

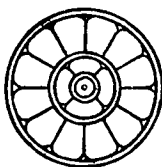
MOTHER INDIA

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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.



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No. 10

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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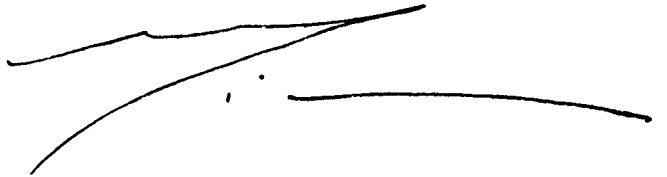
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Whatever work you do, do it
as perfectly as you can.

That is the best service
to the Divine in man.



1-11-61.



24 NOVEMBER
1961

It is by a constant inner growth that one can find a constant newness and unfailing interest in life. There is no other satisfying way.

Sri Aurobindo

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THIS new flower means "Need of Perfection". I don't mean need *for* Perfection. When something is done, one can always say that it is not perfect and falls short of the mark. This is need *for* Perfection. What I mean is : when nothing except Perfection can satisfy you, then you have the need *of* it. This need is the inner urge of the heart towards the perfect. Everybody feels one need or another. Some need the Divine, some the Realisation. The need you feel is the indication of the truth of your being. When this need is Perfection, you can be satisfied only when you get it. The feeling of this need is the influence of Mahasaraswati. Out of the four aspects of the Divine Mother, it is Mahasaraswati who creates the need of Perfection.

People think that their condition depends on circumstances. But that is all false. If somebody is a "nervous wreck", he thinks that if circumstances are favourable he will improve. But, actually, even if they are favourable he will remain what he is. All think they are feeling weak and tired because people are not nice to them. This is rubbish. It is not the circumstances that have to be changed : what is required is an inner change.

Médire est une chose très vile. I don't know how to translate "médire" into English. It is not exactly "speaking ill". Crooked mind, crooked tongue, crooked heart : this comes out in speech that looks like honey but tastes like poison.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were : Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. 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.

This is the eleventh talk in the new Series which follows a chronological order and begins at the very beginning. The four earliest talks, after Sri Aurobindo's accident, appeared in Mother India in 1952. We are now picking up where we then stopped and shall continue systematically.)

JANUARY 2, 1939

DR. SAVOUR came to see Sri Aurobindo. After pranam he sat on the carpet with us and talked about Suchi's illness, then about homoeopathy and how by Providence he had taken it up, a thing he had never thought of. Touching on the mentality of patients he remarked : "It is better not to tell the price of a medicine. For, if a patient is told that a medicine is very cheap, as homoeopathic drugs usually are, he loses all faith and respect for it. So I always keep the price a secret." Then he said something about the Mother testing him. The Mother had come into the room meanwhile and had been listening to him.

THE MOTHER : Testing is not the practice here. It is the play of forces or at times the adverse forces that do the testing in order to measure your strength. If you refuse to listen to them and remain firm, they withdraw.

People have already enough difficulties : why should we add any more ? To say that we purposely test is not true. We never do it—never !

DR. S : I am very glad to get this answer from you. I feel perfectly assured now.

THE MOTHER : Are there any highly priced drugs in homoeopathy ?

DR. S : No, Mother. The highest price that we pay for one drachm of medicine is about Rs. 5. And with that one drachm we can by trituration, etc. treat a huge number of patients.

SRI AUROBINDO : Are there no exceedingly rare drugs for which you have to pay a big sum ?

DR. S : It is only drugs of very high potencies that are rare in India. One has to get them from America. Otherwise almost all drugs are available in Calcutta and other places and most homoeopaths get them from there.

After this, Dr. S. took leave and the Mother also went out to get ready for the General Meditation. All of us fell silent, though some were anxious to start a conversation. P had seemed to be preparing something but waiting for the Mother's departure.

P : How far is it desirable for the Ashram to be self-sufficient ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Self-sufficient in what way ?

P : In meeting the needs of daily life : say, the clothes here. Virji who has come from Bombay wants that we should introduce the spinning loom to make our own clothes. How far is such self-sufficiency desirable in an Ashram like ours ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The question is not whether it is desirable but whether it is practicable. No objection to spinning or weaving. (*Suddenly looking at N and smiling*) Will you set N spinning, to begin with ?

N : I have been spinning all the time, Sir ! (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : There are all sorts of mental formations that can be carried out. But here it is by the Mother's intuition that things are taken up and done.

P : They have done many things for self-sufficiency successfully at Dayal-bagh.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. But in that case you have to direct all your energies into that channel and that becomes the main issue.

It was once my idea, which I gave to M while I was in Bengal. Just as my Sinn Fein idea for Bengal was given up to be worked out in Ireland, this idea got worked out at Chandernagore. But our Ashram is not the fit place to carry it out.

N : In what way ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*) : First of all, the spinners and weavers will at once start quarrelling with one another, and that is one way in which the Ashram is not the fit place. In other organisations they impose a discipline and ensure obedience by force, and people are obliged to take their orders from one at the head. But here we don't impose such discipline from outside. People are left free.

Even if you want to do that kind of work, there are difficulties on the way that have to be guarded against. First, the tendency to degenerate into mere mechanical and commercial activity. Secondly, ambition : there is a

great desire among the sadhaks to make the Ashram figure before the world. That must go.

And then the whole thing won't be possible unless Dr. S promises to homoeopathise all into health !

It is not that we don't want to do that sort of work; we have many ideas but we can't take them up unless the foundation is ready. Even now, in the Gardens, the Building Service and the Dining Room, two or three people can't work together. Their egos come to the front and they want a mental independence.

Work as a part of sadhana or work for the Divine is all right. But work must primarily be spiritual and not merely creative in a personal way. Work as part of spiritual creation is, of course, right, but we can't take this up unless the inner difficulties are overcome. Neither can it be according to mental constructions : it must be only according to the Mother's intuition. Even then there are so many difficulties. Not that we have no workers; there are people here with considerable capacity.

Then the talk was diverted to a totally different subject by Sri Aurobindo asking S : "Is there any cure for baldness in homoeopathy ? I was looking at Nolini's head when he came to dust my books and I was thinking if homoeopathy could do anything for him." A long discussion on baldness followed, with a mention of its various treatments. The example of King Edward VII came in.

