

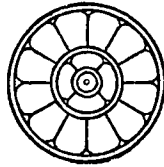
MOTHER INDIA

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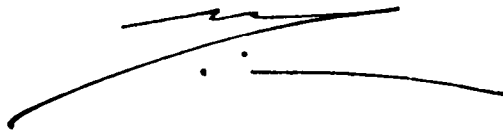


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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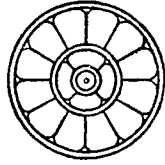
"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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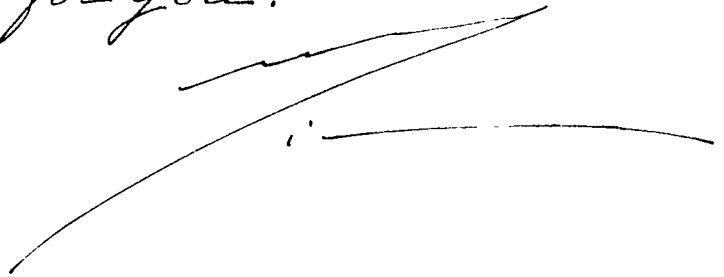
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Never forget that you are not alone.
The Divine is with you helping and
guiding you. He is the companion who
never fails, the friend whose love comforts
and strengthens. Have faith and He will
do everything for you.





Forsaking my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the veils of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
In a horror of mud and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

Sri Aurobindo

Forsaking my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the veils of death and birth.

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In a horror of mud and mire
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SRI AUROBINDO

RÉPONSES — ANSWERS

Q. Tu as dit que pour pouvoir s'asseoir dans la chambre de Sri Aurobindo et y méditer, "one must have done much for Him". Qu'entends-tu par là, Mère ? Que peut-on faire pour le Seigneur qui soit ce "much" ?

Q. You have said that to be allowed to sit in Sri Aurobindo's room and meditate there, "one must have done much for Him". What do you mean by that, Mother ? What can one do for the Lord which may be this "much" ?

R. Faire quelque chose pour le Seigneur, c'est lui donner quelque chose de ce que l'on a, ou de ce que l'on fait, ou de ce que l'on est. C'est à dire Lui faire l'offrande d'une partie de nos biens ou de toutes nos possessions, Lui consacrer une partie de notre travail ou toutes nos activités, ou nous donner à Lui totalement et sans réserve pour qu'Il puisse prendre possession de notre nature pour la transformer et la diviniser. Mais il y a beaucoup de gens qui, sans rien donner, veulent toujours prendre et recevoir. Ceux-là sont des égoïstes et ne sont pas dignes de méditer dans la chambre de Sri Aurobindo.

A. To do something for the Lord is to give him something of what one has, or of what one does, or of what one is. That is to say, to make an offering to Him of a part of our goods or all our possessions, to consecrate to Him a part of our work or all our activities, or to give ourselves to Him totally and without reserve so that He may take possession of our nature in order to transform and divinise it. But there are many people who, without doing anything, want always to take and receive. These people are selfish, and are not worthy to meditate in Sri Aurobindo's room.

THE MOTHER

MOTHER INDIA

Q. Douce Mère, les messages que tu nous donnes les jours de Bénédiction, comment sont-ils choisis ? Comment les lire et que faut-il y chercher particulièrement de nouveau ?

Q. Sweet Mother, how is the choice made of the messages which you give us on the days of the Blessings ? How should one read them and what new thing should one look for in them ?

R. Les messages sont généralement choisis selon l'occasion ou les besoins du moment, afin que chacun puisse y trouver soit la force, soit la connaissance qui l'aidera à faire un progrès.

La volonté de progrès en chacun est la chose nécessaire, c'est elle qui nous ouvre à l'influence divine et nous rend capable de recevoir ce qu'elle nous apporte.

A. The messages are generally chosen according to the occasion or the needs of the moment, so that each may be able to find there either the force or the knowledge which will help him to make progress.

The will to progress in each one is the thing necessary, it is that which opens us to the divine influence and renders us capable of receiving what it brings us.

THE MOTHER

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Un problème pratique se pose de plus en plus fréquemment : celui qui se prépare pour le Yoga et qui a pris comme règle générale de Vous offrir tout et de dépendre entièrement de Vous, peut-il accepter des cadeaux, en espèce ou en argent, venant des autres ?

Or, si l'on accepte, on est sous des obligations personnelles et des devoirs. Est-ce qu'un sadhaka peut se le permettre ? Est-ce que l'on peut se dire : "Le Divin a beaucoup de manières de donner" ?

Que faire si une personne vient se quereller parce qu'on a accepté dans un cas et refusé dans un autre ? Que faire pour éviter une telle amertume dans son entourage, provoquée par des refus répétés ?

A practical problem faces us more and more often : one who prepares himself for Yoga and has made it a general rule to offer You everything and to depend entirely on You, can he or should he accept gifts, in kind or money, coming from others ?

Now, if he accepts, he is put under personal obligations and duties. Can a sadhaka allow this ? Can he say to himself : "The Divine has many ways of giving" ?

What is to be done if a person comes to quarrel because one has accepted in one case and refused in another ? What is to be done to avoid such bitterness around one, provoked by repeated refusals ?

"Le Divin a beaucoup de manières de donner".

Ceci est la chose correcte. On n'a jamais aucune obligation vis à vis de personne, on n'a d'obligation que pour *le Divin* et là totalement. Quand le don est fait *sans conditions* on peut toujours le prendre comme venant du Divin et laisser au Divin le soin de faire le nécessaire en échange ou en réponse.

Quant aux mauvaises volontés, aux jalousies, aux querelles et aux reproches, il faut être *sincèrement* au dessus de tout cela et répondre par un sourire bienveillant aux paroles les plus amères; et à moins qu'on ne soit absolument sûr de soi et de ses réactions, il vaut mieux, en règle générale, garder le silence.

"The Divine has many ways of giving."

This is the correct thing. One has no obligation at any time towards anybody, one has obligation only to *the Divine* and there *totally*. When the

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gift is made *without conditions* one can always take it as coming from the Divine and leave it to the Divine's care to do what is needed in exchange or in response.

As to ill-will, jealousies, quarrels and reproaches, one has *sincerely* to be above all that and reply with a benevolent smile to the bitterest words ; and unless one is absolutely sure of oneself and of one's reactions, it would be better, as a general rule, to keep silent.

6-10-1960

LABOUR AND EXISTENCE

(A LETTER)

THERE is no existence without labour—if you want to get out of labour you must get out of existence. The only way to accomplish that, is the way to Nirvana, and that way, to follow it, is of all labours the greatest.

6-11-1960

THE MOTHER

THE RECENT TREND TO SPIRITUALITY AND MYSTICISM

(An Unpublished Letter, dated 25-1-1935)

SRI AUROBINDO

I KNOW it is the Russian explanation of the recent trend to spirituality and mysticism that it is a phenomenon of capitalist society in its decadence. But to read an economic cause, conscious or unconscious, into all phenomena of man's history is part of the Bolshevik gospel born of the fallacy of Karl Marx. Man's nature is not so simple and one-chorded as all that—it has many lines and each line produces a need of his life. The spiritual or mystic line is one of them and man tries to satisfy it in various ways, by superstitions of all kinds, by ignorant religionism, by spiritism, demonism and what not, in his more enlightened parts by spiritual philosophy, the higher occultism and the rest, at his highest by the union with the All, the Eternal or the Divine. The tendency towards the search for spirituality began in Europe with a recoil from the nineteenth century's scientific materialism, a dissatisfaction with the pretended all-sufficiency of the reason and the intellect and a feeling out for something deeper. That was a pre-war phenomenon, and began when there was no menace of Communism and the capitalistic world was at its height of insolent success and triumph, and it came rather as a revolt against the materialistic bourgeois life and its ideals, not as an attempt to serve or sanctify it. It has been at once served and opposed by the post-war disillusionment—opposed because the post-war world has fallen back either on cynicism and the life of the senses or on movements like Fascism and Communism; served because with the deeper minds the dissatisfaction with the ideals of the past or the present, with all mental or vital or material solutions of the problem of life has increased and only the spiritual path is left. It is true that the European mind having little light on these things dallies with vital will-o-the-wisps like spiritism or theosophy or falls back upon the old religionism; but the deeper minds of which I speak either pass by them or pass through them in search of a greater Light. I have had contact with many and the above tendencies are very clear. They come from all countries and it was only a minority who hailed from England or America. Russia is different—unlike the others

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it has lingered in mediaeval religionism and not passed through any period of revolt—so when the revolt came it was naturally anti-religious and atheistic. It is only when this phase is exhausted that Russian mysticism can revive and take not the narrow religious but the spiritual direction. It is true that mysticism *à revers*, turned upside down, has made Bolshevism and its endeavour a creed rather than a political theme and a search for the paradisaical secret millennium on earth rather than the building of a purely social structure. But for the most part Russia is trying to do on the communistic basis all that nineteenth-century idealism hoped to get at—and failed—in the midst of or against an industrial competitive environment. Whether it will really succeed any better is for the future to decide—for at present it only keeps what it has got by a tension and violent control which is not over.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(This talk is the fourth 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 16, 1940
AFTERNOON

N : Z has given two letters of yours which explain Z's experience of ascent and descent. Z wants to know if the ascent and descent spoken of are the usual or the major ones we heard about from you the other day.

SRI AUROBINDO *(after reading both the letters)* : The first letter refers to the usual ascent and descent. The consciousness has not got fixed above in the higher planes. It is the vital or mental consciousness opening through the head and going up and then coming down. The second letter speaks of the major ascent and descent, but there is only the beginning of them. The being has to become fixed above and the higher or divine Consciousness has to descend and transform the nature. Z's later experiences are a continuation of this beginning, I suppose.

N : The first letter is dated 1931 and the second 1936.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes ; in between Z had a lot of troubles and disturbances.

N : Can't one have experiences during such troubles ?

Sri Aurobindo : One can, but the experiences may not be of the major ascent and descent because, when these take place, there comes a turn in the sadhana and those disturbances don't happen.

N : Now Z says there are no disturbances.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then a decisive turn has perhaps been taken. In the struggle between the vital and the psychic, the vital may have gone under and

MOTHER INDIA

the psychic may have triumphed. Unless the psychic is not only in front but also strongly established to take control of the other parts, the decisive ascent and descent don't take place. There are cases in which even without the psychic opening there may be ascent. Then the course of the sadhana is a more chequered one.

If the psychic is strong, the mind and the vital go under ; but that doesn't mean that one has no more difficulties. There are still difficulties but they are superficial, they don't disturb one so much : there are no major difficulties in which one is on the point of giving up yoga. This is what I call a decisive turn. When the psychic is strong and established, then the Divine Consciousness can descend and do the work.

S : Z's first experience of this kind was in 1931. Nine years have passed. Z still speaks of egoism.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh egoism ! Even spiritual people have some sort of egoism. Egoism goes only after absolute siddhi. Do you think nine years too long ?

S : Life is too short. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : Nine years are not too long for Z.

S : (*addressing N*) : What is Z's method ?

N : I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO : Like everybody else's : making efforts and falling down.

N : Z was having experiences in meditation before coming here.

S : I can't meditate.

SRI AUROBINDO : Meditation is a great help because you can get into the inner being and work on the other parts. Not that the work can't be done from the surface but it is more difficult. That is why people lay stress on meditation.

S : I had also a few experiences : one of ascent, as I told you, and another of death. I knew that breathing was going to stop and felt I was going to die while my consciousness was above the head in a sort of an egg-shell.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not death. It is the rise of consciousness from the body.

S : I had also an experience of light above the head.

SRI AUROBINDO : The light has to come down. Then the vital troubles will disappear.

S : The difficulty is I am not still settled here. Others have accepted this path as their own. I have a great desire for moksha.

SRI AUROBINDO : In spite of important experiences Z also was on the point of going away about two years ago.

S : Of course I didn't have such acute crises.

TALKS WITH SRĪ AUROBINDÓ

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*himself starting the talk*) : About Indumati, whose question was sent me, I am afraid I have to say the same thing as before : that it is difficult. This Yoga is possible by *purna* devotion, full self-giving so that nothing else matters to her. Of course she can get guidance from and communion with Krishna without that.

S : She seems to be a Vaishnavite.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

S : She speaks of Golok-darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO : How does one get it ?

S : I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO : By intensity of devotion, isn't it ?

S : She may have before her Mirabai as example.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, Mirabai had intensity of love.

C : Is there anything like Golok ? Is it true ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is true but it depends on how one sees it.

P brought in a book by Laurence Binyon, an expert art-critic. There Binyon has praised Chinese art and said about Indian art that the subject-matter of Indian art appeals indirectly and not through the lines and moods of the painting itself, while Chinese art is synthetic.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not true. I don't agree. Western critics call Indian matter conceptual, by which they mean intellectual. Take for instance these two figures of Javanese art,¹ which is practically Indian art. They express very clearly the attitude of devotion and prayer through the lines and moods of the figures. Of course, if one paints a man in such an attitude, without conveying the feeling, it is different. Europeans like the art of China better than that of any other Eastern country.

P : Binyon says that in Chinese art there is the expression of the spirit of nature.

SRI AUROBINDO : Europeans have no clear idea of the spirit and spiritual. What he means is the expression of the spirit of universal nature, and nothing spiritual. As I have said, far Eastern art expresses the spirit as nature, as Prakriti, while Indian art expresses the spirit as Self, the Purusha. That seems too subtle for the European mind to understand.

¹ Wood-carvings which stand on one of the tables in Sri Aurobindo's room.

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17-3-1940

Afternoon

There was a letter from an outside sadhaka regarding his election affair. It was read out to Sri Aurobindo. It said, "You may not be interested in politics...."

P : We are interested.

SRI AUROBINDO : We are very much interested though we don't take part in it.

The letter further reads : "The allegation of newspapers is not true that I voted against the release of political prisoners. I voted for it. Neither is it true that I sided with Government against the censure motion by Congress...."

SRI AUROBINDO : Why doesn't he contradict it then ? It is absurd to remain quiet when the papers are spreading false news.

The letter went on to say : "I have spoken to my friends and other members about it."

SRI AUROBINDO : He may have spoken to them but he didn't speak to the papers.

Then the letter elucidated why he had taken part in politics etc. etc. On all this there was no comment from Sri Aurobindo.

P : You seem to have relaxed the rule that the disciples shouldn't take part in politics.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is meant for inmates, not for those who are outside. But there also, if they take part in politics, they shouldn't join any revolutionary activities, as that would bring trouble to the Ashram.

Evening

B : Can one get liberation with desire still present in the lower nature ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, why not ? One can realise the Self and attain moksha or liberation in spite of desires.

B : Won't one have to take birth again because of the desires ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No; the desires fall off with the death of the body.

C : When one snores in meditation, does it mean that one is sleeping instead of meditating ?

SRI AUROBINDO : One may be meditating. One's consciousness may have gone within—it is not quite Samadhi—while the body falls asleep.

C : I ask because very often I have felt that I have gone somewhere and was feeling nice, calm and peaceful but when I wake up I myself find I was snoring or others tell me I was doing so.

SRI AUROBINDO : When you feel peace and calm it means you have gone within. But aren't you conscious of where you have gone ?

C : No; only a feeling of going very deep into a pleasant region. And this has been happening for many years. What is the further stage and how is one to get it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The further stage is to be conscious and there is no device for it. One has to aspire and to will in one's waking moments to be conscious.

Then, looking at N, Sri Aurobindo said : "You are wondering how they feel calm and peaceful ?"

N : No, because you have said about me that the physical crust has to go. (*Laughter*)

P : In my case, when I dream, I am very conscious but just as I wake up I forget all about it. But if some clue remains, I can work it up and get back the full dream.

SRI AUROBINDO : One has to get the habit of keeping the mind quiet after waking. Then the memory comes back.

C brought in again the subject of snoring and asked : "Except for causing disturbance to others, does snoring harm in any way ?"

SRI AUROBINDO : Harm ? You mean if it is immoral ? (*Laughter*) There is no harm; while the body sleeps, the inner being meditates. It does not mean this in all cases. All cases of snoring are not meditation.

C : Why does one snore ?

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean why the physical body snores ? For that you have to ask a doctor. Ask N. Why should others get disturbed by snoring ?

P : One doesn't if one can get into the rhythm of the snoring. I disturb N when he goes out of the rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean when he doesn't snore but snort ? And goes from mental into Overmind rhythm or from lyrical to epic rhythm ?

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Ego

OBVIOUSLY all that must go—it is the old vital egoism of the human being always preoccupied with itself, so that the being cannot give itself simply and unquestioningly to the adoration of the Divine. 14-3-1935

(Q. Is it not difficult to offer oneself to the Divine even if He seems to give no return?)

It is the only way to a real self-giving—otherwise the ego always remains in spite of experiences and progress. 8-4-1935

It is the ego that wants the satisfaction of being the first or specially singled out. It is this egoistic vital demand with all its consequent results and disturbances that made it necessary for Mother to limit the physical manifestation of nearness to a minimum. 17-4-1935

(Q. A poet here has sung, in effect: One day from my begging condition I shall grow Divine and sit beside Thee (Mother) on Thy throne!)

It is a dream of the ego hoping for its own highest possible (or impossible) aggrandisement. 27-4-1935

Yes, the talk about advanced sadhaks is a thing I have always discouraged—but people go on because that appeals to the vital ego. 13-5-1935

They cannot go beyond [Overmind] unless they lose it [ego]. Even in these planes [from Higher Mind up to Overmind] it prevents them from getting the full consciousness and knowledge. For in the Overmind cosmic consciousness too ego is absent, though the true person may be there. 27-4-1935

One has to see (the defects of others), but not judge (i.e., not condemn, simply observe). Each is driven by his own nature, so long as he does not consent to change masters and be driven by the Divine. 28-4-1935

Even if there is no consciousness of ego in the higher parts where oneness

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

of all things has been realised, it does not follow that in the lower parts ego has been abolished. It can on the contrary become very strong and the action can be very egoistic even while the mind is thinking "I have no ego". 30-6-1935

On the higher spiritual planes there is no ego, because the oneness of the Divine is felt, but there may be the sense of one's true person or individuality—not ego, but a portion of the Divine. 19-6-1935

Although there is no ego in the spiritual planes, yet by the spiritual experience the ego on the lower planes may get aggrandised through pride and wrong reception of the experience. Also one may by entering into the larger mental and vital planes aggrandise the ego. These things are always possible so long as the higher consciousness and the lower are not harmonised in the being and the lower transformed into the nature of the higher. 19-6-1935

The idea of helping others is a delusion of the ego. It is only when the Mother commissions and gives her force that one can help and even then only within limits. 13-7-1935

In the vital as elsewhere love must be free from all demand. If anything in your mind supports the claim, it is no wonder that the suggestions come and stop the progress. You yourself had written the clear knowledge that the divine love must be free from all these lower demands, absolute and unconditioned. 17-9-1935

(From N.D.)

FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Nirranjan from the Bengali letters in "Patravali II")

IF experiences are expressed orally or written down, then they either become less or completely stop—this is what happens to many. For this reason the yogis often do not speak of their own experiences to anybody or else when they become firmly established then only they speak. But if you speak of them to your Guru or the Mother, they will not become less but increase. You have to form this habit of speaking.

The boy is the Divine in the heart and the Shakti must be, of course, the Mother.

A rotating wheel means the Mother's force is working in the outer being.

When an experience comes, it is better to accept it than to reject it with disbelief. It was a true experience—there is no question of being fit or unfit—these words have no sense in the sadhana. If only one can open oneself to the Mother, then everything is possible.

What you feel in the head is the physical mind and what you feel below the navel is the lower vital.

To be mingled with the Mother in this way is the sign of true liberation.

When the body is thus filled with the Mother's Light, then only is the transformation of the physical consciousness possible.

It is a very beautiful and true experience — each instrument should be such a temple. What you have heard — that the Mother will do everything, one has only to remain immersed in Her — is also a very great truth.

The girls you have written about are the Mother's powers on different levels. Your experiences are quite good — your condition is also good—your

FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES

sadhana is going on well — the difficulties come from the outer nature in order to disturb the condition — do not accept them.

It is not imagination. The Mother has many personalities. Each one of them has got a different form and from time to time they manifest in Her body. The Mother brings down the light or the power of the colour of the sari she wears, because each colour represents a particular force.

What you have seen is entirely true. There is a centre of the being inside the throat. It is the centre of the externalising mind or physical mental : that is to say, the mind which gives an outer form to all play of the intellect, the mind which controls speech, the mind which observes everything physical and is busy with it. The lower part of the head and the mouth are under its domination. If this mind unites with the consciousness above or within and expresses these things, then it is good. But it has an intimate relation with the lower parts, the lower vital and the physical consciousness (which has its centre at Muladhar), belonging as they do to the same group. That is why this happens. For this reason it is very necessary in the sadhana to control speech so that it becomes accustomed to express the higher and the inner consciousness, and not the lower or the external consciousness.

This descent into the physical consciousness happens to all sadhakas— if there is no descent, then the transformation of that consciousness becomes difficult.

This is a very great opening—the sunlight that is coming down is the light of truth and this truth belongs to a plane much superior to the Higher Mind.

The consciousness is opening to the Truth above. Golden peacock—victory of Truth. The Mother's Force is coming down into the physical. As a result of that, the light of truth is descending (golden light) and you are advancing rapidly towards the Mother.

The part behind the body is the least conscious—it is illumined last of all. What you have seen is true.

Yes, you have seen correctly—above the head there are seven lotuses or chakras—but unless the Higher Mind is open these cannot be seen.

That something vast above is the limitless immensity of the higher cons-

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ciousness. In your experience the head that is turning and coming down is not the material head but mind and intellect. They rise and descend in that vastness in this way.

There are two kinds of empty state—one is the physical inert inconscient inactivity within, and the other emptiness or inactivity comes before the descent of the vast peace and self-knowledge of the higher consciousness.

Maheshwari's gifts are peace, equanimity and the vastness of liberation—you specially need these things, that is why she appeared to you when you invoked her.

This is the union of your inner mind and the inner mind of the Mother—the centre of this mind is in the forehead—when this union takes place the inner mind attracted by the divine truth begins to rise.

To remain always in a good condition, to have the vision of the Mother at all times are not possible even to the best sadhakas—that will come in the ripe stage of sadhana, in the state of realisation. Every one has at times the condition of plenitude and at times the state of emptiness. Even during the state of emptiness you should remain peaceful.

