duchess.

Anyhow, his peculiar behaviour in public makes him antagonistic to the Duke of Guise. However, the virtuous Bussy, who is not disturbed in the least by the "sly charms of the witch policy" and by the waves of political passion, later on succumbs to the tidal waves of romantic passion which is yet another feature in the world of the court. Monsieur says that Bussy, like the sea, has *properties* of commotion and should take some time to settle down :

CHAPMAN'S "BUSSY D'AMBOIS" : A METAPHYSICAL' DRAMA

His great heart will not down, 't is like the sea,
That partly by his own internal heat,
Partly by the stars' daily and nightly motion,
Their heat and light, and partly of the place
The divers frames, but chiefly by the moon,
Bristled with surges, never will be won,
(No, not when th' hearts of all those powers are burst)
To make retreat into his settled home,
Till he be crown'd with his own quiet foam.

Miss Holmes, commenting upon this passage, says :

The sea, itself uniquely and characteristically, figures self-completion and the isolation of greatness....Its restless tides are like Bussy D'Ambois' imperious spirit, striving for expansion and self-expression. Chapman complicates the image, not as his contemporaries do with the colours of life but with the grave colours of science, recounting the 'influences' that move the sea...¹

The chief influence over the sea is attributed to the moon and that is not without its significance. Just as the moon governs the motion of the sea, so also woman governs the turbulent passion of man. It will not, then, be a surprise if the great sea, which Bussy's heart certainly is, is thrown into commotion by the heart of a woman which houses romantic passion. Here is certainly an anticipation of the second theme of the play. As Ennis Rees observes,

The wild waters will not be calmed for some three acts or more.²

The new suit of poor Bussy evokes the jealousy of the courtiers Barrisor, L'Anou and Pyrhot. They consider him "the ass stalking in the lion's case". The result is a duel between them on the one hand and Bussy with two other courtiers, Brisac and Melynell, on the other. All except Bussy are slain.

(To be continued)

S. KANDASWAMY

¹ *Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, P. 86.

² Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, p. 37.

THE CONCEPT OF REBIRTH : SANKHYA AND OTHER THEORIES*

(Continued from the September issue)

(c) THE GOAL OF REBIRTH

WHEN both the gross body and the subtle body are reabsorbed in the universal Prakriti, the Purusha becomes absolutely free. This liberation is the goal set for themselves by the Sāṅkhya seers. This culmination is helped and reached by progressive enlightenment through successive births. The lines of Karma, the samskaras and predispositions stored up in the *lingadeha* gradually wear out through repeated births and finally the Purusha attains Kaivalya (or aloneness) and is self-luminous, free and full of immortal felicity. The same line of thought is preached by Buddhism and later Vedanta of Badarayana. The spirit of Nirvana signifying complete emancipation from terrestrial life was then in the air of India, and the three great teachers, Kapila, Buddha and Badarayana, the protagonists of Sāṅkhya, of Buddhism and of later Vedanta respectively, pursued the same aim of ending rebirth through rebirth. The difference amongst them lies in the conception of what remains after the final demolition is effected. Kapila rescues Purusha and enthrones it in its original pedestal of aloneness (Kaivalya); Buddha promises the eternal Void and leaves nothing to dwell in it or enjoy it, for he admits no self, soul or Purusha; whereas Badarayana retains the eternal Atman and makes it rest in the Eternal for ever after rebirth is successfully cancelled.

In the above three outstanding views regarding the aim of rebirth we find that the clear hints given in the original Upanishads are distorted and finally used to mislead men away from life and action. Two things should be clearly borne in mind—first, that rebirth, with its consequent Karma, is meant for soul-evolution and, secondly, even after perfection of the individual, its realisation of immortality, freedom and eternal bliss and infinite Consciousness and knowledge, his Karma does not and need not cease but can continue more effectively for the good of humanity according to the will of the Divine. This idea is elaborately dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in *The Problem of Rebirth*. “When the soul

* From lecture-notes given to the philosophy students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

is one with the Supreme and with the Universal not only in essence of Consciousness and spiritual truth of being, but in expressive act too of Consciousness and being, when it enjoys an initiating and relating truth of spiritual will and knowledge and the soul's overflowing delight in God and existence, when it is admitted to the spirit's fullness of assent to self and its creative liberty, its strain of an eternal joy in self-existence and self-manifestation, Karma itself becomes a rhythm of freedom and birth a strain of immortality." Says the Isha Upanishad—"by birth he enjoys immortality."—*Sambhutyamṛtam aśnute*.