SRI AUROBINDO : At Baroda there came a Kaviraj who claimed to have cured the baldness of his own head. He showed some patches which had been bald and where hair was now growing. But unkindly critics said that he used to shave his head in patches and call them bald. He treated one of my cousins for baldness, but with no result.

In this connection came in the topic of R and we discussed him. The only things of importance said by Sri Aurobindo were : "He is a man with an abundant vitality. With that vitality there is nothing that he could not have done. But at the same time there is no discipline, order and control in the vital being. He has written some very fine poems in English. He had made a name here as a doctor and, as soon as he entered the Ashram, people wanted to crowd in to be treated by him. He was successful with outside people because he could enforce his will and the patients were obliged to follow all his instructions."

After this Dr. B came out suddenly with a question.

Dr. B : What is the difference between peace and silence ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you mean ?

DR. B : Is peace included in silence, or *vice versa* ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If you have the silence, then there is naturally peace with it; but the opposite may not be true. One can do a lot of work with the peace within.

N : Can one do work with the silence intact ? Does not the silence get disturbed ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Certainly one can do work. By silence I mean inner silence. It is perfectly possible to carry on any amount of activity in that state. I told you about my experience of silence, which is still with me. It has not been disturbed by any activity.

N : Is silence dynamic or static ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not the silence that is dynamic but you can have full dynamic activity out of the inner silence. Also you can remain without doing anything. People who are kinetic in the vital or mental way cannot remain like that.

Some Marathas [came to see me here and inquired what I was doing. I replied : "Nothing." One of them remarked that it was a great thing to do nothing. This is true.

N : Isn't the silence associated with some sort of emptiness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on what you mean by emptiness. There is an emptiness which is full of the divine Presence and can hardly be called empty. There is another emptiness of silence which is neutral and a still another in which one empties oneself, waiting for something higher to come and fill it.

N : In that emptiness one feels somewhat dry, doesn't one ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. On the contrary it is a very pleasant state, with a sense of great release. The neutral silence may be associated with some dryness and dullness—to the ordinary mind.

N : It seems you said once to Barin, when he was having such emptiness and dryness, that it comes to everybody and he had to pass through that phase or stage.

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, it need not come to everybody, but when it does come to somebody he has to pass through it. People like Bertrand Russell can't bear this emptiness. He says that as soon as he tries to go within he begins to feel it and wants to come back. It is foolish on his part to want to come back, for if he is able to feel this emptiness it is something good, the sign of a valuable capacity. These Europeans can't do without thought and the external interests of life. They think that nothing of value can come into the consciousness except from outside.

S : We know of Bansali who studded his lips for a long time to maintain silence. It was only after persuasion by Gandhi that he gave it up.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is what the Gita calls Asuric tapasya.

N : Can one gain anything and advance by that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ? But there is the question : what and how far ? Physical and vital tapasya can give some control over the body and the vital being. But it looks more like *nigraha*, forceful suppression.

N : It doesn't seem to have anything to do with divine realisation.

SRI AUROBINDO : What do you mean by "divine realisation" ?

N : I mean Peace, Bliss, Presence.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is a divine realisation and there is a realisation of the Divine—that is to say, spiritual realisation. If one gains control over the vital nature by the influence of the Atman, the Self, that is a divine realisation.

N : Control by an influence, I suppose, comes and goes. It is not permanent and stable. One can gain control also by a constant exercise of the mind.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, and I think that is a better way. These things, again, may be steps towards the Divine, just as from Hathayoga one goes to Rajayoga. Naturally there are shortcomings in the onward process. You may remember, D used to write plenty of letters complaining of the defects of Yogis. One does not look for defects in the Yogis, for it is not the defects that are important. Whatever leads to the upward growth, adding something to one's stature, is a gain to human progress. No upward progress is to be despised.

S : Has Bansali gained anything by his silence ? He seems to have.

SRI AUROBINDO : Although I don't approve of the method, it is all right if he gained something.

S : Bansali used to go wandering from place to place, not asking for food etc. from anybody.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is an old recognised practice among Yogis. It is a great discipline and gives a control over the desires. At one time I also did that. I never asked anything from anyone. Dayanand Thakur is said to store nothing for the future. Whenever anything came to his Ashram they used to spend it away, not thinking what would happen the next day.

January 3, 1939

N : It is supposed here that illness brings some progress in sadhana after it has been cured. Is that true ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not necessarily. Do you mean that your cold will give you some progress ? (*Laughter*)

N : Cold is hardly a disease !

SRI AUROBINDO : It is said that for every disease there is a psychological reason.

N : Said by whom ?

SRI AUROBINDO : By the Yogis. If that reason can be found and remedied, then there may be a progress.

N : What about children then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What about them ? They have no psychology ? Do you mean to say that when they are born they come with a blank page to be filled up later on in life ? They are full of psychology, each one differing from the others.

The body is an expression of one's nature, and if one could detect the exact psychological factor behind, which is not easy to do, then many helpful things can be done.

Here the Mother came in and silence followed. After she had gone, the talk began about homoeopathy.

SRI AUROBINDO : L was cured by R. She found fault with him and discontinued the treatment, saying that she would rely on the Mother's Force since it was the Mother who had cured her.

S : That is the difficulty here, Sir ! The patients come to oblige us and when they are cured it is done by the Mother. Then why come to us ? They say they come to give us work; otherwise how will our sadhana go on ?

Here N gave an instance of a homeopathic cure. D's cousin had a tumour which was cured by homoeopathy. There was no question of faith in this case. Then the topic arose of long life achieved by Yoga or other means. Someone mentioned Tibeti Baba.

SRI AUROBINDO : But he says that it was not due to Yoga but to some medicine that his body has changed and he has attained longevity. Brahmananda also lived very long—some say 200-300 years. None knew how old he was and he never told his age. Once when he had a toothache, Sardar Majumdar took some medicine to him. Brahmananda said, "This toothache has been with me since the Battle of Panipat." That gave the clue to his age. He had the most remarkable eyes. Usually they were either closed or half shut. When I went to see him and took leave, he opened them full and looked at me. It seemed as if he could penetrate and see everything within clearly.

That reminds me of a compliment given to my eyes by Sir Edward Baker, Governor of Bengal. He visited me in Alipore Jail and told Charu Dutt, "Have you seen Aurobindo Ghose's eyes ?"

"Yes, what about them ?" asked Charu.

"He has the eyes of a mad man !"

Charu took great pains to convince him that I was not at all mad but a Karma Yogi !