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

Classified Excerpts

SECTION I — THE ABSOLUTE : THE SUPREME (*contd.*)

(iv) THE DIVINE

THE truth is not that God moves round the ego as the centre of existence and can be judged by the ego and its view of the dualities, but that the Divine is itself the centre and that the experience of the individual only finds its own truth when it is known in the terms of the universal and the transcendent.¹

To realise its own power and to master as well as to know its world is therefore the increasing impulse of all individual life; that impulse is an essential feature of the growing self-manifestation of the Divine in cosmic existence.²

The Divine is free and not bound by laws of any making, but still he acts by laws and processes because they are the expression of the truth of things, —not their mechanical, mathematical or other outward truth alone, but the spiritual reality of what they are, what they have become and have yet to become, what they have it within themselves to realise. He is himself present in the working, but he also exceeds and can overrule it;...Our view of the divine government of the world or of the secret of its action is either incurably anthropomorphic or else incurably mechanical; both the anthropomorphism and the mechanism have their elements of truth, but they are only a side, an aspect, and the real truth is that the world is governed by the One in all and over all who is infinite in his consciousness and it is according to the law and logic of an infinite consciousness that we ought to understand the significance and building and movement of the universe.³

...not only am I in the world and the world in me, but God is in me and I am in God; by which yet it is not meant that God depends for His existence on man, but that He manifests Himself in that which He manifests within Himself; the individual exists in the transcendent, but all the transcendent is there concealed in the individual. Further I am one with God in my being and yet I can have relations with Him in my experience. I, the liberated

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individual, can enjoy the Divine in His transcendence, unified with Him, and enjoy at the same time the Divine in other individuals and in His cosmic being.⁴

We see then that there are three terms of the one existence, transcendent, universal and individual, and that each of these always contains secretly or overtly the two others. The Transcendent possesses itself always and controls the other two as the basis of its own temporal possibilities; that is the Divine, ...the omnipresent, which informs, embraces, governs all existences.⁵

The third step is to know the Divine Being who is at once our supreme transcendent Self, the Cosmic Being, foundation of our universality, and the Divinity within of which our psychic being, the true evolving individual in our nature, is a portion, a spark, a flame growing into the eternal Fire from which it was lit and of which it is the witness ever living within us and the conscious instrument of its light and power and joy and beauty. Aware of the Divine as the Master of our being and action, we can learn to become channels of his Shakti, the Divine Puissance, and act according to her dictates or her rule of light and power within us.⁶

He [the gnostic being] will have the cosmic consciousness, sense, feeling, by which all objective life will become part of his subjective existence and by which he will realise, perceive, feel, see, hear the Divine in all forms : all forms and movements will be realised, sensed, seen, heard, felt as if taking place within his own vast self of being.⁷

The Divine, the Eternal, expresses himself as existence, consciousness, bliss, wisdom, knowledge, love, beauty, and we can...regard them as the nature of the Divine and Eternal; we can say that God is Love, God is Wisdom, God is Truth or Righteousness; but he is not himself an impersonal state or abstract of states or qualities; he is the Being, at once absolute, universal and individual.⁸

(v) THE ONE

The Lord of Beings is that which is conscious in the conscious being, but he is also the Conscious in inconscient things, the One who is master and in control of the many that are passive in the hands of Force-Nature. He is the Timeless and Time; He is Space and all that is in Space; He is Causality and the cause and the effect: He is the thinker and his thought, the warrior and his

The Life Divine OF SRI AUROBINDO: ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

courage, the gambler and his dice-throw. All realities and all aspects and all semblances are the Brahman; Brahman is the Absolute, the Transcendent and incommunicable, the Supracosmic Existence that sustains the cosmos, the Cosmic Self that upholds all beings, but It is too the self of each individual; the soul or psychic entity is an eternal portion of the Ishwara; it is his supreme Nature or Consciousness-Force that has become the living being in a world of living beings.⁹

We see that the Absolute, the Self, the Divine, the Spirit, the Being is One; the Transcendental is one; the Cosmic is one : but we see also that beings are many and each has a self, a spirit, a like yet different nature. And since the spirit and essence of things is one, we are obliged to admit that all these many must be that One, and it follows that the One is or has become many; but how can the limited or relative be the Absolute and can man or beast or bird be the Divine Being ? But in erecting this apparent contradiction the mind makes a double error. It is thinking in the terms of the mathematical finite unit which is sole in limitation, the one which is less than two and can become two only by division and fragmentation or by addition and multiplication; but this is an infinite Oneness,... which can contain the hundred and the thousand and the million and billion and trillion. Whatever astronomic or more than astronomic figures you heap and multiply, they cannot overpass or exceed that Oneness; for, in the language of the Upanishad, it moves not, yet is always far in front when you would pursue and seize it. It can be said of it that it would not be the infinite Oneness if it were not capable of an infinite multiplicity; but that does not mean that the One is plural or can be limited or described as the sum of the Many : on the contrary, it can be the infinite Many because it exceeds all limitation or description by multiplicity and exceeds at the same time all limitation by finite conceptual oneness.¹⁰

All universal existence moves between these two terms, a diversification of the One, a unification of the many and diverse, and that must be because the One and the many are fundamental aspects of the Infinite. For what the divine Self-knowledge and All-knowledge brings out in its manifestation must be a truth of its being and the play of that truth is its Lila.¹¹

In the view of this unitarian comprehensive seeing there is nothing contradictory in a formless Essence of being that carries a multitude of forms, or in a status of the Infinite supporting a kinesis of the Infinite, or in an infinite Oneness expressing itself in a multiplicity of beings and aspects and powers and movements, for they are beings and aspects and powers and movements of the One.¹²

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(vi) THE ALL

We are infinitely important to the All, but to us the All is negligible; we alone are important to ourselves. This is the sign of the original ignorance which is the root of the ego, that it can only think with itself as centre as if it were the All, and of that which is not itself accepts only so much as it is mentally disposed to acknowledge or as it is forced to recognise by the shocks of its environment... To recognise that we, or rather the results and appearances we call ourselves, are only a partial movement of this infinite Movement and that it is that infinite which we have to know, to be consciously and to fulfil faithfully, is the commencement of true living. To recognise that in our true selves we are one with the total movement and not minor or subordinate is the other side of the account, and its expression in the manner of our being, thought, emotion and action is necessary to the culmination of a true or divine living.¹³

The tree does not explain the seed nor the seed the tree; cosmos explains both and God explains cosmos. The Supermind, pervading and inhabiting at once the seed and the tree and all objects, lives in this greater knowledge which is indivisible and one though with a modified and not an absolute indivisibility and unity. In this comprehensive knowledge there is no independent centre of existence, no individual separated ego such as we see in ourselves : the whole of existence is to its self-awareness an equable extension, one in oneness, one in multiplicity, one in all conditions and everywhere. Here the All and the One are the same existence ; the individual being does not and cannot lose the consciousness of its identity with all beings and with the One Being ; for that identity is inherent in supramental cognition, a part of the supramental self-evidence.¹⁴

(vii) DEITY

We must not indeed exclude the personal aspect of the Deity, for the impersonal is only one face of existence; the Divine is All-existence, but it is also the one Existent,—it is the sole Conscious-Being, but still a Being.¹⁵

Whether they [human religions and philosophies] see dimly the material world as the body of the Divine, or life as a great pulsation of the breath of Divine Existence, or all things as thoughts of the cosmic Mind, or realise that there is a Spirit which is greater than these things, their subtler and yet more wonderful source and creator,—whether they find God only in the Incon-

scient or as the one Conscious in inconscient things or as an ineffable super-conscious Existence to reach whom we must leave behind our terrestrial being and annul the mind, life and body, or, overcoming division, see that He is all these at once and accept fearlessly the large consequences of that vision,—whether they worship Him with universality as the cosmic Being or limit Him and themselves, like the Positivist, in humanity only or, on the contrary, carried away by the vision of the timeless and spaceless Immutable, reject Him in Nature and Cosmos,—whether they adore Him in various strange or beautiful or magnified forms of the human ego or for His perfect possession of the qualities to which man aspires, his Divinity revealed to them as a supreme Power, Love, Beauty, Truth, Righteousness, Wisdom,—whether they perceive Him as the Lord of Nature, Father and Creator, or as Nature Herself and the universal Mother, pursue Him as the Lover and attracter of souls or serve Him as the hidden Master of all works, bow down before the one God or the manifold Deity, the one divine Man or the one Divine in all men or, more largely, discover the One whose presence enables us to become unified in consciousness or in works or in life with all beings, unified with all things in Time and Space, unified with Nature and her influences and even her inanimate forces,—the truth behind must ever be same because all is the one Divine-Infinite whom all are seeking.¹⁶

(viii) THE REALITY

We start, then, with the conception of an omnipresent Reality of which neither Non-Being at the one end nor the universe at the other are negations that annul; they are rather different states of the Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations. The highest experience of this Reality in the universe shows it to be not only a conscious Existence, but a supreme Intelligence and Force and a self-existent Bliss; and beyond the universe it is still some other unknowable existence, some utter and ineffable Bliss.¹⁷

An omnipresent Reality is the truth of all life and existence whether absolute or relative, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate, whether intelligent or unintelligent; and in all its infinitely varying and even constantly opposed self-expressions, from the contradictions nearest to our ordinary experience to those remotest antinomies which lose themselves on the verges of the Ineffable, the Reality is one and not a sum or concourse. From that all variations begin, in that all variations consist, to that all variations return. All affirmations are denied only to lead to a wider affirmation of the same Reality. All antinomies confront each other in order to recognise one Truth in their opposed aspects and embrace by the way of conflict their mutual Unity.¹⁸

...but, behind its [mind's] ignorance, what the soul in it is seeking for is the Reality, the Truth, the Consciousness, the Power, the Delight by which they exist; the mind has to learn to awaken to this true seeking and true knowledge veiled within itself, to the Reality from which all things hold their truth, to the Consciousness of which all consciousnesses are entities, to the Power from which all get what force of being they have within them, to the Delight of which all delights are partial figures.¹⁹

When we see with the inner vision and sense and not with the physical eye a tree or other object, what we become aware of is an infinite one Reality constituting the tree or object, pervading its every atom and molecule, forming them out of itself, building the whole nature, process of becoming, operation of indwelling energy; all of these are itself, are this infinite, this Reality : we see it extending indivisibly and uniting all objects so that none is really separate from it or quite separate from other objects.²⁰

A Reality of Oneness manifesting itself in a reality of numberless forms and powers of its being is what we confront everywhere. There is no doubt in its process a mystery, even a magic, but there is nothing to show that it is a magic of the unreal and not a working of a Consciousness and Force of being of the omnipotent Real, a self-creation operated by an eternal self-knowledge.²¹

All turns round the question "What is Reality ?" Our cognitive consciousness is limited, ignorant, finite; our conceptions of reality depend on our way of contact with existence in this limited consciousness and may be very different from the way in which an original and ultimate Consciousness sees it. It is necessary to distinguish between the essential Reality, the phenomenal reality dependent upon it and arising out of it, and the restricted and often misleading experience or notion of either that is created by our sense-experience and our reason.²²

In this integration [the realisation of unity] the supracosmic Reality stands as the supreme truth of being; to realise it is the highest reach of our consciousness. But it is this highest Reality which is also the cosmic being, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic will and life : it has put these things forth, not outside itself but in its own being, not as an opposite principle but as its own self-unfolding and self-expression.²³

A first condition of the soul's complete emergence is a direct contact in the surface being with the spiritual Reality. Because it comes from that, the psychic element in us turns always towards whatever in phenomenal Nature seems to belong to a higher Reality and can be accepted as its sign and character.

At first, it seeks this Reality through the good, the true, the beautiful, through all that is pure and fine and high and noble: but although this touch through outer signs and characters can modify and prepare the nature, it cannot entirely or most inwardly and profoundly change it. For such an inmost change the direct contact with the Reality itself is indispensable since nothing else can so deeply touch the foundations of our being and stir it or cast the nature by its stir into ferment of transmutation.²⁴

As the mind and life become illumined with the light of the spirit, they put on or reflect something of the divinity, the secret greater Reality, and this must increase until the interspace has been crossed and the whole existence is unified in the full light and power of the spiritual principle.²⁵

There is a Reality; a truth of all existence which is greater and more abiding than all its formations and manifestations; to find that truth and Reality and live in it, achieve the most perfect manifestation and formation possible of it, must be the secret of perfection whether of individual or communal being. This Reality is there within each thing and gives to each of its formations its power of being and value of being. The universe is a manifestation of the Reality, and there is a truth of the universal existence, a Power of cosmic being, an all-self or world-spirit.²⁶

(ix) GOD

It is by Vidya, the Knowledge of Oneness, that we know God; without it Avidya, the relative and multiple consciousness, is a night of darkness and a disorder of Ignorance.²⁷

In the ordinary distribution of life's activities the individual regards himself as a separate being included in the universe and both as dependent upon that which transcends alike the universe and the individual. It is to this Transcendence that we give currently the name of God, who thus becomes to our conceptions not so much supracosmic as extra-cosmic.²⁸

We have to regard therefore this all-containing, all-originating, all-consummating Supermind as the nature of the Divine Being, not indeed in its absolute self-existence, but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds. This is the truth of that which we call God. Obviously this is not the too personal and limited Deity, the magnified and supernatural Man of the ordinary occidental conception; for that conception erects a too human Eidolon of a certain relation between the creative Supermind and the ego.²⁹

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This, then, is the nature of the Divine Consciousness which creates in itself all things by a movement of its conscious-force and governs their development through a self-evolution by inherent knowledge-will of the truth of existence or real-idea which has formed them. The Being that is thus conscient is what we call God; and He must obviously be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent.³⁰

Man is such a finite-seeming infinity and cannot fail to arrive at a seeking after the Infinite. He is the first son of earth who becomes vaguely aware of God within him, of his immortality or of his need of immortality, and the knowledge is a whip that drives and a cross of crucifixion until he is able to turn it into a source of infinite light and joy and power.³¹

This means that cosmos and individual are manifestations of a transcendent Self who is indivisible being although he seems to be divided or distributed; but he is not really divided or distributed but indivisibly present everywhere. Therefore all is in each and each is in all and all is in God and God in all; and when the liberated soul comes into union with this Transcendent, it has this self-experience of itself and cosmos which is translated psychologically into a mutual inclusion and a persistent existence of both in a divine union which is at once a oneness and a fusion and an embrace.³²

...God exists in Himself and not by virtue of the cosmos or of man, while man and cosmos exist by virtue of God and not in themselves except in so far as their being is one with the being of God. But still they are a manifestation of the power of God and even in His eternal existence their spiritual reality must in some way be present or implied, since otherwise there would be no possibility of their manifestation or, manifested, they would have no significance. What appears here as man is an individual being of the Divine; the Divine extended in multiplicity is the Self of all individual existences.³³

The quest of man for God, which becomes in the end the most ardent and enthralling of all his quests, begins with his first vague questionings of Nature and a sense of something unseen both in himself and her.³⁴

...it was necessary that man should find God thus variously in order that he might come to know Him entirely. But it is when knowledge reaches its highest aspects that it is possible to arrive at its greatest unity. The highest and widest seeing is the wisest; for then all knowledge is unified in its one comprehensive meaning. All religions are seen as approaches to a single Truth,

all philosophies as divergent view-points looking at different sides of a single Reality, all Sciences meet together in a supreme Science. For that which all our mind-knowledge and sense-knowledge and suprasensuous vision is seeking, is found more integrally in the unity of God and man and Nature and all that is in Nature.³⁵

...there has even been the dream or a psychic prevision of a fulfilment exceeding the individual transformation, a new earth and heaven, a city of God, a divine descent upon earth, a reign of the spiritually perfect, a kingdom of God not only within us but outside, in a collective human life. However obscure may have been some of the forms taken by this aspiration, the indication they contain of the urge of the occult spiritual being within to emergence in earth-nature is unmistakable.³⁶

(x) ISHWARA

...for the Ishwara is supracosmic as well as intracosmic ; He is that which exceeds and inhabits and supports all individuality ; He is the supreme and universal Brahman, the Absolute, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha. But, very clearly, this is not the personal God of popular religions, a being limited by his qualities, individual and separate from all others ; for all such personal gods are only limited representations or names and divine personalities of the one Ishwara. Neither is this the Saguna Brahman active and possessed of qualities, for that is only one side of the being of the Ishwara ; the Nirguna immobile and without qualities is another aspect of His existence. Ishwara is Brahman the Reality, Self, Spirit, revealed as possessor, enjoyer of his own self-existence, creator of the universe and one with it, Pantheos and yet superior to it, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Divine Transcendence.³⁷

(xi) THE DIVINE REALITY

The Divine Reality is infinite in its being ; in this infinite being, we find limited being everywhere,—that is the apparent fact from which our existence here seems to start and to which our own narrow ego and its ego-centric activities bear constant witness. But, in reality when we come to an integral self-knowledge, we find that we are not limited, for we also are infinite. Our ego is only a face of the universal being and has no separate existence ; our apparent separative individuality is only a surface movement and behind it our real individuality stretches out to unity with all things and upward to oneness with the transcendent Divine Infinity.³⁸

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The last or highest emergence is the liberated man who has realised the Self and Spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and, so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the Power within him working through his human instruments of Nature. The largest formulation of this spiritual change and achievement is a total liberation of soul, mind, heart and action, a casting of them all into the sense of the cosmic Self and Divine Reality. (This is the essence of the spiritual ideal and realisation held before us by the Gita.)³⁹

(xii) THE SUPREME

...the soul in the Becoming arrives at self-knowledge and immortality when it knows the Supreme and Absolute and possesses the nature of the Infinite and Eternal. To do that is the supreme aim of our existence ; for that is the truth of our being and must therefore be the inherent aim, the necessary outcome of our becoming : this truth of our being becomes in the soul a necessity of manifestation, in matter a secret energy, in life an urge and a tendency, a desire and a seeking, in mind a will, aim, endeavour, purpose ; to manifest what is from the first occult within it is the whole hidden trend of evolutionary Nature.⁴⁰

His [man's] thought needs an Absolute on which these innumerable and finite relativities depend for their existence, an ultimate Truth of things, a creating Power or Force or a Being who originates and upholds all these innumerable beings in the universe. Let him call it what he will, he must arrive at a Supreme, a Divine, a Cause, an Infinite and Eternal, a Permanent, a Perfection to which all tends and aspires, or an All to which everything perpetually and invisibly amounts and without which they could not be.⁴¹

(Section I Concluded)

Compiled by N. PEARSON

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SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

(I)

RECENT LEGACIES

To write on Sri Aurobindo's work in the cause of education is a hazardous job. In a sense, it might almost be said that his whole life and work have been an education,—for himself, for those who surrounded him as disciples or admirers, for the nation to whose uplift he devoted so much of his time, for the world of man. His writings that have a bearing on education—understanding the word in the comprehensive sense which he gives to it—are so intimately related to those on nationalism, yoga and history and culture and the future of man that to discuss them would be to survey practically the whole field of his work. For education implies a remoulding of the entire man and his society.

In this series of essays, I shall confine myself to a bare presentation of the main lines of Sri Aurobindo's thought on education. I shall discuss first the glaring defects and inadequacies which he found and criticised in the system prevalent in India at the time when he wrote and his diagnosis of the trouble. This will be followed by a short account of the efforts he made in the first decade of the century to substitute a better system of national education and the reasons why they failed. Then there will be a brief reference to his survey of the systems of education prevalent in ancient and mediæval India and in ancient and modern Europe. This will bring us to what he considers the true aims and content of education, the right methods of teaching, the various fields to which these methods might be applied. I shall conclude this review with a note on the bearing of his scheme of education on the destiny of man and the difficult problems of control and organisation which have to be solved before the scheme can be put into effect. I shall make use of the published material some of which has already been made available in the form of convenient hand-books—I refer particularly to the two excellent brochures on Education¹ published from Pondicherry. I shall also draw freely on a number of articles and other papers which lie scattered among Reviews and old journals like the *Bandemataram* and *Karmayogin* which have not so far been adequately tapped.

¹ *A Scheme of Education* by Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya,
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education.

SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

The quotations are from Sri Aurobindo. The authorship of some of the *Bandemataram* articles I quote is open to some doubt, but we may be reasonably certain that the views they express were his.

It may be remembered that at the time, the early nineties of the last century, when Sri Aurobindo first began to publish his writings, India was in the throes of a depression. A hundred and fifty years of foreign rule had completed the process begun some centuries earlier of the loss of her true spirit and originality. Her leaders were getting accustomed to look to the foreigner for everything. Her education was in his hands, whatever culture her sons imbibed, if culture it might be called at all, was a foreign imposition and not a native growth, her life was at a low ebb. It is against this background that much of Sri Aurobindo's early writings must be read in order to appreciate their import. He describes conditions which prevailed at the time and he prescribes remedies some of which have already become so much a part of our accepted ways of thinking that their novelty and importance cannot be realised unless we recall the circumstances of a bygone age.

Two main factors, says Sri Aurobindo, had contributed to the deplorable state of our mind and life,—one indigenous born of the tendencies developing through our recent past, the other imposed from without by an alien rule and an unnatural education.

“Few societies have been so tamasic, so full of inertia and contentment in increasing narrowness as Indian society in later times; few have been so eager to preserve themselves in inertia. Few therefore have attached so great an importance to authority. Every detail of our life has been fixed for us by Shastra and custom, every detail of our thought by Scripture and its commentators,—but much oftener by the commentators than by Scripture....The result of this well-meaning bondage has been an increasing impoverishment of the Indian intellect, once the most gigantic and original in the world. Hence a certain incapacity, atrophy, impotence have marked our later activities even at their best....

“Throughout the whole range of our life we do things without knowing why we do them, we believe things without knowing why we believe them, we assert things without knowing what right we have to assert them,—or, at most, it is because some book or some Brahmin enjoins it, because Shankara thinks it, or because someone has so interpreted something that he asserts to be a fundamental Scripture of our religion. Nothing is our own, nothing native to our intelligence, all is derived....”¹

¹ “On Original Thinking”, written in the 1890's, first published in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Calcutta, 1953.

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“Let us raise our eyes and cast them upon the world around us. Wherever we turn our gaze, huge masses of strength rise before our vision, tremendous, swift and inexorable forces, gigantic figures of energy, terrible sweeping columns of force. The Shakti of war, the Shakti of wealth, the Shakti of Science are ten-fold more mighty and colossal, a hundredfold more fierce, rapid and busy in their activity, a thousandfold more prolific in resources, weapons and instruments than ever before in recorded history... We have seen the slow but mighty rise of great empires in the West, we have seen the swift, irresistible and impetuous bounding into life of Japan....

“But in India the breath moves slowly, the afflatus is long in coming. India, the ancient mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she who is after all so vast and might be so strong ? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us, nor is it difficult to lay our finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms....

“Is it knowledge that is wanting ? We Indians, born and bred in a country where *jñāna* has been stored and accumulated since the race began, bear about and in us the inherited gains of many thousands of years. Great giants of knowledge rise among us even today to add to the store. Our capacity has not shrunk, the edge of our intellect has not been dulled or blunted, its receptivity and flexibility are as varied as of old. But it is a dead knowledge, a burden under which we are bowed, a poison which is corroding us, rather than as it should be, a staff to support our feet and a weapon in our hands; for this is the nature of all great things that when they are not used or are ill used, they turn upon the bearer and destroy him. Our knowledge then, weighed down with a heavy load of *tamas*, lies under the curse of impotence and inertia....

“Is it love, enthusiasm, Bhakti that is wanting ? These are ingrained in the Indian nature, but in the absence of Shakti we cannot concentrate, we cannot direct, we cannot even preserve it. Bhakti is the leaping flame, Shakti is the fuel. If the fuel is scanty how long can the fire endure ?...

“The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting, which we must strive to acquire before all others is strength,— strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others. If we have strength everything else will be added to us easily and naturally. In the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot seize or strike, who have feet but cannot run. Whenever we strive to

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do anything, after the first rush of enthusiasm is spent a paralysing helplessness seizes upon us.

“We often see in the cases of old men full of years and experience that the very excess of knowledge seems to have frozen their powers of action and their powers of will. When a great feeling or a great need overtakes them and it is necessary to carry out its promptings in action, they hesitate, ponder, discuss, make tentative efforts and abandon them or wait for the safest and easiest way to suggest itself, instead of taking the most direct; thus the time when it was possible and necessary to act passes away. Our race has grown just such an old man with stores of knowledge, with ability to feel and desire, but paralysed by senile sluggishness, senile timidity, senile feebleness.

“If India is to survive, she must be made young again. Rushing and billowing streams of energy must be poured into her; her soul must become, as it was in the old times, like the surges, vast, puissant, calm or turbulent at will, an ocean of force....”¹

“When the sepoys had conquered India for the English a choice lay before the British, either to hold the country by force and repression, or to keep it as long as possible by purchasing the cooperation of a small class of the people who would be educated so entirely on western lines as to lose their separate individuality and their sympathy with the mass of the nation.² To add to our growing weaknesses came the burden of an alien rule and an anti-national education. And this instrument has been so successful in spreading a demoralising effect that the so-called educated community can never be made to believe that the country can do without the help of the English. The hypnotising effect of English education, guided and controlled by the Government has been almost perfect. The Britisher has got a permanent hold on the educated Indian. Education in India completely fails of its effect if it does not teach the Indian such devotion to the Britisher as to be always saying, ‘Thou art good and myself am blind.’”³

“Whatever the Government may say or do, it cannot afford to lose control of the education of the country; it cannot afford to hand over this immense mass of material, the India of the future into the hands of the political leaders.... The Government must keep its hold on the mind of the young or lose India. ...They do not care very much if certain academical ideas of liberalism or nationalism are imparted to the young by their teachers, but they desire to stop the active habit of patriotism in the young, for they know well that a mere

¹ “Bhawani Mandir”, written in the early years of this century, reprinted in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Calcutta, 1956.

² *Bandemataram*, 18.9.1906.

³ *Bandemataram*, 23.3.1907.

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intellectual habit untranslated into action is of no value in after life....

“If our educated men do not understand this—as, indeed with our want of direct political experience, it is difficult for them to understand it,—our English rulers at least have grasped the situation. Study their Circular¹ and you will see what it means. School students are not even to attend political meetings nor school teachers to teach them patriotism. Why ? Because at that age the mind is soft and impressionable and what is seen and heard sinks deep and tends to crystallise not merely into fixed ideas, but into character. A teacher may by his personal influence and teaching so surround the minds of his students with the idea of the country, of work for the country, of living and dying for the country, that this will become the dominant idea of their minds and, if associated with any kind of patriotic discipline or teaching in action, the dominant note in their character. The attendance of school boys as volunteers at political meetings, their work in the reception and service of men honoured by the country for patriotic service, their active participation in semi-political, semi-religious Utsavas² are all part of such a patriotic discipline. It is this against which the efforts of the bureaucracy are being directed, by the Risley Circular, by the prohibition of the Shivaji Utsava outside the Deccan, by the attack on our Melas³ and other public occasions where such training is possible.