In the integral theory of Karma we have, according to the spiritual analysis of Sri Aurobindo, four clear things described by him as pillars of Karma. The first is the assurance of Law both in the physical universe governed by apparently blind physical forces and in the moral and mental world where streaks of dim light help the movements of thought and action. There is "no chaos, fortuitous rule of chance or mere probability, but an ordered Energy of work which assures its will by law and find relations and steady succession and the link of ascertainable cause and effectuality." The rule of Law is evident everywhere. If there are freaks of nature or abnormalities these are also governed by ascertainable laws and causes. But certainly these laws, mental, moral or physical, are not all-sufficient explanations of actions and movements of the world, for in that case we would become "a slave and puppet of Karma" and we could never dream of being a sovereign of ourself and our existence. Behind the Law comes "the second step of the theory of Karma that it is the Idea which creates all relations." The rigid formulations of Law are not blind and mechanical, though they may appear so on the surface but are governed by Intelligence, the Idea operating through will. All is the expression and expansion of the idea—*sarvāṇi vijñāna-vijṛmbhitāni*. And this Idea is not floating in the air, there must be an all-knowing and all-effecting possessor of the Idea, the Purusha, the Ishwara. Thus there must be the third step, "a soul developing and persisting in the paths of the universal Energy and that is myself in the seed of all my creation." He is this soul in me that gives the command and orders the present, and plans the future out of my past actions and ideas. But beyond this, beyond the movement and direction of my life, beyond both the Idea and its Karma, there is the supreme liberating Step, the all-seeing Self or Spirit, by reaching which, I can find my true self and can "exalt my state beyond all bondage of Karma to spiritual freedom. These are the four pillars of the complete theory of Karma. They are also the four truths of the dealings of Self with Nature."¹ Karma thus does not stand isolated as a stream by itself as the Buddhists conceive it but is closely connected with a dynamic being whose abode is in the transcendent

¹ *The Problem of Rebirth*, p. 92.

Spirit. When these four parts of Karma are consciously integrated then it no longer becomes a bondage, a source of suffering but a free and joyous expression of the soul. In a higher stage of our development, Karma is seen to be the self-effectuation of the Spirit in the world, and rebirth serves as a machinery for the continuity of that self-effectuation in the individual, the persistence of the thread. Karma works out and helps the purpose of the Spirit in birth and life, it is subservient to the spiritual self-effectuation and takes from it all its meaning and value. "The Law is a means, a line of working for the spirit, and does not exist for its own sake or for the service of any abstract idea. Idea and law of working are only direction and road for the soul's progress in the steps of its existence."¹

(d) INTERNATAL HABITAT OF THE SOUL

There is another important question regarding the planes in which the departed soul may possibly rest till its sojourn in a new life on earth again takes place. First of all, is it necessary to assume a span of interval between death and reincarnation or are we to suppose that transmigration takes place immediately after death without requiring any stay on some supraphysical plane? The answer to the question is that if there is no need for halting in an intermediate station, then of course the physical attraction of the antecedent physical existence will immediately drag down the departed into a fresh physical birth. This eventuality arises when the individual is not as yet sufficiently developed and is very close to or enveloped in crude physical consciousness. And in such circumstances there can be a theory of rebirth which admits only of a constant transmigration. But when the soul is sufficiently developed the necessity of an interregnum between birth and birth and of a sojourn in other planes besides the physical would naturally arise. This theory maintains that there is no immediate rebirth. Entry into other worlds becomes obligatory, for the soul needs an interval of preparation for the new incarnation and new experience. This sojourn is determined by a double cause: "there is an attraction of the other planes for the mental and vital being in man's composite nature due to their affinity with these levels and there is the utility or even the need of an interval for assimilation of the completed life-experience, a working out of what has to be discarded, a preparation for the new embodiment and the new terrestrial experience. And it is evident that this period of stay in other worlds is short or long according to the measure of the work of assimilation of the effects of past deeds good for future progress or rejection of useless elements found as obstacles