P : Nevinson—correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*—said that you never laughed.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, I met him twice. Once in Bengal at Subodh Mullick's place. I was very serious at that time. The next occasion was when I was president of the National Conference at Surat. Then also I couldn't laugh, being the President. So he called me "the man who never laughs".
(*Laughter*)

N : Taggart regarded you as the most dangerous man in the British Empire. He was dead against lifting the ban on your entry into British India, when it was discussed in England, if I remember rightly.

SRI AUROBINDO : How could that be ? I never knew that there was such a ban. The last prosecution against me was for two signed letters in the *Karmayogin*, and they were declared to be non-seditious. That ban seems to be just a legend.

N : All over India there was the impression that a ban had been put and everybody thought you were the head of the Revolutionary Movement.

SRI AUROBINDO : That was the idea of all Englishmen. You know Olive Maitland. She was friendly with some members of the Royal Family. When she went back to England from here she tried to persuade them that I was rather an innocent person and the Ashram was a nice place. She found that instead of converting them to her view they began to look askance at her.

Lord Minto said that he could not rest his head on his pillow until he had crushed Aurobindo Ghose. He feared that I would start the Revolutionary Movement again; and assassinations were going on at that time.

But there was no ban. On the contrary, Lord Carmichael sent somebody to persuade me to return and settle somewhere in Darjeeling and discuss philosophy with him. I refused the offer.

The Government were absolutely taken by surprise when our Movement was launched. They never expected that Indians could start revolutionary activities.

N : I hear Charu Dutt also joined the Movement

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh yes. Everybody knew of it and so he was called by the Europeans "Disloyal Judge". He was very courageous, spirited, powerful and frank. That's the kind of man I like. He used to talk openly and frankly about his revolutionary ideas to Englishmen.

N : They—at least of some of them—also liked him.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, they like such people. There was another man, D'Souza, whom I knew very well. He is working in Mysore State now. He is one of the cleverest brains I have ever met. He is an Indian Christian. Not that much of Christianity is left in him. He has an independent mind.

N : Taggart was mainly responsible for crushing the Movement, we hear. He narrowly escaped being killed in Palestine the other day.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is surprising how some of the greatest scoundrels have so much protection.

N : Dutt has mentioned in his reminiscences two incidents about you—Bridge-playing and shooting with a gun.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is true that I didn't know how to play cards and Bridge is a difficult game, but I kept winning. So he thought I knew everybody's hand. As for shooting with a gun, it is quite easy. I could have taken aim at even small birds high in the air.

N : Dutt is afraid to come here lest he shouldn't be able to go back.

SRI AUROBINDO : It would be his last journey ?

N : Was he a great friend of yours ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. Beechcroft who was my school-mate couldn't somehow believe that I could be a revolutionary.

Another intimate English friend of mine, Ferrer, came to see me in the court when the trial was going on. We, the accused, were put into a cage for fear we should jump out and murder the Judge. Ferrer was a barrister practising at Sumatra or Singapore. He saw me in the cage and was much concerned and couldn't conceive how to get me out. It was he who had given me the clue to the real hexameter in English. He read out a line which he thought was the best hexametrical line, and that gave me the swing of the metre as it should be in English. English has no really successful poetry in hexameters and all the best critics have declared it to be impossible. Matthew Arnold's professor friend and others tried it but failed.

N : I thought Yeats also has written hexameters.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where ? I don't know about it. I think you mean alexandrines.

N : Yes, yes.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is different. Plenty of people have written alexandrines. But this is the dactylic six-foot line, the metre in which the epics of Homer and Virgil are written. It has a very fine movement which is most suitable for Epic. I wrote most of my hexameters—the poem *Ilion*—in Pondicherry. Amal and Arjava saw them and considered them a success. I may cite a few lines :

One and unarmed in the car was the driver ; grey was he, shrunken,
Worn with his decades. To Pergama cinctured with strength Cyclopean
Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.

N : When did you begin to write poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO : When my two brothers and I were staying at Manchester. I wrote for the Fox family magazine. It was an awful imitation of somebody I don't remember. Then I went to London where I began really to write ; some of the verses are published in *Songs to Myrtilla*.

N : Where did you learn metre ? At school ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. They don't teach metre at school. I began to read and read and I wrote by a sense of the sound. I am not a prosodist like X.

N : Had your brother Manmohan already become a poet when you started writing ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. He, Laurence Binyon, Stephen Phillips and Arthur Cripps who did not come to much in poetry afterwards brought out a book in conjunction. It was well spoken of. I dare say my brother stimulated me greatly to write poetry.

N : Was Oscar Wilde a friend of your brother's ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. He used to visit him every evening and Wilde described him in his Wildish way, "A young Indian panther in evening brown." Wilde was as brilliant in conversation as in writing. Once some of his friends came to see him and asked how he had passed the morning. He said he had been to the Zoo and gave a wonderful description of it, making a striking word-picture of every animal. Mrs. Wilde who was all the time sitting in a corner put in in a small voice, "But Oscar, how could you say that ? You were with me all morning." Wilde replied, "But, my dear, one has to be imaginative sometimes." (*Laughter*)

N : I have heard of a Wilde story. Once when he was correcting the proofs of a book of his, some friends visited him and asked him what he was busy with. He said, "I have to decide whether to put in one place a comma or not." They returned after a time and found him still busy. He said, "I have put a comma in, but now I don't know whether it should be there. I have to decide." The friends went away and came back a little later. Wilde said : "I have decided to take the comma off."

SRI AUROBINDO : The story is very characteristic of Wilde.

Here P brought in the subject of Epic and the experiments that were being made in Gujarat to search for a proper medium for Epic. He regretted that no Indian vernacular had any genuine and successful epic poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why do you say that ? Madhusudan has succeeded in Epic. He has excellent movement, form and swing, but the substance is poor. It is surprising that he could write an epic, for Bengalis haven't got an epic mind. The Bengali Ramayana and Mahabharata are not worth much. But I believe he got his inspiration from Homer and Virgil whom he read a lot.

N : What exactly do you mean by "an epic mind" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The epic mind is something high, vast and powerful. The Bengali mind is more delicate and graceful. Compare Bengal's painting with the epic statues of the Pallavas in South India. For the same reason the

French couldn't write an epic. Their language is too lucid and orderly and graceful for it.

N : Why do you call Madhusudan's epic poor in substance ?