“For the same reason the active participation of College students in political meetings is forbidden. At the age of College students ideas may be modified, the intellect may be powerfully influenced by what they hear and see, but character can only be influenced and modified by action. And it is of character in action that the bureaucracy is afraid, not so much of mere ideas, mere speeches, mere writings. Let the College students attend political meetings and Utsavas—that by itself will not hurt the bureaucracy; but let them not organise or take part in them, for that means the character affected, the habit of political action formed, the first elementary beginnings of service to the country commenced. Picketing and active participation in Swadeshi work is of course still more objectionable from the bureaucratic standpoint. For the same reason, again, College Professors are forbidden to influence their students or lead them to political meetings : for that brings in the powerful impetus of leading and example and threatens the bureaucracy with beginnings of organisation. The Risley Circular, with its sanctimonious professions of anxiety for the best interest of students and guardians, is in reality a powerful attack on the growing

¹ The reference is to the Government Circular prohibiting the participation of students in the Swadeshi movement.

² festivals

³ popular gatherings

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spirit of Nationalism at its most vital point. As such we must understand it and as such resist it.”¹

“A general defiance of the Circular will obviously make it unworkable, unless the Government is prepared to disaffiliate schools and colleges freely and give up its control of education. It is possible, of course, that they may do so in the hope of bringing the country to its knees by drawing home the conviction that it cannot take in hand its own education. But this will be a dangerous game to play.”²

But the country was not yet prepared for this bold step and the opportunity slipped by, as on an earlier occasion at the very inception of the Swadeshi movement.

“...Everyone will remember the convulsion created by the Carlyle Circular. Its natural effect would have been to bring about an universal students' strike, and for a few days it seemed as if such a strike would actually take place. Unfortunately the movement immediately affected certain vested interests and the representatives of those interests happened also to be the political leaders to whom the country and the students especially were accustomed to look for guidance. The leading spirits among young men in Calcutta were still immature and wanting in grit and tenacity, the influence on their minds of their old leaders was very powerful; the new men were comparatively unknown and influenced the course of events rather by the concrete directness of their views, the ardour of their feeling and the fiery energy of their speech and activity than by the weight of their personalities.

“The older leaders were, therefore, able by a strenuous and united effort of their authority to turn back the impetuous tide and dissipate the enormous motive-power which had been generated. They were too selfish to sacrifice their immediate interest, too blind and wanting in foresight to understand that the immediate loss and difficulty would be repaid tenfold by the inevitable effects of the movement. An universal educational strike at that moment, before the Government had become accustomed to the situation, would infallibly have unnerved the hand of power and brought about an almost immediate reconsideration of the Partition.... The magnitude of their blunder was dimly perceived afterwards by some of the leaders and one or two admitted it in private. We only recall that disastrous episode in order to lay stress on the fact that if again repeated, the blunder will be worse than a blunder, it will be an offence against our posterity and a betrayal of the nation's future.

¹ *Bandemataram*, 28.5.1907.

² *Ibid*, 7.6.1907.

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“What is the position now ? The Risley Circular is a desperate attempt of the bureaucracy not only to recover and confirm its hold on the student population and through them on the future, but to make that hold far more stringent, rigid, ineffugable than it ever was in the past...”¹

The warning was not heeded. The “leaders” persuaded the students to obey the Government’s orders, schools and colleges continued their peaceful loyalist course, and India lost a splendid chance of renovating herself. This brought forth a severe rebuke from Sri Aurobindo on his return to the political arena after a year of detention in jail.

“...The whole Calcutta University has been placed under the heel of the Executive authority and no amount of writhing or wry faces will save Principals and Professors from the humiliating necessities proper to this servile and degraded position. They have sold themselves for lucre and they must eat the bitter bread of their self-chosen servitude. If they are asked to do the spy’s office or to be the instruments for imposing on young men of education and respectability restrictions unexampled outside Russia, it is not theirs to reject the demand instantly as freemen would indignantly reject such degrading proposals. They must remember that the affiliation of their colleges and the grants which alone can enable them to satisfy the arduous conditions of affiliation depend on the fiat of those who make the demand. These things are in the bond.

“For the rest, the unwisdom of the wise men and the imprudence of the prudent who stopped the students’ strike is becoming more and more apparent. Prudence and wisdom for the proprietors of private schools, for the country it was the worst imprudence and unwisdom. It has turned the training ground of our youth into a means of restraining the progress of our people and denying them that liberty which the other nations of the world enjoy. An university in which the representatives of academic culture are only allowed to keep their position on condition of forfeiting their self-respect and the pen of the pedagogue supplements the baton of the policeman is no longer worth keeping....”²

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ *Ibid.*, 28 5.1907.

² *Karmayogin*, 7.8.1909.

SRI AUROBINO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

(This is in continuation of the series published in our last issue.)

THE QUESTION OF THE HOUR*

THE writer of "A Word of Warning" which we publish today has voiced an opinion which we find to be held by several Nationalists who have the success of the movement sincerely at heart. Our correspondent, however, lays himself open to some misinterpretation when he speaks of the "suicidal folly of an unarmed and disorganised nation trying to measure its strength with that of the best-organised power in the land." The kind of resistance which seems to be suggested here is something in the nature of rebellion and it goes without saying that such resistance for "an unarmed and disorganised nation" would be not merely foolish but physically impossible ; an armed revolt without arms is an absurdity.

But to measure our strength in a very different way, with the bureaucracy, however well-organised the latter may be, is the whole purpose and principle of the Nationalist movement. Our position has always been that the potential strength of the people is far greater than the actual strength of the close oligarchy which governs them without regard to their wishes or interests and that this potential strength can only be educated, organised and welded into compactness and coherence by a direct struggle against the antiquated and semi-mediaeval system with which the country is still cursed in this twentieth century, when all other nations "from China to Peru" are busy modernising and humanising their governments and institutions.

In the actual course of the struggle questions will always arise as between rigid applications of principle and concessions to policy and between the contending claims of sheer courage and courage tempered by calculation. We must remember that throughout the movement the immense advance we have made, is due to the enthusiasm for a great principle and the boldness,—in the opinion of many an almost foolhardy boldness,—with which we have met every fresh crisis. When the whole of Bengal flung itself into a passionate struggle with the bureaucracy, it was not from any consciousness of strength, for neither the people nor the rulers had any idea of the latent possibilities

**Bandemataram Daily*, 1.6.1907.

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of political strength in the country. It was in a moment of uncalculating anger that Bengal took up the policy a few daring spirits suggested and was amazed to find that in doing so it had discovered itself and begun a new era of Indian history.....

We again repeat that in our opinion the boldest course is the best. If we thought, as the Anglo-Indian papers affect to think, that the movement was the result of our own efforts, a mere human creation, we might be of a different opinion. But throughout we have been conscious that our own efforts and the impulse given or the work done by leading men, whether Moderates or Extremists, have been so small, petty and inefficient that they are absolutely insufficient to explain the extraordinary results. The machinery has been absurdly inadequate, the organisation nil, the means at our disposal pitifully small, the real workers few and mostly obscure, and yet the Indian world has stood amazed and the Anglo-Indian aghast at the vast and incommensurate results of an apparatus so inefficient.

We believe, therefore, that Divine Power is behind the movement, that the Zeitgeist, the Time-Spirit, is at work to bring about a mighty movement of which the world at the present juncture has need, that movement is the resurgence of Asia and that the resurgence of India is not only a necessary part of the larger movement but its central need, that India is the keystone of the arch, the chief inheritor of the common Asiatic destiny. The Mongolian world, preserving the old strong and reposeful civilisation of early Asia, flanks her on the right and has already arisen. The Mahomedan world, preserving the aggressive and militant civilisation of Islam, flanks her on the left and in Egypt, in Arabia, in Persia, is struggling to arise. In India the two civilisations meet, she is the link between them and must find the note of harmony which will reconcile them and recreate a common Asiatic civilisation. Viewing the movement in this larger light we believe that as its progress and development has been in the past, so it will be in the future above ordinary human calculations, with only one thing certain about it, that no external force can frustrate it and no internal intrigue divert.

Neither John Morley nor Denzil Ibbetson nor Nawab Salimullah, neither false friend nor open enemy, nor even our own mistakes and weakness can come in its way, but rather they are unconsciously helping it on and working for it. In this belief we are willing to take any risk and meet any expense of our blood and our labour for the great end. To husband our men or our resources and try to buy liberty in the cheapest market would be a false and foolish economy. Lajpatrai has been swallowed up in the maelstrom and hundreds more will follow him, but their disappearance will make no difference either to the strength of the movement or its velocity. Still it will move.

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But, subject to this confidence and readiness to throw our all into the gulf, we recognise the necessity of relying on our human judgment to guide us in perplexity, leaving it to the Power behind to make our mistakes as useful, perhaps more useful to the final success than our wiser judgments. On one thing only we must lay fast hold, on the triple unity of Swadeshi, Boycott and Swaraj : these must be pursued with unremitting energy, and so long as we hold fast to them, we cannot go far wrong.

~~SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY~~

Sri Aurobindo Society ^{is formed} ~~has been recently registered in Calcutta,~~ to work for the fulfilment of the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, ~~throughout the world.~~ The Mother is the permanent President of the organisation.

The Society proposes to have its branches at various places in India and abroad. There is also a system of direct membership, which will enable people to be more closely connected with the headquarters at Pondicherry.

All interested are cordially invited to join. ~~Memorandum, rules and membership forms can be had from :-~~

The General Secretary,
Sri Aurobindo Society,
64, Rue d'Orleans,
PONDICHERRY.
(S. India)

A. G. Chakrabarti Bhattacharya
The Reception office officer - In Charge
Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

THE GRACE OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER*

(6)

THROUGH A SMALL PIECE OF PAPER

It happened in November 1942. A section of the Indian community abroad wanted to nominate me for election to the Legislative Council there. I was then in Pondicherry. When friends wrote to me for my consent, I asked Sri Aurobindo whether I should accept the nomination.

Sri Aurobindo gave his assent and I sent my reply accordingly. The election was held in my absence and I was elected. Then began the pressure for my presence there. I was requested and urged to return by the first available ship.

I informed Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about it. The Secretary of the Ashram asked me if there was any need to hurry back. I said that I would not go if it was wrong spiritually. He replied that it was not that, but that there was danger on the seas. I said that there was danger also when I came to India and I would not postpone sailing merely because of fear. He replied that it was only for the sake of safety and not for any spiritual reason that the Mother enquired if there was any need to hurry back.

I left Pondicherry soon after because any time the call from the ship authorities was expected informing me about the readiness of the next sea-going ship. I went to my home town and soon the call came by telegram.

On reaching Bombay on 17th November, the Shipping Agency asked me to produce my passport and other certificates. On examination, the smallpox certificate was found missing. I searched and searched but vainly. I was advised to acquire such a certificate somehow so that I might not miss the ship. But I was against doing that. So I decided to postpone my voyage and immediately left for Pondicherry for the Darshan of 24th November.

After the Darshan, I returned to Bombay reaching there on the 27th, only to be told that the passengers then resting outside the Passport Agent's rooms were those who had been rescued from the ship that I had missed. The ship was torpedoed by the Japanese and barely one-third of the passengers were saved.

I am quite certain that I escaped death by the loss of the said small piece of paper—the Inoculation Certificate—brought about by the all-seeing Intelligence of the Grace that leads us and saves, despite our ignorance and blindness in ways which are occult to our intelligence.

(To be continued)

Compiled and reported by
HAR KRISHAN SINGH

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

SALUTATION TO SRI AUROBĪNDŌ

THE Day when it was possible
that You should descend on this earth
 of pain and of sorrows,
and should live among men with a human body,
none realised the purpose of
this Incarnation !
Nor were we wiser—
unfortunate human creatures—
the Day when Your material envelope
 You gave back to Matter !
We cannot guess
what triumphal song was sung by the Gods
to celebrate the hour of Your coming
on this obscure earth,
nor can we guess
what made You cast away
the Godlike body of Yours !
To us who would move about—
nourished by Your blessings—
 happy and aspirant,
the dawn of 5th December
brought the terrible news
and our entire being
could but shake in a vehement protest.
“How can that be ?”—so we asked.
“He—a grain of whose blessings
 can give man immortality,
He whose blessings can make man feel
 himself a victor,
how can He depart ?”—that was our question.
“How is it possible ?
How can we believe so strange a thing ?”

*

*

In the midst of this surging calamity
another day just flashed upon our mind :
the hour when the Supreme Purusha

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had to put an end to his terrestrial Play—
the Purusha who once
showed the universe inside his mouth—
the Lord of the Kurukshetra fields—
who had to leave this earth like a human being,
shot by a hunter's arrow!

*

*

The day when You came down on this earth,
came to this clay-made sphere,
each dust-particle of man's world
was bleeding with our conflicting selfish ends.
When on the dark eastern sky—
dark yet chequered with a distant glow—
You appeared like a new-born Sun,
touched by Your sweetness, touched by Your
divine presence,
how could we guess that in course of time
You would mercilessly shine in our zenith
and turn the very cells of darkness into light ?

*

*

Artist sublime ! You handed Your brush
to the Mother who in love took it up,
and one by one we puppets in clay
walk past the Mother in a file :
She in Her enchanting grace
now touches us with Your brush
and the Clay now turns into Gold.
We see You smiling,
smiling with the bliss of a New Creation !
Friend of the trampled,
Lord of this miserable earth,
Father, O Father Supreme !
May we prostrate and sing at Your feet,
sing for ages to come :
“Fortunate are we and fortunate this life !”

TEJEN MUKHERJEE

*(Selections, translated by Prithwindra, from the original Bengali prose-poem
written in December 1950)*

NEW ROADS

BOOK X

IV

WE have passed
through the doors of Wonder—

A new Beauty
now flatters our sight,

A new measure of Time
has awakened
from the depths
of an occult Night.

A new treasure of touch
towards Nature,
A new feel
with “inanimate” things

Awakens to life
a new magic
from the groves
of the sacred Kings.

Now earth will give forth
her riches—
from the caves of the Past
will arise

New secrets
with old old meanings
to uncover
Mystery’s eyes.

*

*

In the valley of Sunlight
where Wisdom
grows cold
in a thought-world of sense,

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New Fires—
born from a knowledge
that springs
from experience—

Burn in the heart
of the moment
Yearning through pain
to Birth.

A high Love,
as the hand of heaven,
is sent down
to this labouring earth :

Love,—the Priest
and the Bridegroom !
Man and the earth,
the Bride !

But—Purity is the Law
for such Love
on this earth
to abide !

Then stay !
sweet stranger, stay !—
Love, from new fields of Light !

O Golden Aphrodite !
Goddess of Truth
and Delight !

NORMAN DOWSETT

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(31)

VII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

(Continued)

58. O KEEP MY VAGRANT HEART THY VASSAL

O MOTHER, keep my vagrant heart Thy vassal.
I see, of life's vainglory weary grown,
For my afflicted soul one quay alone ;
Serfdom to thee is the end of my life's tussle.

However Thou may'st scorn me, Love, or spurn,
But like a shameless faithful dog I fain
Will, with all candidness of heart, again
And over again towards Thee only turn.

May for my maddened heart life's one joy lie
In taming it to Thy love's slavery !

59. SELF-OBLATION

O Mother, make me, now and ever, faithful
To Thee, to my own self that thou hast chosen
To free from its low state fallen and frozen
Into Thy warm wide love, though mine be a path full
Of fire and fog, of failing and frustration.
Though worlds be flocked to flint a united front
Against my heart, yet may it flaming hunt
Fulfilment in Thy service and self-oblation.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THOUGHTS

WHEN Death embraced Sri Aurobindo's body, this body that had drunk the Amrita, the nectar of Immortality, "like a giant's wine", squirted it forth into Death's gullet.

As a consequence Death forfeited his own nature. He had sallied out to shroud Sri Aurobindo's body with his darkness, but, instead of doing it, backed away with the white radiance, vibrant with a titanic force, emanating from Sri Aurobindo's body and enveloping his body.

It is true about Sri Aurobindo's near-immortal body that Death entered into it. But it is equally true that at that moment the Amrita entered into Death's mouth for Death's annihilation.

*

*

The Kali Nag that was subdued by Sri Krishna was black and venomous yet he was not the parent of the black and venomous darkness ; he was its child.

Kaliya was vanquished and the pythoness, having recognised Lord Krishna and accepted his triumph, showered pearls on him.

That was but a partial victory of Light over darkness.

In order to complete the victory Sri Aurobindo has penetrated the citadel of darkness and roused the demon fast asleep there.

When the battle between Kaliya and Sri Krishna was raging and Sri Krishna was immersed in the Yamuna, the cowherds and cowherdesses on the bank of the river were overwhelmed with fear that Sri Krishna would be swallowed whole by the python and not be able to return. But, in fact, this was a misapprehension of the moment.

Likewise Sri Aurobindo is engaged in battle with the demon of darkness in his very lair, and the grief felt everywhere on earth will also prove momentary.

Till today the legend of the subduing of Kaliya inspired awe but henceforth that awe will be inspired by the slaying of the Demon of Darkness by Sri Aurobindo.

Today the earth has taken one decisive step in her upward evolution.

GIRDHARLAL

(Translated from the author's Gujarati "Uparāma")

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

INTERVIEWS

(Continued)

LET us now seek to know in what aspect the Mother appeared in the field of activity among us after the Mahasiddhi of November 24, 1926. Sri Aurobindo lived in seclusion; the Mother, though not secluded, was not so much in the forefront as later.

Even generally she speaks very little. But every little word of hers is a Mantra that remoulds life. For 34 years she has been building up the Ashram: the result is a large well-organised body. But it is just a bit of her creation. The true form of the highest achievement in her life is yet to emerge into view.

Wide is her heart, the whole world can find shelter in it. There is a power of receiving, there is a power of giving. Spiritual riches may be gained by many but how many can share them with others? If one wants to have a perception of how spirituality can manifest beauty in life, order in work, height in thought, profundity in vision he should once come in contact with the Mother.

But one should know the right way. When she was asked whether, instead of trying to enter into conscious contact with one's psychic being, it was not easier to think of her and to enter into contact with her, her answer was :

"In thinking of me, it is not only of the outer person that you should think, but of what it represents, of what stands behind that outer person. For we must never, forget that the outer person is only the form and the symbol of an eternal Reality, and through the physical appearance it is to this higher reality that one should address oneself."

In August, 1938 R. Palit wrote to Sri Aurobindo : "There are many who hold that the Mother was human once upon a time—to judge from her *Prayers*—but has outgrown her humanity through her sadhana. But to my psychic feeling, she is the Mother Divine herself, putting on the cloak of obscurity and suffering in order that we, humans, may be delivered out of our ignorance into knowledge, and out of our suffering into bliss."

The Master wrote in reply : "The Divine puts on an appearance of huma-

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nity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing Divine consciousness, not human turning into divine. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood. So the view held by 'many' is erroneous."

How the Mother is still fresh in the minds of those who had come in contact with her when she was in Japan—more than 40 years ago, can be inferred from the following statements.¹

"I knew her very well," says Madame Ohkawa.

"She was one of those blessed spirits that one learns to love heart and soul.

"She came from the far-off land of France. But it was my feeling that she was all along, like me, a daughter of Japan. I could swear that she was my very sister whenever she wore a kimono.

"It was for a brief while that she sojourned here. But great was my happiness when I lived with her. And when she went away, there was a mist in my eyes like the autumnal mist that hangs over Tokyo and on the ocean around.

"I do not know what it is to be a mother." But I probably know more than any other what it is to be a sister.

"I sometimes feel that I should have cooked and sent more dishes to Mira when she was here. That would have made me happier still.

"I often think of her, as of a sister in a far-off land. A fellow countryman of yours was here some years ago. I gave him a wicker lamp, made of bamboo, to be presented to Mira. Did he ever give it to her ?

"I feel that I should send a gift with you to her. But how do I know ? How can I be sure that it will reach her ? It is better that I wait and give it myself to Mira when I meet her again !"

"You would like to know," says Dr. Ohkawa, "my young friend, what struck me about your Mother.

"She had a will that moved mountains and an intellect sharp as the edge of a sword.

"Her thought was clarity itself and her resolve stronger than the roots of giant oak.

"Her mystic depths were deeper than the ocean. But her intellect was a plummet that could sound her deepest depths.

"An artist, she could paint pictures of an unearthly loveliness. A musician, she enchanted my soul when she played on an organ or guitar. A scientist, she could formulate a new heaven and earth, a new cosmogony.

¹ Recorded by Dr. V. K. Gokak who had these interviews in Japan.

"I do not know what Mira had not become or was not capable of becoming, But to me she was a sister and comrade in spirit. That is how I know her.

"You would like to know whether I have measured her vision and assessed her spirit.

"But I was a friend, an intimate member of the family. I was her brother.

"You have known her as the Divine. And the Divine I have known as a friend and sister. She was beautiful in western clothes. But she looked surpassingly lovely when she wore a Kimono. If I could but see, I would surely have said that she looked equally lovely in an Indian saree.

"To measure is to be apart and to assess is to be far away. Distance alone can ensure description.

"How could I, who lived in the very heart of Fujiyama, tell you about the volume of its fire and flame and the dimensions of its light ?"

"She came here to learn Japanese," observes Madam Kobayashi," and to be one of us. But we had so much to learn from her and her charming and unpredictable ways.

"She was a sweet friend. She was clever, very clever. An artist to her finger-tips, she would not mind drawing a colour-sketch of mine, which I have treasured to this day.

"Both of us were young. And both of us were peering to glimpse a lovelier landscape and gaze at a bluer sky. She revered a master from the ancient land of the Buddha. And she felt sure that his was the gospel of the morrow, the Veda of the dawning day. Her eyes glistened with a new delight and wonder when she spoke to me of him...

"Yes, I should love to come to India and go to Pondicherry.

"I think, now and again, of writing to my friend. I wish to send a copy of my journal. Do you think she will read my letter ? Will she reply ? I do not know, for now she has become the Mother !

"And when I see her again, I will put both my arms around her and cling to her, feeding my starved love of thirty-seven long years. Will the members of your Ashram be angry with me if I behave that way ? For, she is now—the Mother !

"Yes, she is the Mother to you, but always a dear, dear friend of mine...."

On the occasion of the Golden Day celebration (29.2.1960) Madame Kobayashi had her long-cherished desire fulfilled. She came with Jaikissen from Japan and saw the Mother.

One gets one's fulfilment according to one's aspiration. The Mother received her as one receives a friend. Madame Kobayashi presented a Kimono to the Mother which she put on to heighten her joy. There is a photo of the Mother in her Kimono. As long as Madame Kobayashi was here, she had an

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interview with the Mother every day at 2 p.m. and often enjoyed her music.

On my asking about her reaction on seeing the Mother, she became all smiles. Her eyes beaming with joy, she said : "It appeared to me I had last seen the Mother only yesterday. The yawning gap of 40 years closed in a moment."

These were the people first to recognise "the greatness that held this body."¹ Poet Rabindranath was the first to recognise the soul of India in Sri Aurobindo. Likewise his eyes could not fail to discover something of the unique in the Mother when he met her in Japan and he expressed his desire to place in her hands the entire charge of his *Shantiniketan*.

Another person who met the Mother in Japan was W.W. Pearson, a co-worker of Poet Tagore. Twice he came to Pondicherry from *Shantiniketan* and met the Mother. He even started doing Yoga under the Mother's guidance.

Hirosawas, a Japanese gentleman, also came to Pondicherry to see the Mother.

In 1927 the Mother used to get up by 4 a.m. or earlier. By 6 a.m. she would be ready and go up to the terrace. Some of the inmates would accompany her. Anilbaran would blow a conch to announce the Mother's coming down to give her blessings. Then Pranam and Blessings would start upstairs in the Meditation Hall lasting an hour or two. This was followed by personal interviews till noon. Then she moved to the dining room and gave to each of us a dish of food, herself putting bananas in it. In the afternoon she visited sadhakas in their rooms by turns on fixed dates. Several of the sadhakas' rooms were known after the significances of certain flower. Thus Champaklal's room was known as Psychological Perfection and Dyuman's Entire Self-giving. In the evening the Mother had a drive.

On her return she would enter Sri Aurobindo's room and after a time come through Pavitra's room to the Prosperity Hall. Here she sat in meditation with a few sadhakas, each of whom had been given a number and would take their seats in a certain fixed order. On the publication of *Conversations with the Mother* from Madras in 1931, the Mother gave a copy to each with his number inscribed in it.

After meditation she would at times read some passages from the manuscript of *Prayers and Meditations* in French. This might be followed by a "Flower Game" in which the sentences made by the combination of some flowers were to be intuited by the sadhakas exactly in the form which was in the Mother's mind.

There was no fixed programme. Various things were done according to the

¹ *Savitri*.

inspiration of the hour. At times there were questions and answers. The talks were recorded by one of the sadhakas. They make up the third series of *Words of the Mother*. There was a lot of merriment during these sessions.

Once she asked Dyuman to thrust a paper-cutter into a book. On opening at the page it was found that it related to Buddha. "No, it is not for you, try again." When he did so, the Mother opened the book and read the passage meant for him.