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

for further progress in the next life. There can also be a third theory applicable to the sojourn of souls who are very powerfully developed with their parts of nature, mind and life and subtle physical made spiritually alive and conscious. They "can immediately resume birth for a more rapid evolution without the retardation of a period of intermittence". When during the life-time, the individual is able to systematise the mental experience and organise the vital activities and establish a large measure of harmony between the mental and the vital parts of his being, the period of internatal sojourn must necessarily be proportionately reduced till at a stage the individual feels no need of a halt in any supraphysical plane. He can immediately take up the thread of spiritual evolution on earth and go through fresh experiences and realisations. And lastly when a siddha purusha completes his programme of spiritual freedom he becomes competent to leave this present body or take up a new body at his sweet will.

The law of this sojourn in other supraphysical planes is a very complicated thing and its application in each particular case must therefore be very flexible to accommodate all possible combinations of the numerous divisions and subdivisions, shapes and grades of the mental and vital elements of each individual. In the Taittiriya Upanishad (iii. 10-5) a description is given of the free passage from one plane to another of the highly developed spiritual beings who have gained the Supreme Knowledge: "He passes in his departure from this world to the physical Self; he passes to the Self of life, he passes to the Self of mind; he passes to the Self of Knowledge; he passes to the Self of bliss; he moves through these worlds at will." But what of those who are yet bound to the blind impulses of the vital, to the many imperfections and limitations of the mind, bound by the fetters of egoism and desires ? This question is treated elaborately by Sri Aurobindo in a chapter entitled "Rebirth and other Worlds" in *The Life Divine*. The thing is put in a highly metaphysical form and clothed in a garb of hypothetical speculation and dialectical argumentation to lead the logical mind of the modern man to the belief and conviction of the great truth of soul's evolution amidst the scenes of earth-existence through many births and rebirths, in diverse sheaths and moulds, in various planes and worlds of existence. In his all-seeing vision he sees clearly all the possibilities corresponding to infinite states and stages of the evolving man. We may in a general way indicate the dwelling place of the disembodied soul corresponding to its development.

If the mental being is not sufficiently developed and is primarily busy with the more physical forms of mind and life-activity, he is likely to enter into an environing subtle physical layer and remain there for a pretty long time and may even be obliged to rest there entirely between birth and birth. "In the physical plane itself or close to it there are believed to be layers of greater

and greater subtlety which may be regarded as subplanes of the physical with a vital and mental character; these are at once surrounding and penetrating strata through which the interchange between the higher worlds and the physical world takes place.”¹ Any of these subtle physical planes may serve as the habitat of a less developed being. Next comes the group of beings in whom the vital parts are prominently developed and eager to increase and widen the field of vital experience. They are likely to enter the vital world above the physical to gather and organise their experiences and from there negotiate with the mental parts for support and help in their vital activities and experiences. But those in whom a higher order of development is secured, in whom the mental parts can command obedience of the other elements, would possibly go straight into the mental worlds for rest and assimilation. But Man is not constituted only of these three elements physical, vital and mental. A more powerful element may in course of evolution come to the forefront and assert its domination. Those therefore in whom the psychic is active, the soul personality is dynamic may go straight into the psychic realm of peace and love and harmony. There is also the possibility of persons, gifted with powerful imagination and emotional fervour, creating by their own constructive capacity of imagination temporary abodes where they may choose to rest after death. Such a one is likely “to linger for a time in one of those annexes of the other worlds created by his habitual beliefs or by the type of his aspiration in the mortal body.”²

Beyond these planes of experience, and their annexes, there are higher spiritual mental planes to which the soul seems to have an internatal access but it is not possible to live consciously there unless sufficient mental and soul development has been already attained during its life in the body. Such highly developed mental beings are capable of overleaping other planes and ascending to an overmental state. But in this eventuality it might not be possible for him to return to earth for further physical evolution as long as an organisation of an overmental life in Matter has not been developed by Evolutionary Nature. This condition possibly happens to those ascetics who are highly developed in mind with a strong tendency to transcend the other planes by mental tapasya, by askesis of knowledge with an exclusive strain in it which neglects the demands of other parts and the indications of the psychic. The Sāṁkhyas and the later Vedantins following a path of austere knowledge would possibly gain a status of this kind by overstepping the intermediate stations to reach an overmental habitat. But in the last analysis it is the soul who is the Lord of this game of life and death and when it reaches a stage of complete mastery it can freely travel from plane to plane without experiencing any compulsion to dwell in any world as a bond-slave.