SRI AUROBINDO : For a high substance one must have a noble and elevated mind, a capacity for sympathy with great thoughts, a heart that is large and deep. And, as you know, Madhusudan was nothing in that respect.

N : And yet he was by his genius able to create sympathy in us for Ravana and not Rama. Isn't this striking ?

SRI AUROBINDO : But even then his Ravana is insignificant as compared to the tremendous personality in Valmiki's Ramayana. Or see the character of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. And Rama's character too has been much degraded in Madhusudan.

(Turning to P) Is there any epic in the Marathi language ?

P : I don't know. I have heard about Moropant.

SRI AUROBINDO : I believe there was somebody—Sridhar—who has written something like an epic. I hear Jnanadev wrote very brilliantly but he died at an early age : 21. And Jnaneswar wrote his Gita at 15.

P : They say Tulsidas's *Manas* is a recognised epic in Hindi.

SRI AUROBINDO : The South Indians say that Kamban's is a great epic. I remember somebody trying to prove that Kamban is the world's greatest poet.

(Looking at N) Nishikanto also aspires to write an epic.

N : He may be able to do it. For he seems to have the necessary gift.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, he may come to it.

N : He combines power and delicacy wonderfully well.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but when he writes lyrics he is superb.

N : Have you seen Iqbal's poems ? Some hold he is greater than Tagore.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know what his poems are like in Persian or Urdu. But the translations give me the impression that they haven't got a great and original substance as Tagore's poetry has.

P : Do present conditions permit the writing of an epic ? It is said that epic subjects may be there but there is not the epic poet to write of them.

SRI AUROBINDO : I can't say. It is believed that the epic poet comes only once in centuries. Look at the world's epic poets. How many are they ? As for subject, what subject could be more suitable to an epic than the career of Napoleon ?

It is surprising—the large number of epic poets in Sanskrit. The very language is epic. Valmiki, Vyasa, even classical poets like Kalidasa, Bharavi and others have all achieved epic heights.

N : Has your own epic *Savitri* anything to do with the Mahabharata story ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not really. Only the clue is taken from the Mahabharata. My story is symbolic. I believe that originally the Mahabharata story was also symbolic, but it has been made into a tale of conjugal fidelity.

N : What is your symbolism ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, Satyavan whom Savitri marries is the symbol of the Soul descended into the Kingdom of Death; and Savitri, who is, as you know, the Goddess of Divine Light and Knowledge, comes down to redeem Satyavan from Death's grasp. Asvapati, the father of Savitri, is the Lord of Energy. Dyumatsena is "one who has the shining hosts". It is all inner movement, nothing much as regards outward action.

The poem opens with the Dawn. Savitri awakes on the day of destiny, the day when Satyavan has to die. The birth of Savitri is a boon of the Supreme Goddess given to Asvapati. Asvapati is the Yogi who seeks the means to deliver the world out of Ignorance.

N : But how far are you on with it ? Have you finished the first draft ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, I have finished the first draft, but I have to revise it. I have revised this poem, as I once told you, twelve times and I have finished only the First Part of the First Book.

N : In what form have you cast it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have gone back from Shakespeare to Marlowe. Each line stands by itself and each sentence consists at most of five or six lines. The blank verse differs also from Milton's. There are practically no pauses or enjambments like those in *Paradise Lost*. Blank verse after Milton has not been very great. So if you write the kind that is in *Paradise Lost* you imitate Milton's style—and there can be only one Milton.

Yeats has written some successful blank-verse in the Tennysonian form on Irish Celtic subjects. There is one long piece about a King, a Queen and a Divine Lover : I forget the name. He has given his blank verse a greater beauty than Tennyson was capable of.

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters)

I

THE WORKING OF THE HIGHER NATURE

No objection—it is a very good thing to keep working in the higher consciousness. It is more effective than struggling all the time down below with the lower forces. 2-2-1935

All comes in its time. One has to go on quietly and steadily increasing the higher consciousness till it takes possession of the vital and physical part. 14-3-1935

The rush of the experience at the beginning is often very powerful, so powerful that the resisting elements remain quiescent—afterwards they rise up. The experience has then to be brought down and settled in these parts also. 27-8-1935

Q. Has not every sadhak the capacity to hold the higher experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO : For a time, yes. It is only when there is a big or complete descent that it can be held all the time. 91-9-1935

Q. You have said : “It is comparatively easy to go high when the way is opened. The difficulty is to bring down the power of these states.” But if one keeps rising higher and higher, will not your Force bring down or work out whatever is needed in the lower planes ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If you can rise always it can be done like that, but the inertia prevents that, then there must be a descent to remove the obstacle. The will for that must be there. 19-9-1935

Q. Have you not said that mere rising or getting higher experiences brings no change in the lower being ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I am not speaking of mere rising above. The rising above has to be followed by the descent of the higher consciousness into the different parts of the being. That aided by the psychic development and aiding it changes the external nature. 24-10-1935

The action of the higher consciousness does not usually begin by changing the outer nature—it works on the inner being, prepares that and then goes outward. Before that, whatever change is done in the outer nature has to be done by the psychic. 25-10-1935

Your tendency was to go up and to leave the higher consciousness to deal with the lower nature without any personal effort for that. That could have worked all right on two conditions: (1) that the peace and force would come down and occupy all down to the physical, (2) that you succeeded in keeping the inner being unmoved by the outer nature. The physical failed to absorb the peace, inertia rose instead; force could not come down; the suggestions from the outer nature proved too strong for you and between their suggestions and the inertia they interrupted the sadhana. 25-19-1935

One can remain in the higher consciousness and yet associate oneself with the change of the lower nature. No doubt, it is the Mother's Force that will do what is necessary, but the consent of the sadhak, the association of his will with her action or at least of his witness-vision is necessary also. 25-10-1935

There is no fixed rule in such things. With many the descent comes first and the ascension afterwards, with others it is the other way; with some the two processes go on together. If one can fix oneself above so much the better. 26-10-1935

I have not said that you made a mistake. I have simply said what happened and the causes. If you had been able to remain above and let the Force come down and act while you were detached from the outer nature, it would have been all right. You were able to go up because the Peace descended. You were not able to remain above because the Peace could not occupy sufficiently the physical and the Force did not descend sufficiently. Meanwhile the inertia rose, you got troubled more and more because of the vital suggestions in the outer nature and rush of inertia, so you were unable to keep detached and let the Force descend more and more or call it down more and more. Hence the coming down into the physical consciousness. 26-10-1935

II

SADHANA AND THE VITAL BEING

The opposition of the vital is never reasonable, even when it puts forward reasons. It acts from its nature and habit of desire not from reason.