After some 30 years, in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* of August 60 we hear an echo of the same voice :

"If you have an inner problem to solve, you concentrate on the problem. If you want to know your condition, have some light on the state you are in, you put yourself forward with simplicity, and ask for the light. Or quite simply, if you are curious to know what the invisible knowledge has to tell you, you keep quiet for a moment and silent and you open th book. It is good to use a paper-cutter, for it is sharp; as you are concentrated you thrust the paper-cutter into the book and look at the passage shown by the point."

From Prosperity Hall she would come downstairs into the 'Divine Communion Room' which is now used as Reception Room.

The distribution of soup was started from 1927 in an open space known as Champaklal's terrace. Later it was shifted to the verandah of Prosperity Hall. Afterwards it was shifted into the Reception room. The members would sit in their fixed places long before the coming of the Mother.

Before giving soup the Mother would concentrate for two or three minutes. In her concentrated mood she would extend both her hands with downward palms for a few seconds over the soup-pan. Champaklal opened the cover. The Mother stirred the soup.

Each approached the Mother with his own cup to receive soup, kneeling before her. If anybody had anything to say to her, he would take the opportunity.

These privileges of so many contacts with the Mother continued up to 1928. Thereafter only those could go to her whom she called for private interviews once a week. Others could have an opportunity to meet her only on their birthdays. Visitors were allowed interviews according to the time fixed. The following extract from X's writings may help to throw some light on the prevailing atmosphere of the Ashram in those days when things were taking form :

"When I first arrived at the Ashram, in 1928, I was given to understand by some neophytes—there were only about eighty of us in those days—that one must never even dream of questioning any law laid down by our Gurus Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This made me very unhappy till I began to have

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regular weekly conversations with the Mother. I found her so sweet and kind and catholic in her views that one day I asked her, at a venture, why she who was so lovable wanted us to 'fear' her. 'Fear', she exclaimed in genuine astonishment. 'What an idea ! we only want the attitude of simple trust a child has *vis-à-vis* its parents.'

In 1930, five days in a week there was Pranam in the morning and soup at night. On two non-pranam days, the Mother would give flowers at the soup-time. Here all would be present.

After distribution she went upstairs. Chinmayi (her former name was Mehdi Begum) would follow with a tray containing various kinds of flowers.

At that time the Mother looked into every detail and took personal interest in every sadhaka. If cabbage or any other vegetable was not available for the soup, the Mother would be consulted and then beans or dal put in.

If anyone had any trouble, the Mother would at once inquire about it. Once Sailen had a cut on a finger. When he came to the Mother with a bandage on, she asked him about it. Even a torn shirt did not escape her notice, so everyone took care to be clean and tidy.

Till 1938 interviews were given in the *Sanctum Sanctorum*—the darshan room. Different people had different experiences. Once the Mother said to someone how his inner being had flashed before her. Requested to say something more about it she said, "You have to realise that yourself."

She would be sitting in the Indian style on the Darshan seat, dressed in Sari. Till the year 1950 she was usually in Sari, which dress she had adopted from 1920. When she started playing tennis, she was still in Sari but because it hampered her movements she changed it into salvar, kamees and Kitty-cap.

It is the feeling of many of us that by sitting at her feet we pass into an atmosphere surcharged with a heavenly bliss. There are occasions when the barriers of the heart are suddenly removed by a single touch of hers or by a smiling look and we get overwhelmed beyond words. Thus when the psychic being is stirred for a moment and opens by her grace, the interview proves a precious treasure in the memory or a starting-point for a new course of life. It is a thing which transcends all material favours. This is the source of one of the greatest attractions for an interview.

All are equal in her eyes. But all depends on our capacity to invoke, receive and retain her Force, her Grace. The more one succeeds, the better, the swifter and more surprising the result. Even when the soil, the weather are the same, some seeds sprout, some do not. And even after sprouting some wither away; others grow stout and bear fruit.

When she is pleased to receive people into her family circle, be they here or away in the wider world, she not only takes charge of their inner sadhana

but does everything possible to lighten their burden and make them feel free as they never felt before. They may count on her in any trouble personal or otherwise, provided they know how to call her or allow themselves to be fitted into the schemes of her working.

I may now cite the case of one who has been known to the writer for long. He is the son of an old friend. How his sadhana evolved, since he came into touch with the Mother, is itself an interesting story. Whenever I suggested to him to seek an interview his invariable answer was, "Mother knows everything; why bother her and take her time?"

Years passed. He struggled and suffered. Even at times, when he would be in the grip of a life-and-death struggle, he was still blocked by a certain shyness, his heart could not venture to open to the Mother. No sooner had the Mother pulled him out of one difficulty than another would set in, giving him no respite.

The explanation perhaps lies in the words of the Mother :

"Those who want to follow the true path will naturally be exposed to the attacks of all the forces of ill-will which not only do not understand, but generally hate that which they do not understand.

"...And these things come to you not because you are unlucky or because your lot is not happy, but because, on the contrary, the divine Consciousness and Grace take your resolution seriously and allow the circumstances to become a touchstone on the way to see if your resolution is sincere and you are strong enough to face the difficulties."

In 1934 he came first with his father. In 1939 when he was at College he came alone. I took him to the Mother. "He is a nice chap," said she. He had the ambition¹ to make a lot of money and spend it on public good or do something spectacular. He dreamt of building a "Mother's Home" for the distressed and the destitute. He was connected with R.S.S. too. But although his first connection with the Mother led to a new turn, still it took me six to seven years to impress upon his mind the importance of a direct personal approach to the Mother. I felt very much when he suffered. I sensed in him a boy of promise and of earnestness of purpose. That is why I was keen on seeing him drawn to the Mother.

¹ In an interview with D the Mother said : "I always blame people for not being ambitious enough. I always tell people : be more ambitious—ambitious to grow, ambitious to be divine warriors, ambitious to achieve things really worth while. The only thing is: the ego's human limitations have to be consciously transcended since otherwise unimpeded and true growth is not possible. Let it be your ambition to be content with nothing less than the highest."

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At the time all his correspondence with the Mother passed through me. Once the Mother said, "Ask him to write to me direct."

This helped to make his contact with the Mother a living one.

Formerly the *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother was available only in French. Only those who could write and ask for it in French could have it. It was not for sale. We would procure typed copies of its English rendering. My friend's son got the English version published. This created a keen interest on his part in Ashram publications, and helped to break the block.

Now whenever he intimated his visit, he would also pray for an interview. Seekers of interviews had to get their dates fixed beforehand and the Mother would put their names in her diary. Before 1949 he would come once in a year or two, just for a day or so. Now his visits were month after month. He would only give the date of his arrival and every time he was given an interview. A radiant smile of sweetness and compassion from the Mother always met him. His connection deepened and his life sought to become all service and worship; and he learnt how to invoke her Grace.

This is an instance with which I am personally acquainted. There are many other examples of the Mother's new-creation.

Volumes can be written of the stories of those remaining thousands of miles away from her touch and yet finding the constant action of her grace save them, turn the situation all of a sudden in their favour in response to a letter or a wire. Those who have tasted the joy of her touch do nothing new in their life without referring it to her and obtaining her blessings, be it the education of a child or entering upon a new enterprise, voyage to a distant land, purchase of a house or even a car. Quite recently a visitor became so eager to show to the Mother his new car as if, without that, his use of the car would be a drag. And the Mother, though in seclusion these days, granted him the favour.

One of the organisers of the Calcutta Pathmandir was to visit Japan on business in 1949. But he felt very nervous. He said that but for the Mother he could not venture upon the journey. Had not the Mother poured herself into him and said that she herself had been in Japan and that she would help him wherever he went, his courage would have failed him. On the day of his departure he waited and waited in anxious expectation for the Mother's wire of blessing but all in vain. The journey had been booked, the date could not be altered. The hour of departure was at hand and now when his worries were at their peak he saw the luminous figure of the Mother right in his front. He felt assured and set out. On subsequent enquiry the secretary said that he did send the wire.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

THE ALCHEMY OF LOVE*

The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want; worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.

(Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*)

Strength in the nature, wisdom in the mind,
Love in the heart complete the trinity
Of glorious manhood.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Eric*)

I

Eric is a drama and before we set out to analyse the several elements that have combined to make it a work of art we should do well to give at some length the author's own views on the nature of dramatic poetry. In his book *The Future Poetry* Sri Aurobindo writes :

“Dramatic poetry cannot live by the mere presentation of life and action and the passions, however truly they may be portrayed or however vigorously and abundantly. Its object is something greater and its conditions of success much more onerous. It must have, to begin with, as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit idea of life and the human being; and the vital presentation which is its outward instrument, must arise out of that harmoniously, whether by a spontaneous creation, as in Shakespeare, or by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will, as with the Greeks. This interpretative vision and idea have in the presentation to seem to arise out of the inner life of vital types of the human soul or individual representatives of it through an evolution of speech leading to an evolution of action—speech being the first important instrument, because through it the poet reveals the action of the soul, and outward action and event only the second, important, but less essential, reducible even to a minimum, because by that he makes visible and concrete to us the result of the inner action. In all very great drama the true movement and result is really psychological and

* *Eric : A Dramatic Romance* by Sri Aurobindo. Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price: Cloth Rs. 5/- only.

the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are only either its symbol or else its condition of culmination. Finally, all this has to be cast into a close dramatic form, a successful weaving of interdependent relations, relations of soul to soul, of speech to speech, of action to action, the more close and inevitable the better, because so the truth of the whole evolution comes home to us. And if it is asked what in a word is the essential purpose of all this creation, I think we might possibly say that drama is the poet's vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma, in an extended and very flexible sense of the word; and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathein*, 'the doer shall feel the effect of his act,' in an inner as well as an outer, a happy no less than an austere significance, whether that effect be represented as psychological or vital, whether it comes to its own through sorrow and calamity, ends in a judgment by laughter or finds an escape into beauty and joy, whether the presentation be tragic or comic or tragi-comic or idyllic. To satisfy these conditions is extremely difficult and for that reason the great dramatists are so few in their number,—the entire literature of the world has hardly given us more than a dozen. The difficult evolution of dramatic poetry is always more hard to lead than the lyric which is poetry's native expression, or than the narrative which is its simpler expansion."¹

These observations on the poetic drama throw a vivid light on all its aspects and show how when Sri Aurobindo deals with a subject he studies not only the author's profound insights or ideas but also the way in which they have been presented and the special conditions to be fulfilled by each *genre*.

Now the first important thing in a verse drama is the dramatist's interpretative vision of human life, its inner meaning and drift, and the discovery of the laws that govern the consequences of human actions.

Secondly, the vital presentation should arise harmoniously; otherwise it will turn into a mere farce or a melodrama and thus forfeit its title to be considered a drama.

The third important element is speech, for this interpretative idea must stem from the inner life of the characters who act and react on the cosmic forces surrounding them.

Lastly, the sequence of events must be closely knit so that the movement of the play forms a coherent whole in which the law of probabilities is not violated and the events flow logically from the nature of the characters and from

¹ *The Future Poetry*, pp. 93-94.

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the poet's conception of the overarching destiny that prevails over man's purblind choice.

If it be asked, what in essence is the interpretative idea that governs the evolution of *Eric*, I may say, in the heroine's words :

...A heart, not iron gods, o'errules.

And thus the Fate that overrules us is not the blind, heedless Necessity that rides roughshod over our wishes but, in the words of the hero :

Because it labours and loves
Our hearts, our wills are counted, are indulged.

To what end does this Fate lead us, then, through this tangled skein of events whose meaning always baffles us ? Towards a completer manhood, in which Wisdom, Power and Love are blended harmoniously and no one power is allowed to jar with others or to strike the major chord at the expense of others. We shall repeat the lines that form the second epigraph of our article,

Strength in the nature, wisdom in the mind,
Love in the heart complete the trinity
Of glorious manhood.

II

Now let us examine in detail how this "interpretative vision" emerges from the play. The play consists of five acts and the playwright keeps us in utter suspense right till the end of the play about the background of the feuds that have turned the "cold fiords" of Norway into "deep havens of disunion". Olaf Trondhjem, King of Norway has shamefully butchered Hacon who was the maternal uncle of Eric and also by secret sentence slain Yarislaf who was the father of the hero. This has raised Eric against Olaf. Eric, though an upstart, is able to depose Olaf and capture the throne. Olaf's two children, a son and a daughter, Swegn and Aslaug respectively, refuse to owe allegiance to the new king, Eric, and so have withdrawn into the snowy regions of the North and from there conspire to recapture the throne of Norway for the seed of Olaf. Swegn's sister Aslaug and his wife Hertha set out in the guise of dancing girls to Eric's court in order to ensnare him by their beauty and thus stab him to death at the opportune moment. The play opens just before their appearance in the court.

The play opens in Eric's palace where Eric is sitting alone and soliloquising. He has brought the whole country of Norway under his sword which like an

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“iron hound pursues its panting prey”. But soon it dawns on him that all unity based on brute force is foredoomed to dissolve “like a transitory cloud”. He has found the way to join but he must find the way to solder. Wisdom and force he has but that Power which moves the world is yet unrevealed to him. He prays to Thor and Odin for some sign and instantly Aslaug’s song outside comes floating to his ears :

Love is the hoop of the gods
Hearts to combine.
Iron is broken, the sword
Sleeps in the grave of its lord;
Love is divine.
Love is the hoop of the gods
Hearts to combine.

It is significant that the whole play is woven round the image of iron being transformed into gold by the power of love. Suddenly Eric realises that the seat of unity is in the heart and not in the head :

For unity is substance of the heart
And not a chain that binds, ...
Nor any helpless thought that reason knows.

Aslaug, Swegn’s sister, and Hertha who is his wife appear before Eric, and Aslaug’s beauty and grace set blazing the flame of love in Eric’s heart, and the process of transforming his iron mind into gold sets in.

Aslaug, too, feels her snowy heart melt in the presence of Eric and her resolution to avenge her brother by stabbing him begins to crumble. Meanwhile, Hertha seizes an opportunity to inform Eric of their plot because she desires peace and amity to reign instead of hatred and antagonism; besides she wants her husband to come out of Aslaug’s powerful influence over him.

Eric, conscious of the power of love, feigns sleep, thus giving Aslaug the long-sought opportunity to slay him; but Aslaug has been paralysed by the bonds of love. Eric and Aslaug are united and then the former sets out on an expedition to vanquish Swegn. Swegn is brought as a captive before Eric but his spirit is unvanquished and he is willing to undergo the worst tortures rather than submit. But this iron, too, is transformed by the power of love. Love for the wife and the sister melts him into submission. Eric in his turn offers him the whole of his kingdom back but then it is ordained that whoever wears the ring of the goddess Freya, should be the queen of Norway, and that ring is on Aslaug’s finger, so being the husband of Aslaug he becomes the king of Norway.

III

Now that we have seen the bare outline of the story, which is nothing more than a skeleton, we can study in detail how Sri Aurobindo makes it something living in flesh and blood, and try to peer into the true core of the underlying interpretative idea.

The first thing that we notice is that the major characters fall into two types. Aslaug and Eric are beings known in India as Vibhutis who are not natives of the earth and who come from some other plane with an elemental simplicity and, like a lightning-flash, smite down the forces of retrogression and open new possibilities and then withdraw to their own native abode. Caesar's *ven, vidi, vici*—"I came, I saw, I conquered"—is typical of such figures. They are the creative geniuses like Napoleon or Shivaji or Newton or Shakespeare who come charged with a new vision and open new vistas before mankind. Unlike the beings of the earth they lack complexity, deep understanding of human limitations, human feebleness born out of the different elements jostling in the same being. They are single-minded in their aims because like electricity they are forces of nature. Nelson did not know what fear is, Newton never had the time to think of marriage, Napoleon did not know the nature of Love that gives itself in an ecstasy of self-forgetfulness. Hertha, on the other hand, is a soul who by a long development through life after life on earth has grown into a complex personality. The difference between the two types is the same as between an officer who started from a low position and climbed rung after rung facing rivalries, placating one, wheedling another, circumventing a thousand difficulties, and has reached the top, and an officer who because of his noble birth—like many of the viceroys of India during British rule—comes straight to the chief position. The former will be cunning, astute, not to be easily duped by his subordinates, rich with the wealth of a long experience, therefore sympathetic and considerate while the latter has a larger vision, freshness of approach, is above pettinesses and full of magnanimity but also lacking in full understanding of the difficulties of the practical life because of inexperience. The following dialogue between the two women of the drama will make the point clear.

HERTHA

Better is a tried resolve.

Therefore I cast the doubt before your mind.

Be sure in striking. Aslaug, did you see

The eyes of Eric on you ?

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ASLAUG
(*indifferently*)

I am fair.
Men look upon me.

HERTHA :

It gives us the great chance.
At ease, alone with us, absorbed, suddenly
You strike, I leap in seconding the blow.
Can he escape then ? Swegn shall have his throne.¹

ASLAUG :

Arrange it as you will. You have a swift
Careful contriving brain I cannot match.
To dare, to act was always Aslaug's part.

HERTHA :

You will not shrink ?

ASLAUG :

I am not of the earth,
To bound my actions by the common rule.
I claim my kin with those whom Heaven's gaze
Moulded supreme,—Swegn's sister, Olaf's child,
Aslaug of Norway.

HERTHA :

Then it must be done.

ASLAUG :

Hertha, I will not know the plots you weave ;
But when I see your signal, I will strike.

She goes out

¹ It is to be noticed that even the rhythms of the respective speeches of Aslaug and Hertha body forth their personalities in speech. Hertha's is a zigzag movement, hesitant, well thought-out and variously modulated whereas Aslaug's is straight, simple and direct.

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HERTHA

(*alone*)

Pride violent ! loftiness intolerable !
The grandiose kingdom-breaking blow is hers,
The baseness and deception are for me.

Such are Aslaug and Hertha : one is a pure ray of the sun, elemental in simplicity, incapable of ruse or any tortuousness, uncompromising, forthright but at the same time never tempered by the touch of tears in mortal life and the other is a soul that has grown on earthly soil, hence supple and shrewd, but mellowed with experience. She is not that fiery tempestuous spirit which sweeps away everything heedlessly. She knows that everything has its hour and Eric too has "his strong resistless time" but all things too great end soon, and then comes

death, overthrow,
And our late summer when cold spring is past.

. (*To be continued*)

RAVINDRA KHANNA

OBSCENITY IN HINDU ART

SENSUAL figures of the grossest kind are found on the walls of very ancient Hindu temples. We moderns are flabbergasted and hang down our heads in shame at their sight. Konarak, Kamakhya and Mt. Abu are the extreme examples of such obscenities. If one or two figures here and there gave sensual representations to an excessive degree, we might say that they were but signs of a natural weakness of the artists. But it is not so. Figures of this type are not one or two, but are scattered about in abundance. It was, as it were, the sole or main purpose of the artists to make a magnificent display of such figures. Obscenity may be admitted to some extent in the field of profane art. The obscene "*Sringar-Tilak*" in Kalidasa does not matter much. But obscenity on a temple wall ! And that too of the highest degree ! Had these figures been carved in some nook and corner of the temple walls or some spot away from the public gaze we could have excused the sculptors. But they have displayed them on either side of the entrance of the temple. Leaving behind all family ties people with a pure and candid heart resort to the temple to spend some time in holy communion with the highest Good and Beauty. But at the very entrance of the temple their eyes are pricked by the worst possible, sensual, ugly sight of these figures.

If we want to know the true meaning of all arts, then we must get to the root secret of all arts. Art is founded on delight. Art expresses the rhythm of delight. What we call beauty is nothing save a surge of delight expressing itself in concrete shapes. Verily, beauty is the image of delight. Now, which delight is considered the most intense and exceeds all other forms of delight ? No doubt, sex-delight. Such a statement is likely to be offensive to the ears of a moralist and may send a shudder to his nerves. Owing to various reasons we all have become more or less moralists to-day. But the artist has to deal with the basic truth. The veil of delicacy must in no way obstruct or impair his vision. The whole creation is the love play of He and She : a poet, a seer and a true artist cannot ignore or conceal this truth. Right from the dawn of creation the whole universe may be looked upon as a rhythm of sex-delight. When the poet Kalidasa extends the relation between man and woman and depicts a buck scratching the person of a doe, a creeper hugging and entwining a mango tree, or a river madly rushing into the sea, to kiss and to be kissed, he pictures a universal and sempiternal theme of Nature.

OBSCEINITY IN HINDU ART

The present-day science of Europe too is engaged in unveiling the secret mysteries of the subconscious nature. According to Freud and other eminent psychologists the unadulterated sex-impulse lies at the root of all religious practices, inspiration and aspiration. They hold that even the greater, nobler and purer urges such as love, affection, imagination, poetry, as well as religious instincts, are only different expressions of the same sex-impulse. In the civilised and cultured society it is this alone which is worshipped and appreciated in the various noble sentiments and impulses when it is presented in innocent-looking and lovely figures. Therefore there is no reason why the root impulse of all these noble virtues should be looked down upon.

Science wants to probe into the eternal truth and the eternal power that exist behind all outer phenomena. Art sees into these and brings to the fore the delight and beauty inherent in them. Ugliness can in no way attach to the truth, to whatever status it may belong. It does not matter even if it concerns the highest or the lowest secrecies of man and nature. Truth is beauty. Beauty and ugliness of a thing depend on the way in which it is conceived and expressed. Truth is truth, for it is self-evident. And a thing becomes self-evident only when it is expressed in its inner delight and power. The poet and the artist have visualised and expressed in their artistic works this self-poised and delightful power of truth, including sex which is a power that lies at the root of creation.

But what connection is there between spiritual practice and sex-life? What useful purpose is served by carving on the walls of a temple the figures that depict activities of the flesh, propensities of the beast? Obscenity may be admitted to a degree in profane art, one might concede, but what benefit can we derive from the obscene in the field of spirituality? Firstly, it is doubtful whether art has two different branches, profane and spiritual. Viewed from the highest peak of the inmost Being there is no gulf between the two. The glimpses of the Truth that the modern European psychologists have to-day are not unfamiliar to our ancient seers who held that the highest spiritual delight and the sex-delight are but the obverse and the reverse of the one universal delight. When the delight of the Self, the Being of existence expresses itself in a concrete form through the material body, it is called bodily pleasure. And when sense-delight turns inward and becomes transformed we call it "The Infinite alone is bliss."

The body after all is an embodiment or an emblem of the soul. The worship of a symbol is really offered to the Spirit that it embodies. Thus does the delight of the soul become as living and concrete as that of the physical body. Both sex-delight and divine delight are original powers and are equally poignant and irresistible. In their respective spheres they are supernal in their status.

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Religious sentiments derived from mental inquisitiveness and intellectual curiosity, or mere emotional intoxication, that drown and overwhelm you for a moment leaving you high and dry the next moment lack authenticity and infallibility. The spiritual urge should be as natural and spontaneous as the physical. Therefore the prayer of Prahlad, the devotee of devotees, ran : "O God, let my aspiration for Thee be as intense as the craving of a sensualist for the object of his senses." The rhythm of bliss is at the root of creation, be it in the highest spiritual experience in which the soul meets the Self or in the act of procreation which is an unavoidable necessity for physical creation. The spiritual bliss itself has come down and assumed the form of sex-delight. The lower end of the river Mandakini originating from the glaciers of the Himalayas is known as the river Bhogavati. O man ! let your divine life attain to the highest intensest Bliss, a replica, a far-off echo of which you enjoy in the gross sex-life. Is this not the message proclaimed by the temples of Konarak, Kamakhya and Mt. Abu to the world at large ?

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali)

THE MARXIST APPROACH TO LITERATURE*

I

THE Marxist approach to art or, for that matter, to literature is neither Tagorean nor that of a Mediaeval aesthetician. A Marxist does not subscribe to the view, as Tagore did, that disinterested enjoyment or self-expression is the soul of art, nor does he believe that "where there is an element of the superfluous in our heart's relationship with the world, Art has its birth." All such expressions as "disinterested enjoyment", "self-expression", "soul of art," "element of the superfluous" etc. are either incomprehensible or hateful or dangerous to him. And if a Mediaeval European aesthetician felt that art attains its supreme fulfilment in that blessed or blissful contemplation where the Muses become one with the Christian virtues and the Christian Mystery, a Marxist can have but contempt or, at best, pity for such a feeling. And no wonder, for to him religion is but "one of the most odious things in the world," as Lenin said.