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, C. E. Ed. p. 952.

² *Ibid.* p. 952.

Before concluding this subject we have to offer some reasonable answer to a pertinent question which poses itself as highly relevant in connection with rebirth. We have taken rebirth to be a fact not as a result of bondage but as an expression of progressive freedom, freedom in the status of spirit and freedom in action in life on a higher platform. If so, how is it that we do not remember anything of our previous lives ? Is there any method of reestablishing the missing link between our present life and the preceding ones ? Is this knowledge necessary for the global unfolding of our spiritual possibilities ? In answer to these connected queries it would be best to quote here some words of the Mother which throw a clear light on all the aspects of the questions. Here are the words : "In rebirth it is not the external being, that which is formed by parents, environment and circumstances—the mental, the vital and the physical,—that is born again: it is only the psychic being that passes from body to body. Logically, then, neither the mental nor the vital being can remember past lives or recognise itself in the character or mode of life of this or that person. The psychic being alone can remember; and it is by becoming conscious of our psychic being that we can have at the same time exact impressions of our past lives."¹ It behoves us therefore to find out the psychic being and consciousness in us and live in it habitually, if ever we want to know our previous lives. In the Isha Upanishad we are asked to invoke solemnly "the Will to remember the thing that has been done, so as to contain and be conscious of the becoming, so as to become a power of knowledge and self-possession and not only a power of impulse and self-formulation. It will thus more and more approximate itself to the true Will and preside over the co-ordination of the successive lives with a conscious control. Instead of being carried from life to life in a crooked path, as by winds, it will be able to proceed more and more straight in an ordered series, linking life to life with an increasing force of knowledge and direction until it becomes the fully conscious Will moving with the illumination on the straight path towards the immortal felicity."² The mental Will, *kratu*, can become the divine Will, the Agni of the Vedas which is the essence of the psychic being in man and in and through which abiding contact with the Transcendent Divine is maintained.

This knowledge and will in the psychic being can bring back the memory of our past lives. "It is Jatavedas, that which has right knowledge of all births. It knows them in the law of their being, in their relation to other births, in their aim and method, in their process and goal, in their unity with all and their difference from all."³ But immature knowledge or untimely illumination or

¹ Words of the Mother, 3rd Ed. p. 18.

² Isha Upanishad, p. 147-148.

³ Isha Upanishad, p. 148.

MOTHER INDIA

partial glimpses are fraught with mischief and may even prove dangerous. Here we may profitably quote a few words of warning administered by the Mother : "In all, in some part of our consciousness, there is a remembrance. But this is a dangerous subject, because the human mind is too fond of romance. As soon as it comes to know something of this truth of rebirth, it wants to build up beautiful stories around it. Many people would tell you wonderful tales of how the world was built and how it will proceed in the future, how and where you were born in the past and what you will be hereafter, the lives you have lived and the lives you will still live. All this has nothing to do with spiritual life. True remembrance of past births may indeed be part of an integral knowledge; but it cannot be got by that way of imaginative fancies. If it is on one side an objective knowledge, on the other it depends largely on personal and subjective experience, and here there is much chance of invention, distortion or false building. To reach the truth of these things, your experiencing consciousness must be pure and limpid, free from any mental interference or any vital interference, liberated from your personal notions and feelings and from your mind's habit of interpreting or explaining in its own way. An experience of past lives may be true, but between what you have seen and your mind's explanation or construction about it there is bound to be always a great gulf. It is only when you can rise above human feelings and get back from your mind, that you can reach the truth."⁴

Thus we can conclude that it is only through the psychic consciousness, through the power of Agni the knower of all births, that the human will when identified with the divine will, can regain the experiences of past lives. It is not through the memory of the brute mind that the recollection of previous births can ever be revived, for this memory is concerned with the function of utilising the data of the present life. All records of the past lives are stored up in the folds of the psychic being and probing deep into it one can obtain useful and authentic knowledge of the past. Other attempts are fruitless, and often vitiated by exaggeration, fantastic imagination and misleading perversions.

NARENDRA NATH DAS GUPTA

⁴ The Mother, Conversations, p. 63.