5-3-1935

What life-feelings ? What you describe is their absence, the entire quiescence of the vital. It is when the vital is inactive or non-cooperates and no higher force replaces it, that there is the feeling of absence of interest in everything.

30-9-1935

There are two conditions in which it becomes like that: (1) when its ordinary (ego) actions or motives of action are not allowed to it, (2) when one goes very much down into the physical, the vital sometimes or for a time becomes inert unless or until there is the Force from above.

1-10-1935

The outer being has to learn to love in the psychic way without ego. If it loves in the egoistic vital way, then it only creates difficulties for itself and for the sadhana and for the Mother.

11-11-1935

The love in the vital or other parts is the true thing, good for the spiritual life, only when in the vital love is changed into a form of the psychic love and becomes an instrument for the manifestation of the soul's love, no longer for the desires of the ego which men call love.

11-11-1935

All that of course is not love, but self-love. Jealousy is only an ugly form of self-love. That is what people do not understand—they even think that demands and jealousy and wounded vanity are signs of love or at least natural attendants of it.

11-11-1935

Q. There is no struggle, despair or depression as before, but not because of any right attitude. The condition seems to be: "I can't have any demands; very well, I abdicate"—or "How can I have any right of demand since I do practically no sadhana?"

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be. The first is vital non-cooperation. The second is the usual vital reasoning; for the vital sadhana is only a basis for demands, satisfaction of pride, ambition or desire. But this is just the attitude which leads to shipwreck in the end, if not corrected.

15-11-1935

Q. The vital appears to become stone-like—there is no joy or sorrow; the state is such that the Mother's smile or seriousness produces no impression.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is certainly better than dissatisfaction, despair and depression. The main point is that the sadhana seems to refuse to go on on a vital basis and the vital or at least a part of it refuses to participate in the sadhana except on a vital basis.

15-11-1935

Q. Do most people, when they begin sadhana, do so on a vital basis ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Many do. But in all there is a mixture—one has to get

rid of the mixture either by silencing the vital or by purifying it and psychicsing it.

15-11-1935

Q. People say that a dry and indifferent heart, feeling neither joy nor sorrow, is undesirable. Why then do you write : "It is certainly better than dissatisfaction, despair and depression" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is dangerous to have a heart insisting on its own vital emotions. Not to be the slave of the vital joy or sorrow is a condition one has to pass through in order to arrive at true Ananda. If people are right then there can never be any equality and we have even to say that equality is a bad thing. If so, then the whole of the Gita is a mass of nonsense.

15-11-1935

Why should the Divine do miracles contrary to the conditions of the nature ? Man has a vital and he brings it with him to the sadhana. In the course of the sadhana one has to transform it. You are asking the Divine to transform the vital without sadhana and then start the sadhana. As well ask him to dispense with sadhana altogether and transform the whole nature in the twinkling of an eye.

15-11-1935

The mistake of the vital is to think that the Divine exists only to satisfy its demands and indulge its desire. From that false premise it draws logically the conclusion that, if it is not satisfied and indulged, the Divine is not there.

23-12-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

MANY DELUSIONS*

(A very insidious form of pseudo-nationalism which Sri Aurobindo had to fight was the cherished belief of many of our armchair politicians of the period that there were other things than mere political independence which we must try to acquire first and to which the young men should devote their energies. Some of these "first priorities" are exposed here mercilessly with fine satire and a close appeal to history and common sense.)

IN a country where subjection has long become a habit of the public mind, there will always be a tendency to shrink from the realities of the position and to hunt for roundabout, safe and peaceful paths to national regeneration. Servitude is painful and intolerable,—servitude is killing the nation by inches,—servitude must be got rid of, true; but the pains and evils of servitude seem almost more tolerable to a good many people than the sharp, salutary pangs of a resolute struggle for liberty. Hence the not uncommon cry,—“The violent and frequently bloody methods followed by other nations are not suited to a gentle, spiritual and law-abiding people; we will vindicate our intellectual originality and spiritual superiority by inventing new methods of regeneration much more gentlemanly and civilised.” The result is a hydra-brood of delusions,—two springing up where one is killed.

The old gospel of salvation by prayer was based on the belief in the spiritual superiority of the British people,—an illusion which future generations will look back upon with an amazed incredulity. God answers prayer and the British people are godlike in their nature; so why should we despair? Even now there are prominent politicians who say and perhaps believe that although there is no historical example of a nation liberated by petition and prayer, yet the book of history is not closed and there is no reason why so liberal and noble a nation as the British should not open a new and unprecedented chapter : a miracle which never happened before in the world's records may very well be worked for the sole and particular benefit of India ! The petitionary delusion, however, though not yet killed, has been scotched; its lease of life is not for long.

Another delusion of which Babu Narendranath Sen of the *Indian Mirror*, and the cultured and eloquent lady whom the Mahatmas have placed at the

* *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 5.4.07.

head of the new Theosophist Church,¹ are the principal exponents, asks us to seek our regeneration through religion : only when we have become religiously and morally fit, can we hope to be politically free. In spite of the confusion of ideas which underlies this theory, it is one which has a natural charm for a religiously-minded people. Nevertheless it is as much a thing in the air as the petitionary delusion. If by religion is meant the *Nivr̥tti mār̥ga*, it is an absurdity to talk of politics and religion in the same breath; for it is the path of the few, —the saints and the elect—to whom there is no I nor thou, no mine or thine, and therefore no my country or thy country. But if we are asked to perfect our religious development in the *Prav̥rtti mār̥ga*,² then it is obvious that politics is as much a part of the *Prav̥rtti mār̥ga* as any other activity, and there is no rationality in asking us to practise religion and morality first and politics afterwards; for politics is itself a large part of religion and morality.