Is the Marxist approach to literature, then, Tolstoyan? Tolstoy, we find, attacked Shakespeare for his alleged artificiality and unintelligibility, and considered him inferior to folk poets whom more people enjoyed and understood. He, thus, judged art by its power to be universally understood. And this, we may feel tempted to say, is how a Marxist would also like art and literature to be judged. If art or literature is not something which is written for the masses, which appeals to the common people, which does maximum good to the maximum number, then it is something which is dangerously and hopelessly 'bourgeois' and must be thrown out of society. But Lenin did not regard Tolstoy as above suspicion altogether, for if, on the one hand, he considered him as "an artist of genius who...produced not only incomparable pictures of Russian life, but also great works in world's literature",¹ on the other hand, he could not help denouncing him as "a landlord, playing a fool in Christ", as "a worn-out, hysterical mud-wallower called the Russian intellectual who, publicly beating his breast, wails: 'I am bad, I am rotten, but I am engaged in moral self-perfection; I no longer eat meat and live only on rice cutlets.'"² Again, if, on the one

* An Extension Lecture delivered at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on May, 1960, in the wake of two by Sisir Kumar Ghose on Tagore's View of Art and on Mediaeval Aesthetics. All references are given at the end of the Lecture. All references at the end.

hand, Tolstoy was to him, a writer who offered "relentless criticism of capitalist exploitation, exposure of...the growth of poverty, barbarism and suffering among the masses of workers,"³ on the other hand, he was also "weak-minded enough to 'preach non-resistance to evil by force'."

No, even the Tolstoyan approach to art and literature will not do for a Leninist or Marxist. There is too much of contradiction inherent in Tolstoy's teachings. To Lenin, "Tolstoyanism is an ideology of the Eastern, Asiatic order, according to its actual historical content. Hence the asceticism and the non-resistance to evil, the deep notes of pessimism and the conviction that all is vanity.... Tolstoy's teachings are unquestionably utopian and in content reactionary."⁴

A student of Marxist aesthetics can very easily see that although Marx used now and then the word 'spiritual' in connection with artistic and literary productions, yet he hardly meant by it any of those things which are usually understood by it. For even if one takes the broadest possible view of his aesthetic and literary taste, the fact remains that his approach to literature is as much rooted in the questions of economics and politics as his general view of human life and society and civilization. It is, as we all know, undisguisedly materialistic in the most literal sense of the term.

We should, therefore, try to understand, first of all, the Marxist interpretation of life, for the Marxist approach to literature is but an outcome of such an interpretation. The Marxist philosophy of life has been called the philosophy of scientific socialism or dialectical materialism. To Marx, Engels, and Lenin, "the palpable world which we perceive with our senses is the only real world."⁵ "Our consciousness and thought, however supersense-like they may seem, are the product of the material of spirit and spirit is only a higher product of matter."⁶ The material reality is, thus, the only valid truth for Marx; and his followers say that it is by following the Marxist theory that "we shall come closer and ever closer to objective truth;"⁷ for, "following any other course we can come to nothing except confusion and falseness."⁸ And objective truth, the Marxist will argue, can be sought only by an objective method, such as dialectical materialism is. Indeed, "Lenin insists that dialectics is inherent in human knowledge generally because nature itself lives dialectically: constant transitions, modulations, mutual connections of contraries are observable in it. Nevertheless man achieves consciousness of the dialectic properties of his thinking, properties profoundly consistent with the properties of nature itself, only at times, under favourable circumstances."⁹ So far no sensible person need disagree with Lenin overmuch but when it is made out that "frequently man's own class interests, or the class interests of those who guide him, completely kill the dialectics living in his brain activity, replacing it with meta-

physical methods of thought", we cannot help feeling that something wrong has entered the brain activity of the Marxist, and when it is ultimately claimed that "only now, with the triumph of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, will the natural dialectic thinking of man prevail, having done away with the distortions of property—owning social order",¹⁰ we have no doubt at all in our minds that the Marxist brain has itself undergone so many "distortions" that it cannot view the objective truth of the material reality except through proleterian glasses. No wonder, then, if a Leninist thinks at the same time that the method of dialectic materialism is "a party, a class method" and that "this can be explained by the fact that the ruling bourgeois class, and bourgeois science which is dependent upon it, are incapable of being objective, because objective truth contradicts the interests and the very existence of the bourgeoisie."¹¹ Well, a view of this kind is, on the very face of it, the height of absurdity and "distortion" as well.

However, there are certain moments as well as elements of lucid perception, too, in the Marxist philosophy of the world. Marx, for example, says that the great basic thought is "that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things but as a complex of processes, in which things apparently stable no less than their mind-images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away. ...For dialectical philosophy nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything ; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascending from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain".¹² Thus, according to Marx, dialectics is "the science of the general laws of motion—both of the external world and of human-thought."¹³

Here no sensible person can help admiring Marx for recognizing the world to be "a complex of processes in which the things apparently stable...go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away," and those of us who believe in the principle of a purposive and progressive evolution at work in the world cannot help being struck by that remarkable phrase of Marx where he speaks of "endless ascending from the lower to the higher". But the famous *Communist Manifesto* of February, 1848, in which Marx and Engels propounded this theory of dialectical materialism, nowhere gives any indication that their authors made any attempt to enquire into the power or being which caused all this complex play of processes operative in the world. After all, when one can perceive so far as to say that behind all this uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away there is an "endless ascending from the lower to the higher," and not a movement from the higher to the

lower or in any other direction, it is clear that one should even logically recognize the presence of some power due to whose conscious knowledge or force things and concepts of the world move in a precise pre-planned manner and not in a chaotic haphazard way. But in order to stick doggedly to their theory of dialectical materialism and eschew all metaphysicality and subjectivity from it, Marx and Engels could not discover the principle of 'being' too at work behind all these endless phenomena of 'becoming' in the world. On the contrary, they went so far as to say that "the unity of the world does not consist in its being...(but) in its materiality".¹⁴ And if the question is raised : what then are thought and consciousness, and whence do they come?, they would immediately reply, as they actually did : "it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of nature, which has been developed in and along with its environment."¹⁵ Plekhanov is even more explicit. He says that "thought is conditioned by existence, not existence by thought." Thus to Marx and Engels and their followers there is nothing beyond ever-changing nature and environment.

In sharp contrast to Marx and Engels, Hegel had perceived before that the only real things in the world are ideas. But quite interestingly enough the Hegelian ideas, like the Marxist material nature and environment, are not static entities. On the contrary, they are in a state of non-stop development by a triple process of affirmation, contradiction and reconciliation. The world, to Hegel, therefore, was nothing but a Mind, a Divine Mind, evolving with logical necessity by this process of affirmation, contradiction and reconciliation of the opposites in a higher order. Here we see that though apparently Marx is credited with rejecting Hegel, yet for all practical purposes he retained the very essence of Hegel's philosophy. Reality, it is true, was not at all spiritual or metaphysical for Marx, as it was to Hegel; it was only solid, stubborn matter. But Marx's Matter behaves in very much the same way as Hegel's Absolute. And his theory of class struggle through which, he said, human society or human civilisation ascended from the lower to the higher order is easily explicable in terms of the Hegelian dialectical process of affirmation, contradiction and reconciliation of the opposites in a higher order. For, wealth or private property is the positive side of the Hegelian antithesis and the proletariat is the other, and the conflict between these two opposites is resolved, through a successful revolution, in a higher order.

Indeed, we may even find here a similarity in the perceptions of Hegel, Marx and Sri Aurobindo. Let us remind ourselves of that famous passage in the opening chapter of *The Life Divine* where Sri Aurobindo says that "all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony", and that they "arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undis-

covered agreement or unity."¹⁶ But then whereas Hegel and Sri Aurobindo would have us think, by this process, of a conscious Divine mind or Truth-Consciousness-Force or Sachchidananda at work behind all these material phenomena of change, Marx and Engels refuse to go beyond the complex of changing objective processes and the fact that the unity of the world consists not in its being but only in its materiality. And if Sri Aurobindo through his vision of the endless ascending from the lower to the higher level would have us perceive clearly and hopefully that "the animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man,"¹⁷ and "Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the God",¹⁸ Marx and Engels would hardly enable us to think of any other species higher than the proletariat, and of any other life higher than the proletariat life. This, then, is the acme of the vision of objective truth and of dialectical materialism by Marx and Engels.

There is also an economic aspect to the Marxist philosophy of life. In his *Das Capital* he draws our attention to this aspect again and again. "Technology," he says, "discloses man's mode of dealing with nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations and of the mental conceptions that flow from them....In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite state of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness;...with the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed...."

From this famous passage of *Das Capital* it is, then, abundantly clear what a large part economics plays in Marx's view of life and society. It is also clear that since it is with the change of the economic foundation that the entire legal, political, cultural superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed, a Marxist would plead and strive for an economic change in society before he would think of changing the political or cultural life of man. Nay, to him, it is a change in the mode of production, *i.e.*, an economic change which alone can bring about a corresponding change in the consciousness and culture of man. As Plekhanov says in his *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, "By acting on nature outside himself and changing it, man simultaneously changes his own nature." Here,

then, we get a theory which is quite opposed to the one we hold in the Ashram and which has the sanction of our ancient spiritual wisdom and culture. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have repeatedly told us that no amount of external change in the structure of our social or political or economic system will bring about a radical change in our life and prospects unless it is preceded by a definite radical change in the consciousness of man. And several years ago Vivekananda in his clear resonant voice said more or less the same thing when he declared : "Every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas. The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths contained in our Upanishads, in our Scriptures, our Puranas must be brought out from the books and scattered, broadcast all over the land, so that these truths may run like fire all over the country from north to south and east to west, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from Sind to the Brahmaputra."¹⁹

But such a suggestion will appear to a Marxist as only a dangerous bourgeois thought, calculated to deceive the masses and perpetuate their exploitation. Any talk of religion or reference to spirituality is a culpable heresy in the eyes of a Marxist. No wonder, Marx advocated the abolition of religion altogether from the life of man. "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people," he wrote, "is a demand for their real happiness." But ironically enough, what this professed enemy of religion did was to substitute a new religion for the old ones. For Marxism by now has itself become a religion. It has its chief prophet and a few minor ones also. It has its Bible, its ritual, its saints and martyrs and priests and its inquisition as well. It has divided humanity into two sections, the believers and the non-believers. It has also its heretics. And above all, wherever it is being followed, it is followed with all the hard-heartedness as well as violent zeal of a religious fanatic. And if the devil is to be given his due—as in every religion he should be—it must be said to the credit of Marx that whatever the limitations of his theory, it ultimately proved to be a practical theory and did enable its followers to rebuild the economic and political life of man along its own lines in some of the big countries of the world, and today its practical side has reached a height of enviable glory even in the sphere of science, not to speak of the economic, technological field. It has become the greatest challenge to the world of today. Under the impact of its political and economic and scientific successes, the cult of Materialism has come to acquire a status today which it hardly possessed before. The number of those who now accept matter as the only reality and consider religion or spirituality as not only stuff and nonsense but a dangerous deception of the masses by the bourgeoisie is on the increase even in such a

predominantly spiritual country as ours and we all know what fate has overtaken the land of Confucius and Lao-Tze.

It is against this background of the increasing glamour and prestige of the Marxist view and way of life in the modern world that we are to judge its approach to literature.

But let us, first, collect some well-known facts about the literary interests and taste of Marx. There are many indications of the fact that Marx and Engels took a tremendous interest in fine literature. While young, Marx had even planned a special work on aesthetics. It is assumed that he was a collaborator in the book of the young Hegelian Bruno Bauer, *Trumpet Voice or Final Judgment on Hegel, Atheist and Anti-Christ*. He was himself working at that time on a *Treatise on Christian Art*. From Lafargue's reminiscences about Marx we learn that the latter was planning to write a book on Balzac after completing *Das Capital*. It is also known that he was preparing an article on aesthetics for the *New American Encyclopedia*. Then again we find that Marx was a great reader of literature. Lafargue tells us :

"He knew Heine and Goethe by heart, and would often quote them in conversation. He read the poets constantly, selecting authors from all the European languages. Year after year he would read Aeschylus in the original Greek, regarding this author and Shakespeare as the two greatest dramatic geniuses the world has ever known. He had made an exhaustive study of Shakespeare for whom he had an unbounded admiration, and whose most insignificant characters even were familiar to him. There was a veritable Shakespeare cult in the Marx family and his three daughters knew much of Shakespeare by heart...he himself sought out and classified all Shakespeare's characteristic expressions ; and he did the same with some of the polemical writings of William Cabbot, for whom he had a great esteem. Dante and Burns were among his favourite poets, and it was always a delight to him to hear his daughter recite Burns's satirical poems or sing Burns's love songs... like Darwin he was a great novel-reader. He had a preference for eighteenth-century novels, and was specially fond of Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The modern novelists who pleased him best were Paul de Kock, Charles Lever, the Elder Dumas and Sir Walter Scott whose *Old Mortality* he considered a masterpiece. He had a predilection for tales of adventure and humorous stories. The greatest masters of romance for him were Cervantes and Balzac....

"...Marx could read all the leading European languages and could write in three (German, French and English) in a way that aroused the admiration of all who were acquainted with the tongues.... He had a great talent for languages....He was already fifty years old when he began to learn Russian... [and] had made such progress in six months as to be able to enjoy reading in

the original the works of the Russian poets and authors whom he specially prized : Pushkin, Gogol and Schchedrin...

"...When the children were still quite small and he would take them on walks, he would shorten the miles for them by telling them stories without end, fantastic fairy tales invented as he went along and spun out to fit the length of the walk, so that his hearers forgot their fatigue. Marx had an incomparably rich poetic imagination, and his first literary efforts were poems."²⁰

No wonder if his parents "had intended their son to become a man of letters or a university professor. In their view he degraded himself by devoting himself to socialist agitation and by occupying himself with the study of political economy (a subject then little esteemed in Germany)."²¹

As regards his interest in literary style we are told that he was "a severe purist—he often searched long and laboriously for the correct expression... [he] attached extraordinary value to pure correct expression and in Goethe, Lessing, Shakespeare, Dante and Cervantes, whom he read every day, he had chosen the greatest masters. He showed the most painstaking conscientiousness in regard to purity and correctness of speech"²²...About his own style it has been said that his "style is indeed Marx. He has been reproached with having attempted to compress the greatest possible content in the smallest possible space, but that is precisely Marx"²³ Anyway, as one of his warm critics has said, he "...performed very high services for the German language and belongs to the most eminent masters and creators of the German language"²⁴

As regards his literary memory we are told that it was "tremendous". "He would recite long passages from the *Divine Comedy* of which he knew almost the whole by heart, and scenes from Shakespeare..."²⁵

It is, thus, clear that "just as his own scientific work mirrored a whole epoch, so his own literary favourites were those whose creations also mirrored their epoch; from Aeschylus and Homer to Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Goethe"²⁶ No less striking is the fact that, "like Darwin and Bismarck, he was a great devourer of novels and had a particular liking for adventurous and humorous stories"²⁷ He could also invent such stories himself for the amusement of his children. It is quite understandable from all this that he "sought mental recreation and refreshment in literature and all his life it was a great consolation to him"²⁸ But what passes our understanding is the way in which he used literature for his political purpose and made a theory out of it. From his genuine, wide and catholic interest in literature ranging from Aeschylus to Goethe and Scott it might appear that his theory of literature would be equally catholic and genuinely literary. But the fact is just the contrary. For all the "mental recreation and refreshment" which he sought in literature, he would hardly think of literature, in theory, as a source of pleasure

or enjoyment, pure and simple. And, the kind of practical-minded genius which he was, he would hardly think of literature as something apart from the day-to-day life of man, from the question of economics and politics, and his own theory of dialectical materialism. That is to say, he would constantly press literature to the service of his own philosophy of life and the political programme he had for bringing about a change in the life and society of man. Indeed, the discoverer of the materialist conception of history could not help discovering in the realms of art and literature a sphere of ideology that lent itself quite easily to the materialist explanation. Also, he could not fail to discover in art and literature a powerful weapon in the education of the masses. And then what was no less significant for Marx was that he discovered in fine literature a rich source of information in the study of the history of society.

Thus, as a most astute practical person, he discovered the twofold utility of literature. It was for him, firstly, a mine of information, for many social phenomena are presented here clearly and accurately, more clearly and accurately perhaps than they are to be found in historical and scientific records. For instance, to Marx the great importance of Balzac lay, as he said, in the fact that he was "remarkable in general deep understanding of real relations." Therefore, literature mattered enormously to him, even the reactionary bourgeois literature, since it could serve the purpose of a social document, reveal the existing social relations or give an insight into the states of mind of a larger or smaller group of people. No wonder if Engels in one of his letters expressed himself to the effect that he found out more about French society from Balzac "even in the sense of economic details (*e.g.* the redistribution of real and personal property after the revolution) than from all the books of professional historians, economists and statisticians of the period together".²⁹ Similarly, the English realistic novel of the 19th century had this very significance for Marx. He found the brilliant modern school of English novelists "uncovering more political and social truths with their graphic and eloquent portrayals than all the politicians, publicists and moralists taken together. It has shown all strata of bourgeois society beginning with the respectable rentier and owner of gold bond-certificates who looked down upon all kinds of 'business' as upon something vulgar and ending with the small shopkeeper and lawyer's assistant".³⁰ Realistic literature, particularly as it revealed a varied and rich picture of the bourgeois society and its social and economic psychology, was naturally of great service to Marxism. That is why he was chiefly, almost exclusively, interested in that kind of literature which had "a rich socio-historical and intellectual content".³¹ His tastes are hardly subjective. Even his most favourite author Shakespeare matters to him in so far as he was "the expression of the stormy period of historical activity, the expression of the actual

struggle that was rending the society of the period, shaking it and breaking up the old foundations".³²

Marx's preference for dramatic and fictional literature is, thus, not accidental. It is here that he chiefly discovers the picture of the times, particularly of the bourgeois class and its social psychology and relations.

The social, documentary, historical utility is the most primary utility of literature to Marx and his followers. The other utility of it is a still more practical one, for Marx could also shrewdly realise that art or literature was a powerful weapon in the education of the masses. He used literature—and let us concede that he had quite a legitimate right to do so—for purely non-literary purposes. He made frequent references and allusions to literature even in his *Das Capital* to explain, illustrate and substantiate his thesis. Even Shakespeare and Dante, and not merely Balzac and Cervantes, are used for such a purpose. And what is even more important is that he saw how literature could be fruitfully used in the service of revolution. He was engaged on the task of not only expounding a new and revolutionary socio-economic philosophy of life and history but also organizing agitations and campaigns for changing the existing capitalistic order. And he found literature useful enough in this affair as well. It was surely permissible for him and his followers to press literature into the service of humanity. Literature, as we all know, appeals strongly to the emotions and, therefore, cleverly used, it can make ideas familiar and evoke the right kind of emotional response. For propaganda purposes its value is immense. But then we cannot fail to see that there is one great danger to such a use of literature. If literature is used for essentially non-literary purposes, that is for the propagation of partisan ideas, of political and economic views of a particular party, as the Marxist and Soviet writers generally do, it soon ceases to be literature. The distinction between mere slogans or political fulminations and genuine literature may become blurred. Now, Marxist literature is always open to this grave danger. But a practical person like Marx need not have bothered about it. So long as the masses were influenced, the defective literary merit should not be a consideration at all. But the Marxists did not feel satisfied with this. Like all zealots and fanatics they came to justify their own propaganda, party literature, as the finest literature ever written and they further laid down the rule which in effect came to this that one who was not a Marxist could not produce valuable literature. Troschenko, a Marxist critic, accused Balzac of wanting a world philosophy in the Marxist sense of the term simply "because he was a bourgeois thinker."³³ He even went so far as to say that "an integral world philosophy, consistent in all its parts, having no inner contradictions is created only by the proletariat, the only class revolutionary to the very end."³⁴ "Art free

from politics or party, poetry independent of class interests” are regarded as things belonging to the false bourgeois world. Lenin, too, declared that “the idea of party art becomes a slogan for all soviet literature, one of the main principles of our views on art”.³⁵ From the Marx-Freiligrath correspondence also it is clear that Marx connected “artistic merits of the work of a revolutionary poet directly with his adherence to the party”.³⁶

This itself was bad enough but one could have afforded to overlook it as having been prompted by an excess of zeal mixed with ignorance and narrowness. But Marx went further. He theorised about literature just as he had theorised about revolution. And his theory about art and literature is even more faulty than his theory about dialectical materialism. In the words of Engels, “Marx discovered the simple fact (heretofore hidden beneath ideological overgrowths) that human beings must have food, drink, clothing and shelter first of all, before they can interest themselves in politics, science, art, religion and the like. This implies that the production of the immediately requisite material means of subsistence, and therewith the existing phase of development of a nation or an epoch, constitute the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal outlooks, the artistic and even the religious ideas are built up. It implies that these latter must be explained out of the former, whereas the former have usually been explained as issuing from the latter.”³⁷

It is, no doubt, a remarkable discovery in its own way but extremely exaggerated. Nobody can deny that the superstructure of, say, social forms rests upon the material means or forces of production but how can any person with sense agree that these social forms, the artistic and religious ideas etc., are wholly determined by the means of production alone ? In their over-enthusiasm to emphasize the importance of economics and sociology the Marxists have so far neglected the value of psychology and anthropology. Psychology would tell them that the so-called forces of production do not wholly explain the working of the human mind which can use those very forces of production for its own purposes. And from anthropology they would learn that the development of human culture shows the presence of something known as the human spirit which is seeking its perfect expression by using the material means at its disposal. As a matter of fact, if we are tolerant enough, we may say that Marxism itself is one of the triumphs or, at any rate, achievements of the human spirit which, unfortunately, is just an illusion for Marx.

(To be concluded)

SREEKRISHNA PRASAD

MOTHER INDIA

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Students' Section

TALKS OF THE MOTHER.

Q. Mère, tu as dit qu'il y a beaucoup de plans intermédiaires entre le mental et le supramental, et que si l'homme ordinaire entrerait en contact avec l'un des plans intermédiaires, il serait ébloui. Pourquoi alors, parle-t-on de la descente du plan supramental au lieu d'une descente des plans intermédiaires, puisque les hommes sont encore si peu développés ?

Q. Mother, you have said that there are many intermediate planes between the mental and the supramental, and that if the ordinary man entered into contact with one of these intermediate planes, he would be dazzled. Why then does one speak of the descent of the supramental plane instead of a descent of the intermediate planes, since men are still so little developed?

R. Pour une raison très simple, c'est que, jusqu'à présent, tout le monde matériel, physique, toute la terre (pour ne prendre que la terre), a été gouverné par des forces et des consciences venant de ce que Sri Aurobindo appelle l'Overmind ou Surmental. Même ce que les hommes ont appelé Dieu, est une force, une puissance qui vient du Surmental, et tout l'univers était sous la domination du Surmental. Pour arriver jusque là, il y a beaucoup de plans intermédiaires et il y a très peu de gens qui peuvent y atteindre sans être éblouis. Mais Sri Aurobindo nous a dit que, maintenant, le temps du "rule", ou du gouvernement du Surmental, touche à sa fin, et va être remplacé par le gouvernement du Supramental. Pour le Surmental, tous ceux qui ont fait des expériences spirituelles et qui ont découvert le divin et qui se sont unis à lui, tous ceux-là savent. Mais ce que Sri Aurobindo nous dit, c'est que, au-delà du Surmental, il y a quelque chose, et que c'est le tour de ce quelque chose de venir se manifester sur terre et de gouverner la terre. Et par conséquent, il n'est pas besoin de parler de Surmental, parce que beaucoup de gens en ont déjà parlé avant et en ont eu l'expérience. Tandis que cela, c'est une chose nouvelle, qui va se manifester d'une façon nouvelle, et dont personne n'avait pris conscience auparavant. C'est pourquoi cela. Les vieilles histoires, il ne manque pas de gens qui

en aient eu l'expérience, ou qui les aient décrites, ou de livres qui aient été publiés à ce sujet. Cela ne sert à rien de répéter encore une fois ce que les autres ont dit. Sri Aurobindo est venu annoncer quelque chose de nouveau. Et c'est justement parce que les gens n'arrivent pas à sortir des expériences qu'ils ont eues et dont on leur a parlé, qu'ils essayent d'identifier cette force que Sri Aurobindo appelle supramentale, avec leur expérience des mondes intermédiaires, y compris le Surmental. Parce qu'ils ne conçoivent pas qu'il y ait autre chose. Sri Aurobindo a toujours dit que son yoga commençait là où finissent les autres. Que pour pouvoir réaliser son yoga, il faut d'abord avoir réalisé l'extrême limite de ce que les yogas précédents ont réalisé. C'est-à-dire, la perception du divin, l'union, l'identification avec le divin. Mais le Divin-là, Sri Aurobindo disait que c'était le Divin du Surmental, qui, déjà, par rapport à la conscience humaine, est quelque chose de tout à fait impensable; même pour aller jusque là, il faut traverser plusieurs plans, et quand on entre dans ces plans on a l'impression d'un éblouissement.