We acknowledge that nothing is likely to become an universal and master impulse in India which is not identified with religion. The obvious course is to recognise that politics is religion and infuse it with the spirit of religion; for that is the true patriotism which sees God as the Mother in our country, God as Shakti in the mass of our countrymen, and religiously devotes itself to their service and their liberation from present sufferings and servitude. We do not acknowledge that a nation of slaves who acquiesce in their subjection can become morally fit for freedom; one day of slavery robs a man of half his manhood, and while the yoke remains, he cannot compass a perfect and rounded moral development. Under a light and qualified subjection, he may indeed develop in certain directions; but in what direction are we asked to develop? In the morality of the slave, the Shudra, whose dharma is humility, contentment, service, obedience? In the morality of the merchant whose dharma is to amass riches by honesty and enterprise and spend them with liberal philanthropy? In the morality of the Brahmin whose dharma is to prepare himself for the *Nivr̥tti mār̥ga* by learning and holy exercises, to forgive injuries and accept honour or insult, wrong and injustice, with a calm and untroubled mind? It is obvious that we may develop far on these lines without coming at all nearer to moral fitness for freedom.

Politics is the work of the Kshatriya and it is the virtues of the Kshatriya we must develop if we are to be morally fit for freedom. But the first virtue of the Kshatriya is not to bow his neck to an unjust yoke but to protect his weak and suffering countrymen against the oppressor and welcome death in a just and righteous battle.

¹ The reference here is obviously to Mrs. Annie Besant who later took some part in the Indian national movement, after Sri Aurobindo had retired to Pondicherry.

² These are names given respectively to the path of asceticism and the path of action in the world.

A third delusion to which the over-intellectualised are subject is the belief in salvation by industrialism. One great danger of the commercial aspect of the Swadeshi movement is that many of our young men may be misled into thinking that their true mission is to go abroad, study industries and return to enrich themselves and their country. We would warn them against this particular error. This work is an admirable work and a necessary part of the great national *yajna*¹ which we have instituted; but it is only a part and not even the chief part. Those who have never studied Japanese history, are fond of telling our young men that Japan owes her greatness to her commercial and industrial expansion and call on them to go and do likewise.

Commercial and industrial expansion are often accompaniments and results of political liberty and greatness, never their cause. Yet the opposite belief is held by many who should have been capable of wiser discrimination. We find it in the truly marvellous address of Rai Srinath Pal Bahadur at Berhampore; there is a wonderful contrast between the canine gospel of submissive loyalty preached in the first part of the address and the rampageously self-assertive gospel of economic independence preached in its tail-end. "Whatever the advantages of political advancement, they sink into insignificance when compared with the blessings which Industrial prosperity brings in its train,"—such is the gospel according to Srinath Pal Bahadur. It is so far shared by many less loyal people that they consider industrial prosperity as prior to and the cause of political advancement. The idea is that we must be rich before we can struggle for freedom.

History does not bear out this peculiar delusion. It is the poor peoples who have been most most passionately attached to liberty, while there are many examples to show that nothing more easily leads to national death and decay than a prosperous servitude. We are particularly thankful that British rule has not, like the Roman, given us industrial prosperity in exchange for political independence; for in that case our fate would have been that of the ancient peoples of Gaul and Britain who, buying civilisation and prosperity with the loss of their freemanhood, fell a prey to the Goth and Saxon and entered into a long helotage from which it took them a thousand years to escape. We must strive indeed for economic independence, because the despotism that rules us is half-mercantile, half-military, and by mortally wounding the lower mercantile half we may considerably disable the upper; at least we shall remove half the inducement England now has for keeping us in absolute subjection.

But we should never forget that politics is a work for the Kshatriya and it is not by the virtues and methods of the Vaishya that we shall finally win our independence.

Compiled by SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ sacrifice

REMINISCENCES

I

(We begin here a new series giving us intimate glimpses into the origins of the Ashram in Pondicherry and of the Revolutionary movement in Bengal during the first decade of this century, both inseparably connected with Sri Aurobindo's life and work. These articles are from the pen of one who was a close associate of the Master from early youth; they bear a stamp of authenticity which will make them invaluable documents for future research. The article which appears in this issue should, from the strictly chronological point of view, be actually the last. We have thought it fit to depart from the chronological order in view of the special occasion to which this issue of "Mother India" is dedicated. The articles were originally written in Bengali and they appear here in translation for the first time. As some of them were meant to be read out before an Ashram audience, the conversational tone has been preserved.)

SRI AUROBINDO came to Pondicherry¹ and took shelter here. We might say of course from another point of view that it was he who gave shelter to Pondicherry within his own consciousness. But why this city in particular? There is indeed the usual view that he retired into French territory to escape the wrath of the British bureaucracy. But actually, all he wanted was to find a quiet spot where he might give himself to his own work undisturbed.

The place was so quiet that we can hardly imagine now what it was really like. It was not quiet, it was actually dead; they used to call it a dead city. There was hardly any traffic, particularly in the area where we lived, and after dusk there was not a soul stirring. It is no wonder they should say, "Sri Aurobindo has fixed upon a cemetery for his sadhana."

It was a cemetery indeed. Whilst the Indian nationalist movement had been flooding the whole country, nothing of that regenerating flood could find an entry here, except for one or two individuals who had felt a touch. It was like a backwater of the sea, a stagnant pool by the shore. There was here no such thing as a public life or a youth movement or any kind of collective effort, or an experiment in educational reform,—there was no sign whatsoever of an awakening to life.

¹ in 1910.

A cemetery it was no doubt, but one with its full complement of ghouls.

In the first rank of these ghouls were the ruffian bands. Such creatures can appear only in a highly tamasic environment. For, the greater the depth of inertia the more is the need for keen rajasic excitement followed immediately by the silence of sleep. Pondicherry of those days had a still more notorious reputation for its cheap wine-shops and its rowdy tipsies. Of this type of ghouls there was a regular invasion from outside every week-end.

The ruffian bands—known locally as “bandes” in French—were a peculiar institution now almost broken up. The French regime in Pondicherry was supposed to be in theory a reign of liberty, equality and fraternity. But in actual fact, it was the feudalism of pre-Revolution France that held sway here. Or perhaps it was something worse, namely, the arbitrary rule of three or four high officials and rich men of ill-gotten means. The “bandes” were in their pay and they were there to do their bidding; the police had neither the will nor the power to intervene. On certain occasions, during the campaigns for political elections, complete anarchy seemed to reign in Pondicherry, while rioting and murder continued for days on end and blood flowed freely. People would not dare stir out of their houses, especially after dark. We were not openly involved in politics, but some of our friends were. And Sri Aurobindo would sometimes send out some of us to meet them, even after nightfall and on purpose. The local people marvelled at our dauntless courage.

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These ruffian bands—these ghouls I was going to say—have turned against us too on more than one occasion. Let me explain in a little more detail.

Soon after Sri Aurobindo came, he realised that a firm seat must be established here, an unshakable foundation for his *sādhana* and *siddhi*, for the path and the goal. He was to build up on the ever-shifting sands of the shore a firm and strong edifice, a Temple of God. Have we not read in the Puranas and other scriptures that whenever and wherever a sage or a Rishi sat down to his meditation and sadhana, there rushed upon him at once a host of evil spirits to break up his work? They seemed to have a special liking for Rishis' flesh.

Those who tried most to stop Sri Aurobindo from settling down and were ever on the alert to move him from his seat were the British authorities. The British Government in India could never accept that Sri Aurobindo had come away to French territory for carrying on his yoga. Religion and spirituality, these to them were a mere subterfuge. They thought they knew what Sri Aurobindo was—the one most dangerous man in all India, the source of all the trouble. Pondicherry was the place from where were supplied the necessary instructions and advice and perhaps even the pistols and other weapons. Here

was the brain-centre of the Indian independence movement. That Sri Aurobindo had been the mainspring of Indian independence they had been told by their life-instinct, although the superficial sense in which they understood it was not obviously the whole truth.

At one time, they made up their minds that Sri Aurobindo should be kidnapped in a car with the help of one of the chiefs of the local "bandes". We had to patrol all night the house in which Sri Aurobindo lived, lest there should be a sudden attack. I gather the ringleader behind this move showed repentance later and said that to act against a holy man and yogi was a great sin and that a curse might fall on the evil-doer himself.

Nevertheless, force having failed they now tried fraud. An attempt was made to frame a trumped-up charge at law. Some of the local "ghouls" were made to help forge the documents—some photographs and maps and charts along with a few letters—which were to prove that we had been engaged in a conspiracy for dacoity and murder. The papers were left in a well in the compound of one of our men, then they were "discovered" after a search by the police. The French police had even entered Sri Aurobindo's residence for a search. But when their Chief found there were Latin and Greek books lying about on his desk, he was so taken aback that he could only blurt out, "Il sait du latin, il sait du grec!"—"He knows Latin, he knows Greek!"—and then he left with all his men. How could a man who knew Latin and Greek ever commit any mischief?

In fact, the French Government had not been against us, indeed they helped us as far as they could. We were looked upon as their guests and as political refugees, it was a matter of honour for them to give us their protection. And where it is a question of honour, the French as a race are willing to risk anything: they still fight duels in France on a point of honour. But at the same time, they had their friendship, the *entente cordiale*, with Britain to maintain, and it is this that got them into a dilemma.

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In addition to force and fraud, the British Government did not hesitate to make use of temptation as well. They sent word to Sri Aurobindo which they followed up by messenger, to say that if he were to return to British India, they would not mind. They would indeed be happy to provide him with a nice bungalow in the quiet surroundings of a hill station, Darjeeling, where he could live in complete freedom and devote himself to his spiritual practices without let or hindrance. Needless to add, this was an ointment spread out to catch a fly and Sri Aurobindo refused the invitation with a "No, thank you."

Afterwards came a more serious attack, perhaps the one most fraught with danger. The First World War was on. India had been seething with

discontent and things were not going too well abroad on the European front. The British Government now brought pressure on the French: they must do something drastic about their political refugees. Either they should hand them over to the British, or else let them be deported out of India. The French Government accordingly proposed that they would find room for us in Algeria. There we could live in peace; they would see to our passage so that we need have no worry on that score. If on the other hand we were to refuse this offer, there might be danger : the British authorities might be allowed to seize us forcibly.

I can recall very well that scene. Sri Aurobindo was seated in his room in what was later called "Guest House", Rue François Martin. We too had come. Two or three of the Tamil nationalist leaders who had sought refuge in Pondicherry came in and told Sri Aurobindo about the Algeria offer and also gave a hint that they were agreeable. Sri Aurobindo paused a little and then he said, in a quiet clear tone, "I do not budge from here." To them this came as a bolt from the blue; they had never expected anything like this. In Algeria there would be freedom and peace, whereas here we lived in constant danger and uncertainty. But now they were helpless. Sri Aurobindo had spoken and they could hardly act otherwise. They had no alternative but to accept the decision, though with a heavy heart.

The story of Danton comes to mind : Danton the leader of the French Revolution. For a long time he had been on the crest of the wave of revolution, a leader revered of all. The wheel of his fortune was now on the downward turn and another party, the extremists, had reached the crest. Orders were out for his arrest, which meant the guillotine. His friends rushed to him to give advice. "Flee, Danton, flee," they said, "there is yet time, flee." Danton was unmoved and he replied in a calm and quiet manner. "That cannot be," he said. "On n'emporte pas le pays à la semelle de ses souliers"—"You cannot carry the country on the heels of your shoes."

The Ashram has of course been subjected to fresh attacks later, and to some of these many of you have been witness. But by then the Ashram had its foundations well laid and the edifice had risen high. But in the days of which I have been speaking there was no such thing as a foundation yet. Today the Ashram stands like a banyan tree with head erect and branches spread all over; its body is solid and immovable, the roots go deep and strong and firm. An attack may dislodge or even break a few leaves and branches, but nothing more serious can happen. But in those days there was a possibility that the whole tree might get uprooted and such attempts too were there. The whole endeavour then was to find a standing-room. Sri Aurobindo wanted, as the Vedic Rishis before him had done, to find a footing where there was none, *apade pada-dhātave*.

In those days there was in the Collège de France in Pondicherry a French professor named Jouveau Dubreuil—later on he became quite a well-known name—who had been engaged in research in ancient history and archaeology. We knew him quite well. He was at that time working on the early history of Pondicherry. From a study of the ancient documents and inscriptions he discovered that the city of Pondicherry, which I have called a city of the dead, had at one time been known as a city of the Veda, *veda-purī*. That is to say, it had a centre of Vedic learning. And this Vedic college, our professor found from ancient maps and other clues, was located exactly on the spot where the main building of our Ashram now stands.

According to ancient tradition, the Rishi Agastya came to the South to spread the Vedic lore and the Aryan discipline. His seems to have been the first project for the infusion of Aryan culture into the Dravidian civilisation. Many of you may here recall the lines of Hemchandra the Bengali poet :

Arise, O Mountain, arise,
 Agastya has returned;
 A new sign has been floated,
 There's a racing flood of Light;
 And lo, the sky holds a new splendour of the Sun...
 Hold this light, O Mountain,
 That it spread a new Dawn over the land;
 May it hold the new Knowledge,
 May it acquire a new life;
 May a new Dream come to us all.
 Raise, O Mountain, your blue dragon-mass.