Il y a des êtres du vital qui, s'ils apparaissaient aux hommes, ou, plus exactement, chaque fois qu'il sont apparus aux hommes, les hommes les ont pris pour le Dieu suprême — des entités du vital ! Si vous voulez, nous appellerons cela un déguisement, mais c'est un déguisement très réussi, parce que ceux qui le voyaient, étaient tout à fait convaincus d'avoir vu la divinité suprême. Et pourtant, c'étaient des êtres du vital. Et ces entités du Surmental, ces dieux du Surmental ce sont des entités formidables par rapport à notre humanité. Quand les êtres humains ont une relation avec eux, ils sont vraiment "bewildered" (c'est curieux, je pense en anglais ce soir), ils sont "ahuris".

Mais il y a une sorte de grâce, quelque chose que l'on pourrait comparer au système de l'enseignement scientifique. Si chaque savant devait refaire toutes les expériences faites par les autres pour arriver à une découverte nouvelle, il y passerait toute sa vie, ne serait-ce que pour repasser ce que les autres ont déjà trouvé, alors il ne resterait plus de temps pour faire la découverte nouvelle. Maintenant, on n'a plus besoin de tout cela; on ouvre un livre et on voit les résultats, et à partir de là on peut aller plus loin. Eh bien, Sri Aurobindo a voulu faire la même chose. Il vous dit où vous pouvez trouver les résultats obtenus avant lui et les expériences faites; il vous dit historiquement où on est dans l'histoire spirituelle du monde. Puis il vous prend à partir de là, après avoir établi la base, et il vous fait gravir la montagne plus haute.

A. For a very simple reason. It is that, up to the present, the whole material physical world, the whole earth (to take only the earth), has been governed by forces and consciousnesses coming from what Sri Aurobindo calls

Overmind. Even what men have called God is a force, a power which comes from the Overmind, and the whole universe has been under the rule of the Overmind. On the way up there, there are many intermediate planes and few people can attain them without being dazzled. But Sri Aurobindo has told us that now the time of the rule of the Overmind has drawn to its end, and is going to be replaced by the rule of the Supermind. As for the Overmind, all those who have had spiritual experiences and have discovered the Divine and become one with him, all these know it. But what Sri Aurobindo tells us is that, beyond the Overmind, there is something, and that now it is the turn of this something to come and manifest itself on earth and govern the earth. In consequence, it is not necessary to speak of the Overmind, because many people have already spoken of it before and have had the experience of it. Whereas this, it is a new thing which is going to manifest in a new way, and of which nobody has been conscious up to now. That's why it is so. The old stories, people are not wanting who have had the experience of them, or have described them, nor are books lacking which have been published on this subject. It serves no purpose to repeat once more what others have said. Sri Aurobindo has come to announce something new. And it is just because people have not been able to get away from the experiences which they have had and of which they have been told, that they try to identify the force which Sri Aurobindo calls supramental, with their experience of the intermediate worlds, the Overmind included among them. Because they cannot conceive that there was anything else. Sri Aurobindo has always said that his yoga begins where the others end. In order to be able to accomplish his yoga, one should first realise the extreme limit of what the other preceding yogas have realised. That is to say, the perception of the Divine, the union, the identification with the Divine. But this Divine, Sri Aurobindo has said that it is the Divine of the Overmind; even this the human consciousness regards as something altogether unthinkable; and to reach up to it, one has to cross many planes, and when one enters these planes one feels dazzled.

There are beings of the vital plane who, if they appeared to men or, more exactly, each time they have appeared to men, have been taken by men for the supreme God—the entities of the vital plane ! If you like, we shall call this a disguise, but it is a very successful disguise, because those who saw it were quite convinced of having seen the supreme divinity. However, it was the entities of the vital. And these entities of the Overmind are formidable entities in comparison with our humanity. When human beings have a relation with them, they are truly “bewildered” (it is curious, I am thinking in English this evening), they are “stupefied”.

But there is a sort of grace, something which one could compare to a system of scientific teaching. If each savant had to redo all the experiments made by others in order to arrive at a new discovery, he would pass his whole life only to go over again what others have already discovered; then no time would be left him to make the new discovery. Now, one has no longer any need for all this; one opens a book and one sees the results, and starting from there one can go further. Oh well, Sri Aurobindo has wished to do the same thing. He tells you where you can find the results obtained before him and the experiments made; he tells you historically where one stands in the spiritual history of the world. Then he takes you from that starting-point, after having established the basis, and he makes you climb the highest mountain.

Q. Dans cet Ashram, on ne devrait donc trouver que des gens qui sont déjà parvenus au niveau surmental ? Au lieu de cela...

Q. In this Ashram, then, one should find only people who have already arrived at the Overmind level. Instead of that...

R. Je ne veux pas parler de ceux qui étaient ici au début, de ce qu'ils savaient ou ne savaient pas et de leur expérience. Mais vous tous mes enfants, à quel âge êtes-vous venus ici ? Ce n'était pas un âge à avoir réalisé le Surmental, n'est-ce pas ?

A. I don't want to speak of those who were here from the start, of what they they know or don't know and of their experience. But you all, my children, at what age did you come here ? It wasn't an age to have realised the Overmind, was it ?

Q. Si tu avais autour de toi des gens comme Vivekananda, ton travail serait plus facile, non ? Au lieu d'avoir de la matière brute comme nous ?

Q. If you had around you people like Vivekananda, your work would be easier, no ? Instead of having crude matter like us ?

R. Peut-être auraient-ils été plus récalcitrants.

Parce qu'il n'y a rien de plus difficile que de convaincre quelqu'un qui a déjà une réalisation. Il se croit très supérieur à tout progrès. Pas nécessairement. Ce n'est pas nécessairement celui qui a fait l'expérience, qui est le plus avancé. Il lui manque un élément de simplicité, de modesté, et la souplesse qui vient de ce que l'on ne s'est pas encore totalement développé. A mesure que

l'on se développe, quelque chose se cristallise dans le cerveau. Ça devient de plus en plus fixe; et à moins qu'on ne fasse de gros efforts, on finit par se fossiliser. C'est généralement ce qui arrive aux gens, surtout à ceux qui ont fait un effort de réalisation et qui sont arrivés, ou qui ont cru être arrivés au but. En tout cas, c'était leur but personnel. Ils l'ont atteint. Ils sont arrivés. C'est fini, ils restent là. Ils se fixent, ils disent "Ça y est," et ils ne bougent plus. Alors ils peuvent vivre dix ans après cela, vingt ans, trente ans, ils ne bougeront pas. Ils sont là, ils resteront là. Ceux-là manquent de toute la souplesse d'étoffe nécessaire pour aller plus loin et progresser. Ils sont fixés. Ce sont de très bons objets pour mettre dans un musée, mais pas pour faire du travail. C'est comme des échantillons, pour montrer ce qui peut se faire, mais pas des éléments pour faire davantage. Moi, j'avoue que j'aime mieux, pour mon travail, quelqu'un qui sait très peu, qui n'a pas fait trop d'efforts, mais qui a une grande aspiration, une grande volonté, et qui sent en lui cette flamme, ce besoin de progresser. Il peut savoir très peu, et avoir réalisé encore moins. Mais s'il a ça au-dedans de lui, c'est une bonne étoffe, avec laquelle on peut aller très loin, beaucoup plus loin. Parce qu'il faut savoir le chemin pour avancer. Eh bien, généralement, dans la vie, pour gravir une montagne ou pour aller dans un pays inconnu, on cherche quelqu'un qui y est allé, qui est un guide, et on lui demande le chemin. C'est la même chose. Si on se laisse guider, on peut arriver beaucoup plus vite que quelqu'un qui a fait de grands efforts, qui a trouvé son propre chemin, et qui généralement est assez fier de lui-même, ou, en tout cas, qui a le sentiment d'être arrivé, d'avoir atteint le but qu'il s'était proposé; et il s'arrête, il se fixe, il ne bouge plus.

Au commencement il n'y avait pas d'enfant ici, naturellement, et on n'acceptait pas les enfants, on refusait tous les enfants. C'est seulement après la guerre qu'on en a pris. Mais je ne le regrette pas. Parce que je crois qu'il y a beaucoup plus d'étoffe pour l'avenir parmi les enfants qui ne savent rien, que parmi les grandes personnes qui croient tout savoir.

Je ne sais pas si vous connaissez grand-chose à la sculpture. Mais pour faire de la sculpture, on prend de l'argile, on l'imbibe d'eau; il faut que ce soit de l'argile comme une poudre très fine, et on en fait une pâte. On le garde toujours mouillé et on fait sa statue ou n'importe quoi. Quand c'est fini, on la cuit pour que ça ne bouge plus. Et ce moment-là, en effet, ça ne peut plus bouger. Si vous voulez changer quelque chose, il faut que vous la détruisiez et que vous en fassiez une autre. Parce qu'autrement, telle qu'elle est, elle ne bouge plus. C'est solide et immobile comme de la pierre. Et c'est la même chose dans la vie. Il ne faut pas être arrivé à quelque chose, puis rester cristallisé, fossilisé, immobilisé. Parce qu'alors, il faut briser, casser en petits morceaux, autrement on ne peut plus rien faire.

Tant qu'on reste de l'argile, comme ça, bien doux, bien malléable, qui n'est pas encore formé, et qui n'a pas conscience d'être formé, on peut faire quelque chose. Et tant qu'on est enfant, c'est un état béni...mais les enfants n'ont qu'une idée, c'est de devenir grands, et ils ne savent pas que quand ils seront grands, ils auront perdu les trois quarts de leur valeur, parce que leur valeur, justement, c'est d'être quelque chose qui peut être encore développé, formé, quelque chose de malléable, quelque chose de progressif, qui n'a pas besoin d'être cassé en petits morceaux pour faire des progrès.

Il y a des gens qui sont obligés de faire tout le tour de la montagne, comme ça, depuis le bas jusqu'en haut, et qui prennent toute une vie pour arriver en haut. Il y en a d'autres qui savent le chemin, le raccourci qu'on peut prendre et par lequel on peut arriver tout droit au but. Et une fois qu'ils sont là-haut, ils sont encore pleins de jeunesse, d'énergie, et ils peuvent voir l'horizon et quelle est la prochaine montagne. Tandis que les autres, ils ont conscience d'avoir fait une œuvre considérable en tournant autour, tournant autour, et en passant toute leur vie à arriver jusqu'en haut. Alors vous, mes enfants, on essaie de vous prendre tout en bas, de vous faire monter par le funiculaire jusqu'en haut, le chemin le plus court. Et quand vous serez en haut, alors vous aurez la vision des espaces qui sont en face de vous, et vous pourrez choisir la montagne que vous voulez gravir.

Et surtout ne vous hâtez pas de ne plus être un enfant. Il faut être un enfant toute sa vie, tant qu'on peut, aussi longtemps qu'on peut. Soyez heureux, content d'être un enfant, et restez enfant, de la matière plastique à former. Voilà.

A. Perhaps they would have been more recalcitrant.

Because there is nothing more difficult than to convince somebody who has already a realisation. He believes himself to be superior to all progress. It is not necessarily so. It is not necessarily one who has got experience that is the most advanced. He lacks an element of simplicity, of modesty, of the suppleness which comes of the fact that one is not yet fully developed. In proportion as one develops, something crystallises in the brain. It becomes more and more fixed; and unless one makes huge efforts, one ends up by being fossilised. It is generally what happens to people, especially to those who have made an effort of realisation and who have arrived or who have believed that they have reached their goal. In any case, it was their personal goal. They have attained it. They have arrived. That's finished, they stay there. They get fixed, they say : "I've got it," and they no longer budge. Then they may live ten years after that, twenty years, thirty years, they don't budge. They are there, they stay there. These lack in all suppleness of stuff needed for going

farther and progressing. They are fixed. They are objects good to be put in a museum, but not for doing work. They are like specimens, for showing what can be done, but not elements for doing further. As for me, I avow that I love better, for my work, someone who knows very little, who has not made too many efforts, but who has a great aspiration, a great will, and who feels in him this flame, this urge for progress. He may know very little, and have realised even less. But if he has this within himself, it is good stuff with which one may go very far, much farther. Because the way must be known in order to advance. Well, generally, in life, to climb a mountain or go to an unknown country, one looks for somebody who has been there, who is a guide, and one asks him the way. It is the same thing. If one lets oneself be guided, one can arrive much quicker than someone who has made great efforts, who has found his own way, and who is generally proud enough of himself, or, in any case, who has the feeling of having arrived, having attained the goal which he had set before himself; and he halts, he gets fixed, he moves no more.

At the start there were no children here, naturally, and no children were accepted, all children were refused. It is only after the war that they were taken. But I don't regret it. Because I believe that there is much more stuff for the future among the children who know nothing, than among the grown-ups who believe they know everything.

I haven't any idea whether you are well-informed about sculpture. But to make a piece of sculpture, you take some clay, soak it in water; it is necessary that the clay should be a very fine powder, and you make a paste of it. You keep it always moist and make your statue or whatever else. When the work is finished, you bake it so that it may not move any more. And at that moment, in effect, it cannot any more move. If you wish to change something, you have to destroy it and make of it something else. Because otherwise, such as it is, it does not move any more. It is solid and immobile like the stone. And it is the same thing in life. One must not reach something, otherwise one rests crystallised, fossilised, immobilised. Afterwards one will have to be broken, be smashed into bits, else nothing more can be done.

As long as one remains clay, like that, quite soft, quite malleable, still unformed, having no consciousness of being formed, something can be done. And as long as one is a child, it is a blessed state...but children have only one idea, it is to grow big, and they don't know that when they will have grown big they will have lost three-fourths of their value, because their value is just to be something which can still be developed, formed, something malleable, something progressive, which has no need to be smashed into bits in order to make progress.

MOTHER INDIA

There are people who are forced to go all round the mountain, like that, from the base up to the top, and who take a whole lifetime to reach the top. There are others who know the way, the short cut which they can take and by which they can get straight to their goal. And once they are up there, they are still full of youth and energy and they can see the horizon and what the next mountain is. Whereas the others have the consciousness of having done a considerable amount of work in turning round and round and in passing their whole life to reach up to the top. So, you my children, one can try to take you right from the base, to make you climb by the funicular railway to the top; that way is the shortest. And when you will be high up, then you will have the vision of the spaces which lie before you and you can choose the mountain which you would like to scale.

And, above all, don't be in a hurry to be no longer a child. One should be a child all one's life, as much as one can, as long as one can. Be happy, joyful, content to be a child, and remain a child, plastic matter to be moulded. So !

Q. Ne pouvez-vous pas changer quelqu'un qui a déjà fait des progrès, changer les hommes qui vieillissent ?

Q. Can't you change someone who has already made progress, change the men who have aged ?

R. On peut, on peut. On le fait. Mais c'est beaucoup plus difficile, et plus ils sont convaincus d'être arrivés à quelque chose, plus c'est difficile. Et quelquefois cela prend plus de temps.

A. One can, one can. One is doing it. But it is much more difficult, and the more they are convinced of having attained something, the more difficult. And occasionally it takes a lot of time.

Q. Pourquoi, avant la guerre, n'acceptait-on pas les enfants ?

Q. Why, before the war, were children not accepted ?

R. Ah, mes enfants, c'est très simple. C'est parce que les enfants sont des créatures très absorbantes. Quand il y a des enfants, on ne s'occupe plus guère que d'eux. Il faut que tout soit organisé pour eux, que tout soit arrangé pour leur bien-être, et tout l'aspect de la vie change. Les enfants sont les personnages les plus importants. Et toute l'organisation de l'Ashram a com-

plètement changé. Avant, c'était tout à fait différent. D'abord, il y avait une austérité que l'on ne peut pas imposer aux enfants. Il y a des simplicités et des austérités de vie qu'on peut imposer à des grandes personnes, parce qu'on leur dit : "C'est à prendre ou à laisser. Si vous ne pouvez pas le supporter, ou si ça ne vous plaît pas, eh bien, allez-vous-en. Voilà comment sont les choses. Si vous n'en voulez pas, vous pouvez partir, la porte est toujours ouverte." Mais un enfant, de quel droit exiger de lui ce qui n'est pas en rapport normal avec sa croissance ? Il faut qu'ils soient arrivés à une certaine maturité pour pouvoir faire leur choix; vous ne pouvez pas les obliger à faire quelque chose avant qu'ils aient la capacité de choisir. Vous devez leur donner tout normalement ce dont ils ont besoin. Et ça change totalement l'existence. Et je le savais très bien. J'avais déjà l'expérience de ce qu'est une vie de solitaires, d'un ensemble de solitaires, et l'expérience d'une vie où les enfants sont admis. C'est absolument, c'est totalement différent. On n'a pas le droit d'exiger d'un être certaines choses tant qu'il n'a pas le libre choix ; et tant qu'on n'est pas formé, tant qu'on n'est pas arrivé à une certaine maturité, on ne peut pas choisir. Quand on arrive à maturité, on choisit. Et les enfants ici ne sont pas venus d'eux-mêmes. La plupart d'entre vous, étiez haut comme une botte ; quel âge aviez-vous quand vous êtes arrivés ? On ne peut donc pas dire à l'enfant : "Tu as choisi, par conséquent c'est à prendre ou à laisser, tu fais comme cela ou tu t'en vas." On l'a amené, par conséquent on a le devoir de lui donner tout ce dont il a besoin ; et les besoins de l'enfant ne sont pas du tout les mêmes que les besoins des grandes personnes. C'est beaucoup plus compliqué.

Maintenant les choses sont différentes, parce que maintenant on ne dit plus aux gens : "Vous allez venir pour faire le yoga," on leur dit : "Vous allez venir pour tâcher d'apprendre dans quelles conditions la vie terrestre peut être améliorée." Alors on vient, on étudie. Quand on pense savoir ce que l'on veut apprendre, on s'en va. Ce n'est pas la même chose, et ce n'est pas la même condition que de venir avec un but précis et unique, comme de réaliser le divin dans sa vie physique, et que rien d'autre au monde ne compte sauf cela. Pour choisir, il faut au moins connaître un peu les éléments du choix. Et pour cela, il faut avoir une certaine formation intérieure, une certaine culture. Et on ne l'a certainement pas quand on a cinq ans. Excepté quelques-uns... Il y en a parmi vous, plus même qu'on ne pourrait le croire, qui savaient très bien pourquoi ils étaient venus, bien qu'ils ne puissent pas le formuler avec des mots. Ils le sentaient très intensément ; et quand les parents essayaient de les retirer, ils refusaient obstinément : "Non, je veux rester ici." Même à cinq ans, bien que dans la tête ils ne pouvaient pas savoir pourquoi, parce que le cerveau n'était pas formé. Mais la conscience

psychique était là, et ils sentaient. Eh bien, ces enfants-là sont d'une étoffe infiniment supérieure à celle des gens qui ont leur tête déjà aux trois-quarts abruti par l'enseignement qu'on leur donne dans les écoles ordinaires, et qui vous arrivent tout à fait convaincus qu'ils savent beaucoup de choses, qu'ils sont au courant de la vie. Ils ont le caractère formé, ils ont pris beaucoup de mauvaises habitudes. Voilà.

A. Ah, my children, it is very simple. It is because the children are very absorbing creatures. When there are children, one hardly busies oneself with anyone else. All has to be organised for them, all has to be arranged for their welfare, and every aspect of life changes. The children are the most important personages. And the whole organisation of the Ashram has completely changed. Before, it was altogether different. Firstly, there was an austerity which one cannot impose on children. There are simplicities and austerities of life which one can impose on grown-ups, because one tells them : "You have to take or leave. If you cannot bear it, or if it does not please you, well, go away. There, that's how things are. If you don't want them, you may leave, the door is always open." But a child, with what right can one demand from it what is not in normal keeping with its growth ? It has to arrive at a certain maturity to be able to make its choice ; you cannot force it to do something before it has the capacity to choose. You have to give it quite normally what it needs. And this totally changes the mode of life. And I have known it very well. I had already the experience of what is a life of solitaires, a group of solitaires, and the experience of a life where the children have been admitted. They are absolutely, they are totally different. One has no right to demand certain things from a being as long as it has no free choice ; and as long as one is not formed, as long as one has not reached a certain maturity, one cannot choose. When one reaches maturity, one chooses. And the children here have not come by themselves. Most of you were just boot-high ; what was your age when you came ? One cannot then say to the child : "You have chosen ; consequently you take or leave, you do like this or you go." The child has been brought ; consequently one has the duty to give it what it needs ; and the needs of the child are not at all the same as those of grown-ups. It is much more complicated.

Now things are different, because now one can no longer say to people : "You have come to do the Yoga." One says to them : "You are coming to try to learn under what conditions the earthly life can be improved." Then they come, they study. When they think they know what they want to learn, they go away. It is not the same thing. And it is not the same condition as coming with a precise and single aim, like realising the divine in the physical life, and nothing

TALKS OF THE MOTHER

else in the world counts except that. To choose, one should at least know, a little, the elements of the choice, and for that, it is necessary to have a certain inner formation, a certain culture. And one certainly hasn't got it when one is five years old. Except for some....There are a few such among you, more even than one would believe, who know very well why they have come, even if they cannot formulate it in words. They know it very intensely; and when their parents try to take them back, they refuse obstinately : "No, I wish to stay here." Even at the age of five, even though in the head they could not know why, because the brain was not developed. But the psychic consciousness was there, and they felt. Oh well, these children are of a stuff infinitely superior to that of people who have their heads already three-fourths made stupid by the teaching which was given them in the ordinary schools, and who come to us altogether convinced that they know a lot of things, that they are on familiar terms with life. They have a formed character, they have acquired a lot of bad habits. There !

30-9-1953

SADHANA IN THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. Why all this suffering of the physical being on the way to the Divine ?

It is the nature of the sadhana. The forces of the Ignorance are a perversion of the earth-nature and the adverse Powers make use of them. They do not give up their control of men without a struggle. 1.2.1935

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In its descent the peace and silence met a resistance in the lower vital (probably the most vital-physical) and the physical combined which instead of receiving the peace and silence and the release and joy it brings replied with inertia. This inertia gave an opportunity for the old vital suggestions *from outside* to act in you—because that is the ordinary release from inertia, to begin a vital activity good or bad. This would not have mattered, for the vital itself would have rejected it—but somewhere there was a sort of response, an acceptance of the inertia and through that a response to the vital suggestions, listening to them, giving them importance, not seeing the entire inanity of them. At the same time the inertia communicated itself to the mind, preventing the will from acting. Hence the difficulty. 15-3-1935

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Inertia or anything else must be felt as separate, not part of one's real self which is one with the Divine. 16-3-1935

Q. When the Mother pressed her hand on X's head to bless, I felt her touch concretely on my head! How does this happen ?

It shows that the subtle physical is growing conscious and felt [the] touch and blessings of the Mother which is always there. 20-3-1935

Q. At present many different flowers surge up before the inner sight. Before appearing, they themselves announce their significance. The flowers seen often are :

SADHANA IN THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

“The physical consciousness turned towards the Light” and “The Peace in the physical cells.”

It is evidently, from what you have written, the thing that is happening—the physical consciousness is opening to the spiritual experience.

It is usually when the psychic is active, that this seeing of flowers becomes abundant.

23-3-1935

Q. In action one feels detached and the Mother’s Force working in one’s place; one finds oneself above with her at the same time.

To live in a higher plane and see the action in the physical from it as something separate is a definite stage in the movement towards transformation.

24-3-1935

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If you remain in a fully conscious state, the cleaning of the nature ought not to be difficult—afterwards the positive work of the transformation into a perfect instrument can be undertaken.

29-3-1935

Q. Why do the following flowers present themselves repeatedly : “Psychic purity”, “Purity in the blood”, “Supramental Light in the physical” ? Are they thus announcing the advent of these things ?

The two first perhaps but the supramental light in the physical cannot come until much else is done to prepare the physical for it.

30-3-1935

Q. Can the body-consciousness suddenly emerge from the darkness of inertia and take the lead in sadhana and actually direct the mind and vital and finally disperse the disturbance in the subconscious ?

It is very possible when one reaches a certain stage. The Force acts directly through the part needed for the action.

17-4-1935

It is because the subconscious being just below the physical, the enlightened physical can act on it directly and completely in a way in which mind and vital cannot and by this direct action can help to liberate the mind and vital also.

17-4-1935

FROM : N.D.

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-TWO

A SONG of Shakespeare's from *Measure for Measure* closed our discussion of melopoëia. Well, Shakespeare is just the poet with whom to start our discussion of iconopoëia. For, Shakespeare is the superman of imagery. But let us first say a few prefatory words on our subject. Just as the music of melopoëia must come fused with significance, though not necessarily significance acceptable to the reasoning mind, so also the colour and shape, the contour and gesture brought by iconopoëia must come as organic part of the substance of poetry. By this I mean that true imagery is not something added to an idea or emotion, it does not serve simply as an illustration of either. It is such that the idea or emotion as a poetic entity lives only by it or at least draws its life from the core of it. But by imagery I do not here refer merely to a simile or metaphor. I include pure description which is charged with vision-intensity.

Intense description may pertain directly to the actual theme in hand or indirectly to it through a simile or metaphor which instead of being briefly etched is elaborated as so often in Homer. Homer, taking one or two main points in common between objects or situations or persons, launches again and again on long comparisons which are themselves complete pictures—small dramatic scenes inset into the main visual reconstruction: the *Iliad* contains 180 full-length similes and the *Odyssey* 40. Virgil, Dante and Milton also paint such pictures, but perhaps the best versions of the Homeric comparison outside Homer are in Matthew Arnold's blank-verse narratives—particularly his *Sohrab and Rustam*—and in those early works of Sri Aurobindo: *Urvashie*,

Love and Death, Baji Prabhau. We may cite one from Sri Aurobindo. He is describing the heavenly nymph Urvasie awaking from a swoon into which she fell under the abducting assault of a Titan. She awakes to the presence of her saviour, King Pururavas :

As when a child falls asleep unawares
 At a closed window on a stormy day,
 Looking into the weary rain, and long
 Sleeps, and wakes quietly into a life
 Of ancient moonlight, first the thoughtfulness
 Of that felicitous world to which the soul
 Was visitor in sleep, keeps her sublime
 Discurtained eyes; human dismay comes next,
 Slowly; last, sudden, they brighten and grow wide
 With recognition of an altered world,
 Delighted : so woke Urvasie to love.

I shan't linger over the metrical qualities or the verbal, except to mark the phrase "sublime discurtained eyes". The first adjective does not only mean : "exalted" by the wonder visited during slumber. I believe the literal Latin shade is present as in that phrase where, after saying that God made animals earthward-looking, Lucretius tells us : "os sublime dedit homini"—"He gave man an uplifted face." Sri Aurobindo's "child" awakes with her eyes physically uplifted, looking upward : a concrete pictorial touch goes with the general psychological suggestion. "Discurtained" has a twofold meaning in the reverse manner. It seems to signify more than just "opened by parting of the lids" : here to the concrete sense is added the idea that the earthly veil by which the eyes are shut off from the soul's world has been temporarily removed. Especially as this adjective follows "sublime", it yields that idea in sympathy with the psychological suggestion of the latter : the experience of exaltation is accompanied by the experience of revelation.

Now to our business. One may think that such lengthy similes are mostly decorative, but in fact when the poet has worked with true imagination they throw a subtle light upon a situation and bring out some truth from behind the surface of things. Sri Aurobindo speaks of a child. Urvasie, by being compared to this child, is revealed as a soul of innocence : she is, after all, a nymph of heaven, an *Apsarā*, and, as the poem says afterwards, the *Apsarās* remain ever pure, no matter what they do. The simile makes the child who had fallen asleep wake in the midst of moonlight and keep awhile the feeling of the supernatural felicity visited in dream. Moonlight here has a very significant

role. The moon is an old Indian symbol of Divine Nectar, supernatural felicity. If, then, the child awakes into a world whose familiarity is found pervaded and altered by "a life of ancient moonlight", is it surprising that she should retain the "thoughtfulness" of the felicitous dream-world? Although "human dismay" comes for a moment, it is brightness that finally remains, and the last word of the simile is "delighted", a word which, as applied to the eyes that "grow wide" still in the moonlight, strengthens further the moon's symbolism and the continuity of its light with the atmosphere of the dream-felicity. All this illuminates the love-experience into which Urvashie woke. Just as the swoon into which she had fallen was due to a monstrous attack on her, comparable to the child's day of storm and "weary rain", Urvashie's love-experience, which is essentially one of bliss, is shown to be a white luminosity belonging to some ageless depth of mysterious being and beatitude, some depth into which she must have plunged during her swoon just as the sleeping child is said to have sojourned in a paradisaal realm. The elaborate simile has indeed afforded us in a charming way an insight of Urvashie's life and love.

Shakespeare has very few elaborate comparisons. His mind is too active and darting for them. But almost every pulse and turn of the poet in him is iconopoeic. Images are the very stuff of his thinking and feeling and they are such in several modes. He does not just vivify abstract things, as in the sonnet-opening which depicts the condition or sense of ageing :

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves or few or none do hang...

(Was he by any chance referring to his falling hair which left his head the monumental egg we see in his pictures?) He also makes the abstract possess concrete qualities as if it could do no other :

I have lived long enough : my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf...

It seems the most natural thing for a way of life to do what it does here. Again, Shakespeare does not rest with activating concretely an observation of the misfortune suffered in a changing mortal existence such as all of us know : *e.g.*

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time...?

He can also catch an awesome impalpable reality in its very essence of strangeness, as by that vibrant evocation which Sri Aurobindo finds full of overtones and has somewhere considered one of the rarest poetic revelations :

In the dark backward and abysm of time...

We may remark how Shakespeare gets his best effect frequently by a combination of the abstract with the concrete : “sere” with “yellow”, “scorns” with “whips”, “abysm” with “backward”. Somehow the concreteness thus becomes both intensified and magnified.

Of course, the line about the “dark backward” is Shakespeare at an unusual occupation, almost an occupation that is mystical. At a more characteristic level he is a puissantly colourful metaphorist of the objects and scenes he finds around him and he employs all the resources of an abundant vocabulary, as in the apostrophe to Sleep by a troubled King, the apostrophe from which Sri Aurobindo has so often admired for image-vividness as well as for richness of word and rhythm those three lines :

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge ?

Shakespeare is not shy of double epithets nor of packing his rhythm with alliterative sounds—six *r*’s from the end of the second line to the end of the third.

Sri Aurobindo has also commented on the verses in which Shakespeare, with his eye again on the “surge”, commits a metaphorical violence :

Or take up arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them ?¹

Sri Aurobindo imagines what may be called the Johnsonian critical method *vis-à-vis* such poetry—“the method which expects a precise logical order in thoughts and language and pecks at all that departs from a matter-of-fact or strict and rational ideative coherence or a sober restrained classical taste.” Sri Aurobindo writes : “What would the Johnsonian critic say to Shakespeare’s famous lines ? He would say, ‘What a mixture of metaphors and jumble of ideas ! Only a lunatic could take up arms against a sea ! A sea of troubles is a too fanciful metaphor and, in any case, one can’t end the sea by opposing it, it is more likely to end you.’ Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing; he saw the mixture as well as any critic and he accepted it because it brought home, with an inspired force which a neater language could not have had, the

¹ Actually the lines start “Or to take arms” and not “Or take up arms”. I am retaining the form commented on by Sri Aurobindo.

exact feeling and idea that he wanted to bring out." I may add that a proof of Shakespeare's awareness is that he skilfully eludes being caught by the Johnsonian critic's booby-trap : "Can one end a sea instead of being ended by it ?" Mark that in the second half-line Shakespeare speaks not of ending the sea but of ending the troubles—he uses "them" and not "it".

We can gauge the wrong-headedness of Johnsonian criticism by referring to Johnson's own balancing against one of the most admired passages in *Macbeth* three couplets from Dryden's drama, *The Indian Emperor*. Dryden gives the stage-direction : "Enter Cortez alone in a night-gown"—and then the speech of the night-gowned hero :

All things are hush'd, as Nature's self lies dead;
The mountains seem to nod their drowsy head;
The little birds in dreams their songs repeat,
And sleeping flowers beneath the night-dew sweat :
Even Lust and Envy sleep; yet Love denies
Rest to my soul, and slumber to my eyes.

A contemporary of Johnson, Rhymer, singled out this passage as a touchstone of poetic taste. But Wordsworth calls it "vague, bombastic and senseless." I for one find it positively comic in parts and, on the whole, a poor play of fancy and sentimentalism.

However, in fighting free of Johnsonian criticism, which is suspicious of imaginative audacity and partial to the softly pretty and superficially dignified, we must not fall into a penchant for the extravagant and the contorted which were very much in vogue in Shakespeare's day and which Shakespeare himself often dangerously skirted—things like that outrageous distortion of Homer by Chapman in his translation of the *Iliad* :

And such a stormy day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
When sacred Troy shall shed her towers for tears of overthrow.

The second line is what is called a conceit—something which, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, does not convey any true vision or emotion but is meant to strike and startle the intellectual imagination. Shakespeare, we said in an earlier Talk, has a strong tendency to be ingenious, but he mostly carries off his ingenuities by working not from the brain-mind but from some white-hot centre of multiple sight in the depths of his passionate vitality. Even when he is not openly energetic, whatever apparent exaggeration he indulges in is supported by a true throb of feeling, a genuine imaginative tension. Thus, when Othello, in his speech before his suicide, tells us of himself as being one

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whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum,

we get a picture that, unlike Chapman's of tear-towers, has a pathos appropriate and keen at once by the extreme simile fetched by the speaker and by the romantically pricking strangeness of the simile and by the tears' background of rugged restrained dignity which is hinted in the second line.

The vital depths and the keen eye drawing upon them save Shakespeare not only from fanciful falsities but also from the generalities, sedate or high-pitched, that we often encounter in the dramatic language of his contemporaries—even contemporaries who have something or other Shakespearean about them. *The Cambridge History of English Literature* says: "In the mechanical elements of poetic rhythm, Massinger comes very near to Shakespeare; but, when we look deeper, and come to the consideration of those features of style which do not admit of tabular analysis, we find the widest difference." This difference may be briefly shown to the best effect by a few passages. A.H. Cruickshank has juxtaposed some lines from Massinger with those from Shakespeare to which they have an affinity, and T.S. Eliot has made comments. Here is Massinger speaking—

Can I call back yesterday with all their aids
Who bow unto my sceptre ? or restore
My mind to that tranquillity and peace
It then enjoyed ?

("Their aids" is equal to "the aids of those" or "the aids of them"—an example of a peculiar English turn adopted several times by Sri Aurobindo in his writings.) Now take Shakespeare in *Othello* :

Not poppy nor mandragora
Nor all the drowsy syrops of the world
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday.

("Owe" in Elizabethan English connotes "possess", "own".) Eliot remarks: "Massinger's is a general rhetorical question, the language just and pure but colourless. Shakespeare's has particular significance; and the adjective

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'drowsy' and the verb 'medicine' infuse a precise vigour." Again, Massinger writes :

Thou didst not borrow of Vice her indirect
Crooked and abject means.

Shakespeare has :

God knows, my son,
By what bypaths and indirect crook'd ways
I met this crown.

Says Eliot : "Massinger gives the general forensic statement, Shakespeare the particular image. 'Indirect crook'd' is forceful in Shakespeare, a mere pleonasm in Massinger. 'Crook'd ways' is a metaphor; Massinger's phrase only the ghost of a metaphor." (Eliot's "forensic" I understand as "affirmative in a public legalistic manner.") Once more, listen to Massinger :

And now in the evening,
When thou shouldst pass with honour to thy rest,
Wilt thou fall like a meteor ?

Then lend your ears to Shakespeare :

I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more.

("Exhalation" means a puff in the air, a short burst of something vaporous.) Eliot's comment : "Here the lines of Massinger have their own beauty. Still, 'a bright exhalation' appears to the eye and makes us catch our breath in the evening; 'meteor' is a dim simile; the word is worn." Finally there is Massinger's :

What you deliver to me shall be lock'd up,
In a strong cabinet, of which you yourself
Shall keep the key.

And there is Shakespeare's :

'Tis in my memory locked,
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Eliot has the verdict : "In the preceding passage Massinger had squeezed his simile to death, here he drags it round the city at his heels ; and how swift Shakespeare's figure is !"

To put it broadly : everywhere it is the unfailing iconopoeic energy of Shakespeare—his sense of the concrete and his gift of sight—wedded to a supreme word-craftsmanship, that makes his significances leap alive. But perhaps the most characteristic Shakespeareanism is not a single throbbing comparison as in the above excerpts : it is a swift succession of independent metaphors linked only by some inner necessity and by their immediate relevance to the theme, as in Macbeth's appeal to his physician on behalf of his wife:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart ?

What physician would not be enraptured on hearing an appeal like this ? I am sure our Dr. Nripendra or Dr. Gupta would feel like a god if asked to do such things in such language. Perhaps even our Dr. Sanyal and Dr. Satyabrata Sen, though they are more surgeons than physicians, would thrill ; for, Macbeth speaks of plucking a rooted sorrow, razing out brain-troubles and cleansing the stuffed bosom—procedures that appear to call for deep-going operations, the surgeon's job.

But possibly Dr. Sanyal and Dr. Sen would respond more to a certain surprising image of Eliot's and at once brandish their knives in exultant appreciation :

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table...

It almost sounds like one surgeon egging another on to take advantage jointly of a wonderfully opportune situation in Nature. To operate on an anaesthetized evening ! By Hippocrates, that's a thing few Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons could hope to do—unless the sky falls and overwhelms them with grace. But, leaving aside acknowledged F.R.C.S.'s we may ask whether Eliot has produced here a true poetic image that could please this unconventional F.R.C.S. before you—this Fellow Researching in Com-

parisons and Symbols or, if you want to generalise, this Fellow Roaring to Cute Students. At once we have to admit that the image is extraordinarily clever. The question is : Is it poetic ? Let us try to understand what is intended. Evidently an atmosphere and a mood are sought to be suggested. When the time of evening is compared to a sick person put under an anaesthetic, ready in his submerged state of mind to be operated upon, and you and I are asked to go somewhere at that time, immediately the keynote of the poem is struck. You and I are going to visit a world whose mind no less than body is sick and has sunk in vitality and awareness. And we are going to perform the operation of probing the cause of this neurotic disease. But merely to strike the keynote successfully is not enough for poetic ends. A justification has to be provided for the comparison made.

The fact that evening-time is neither day nor darkness but the middle term that is twilight gives point to the image so far as the psychological element is concerned. The anaesthetised patient who represents the sick world is in a state of mind which is neither life's day nor death's night but a certain hovering mid-existence in which all purpose and drive have grown indistinct, leaving nothing more than an issueless self-absorption. There is also the fact that twilight is characterised by a diffusion of faint red colour : this connects it up with the bleeding which takes place under an operation but of which the patient himself, in his fainted condition, is unaware. That unconscious bleeding may be taken to stand for the patient on whom the operation is performed : the patient is but one mass of unconscious bleeding matter. Then the evening which is composed of a dimness of diffused crimson against the sky can very well be called an anaesthetised patient spread out upon a table during an operation. Finally, we have the word "etherized". It comes from the noun "ether" which belongs to two spheres : the operation-theatre where we may go under anaesthesia, and the space above us which science terms etheric and poetry calls ethereal. The use of a passive past participle derived from this noun is sheer inspiration. The whole imaginative impact of the lines would have evaporated if "chloroformed" instead of "etherized" had been used : the patient and the evening would have missed the ultimate fusion. The case would have been worse than Massinger's "meteor" where Shakespeare has "a bright exhalation in the evening". "Meteor" is at least a touch upon the eye, however dull. "Chloroformed" would touch only the brain-cells and make a merely ideative connection with the twilight in the sky. "Etherized" nearly evokes an opposite Shakespearean phrase, visual and vivid : "a dim inhalation in the evening".

I think that Eliot, no matter how curiously, has succeeded in making poetry of the kind we have designated as piquant. Extremely piquant iconopoeia is

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created in the modernist mode which does not put a *cordon sanitaire* around usually prosaic departments of life but intrudes everywhere with a semi-satiric semi-morbid acuteness of sensation-seeking intellect. Shakespeare would have congratulated Eliot here—Shakespeare who could come out with realistic ingenuities like :

his brain

Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit
After a voyage.

I suppose the etherized patient's brain must be similarly dry.

Actually, I should be able to decide the point. For, I have been on two occasions an etherized patient. It all happened in London where my father, a Bombay doctor, had taken me when I was about six years old. I had suffered an attack of infantile paralysis—present pet-name "polio"—and in those days India held out no hopes for a polio-victim. The heel of my left foot had got pulled up by the paralytic infection and the muscles around the left knee had become useless. I had to walk with a hand pressed to my knee in order to force the up-drawn heel down to floor-level. The leg did not have strength enough to let me move like half a ballet-dancer, tripping on one toe ! Today, though I still limp, I can walk without doubling up—thanks to the skill of Dr. Tubby, the surgeon under whose knife I lay in an etherized condition. But I don't remember whether my brain, on awaking from the effects of the ether-fumes, felt as if it had been dry like Shakespeare's biscuit. Don't conclude that my forgetting is due to the fact that I was a tiny tot. I remember a host of other things connected with my trip to England. I'll tell you about them one day. I have forgotten simply because I was not interested in the matter. How could I be interested when I had not read Shakespeare and Eliot and when the experience of my etherization was one I wanted very much to raze out ? Yes, it was an unpleasant experience. On the first occasion of the two, I hardly knew what was going to occur : so I breathed in the sickly-sweetish fumes like an innocent idiot. On the second occasion everything in me revolted and I endeavoured to get my face away from the mask through which the fumes were being passed into my nose. On failing to be effective with mere nose-movement I got one of my hands into action and pushed the mask off so violently that the anaesthetic liquid flowed over and streamed down my face. I started crying—but the anaesthetician burst out laughing. Oh how I hated the fellow ! If Dr. Tubby could have lent me his knife for a second I would have tried to perform an immediate operation on the anaesthetician without bothering to etherize him !

When the liquid was spilt, I hoped that the surgeon would give up the

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job he had to do. But I was not to be spared. The mask was clamped once more upon my face and, although I still protested, I somehow inhaled the fumes and in a jiffy I—to invert Eliot's simile—was spread out upon the operation-table like an evening against the sky...

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

THE MOTHER* MAHAKALI

MAHAKALI, the ceaseless torrent of Power,
Desires not the vast, but the loftiest Peak.
Not lore, but might supernal, her choice divine.
Hers is the peerless speed beyond surmise,
The wonder-passion to win victory
With her thunder-Feet She tramples over the souls
That dare deny the Truth, the Law of the One.

Even our trifling flaws She fails to brook.
Ruthless She fights in enormous ire with all
In man that fights shy of a golden change.
Against all perfidy, falsehood, lurid spite
Her tremendous fury is swifter than a bolt.
Never She lets apathy or heedlessness
In the work divine to grow and spread all-where.
Anon She smites awake with poignant pangs
The man who wanders in the land of nod,
And him who ever hangs about care-free.

The moon-white cry that climbs up quick in flame
From the human heart blooms from her Bounty alone.
Dauntless is her Spirit, lofty her Vision-Will.
And as her mighty march engenders fear
In the feeble heart, so is She loved and adored
By the noble, the strong, for they know this Mother smites
Only the thing that revolts within their core.
Her presence high with half an eye performs
Centuries' tireless work in a single day.
She alone on lore bestows a conquering might.
Our hard and tardy toil that pines to clasp
The star of perfection true, immaculate,
Receives from her a push unique that ekes
In a measure infinite our inner strength.
She only owns the triumphant Force of the One.
Luminous her Face becomes with a secret Bliss
The moment we cry for the Pinnacle unknown.

“MADAL”

A versification of the substance of the section on Mahakali in *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

UNRECOGNISED FRIENDS

YOUR darkness hides a light, O pain! O sorrow !
The urge to gain Heaven's realm from you we borrow.
How all grew deep and sober since you came !
Yet how we curse and blame you, seeds of flame
Mounting up, touching the heart of God who leans
To brace the human soul and tear the screens
Of ignorance, the blinding magic, and then you cease
And change into unspeakable fathomless ease.
For then your task is over, O friends of man,
O secret tools of God to work His plan
Of leading suffering dwarfs, who in mire roam,
To Light, the Source of bliss, infinity's Home.
I shall not crave and call your wounding fight;
But, when you come, guest in my heart your might
To vex me, till I reach the mystic Height.

DEVAKI NANDAN

I DON'T BELIEVE

I DON'T believe
That devotees
'Are not just made, but born',
It not so,
Because we grow,
And can ourselves transform.

The greatest saints
All had some taints
Before they went aspiring
Towards the light,
The sovereign height
They climbed without a-tiring.

They found by this
Immortal bliss
Though they were mortal men :
They fell in love
With God above
And ne'er fell out again.

GODFREY

MY FIRST BALCONY DARSHAN

(Extract from a letter written to a friend)

We arrived at Pondicherry in the afternoon of the 12th of February, 1960. The next morning we went for the "Balcony Darshan". The Mother came ! Before blessing the waiting devotees, how solicitiously she surveyed the whole gathering, embracing, so to say, each and every one with her eyes ! Then commenced concentration. The concentration over, she graciously smiled.

Then commenced her parting—nay, her tearing herself from us. She did not turn her back upon us. She retraced her steps all the time facing us, broadening and enlarging her gracious smile.

She seemed to say to us with her eyes :

"Children, I wish I could be with you all the time possible. However, I have to work for you and for the world. I have got to go, I wish I could help it. Alas, I cannot ! Nevertheless, be of good cheer, and good-bye for the present, darlings, till we meet tomorrow morning."

She seemed to lengthen out the duration of her sight of us to the uttermost. How reluctantly she retired—with hardly quarter steps backwards ! Effectively did she actualise to me the words of the poet, Thomas Gray,

...cast one longing lingering look behind.

What a loving and self-sacrificing mother ! No wonder, she is adored as the Divine Mother Incarnate.

DR. MOHANLAL V. SONPAR

BREATH OF THE SPIRIT

If you must be mad, let it not be with the things of the world, but be mad with the love of the Lord.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Better to be in hell with God than to be in heaven without Him.

Circle in point, blossom in seedling lies;
Those who seek God within the world are wise.

ANGELUS SILESIUS

We all know how important it is to put our trust in God—but it's even more important to realize that God is putting His trust in us.

THE COUNTRYMAN CALLING

The essence of man lies in this, in his marvellous faculty for seeking truth, seeing it, and sacrificing to it.

GUISEPPE PREZZOLINI

Become as God; then ah! what joy is thine!
Thou drinkest God with every sip of wine.

ANGELUS SILESIUS

The end of all learning is to know God, and out of that knowledge to love and imitate Him.

MILTON

WHY WAS ANTIOCHUS, THE HERO OF SRI AUROBINDO'S EPIC DRAMA *RODOGUNE* DESTINED TO DIE WITHOUT FULFILLING HIS MISSION ?

*(The following answers were written by students of standard
9B of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in a
recent Quarterly Examination.)*

I

PERHAPS it is a mortal law that every human being should have a low aspect along with a high one. Perhaps the quality of good does not shine forth if it is not placed side by side with that of evil. But when man destroys that evil power and makes room in his heart only to receive the light, the truth, then he reaches his supreme manhood. When man moulds himself only with the true aspects then he is no longer an ordinary man, but a perfect instrument of the Divine.

Through the character of Antiochus, Sri Aurobindo has shown us how the greatness of a man can altogether be destroyed by a low aspect of his nature. Antiochus was great, open-hearted and noble. A great wisdom mixed with a high purpose formed his personality. He believed in his own capacity and his royal nature as a gift of God. But this belief was not separated from ego, which was the cause of his fatal end. He thought that his desires should be fulfilled as though by some natural law. Perhaps he had the ambition of the heart but not the pure aspiration of the soul which seeks not for the satisfaction of the personal being, but for the good of all humanity. Sometimes we see that his love seemed great, but he was cold in heart. His was not the love that can embrace all mankind.

Antiochus was arrogant and that arrogance is brought out when he says to his brother :

“Thoughtst thou thy light and shallow head
Was meant to wear a crown ?”¹

¹ P. 66

and again,

“What is it to thee whom or what I love ?”

Here we see that all the kindness vanishes from his heart at this moment. He is tremendously selfish when he says to Timocles :

“Exalt not thy presumptuous eyes henceforth
Higher than her sandals.”¹

And he reaches the extreme point of his lower nature when he says :

“Thou shalt have
My sword across thy heart-strings first. She is
The kingdom’s prize and with the kingdom mine.”²

But he is clever and changes his tone, saying :

“I pardon thee, my brother Timocles;
Thy light passions are thy excuse.”³

We have the impression that he had the intuition of a God-given power in him and of the mission he had to fulfil on this earth—because once he says, “Who am I ? Whence come I ?,” etc. Then at once the question arises : Why then did he fail ? That is because he wronged his spiritual mission and wanted to conquer or fulfil his desires for his personal satisfaction and not as the work of the Divine. His personal ambition was the cause of his failure.

For this same reason he could not have his Rodogune. He denied his brother’s love for her which was no less than his own. He loved, but there was no humility in it. His is not the love of one whose whole heart is eager to surrender at the feet of his beloved, but it was an egoistic love that cried aloud, as it seems, “She ought to be mine by a natural law, because I want her.” He wanted everything : the Kingdom and along with it the Parthian. Sacrifice of desire is the first bar that one has to cross in order to reach a great goal; and Antiochus was unable to sacrifice one for the other. So this idea of having everything and that merely for his own satisfaction is the cause of his failure in this life. If Antiochus had outgrown his ego and worked as an instrument of the Divine, then Death would have lost its power to approach him before he completed his mission.

MANJUSRI

¹ p. 66

² p. 65.

³ p. 92.

There was something radically wrong with Antiochus. In spite of all his nobilities, there lurked certain ominous signs that confirmed the peculiarity in his character. The great godlike power that flowed through him he used for his own selfish purpose. His ambition and the attitude of 'all is mine' were his greatest hindrances to achieving his desires. The whole conception of his work lay on faulty ground. His total indifference towards his mother and the selfish stand he took in personal matters were not the qualities a God-chosen mission could have. He had the dynamism, but his purpose was utterly different.

And again if one considers the silent manner in which he accepted his conquest, it shows that he recognised the lack of divine will behind his mission. Very often what the human mind endeavours for does not turn out exactly as is conceived. He did not have a true love for Rodogune. He was not destined to have her or the throne. Had God willed that he succeed, then whatever might have been the difficulties, in time they would have been surmounted.

ANUP

Sri Aurobindo has chosen Antiochus as his hero in the romantic drama *Rodogune*. Antiochus had a god-like stirring in him. He had all the qualities of a good king; he was strong, noble and ambitious. In spite of these good qualities, he failed to get the throne of Syria. Fate mocked at him.

Sri Aurobindo did not intend to portray his hero all in white. Antiochus had a few faults in him, but these were so grave that they stood as obstacles to the fulfilment of his ambitions. He had no heart; he loved no one. He did not love his brother sincerely; he could not love his mother. As he had not seen his mother from his infancy, he was not able to love her. This seemed to enforce his strength but at the same time it dried up his nature. His mother told him : "There is no place for love in thy cold heart." In this respect, Timocles who dreamt of his sweet mother was more a human than he.

Antiochus loved Timocles but behind his love and affection there was a desire to make Timocles a slave of his, or at least a subordinate. He wanted whomever he loved to do as he pleased. That is why Timocles said :

"What's his love ?

A despot's longing for a slave,
Carnal, imperial, harsh, without respect,
The hunger of the vital self, not raised,
Refined, uplifted to the yearning heart."¹

¹ *Ibid.*

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It is absolutely true. When Timocles put forward his desire to get Rodogune, he frankly said that though he desired the Syrian throne, he would give it to Antiochus in exchange for Rodogune. He said everything in a soft generous manner but Antiochus answered roughly and arrogantly.

Antiochus had a god-like stirring in him. He was well aware of it; he knew he had a mission. But he wanted to use his god-like power for his selfish desires. He wanted the entire globe as his empire, all women's hearts as his own. His hungry ambition could not be appeased and he wanted more and more for himself. He had "an ambition almost inhuman." He respected no one and did not care for anyone's advice. Whatever he thought best, he did. Whatever he conceived for himself, he tried to possess. He had

".....a haughty mind
That lifts itself above the highest heads
As if his mortal body held a god
And all were mean to him."¹

The strength he had in him was born untimely. He used it for his ambition and thus he misled his soul. These are the main reasons why he could not get Rodogune and died before he could ascend the throne.

JOY TAGORE

¹ *Ibid.*

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

(Continued from the October issue)

6

IMAGES of vehemence and fiery passion abound in Nuntius' account of the duel to the king—Confires of contributory wood (II, i, 44), lighted paper (II, i, 72), fire and ashes (II, i, 73), the ne'er-shutting wounds (II, i, 79), pointed comet (II, i, 82), the deadly-bitten point tugged off (II, i, 88), oak long shook with tempests (II, i, 94-95) radical fibres burst (II, i, 100), the sky with storms (II, i, 99), the fear-cold earth (II, i, 101) and opposite fumes in the upper region of a cloud (II, i, 110-11). Bussy himself is described as "fierce", "fiery", and as "a laurel put in fire sparkled and split". Among these images, the images of trees like other images from nature in Chapman, says Miss. Holmes, are endowed with an individual life.¹

Henry, weak as he is, forgives Bussy, for all the "piteous and horrid murder" he has committed, and says :

D'Ambois, let your life

.....
Be purged from more such sinful pollution.

Thereafter, Bussy is purged from "such sinful pollution" indeed but only by becoming peculiarly susceptible to another.

This naturally takes us to the second theme of the play—the theme of Romantic Passion. Bussy loves Tamyra the Countess of Montsurry who is also loved by Monsieur. The Countess rejects the love-suit of Monsieur, for she is passionately in love with Bussy. When Montsurry tells her to bear with Monsieur because "he is a bachelor and a courtier... and a prince", she tells him :

I cannot live at quiet in my chamber
For opportunities almost to rapes
Offer'd me by him.

¹ *Some Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, p. 86.

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The very same woman, when left alone, says that she is

In mine own dark love and light bent to another

and

Frailty is fruitful, one sin gets another :
Our love like sparkles are, that brightest shine
When they go out; most vice shows most divine.

The woman who calls her husband earlier the sun and bids him adieu by saying "that the sun hath left the whole world's beauty ere my sun leaves me" now bids farewell to her "light and life". Now begins their "wane of...affections". In her mad fondness for Bussy, she finds herself in a fix and invokes "all the friends of rest in Nature" and bids them make still "the violent wheels of Time and Fortune" :

Now all ye peaceful regents of the night,
Silently gliding exhalations,
Languishing winds, and murmuring falls of waters,
Sadness of heart and ominous secureness,
Enchantments, dead sleeps, all the friends of rest
That ever wrought upon the life of man,
Extend your utmost strengths, and this charm'd hour
Fix like the centre ! Make the violent wheels
Of Time and Fortune stand, and great Existence
(The Maker's treasury) now not seem to be
To all but my approaching friends and me.

Here is the central image of the play which crystallizes the meaning of the play. The "violent wheels of Time and Fortune" are contrasted with the still "centre" which is "the great Existence" and "the Maker's treasury". This is one of the passages in the play which illustrate a statement of Miss Holmes's :

"Many of the passages are of storm and movement, but there are some exquisite images of stillness".¹

It was perhaps the expression of "the still point of the turning world" in pas-

¹ *Some Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery*, p. 84.

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

sages like this that led Sir Herbert Grierson to speak of the 'metaphysical' character of Chapman's metaphors.¹

We find Tamyra getting herself involved in the flux of passion as Bussy himself gets caught earlier in the play in the flux of politics. So she says :

I fly my sex, my virtue, my renown
To run so madly on a man unknown.

Camolet the Friar is the man who acts as a pander between the lovers caught in "affection's storm".

Tamyra, though in love with Bussy, is not free from a sense of sin-consciousness. She is "torn inwardly by the struggle between her passion and the sense of guilt."² She is "subject to the heartless fear of every shadow, of every breath." The "tyranny" and "the dangerous siege of sin" appear to her like "the horror of a winter's thunder, mix'd with a gushing storm" as opposed to the security of virtue which is shown in the images of "roof" and "shelter" (III, i, 18). In the speech that follows where Bussy tries to console Tamyra, Bussy characterises sin as a coward. We are struck by the images of "shadows" and "empty clouds" (III, i, 24) in the speech and those of terrifying and Kingly animals—dragons, lions, elephants (III, i, 25) and monster (III, i, 27). This passage on sin is "a good instance of Chapman's dialectic. Bussy is not speaking of sin in general terms; he is persuading Tamyra, who is still reluctant".³ The animal imagery shows the courage evinced by the virtuous Bussy in the path of vicious passion and the shadow is something which forecasts the coming of his tragic end.

This dramatic tension in Tamyra endures till at last virtue takes a holiday. No wonder she declares :

We cannot keep our constant course in virtue—

and speaks of "the false clock of life" with its mechanical round in which "every thought...oft-times inverts the whole circumference". She says :

¹ See his book *The First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Periods of European Literature Series), Section on Webster, p. 118.

Also cf. George Williamson who gives a list of 'metaphysical' conceits in Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* in "The Donne Tradition" (see pp. 255-257 in Paperbound Edition, 1958).

² T.M. Parrott (Ed.): *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, p. 545.

³ A.S. Ferguson, "The Plays of George Chapman", *Modern Language Review*, Vol. XIII (1918), p. 8.

Our bodies are but thick clouds to our souls.

Stars, the sun (III, i, 80), the "beams" (III, i, 82) and the "ordered rays" (III, i, 84) describe the nature of the better part in a man or woman and vapours (III, i, 81), "motes" (III, i, 83), "passion's fumes" (III, i, 85) and "all earth's vapours" (III, i, 86) are the images of the weaker part in a man or woman. Tamyra "no less than Bussy has chosen to live in surroundings where virtue has small chance of surviving".¹

In the meanwhile, Bussy becomes, in the words of Montsurry, "Fortune's proud mushroom shot up in a night", a favourite with the king. The king addresses Bussy as his "eagle" and says that "flatterers are kites that check at sparrows". This has an obvious reaction on Monsieur and the nobles in the court who conspire against Bussy.

Pero, the maid of Tamyra, discloses to Monsieur the affair between Bussy and Tamyra. Pero's song on chastity, which is in the form of a riddle, sets up the theme of Romantic Passion :

What's that, being most rare's most cheap ?
That when you sow, you never reap ?
That when it grows most, most you in it;
And still you lose it when you win it ?
That when 't is commonest, 't is dearest,
And when 't is farthest off, 't is nearest ?

Monsieur once again expatiates upon the nature of the heart's passion, now from the point of view of Tamyra. He speaks of the "unbounded sea of women's bloods" which "when it is calmest is most dangerous". The images of "dark and standing fogs" (III, ii, 301) and "cloud of sulphur" (III, ii, 306) are references to the evil passions that surge in the bosom of woman.

In a frank, free, final, heart-to-heart discussion with Bussy, Monsieur asks him whether he would do one thing sincerely for him. To this Bussy replies :

Ay, anything but the killing of the king.

In the course of the conversation, Monsieur characterises Bussy as "a wild horse or tiger" and "The ravenous wolf" of "cannibal vigour".

When, in a banquet given by the king, the question of relationship between the sexes arises, Bussy in an admirable and fitting conceit calls women "the

¹ Ennis Rees, *The Tragedies of George Chapman*, p. 41.

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

idols of moon (IV, i, 16) governing the sea of men's hearts as it waxes or wanes. This recalls the earlier speech by Monsieur where he compares the influence of the moon on the sea to that of woman on man. Monsieur incidentally hints at Tamyra's affair with Bussy. But Henry dismisses it by saying that

Her courtship is more pure than heretofore.

Bussy directly attacks Monsieur in the presence of others and says that he would toss him in the air by his "roughness" and "hardness". Throughout Bussy's impetuous attack, Henry remains passive like a silent spectator and feels "a calm before a tempest" and sees in these events "the dim ostents of tragedy". No wonder Montsurry observes that

The King and D'Ambois now are grown all one.

(To be concluded)

S. KANDASWAMY

TOWARDS "THE LIFE DIVINE"

I

SRI AUROBINDO deals with 'Indeterminates, Cosmic Determinations and the Indeterminable' in *The Life Divine*, Chapter I, Book II. He elucidates the indications that can be seen in the different lines of manifestation in the world. I shall try to give a gist of his discussion.

At the very outset he says ditto to the Vedic seers and observes that an Infinite Consciousness-Force is there at the root of the entire creation. "A Consciousness-Force everywhere inherent in Existence, acting even when concealed, is the Creator of the occult secret of Nature." The play of intuition was evidently natural to the seers of the Vedic Age. Intuition was inherent, so to say, in the very make-up of their mind. And the knowledge of truth happened to dawn on them through this faculty of intuition. But the way of the present-day mentality is to place before the mind things in the frame of syllogistic reasoning. In these days it is rarely possible to get directly to the occult truth right in the beginning. The nature of the present-day mind is, as it were, to proceed slowly through analysis and reasoning carried on by the tumbling and veering intellect. No wonder, then, if the mind raises objections to accepting the existence of the Infinite Consciousness at the root of the creation spontaneously without any act of ratiocination and discrimination. We do not meet with any proof of that unique Consciousness either in the world or in ourselves. What else is our mental consciousness as it is at present save an admixture of light and shade, of broken bits of thoughts and ideas hustled together? And the things that we see in the objective world are no other than the alternate integrations and disintegrations of inert matter and blind force. One may perhaps argue that if an Infinite Consciousness-Force were at the root of the creation, then one could be able to perceive it in atoms and molecules as well. On the other hand, our mental vision can envisage only the existence of an infinite stress of Nescience, inconscient matter at the very commencement of the creation. If with the eye of imagination we look at the pre-natal state of the creation, we do not find there the forms of the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, etc. Beyond the formed existences is the vast Formless and beyond the Formless is the Indeterminate. The world then is the expression of this Indeterminate Reality, the Absolute that beggars

all description. Who can tell how many millions of centuries were needed for the manifestation of this earth? On the base of this matter there appeared, much later on, life and living beings and after countless ages mental consciousness which was inherent in life made its appearance. Yet the evolution of Nature has not reached its acme here. Rather it is now on the way to attain a higher level, with a greater evolutionary nisus. We can without much ado think that an Infinite, Indeterminate and Absolute Reality must be the prime source of all the different lines of the creation. Or it can as well be said that the creation has originated from 'an infinite mystic Zero of Non-Existence.' But by its very nature the human mind is incapable of conceiving the possibility of this universe in its diversity as coming out of an indeterminate Non-Existence. Also, our mind refuses to accept the doctrine of the world having emanated from Time or Space or a limitless expanding Finite. But, whichever theory we may accept, it leads us to something indeterminate and absolute as the root cause of the creation. The Infinite Existence, the Infinite Non-Existence and the Expanding limitless Finite, (Space or Time or Space-Time continuum) are all featureless devoid of connotation or quality. And the problem is: how could this creation in its infinite qualities come into existence from a featureless, contentless origin?

By scientific research we arrive at a great primal Energy that has defied all determinations till now. We infer its existence only from the effects of its actions. The scientists accept some axioms and postulates which cannot be perceived by the senses, but have to be conceived by the intellect. Therefore these axioms and postulates are rightly called representative fictions. The doctrine of Energy belongs to this group. And this Energy is taken as the sole foundation of the creation wherefrom matter, life and mind have come into existence. The wonder of wonders is the awakening of consciousness in this field of energy. If a blind inconscient power be the fundamental Truth, then how could consciousness manifest itself from it? Can science give an adequate explanation of the many-sided expression of this inexhaustible Consciousness? That *Hamlet*, the *Symposium* or *War and Peace* are the results of actions and reactions of atoms and electrons must sound like pure magic. So it will not be improper to say that science has not yet been able to find a satisfactory solution of the basic problem. And we needs must say that there is a supra-rational mystery, beyond mind and speech, at the root of the creation and to attain to it we have to exceed the usual methods of science.

Science has failed to solve many other allied problems apart from this fundamental one. We can observe how the process of creation has proceeded in serial stages from its very start. First comes an Indeterminate, then appears a general determinate which is followed by particular determinates. There is

no doubt that material science by its laborious research has discovered fixed causal relations in the sphere of the various determinates of matter, but it has been yet unable to probe into the inmost secret of the original cause. We have already said that an Indeterminate Energy is the fount of the creation from which were derived the general determinates producing in their turn the particular ones. The same process holds good in the different stages of the creation originating from the One. "An electric energy produces positive, negative and neutral forms of itself, forms that are at once waves and particles; a gaseous state of energy-substance produces a considerable number of different gases; a solid state of energy-substance from which results the earth principle develops into different forms of earth and rock of many kinds and numerous minerals and metals." Thus we see the many appearing from the One, multiplicity coming out of unity or the Determinates from the Indeterminates. "But we do not find anything in any general or generic determinate necessitating the variant determinations that result from it." The different views of material science fail to explain how the ceaseless play of diversity originated from an absolute Oneness. At every stage or on every plane numberless diversities and variations have appeared on the basis of a continuous unity. That this is the inviolable law of Nature can easily be comprehended. But the why and the how are shrouded in a nebulous mystery. Perhaps, behind all this there is a vast mind, a unique resolve with a creative delight, a secret guidance of an Infinite Will, but that is not discernible in the different stages of manifestation in the external Nature.

The answer given by materialism to this primal query is not at all up to the mark. There is a mystery inherent in Nature that regulates the world-play in a systematic order. It is quite apposite that our mind should refuse to call that mystery merely a Dynamic Chance. It is an absurdity on the face of it that the creation proceeds from the actions and reactions of a blind, arbitrary and whimsical force. Can the Theory of Dynamic Chance explain the immutable laws of Nature? In every sphere do we not meet with fixed principles of law and order? How can whims bring out this order in the universe? "An opposite aspect of the nature of the cosmic phenomenon as we see it appears to forbid the theory of a random action generating a persistent order." The procedure of creation has two aspects. An apparent lawlessness and an infallible orderliness run abreast. Consequently neither the Theory of Chance nor the Theory of Mechanical Necessity can unravel the mystery of this aspect of creation. In order to reconcile the apparently opposite theories we can say: "If there is a necessity which compels the emergence, it can be only that there is already a consciousness concealed in the Inconscient, waiting for evolution and when all is ready breaking out from its prison of apparent Nescience."

Necessity and freedom constitute the warp and the woof of creation and the two are nurtured in the bosom of consciousness.

So modern scientists no longer cling to their old opinion. They are eager to look into matter from a new angle of vision. They entertain the hope of discovering consciousness in matter itself. "We have known too much of matter to be materialist any longer," says Whitehead. James Jeans finds an amazing behaviour in the electrons. They behave dissimilarly under similar circumstances. Therefore, according to him, they are endowed with a kind of free will. He wants to describe matter as a 'congealed consciousness'. To the general mass matter is only Nescience. But the scientists fail to see eye to eye with them. Their research reveals to them the indications of a secret consciousness in matter. Eddington is also one of those who subscribe to this view. Now we can easily opine that the age-long insuperable gulf between matter and consciousness will before long cease to exist. Modern scientific research has opened up a new channel, yet it is no better than groping in the dark to discover light. The Vedic seers saw an Infinite Consciousness in Matter. Now the pertinent question is : how can this truth be revealed to the present-day scientists ? They are quite in the dark about the true nature of the consciousness that exists in matter. Perhaps, they may get there a glimpse of something similar to the Subconscient, but the clue to the real nature of consciousness is likely to remain beyond their grasp.

We cannot then hope to get at the right solution of the mystery of creation unless and until we exceed the domain of material science.

2

The philosophers who have faith in God and particularly those who are themselves yogis have explained the mystery of the creation otherwise than the materialists. Their way of approach widely differs from that of the latter who depend solely on sense-perception and reasoning based upon sense data. According to them Consciousness is the fount of the creation. "All these things we see around us are then the thoughts of an extra-cosmic Divinity, a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will." The universe is but the manifestation of that unique omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will. The creation, continuation and dissolution of the world play their respective roles only in his Infinite Consciousness. It is He who directs the play of Nature with all her mathematical precision. All forms of beauty and sweetness are nothing but the expression of his Delight. He regulates the universal play like a *Deus ex machina*, from the transcendental plane. "The fact that this Divinity is invisible to us, undiscoverable by our mind and senses, offers no difficulty,

since self-evidence or direct sign of an extra-cosmic Creator could not be expected in a cosmos which is void of his presence." But it is not absolutely unreasonable to form a conception of God from the inviolable laws and accurate measures noticeable at every stage of the creation. It is as well possible that that Divine Power is at once Transcendent and Immanent. Perhaps, that Power is inherent in and permeates the universe, eluding our detection. On scrutiny this theory will not appear airy or void of reason. Yet one crucial problem remains unsolved by all these theories. The problem is—"why this stamp of so many undivine elements and characters in the play of One whose nature must be supposed to be divine?" If we assume that the world is the outcome of the Will of Sachchidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), then how can division, opposition and misery be rampant here? "To the suggestions that what we see worked out in the world is the thoughts of God, the retort can be made that God could well have had better thoughts and the best thought of all would have been to refrain from the creation of an unhappy and unintelligible universe." We usually assert that everything is divine, all is Brahman, all things are created by the Mother Divine. But if we do not get to the clue as to how actually the world has come into existence, we are bound to lack in conviction. All these abounding miseries can hardly be justified as the manifestation of the supreme Truth and ultimate Good. That is why Sri Aurobindo holds that this world of light and darkness is but the result of the self-limitation and finally self-negation of the supreme Consciousness. He has lucidly explained the process of involution in another place in *The Life Divine*. The supreme Light has gradually faded in its downward journey and become completely hidden in the bosom of inert Matter. And this Matter is the lowest rung in this involution. Here Consciousness has, apparently, ceased to exist and turned into unconscious concrete matter. The vast primal unity multiplied itself into infinite droplets of complete disunity. The Conscious Divine Will has concealed herself within a mechanical order. Thus at long last the triune aspect of Sachchidananda turned itself into its diametrical opposite. When the self-limitation reached its culmination, once again owing to the upward urge of Consciousness inherent in Inconscience the process of evolution commenced. First, there is the involution, the downward curve or gradual dwindling of Consciousness, then comes the play of evolution, the upward curve or the process of progressive re-awakening. If this theory be true, we can get a satisfactory solution of many intricate problems of the world-play. In the Infinite Consciousness and in its infinite play, there has appeared as its reflection an infinite, indeterminate Inconscience holding firm within itself all the contents of truth in a unique manner. The blind, lawless movements of Nature that appear on the surface give an ample indication of the manifestation of that hidden Infinite Consciousness,

while the mathematical precision of mechanical laws is the infallible indication of the self-manifestation of the Real-Idea. "The appearance of Consciousness out of an apparent Inconscience would also be no longer inexplicable."

First involution, and then evolution; if we accept this view, we can arrive at a reasonable solution of many of the problems of the world-creation. Inconscience may be explained as the self-oblivious concentration of that One Undivided Consciousness. The Inconscient Energy is the first attempt of the supreme Consciousness-Force to manifest herself, piercing through the veil of Inconscience. This Consciousness-Force comprises the endless principles of free variation and the manifold ways of self-manifestation of the Conscious Being that appear to our view as the innumerable laws of Nature. In every field, on every level, there is a hidden Real-Idea which is but a formless Will of the infinite riches of the supreme Consciousness. For instance, the Real-Idea of a tree resides there in the seed itself in a uniquely involved form, and by its pressure alone the tree develops by stages. "The growth of the tree out of seed would be accounted for like all other similar phenomena by the indwelling presence of what we have called the Real-Idea; the Infinite's self-perception of the significant form, the living body of its power of existence that has to emerge from its own self-compression in energy-substance, would be carried internally in the form of the seed, carried in the occult consciousness involved in that form, and would naturally evolve out of it." It is the constant pressure of the Real-Idea inherent in matter for its manifestation that has called forth life. And the mental modes latent in the depth of life have become manifested by the pressure of the Real-Idea dwelling therein. The same truth holds good in the case of human atavism and heredity. Likewise the entire creation is the outcome of an Infinite Consciousness dormant in the Inconscience. The process of evolution entails a persistent struggle between the two opposites and so difficulties are bound to be met with at every step. "Finally the conception of a Divine Mind and Will creating the cosmos becomes justifiable, while at the same time the perplexing elements in it which our reasoning mentality refuses to ascribe to an arbitrary fiat of the Creator, find their explanation as inevitable phenomena of a Consciousness emerging with difficulty out of its opposite—but with the mission to override these contrary phenomena and manifest by a slow and difficult evolution its greater reality and true nature."

Full conviction devoid of doubt can never be had from any of the theories based on mental speculation. Our mind will naturally feel that something is left untouched or something is yet to be known. It is an impossibility to get to the real clue of the world-mystery by scrutiny of matter only through the outer senses and the faltering intellect. Therefore to quote Sri Aurobindo: "an approach from the material end of Existence cannot give us any certitude

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of validity for this hypothesis or for that matter for any other explanation of Nature and her procedure.” To arrive at a solution that utterly banishes all doubts, we must begin at the point where the Consciousness has had a clear manifestation along the path of evolution. The infinite rungs of Consciousness extending up and down can be dimly seen from the highest level already attained by the mental consciousness, and treading this path alone we shall have to discover the supreme Mystery. “To know with greater certitude we must follow the curve of evolving consciousness until it arrives at a height and largeness of self-enlightenment in which the primal secret is self-discovered.” How can we hope to unravel the world-mystery unless we focus our attention on the origin and its upward march ? We can know something about the mystery of matter and life by probing into their core, but the ultimate Truth can only be acquired by probing into the core of Consciousness itself. The search for the Truth by the outgoing objective mind in the field of science, Natural philosophy and even in idealistic philosophies based on pure speculation, is bound to gather only half-truths or perversions. For the fundamental secrets are hidden in the folds of Consciousness and a search by penetration into Consciousness is alone adequate to deliver the fundamentals of the creative and evolutionary process of the Cosmos and all it contains. Self-Knowledge, supreme Knowledge and Delight and a global cosmic Knowledge of the universe can be attained only by heightening and widening the already existing light and truth of consciousness present in the mind, and for this we have to turn to the science of Yoga of India.

NARENDRA NATH DAS GUPTA.

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali Talks given in “Pathmandir”, in 1944)