The legend goes that as Agastya journeyed South, the Vindhya mountains bent low to give him passage, and that they have remained low ever since and would continue in that posture until the Rishi came back. In connection with this story about the Vedic Rishi Agastya, one is almost automatically reminded of the endeavour of Sri Aurobindo. Like Agastya he journeyed South and set up a permanent seat here to emanate a new Light—he was even known in these parts as Uttara Yogi, the Yogi of the North. In his lines of work and sadhana too we find a strange affinity with Agastya's effort, at least in one respect. Agastya had been for years driving deep into the earth, in the abyss of the subconscious, for he nourished both the worlds, earth and heaven; he along with his companion Lopamudra had been striving for victory here upon earth itself, in their battle and the sacrifice with its hundred fiery tongues, *jayāvedatra śatanīthamājīt, yat samañcā mithunāvababhyajāva*; for the effort that had the protection of the gods could never fail, *na mṛṣāśrāntam yadavanti devāḥ*. To carry the effort of the Vedic Rishis to a greater fulfilment, to make the victory

complete in a hundred, nay, in a thousand ways, *śatanītham*, *sahasranītham*,—this precisely was Sri Aurobindo's aim.

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Sri Aurobindo was in Pondicherry for forty years. The first few years were spent in establishing a seat : he had to select a suitable spot and make a permanent abode where he could work undisturbed. This point about selecting a "seat" occurs in the story of all great spiritual aspirants and in all the disciplines. The Tantriks had need of their "seat of five skulls", *pañcamuṇḍī*. Ramakrishna had his *pañcavaṭī*, the grove of five banyans. But why this insistence on five ? Perhaps the number stood for the five main elements in man and the five worlds that constitute the universe,—what the Upanishads term body, life, mind, supermind and spirit. The Vedas too speak of *pañcakṣiti*, the five abodes, *pañcakṛṣṭi*, the five fields of culture, *pañcājana*, the five births or worlds. Sri Krishna's conch of *pañcājanya* may well occur to the mind. Lord Buddha too when he took his seat under the Bodhi tree is supposed to have said, "I do not rise from this seat until my aim is attained, even though the body dry up or fall" (*ihāsane śusyatu me śarīram*).

The site once chosen and the seat established, Sri Aurobindo had now to prepare the ground. There were, as I have said, shifting sands all around symbolising a changing world where all is in a state of flux, *yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*. All that had to be cleared and firm ground reached. He spent many long years, even as Agastya had done, in this spade-work. For he was to erect a huge edifice, a Temple dedicated to God. He had once dreamed of a Temple for Bhawani, Bhawani Mandir, where he would install Mother India. Now too he desired the same thing, a Temple for Bhawani, a Temple-city in fact.

That needed a solid, firm and immovable foundation. For this he had to dig into the farthest abyss, to fix, one might say, the "five supporting pillars". All this he did single-handed during the first four years, from 1910 to 1914. Then the Mother came. And although that was for a short time, it was then that the plans were clearly laid for the thing that was to be and the shape it was to take,—this New Creation of theirs.

The work of building the foundation took him till 1920. From 1920 to 1926 he worked with the Mother in giving it strength, testing it and making it fit and adequate for carrying the future load. In 1926 there began the construction of the superstructure, and along with that proceeded the work of installing the presiding Deity. This work of installation took twelve years to complete and the next twelve were given to making it permanent. His task done, Sri Aurobindo stepped aside, for a new task, for taking up another line of work. But to this foundation he lent the entire strength of his bare back, that his work and new creation should stand immortal and with its head erect.

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All that Sri Aurobindo had wanted to do with his body was to instal permanently in an earthly form the Mother Divine. This Temple we call the Ashram has grown through the Power and Influence of her physical Presence, in order that she may manifest anew. The Divine Mother of the worlds has installed herself here. In the golden Temple the living Goddess is manifest with all her Powers of realisation. She has herself taken charge of the Work now. And the power of her Grace is working towards the goal that the entire earth and the race of men grow into a living manifestation of Herself.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated from the original Bengali by Sanat K. Banerji)

SRI AUROBINDO AND HISTORY

(With acknowledgements to Art and Letters, Vol. XXXIV, No. I, the Journal of the Royal India Pakistan and Ceylon Society, published from London, we reproduce the following brilliant article by the well-known English writer on philosophical themes, Ninian Smart. An "Editor's Note" has been added to clarify certain issues apropos of it.)

"MAN descends from the ape ; therefore we must love each other !" It was with these words that the great Russian theologian Soloviev parodied those who, under the impact of Darwinism, imagined that science could answer all questions. The words could, in our day, express a criticism of Sir Julian Huxley.

Nevertheless, the advance of science certainly changes, or ought to change, our religious outlook. In particular, evolutionary theory and the refined methods of historical investigation have sharply affected the Christian world-picture, and in a less violent way they undoubtedly must modify the great religions of the East. It is therefore appropriate to consider the writings of Sri Aurobindo against this background, since he steers something of a middle course between the narrow view of history to be found in much traditional Christianity and the expansive, and rather directionless, picture which we can derive from Indian mythology and cosmology.

In speaking about Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical views in relation to evolution and history I am, of course, confining myself to the theoretical side, so to speak, of his spiritual teachings ; I am not here concerned directly with the practical side. This is largely because my competences lie in the former direction. But it would be a mistake to suppose that theory and practice are anywhere in religion unconnected. And thus it is always of some importance in such matters to consider the intellectual basis of a way of life.

Evolutionary theory (whatever we may think about the particular mechanisms postulated by biologists to account for the emergence of new species) is with us to stay. Gone are the somewhat claustrophobic days when Western men looked back over their forefathers' shoulders at Adam and Eve at the dawn of a short-lived world. The history of life on this planet is to be measured in thousands of millions of years ; and the history of the cosmos goes back even further (or indeed on some theories indefinitely). Men have to be seen against the backcloth of a truly gigantic universe and of an astonishing pre-history. The immensity of our cosmos accords with the vast times and

spaces of Indian cosmology and mythology ; so that our new evolutionary world-picture is more shattering to traditional Western than to Eastern beliefs, or so it would at first appear.

A second main element in our situation is provided by the development of more accurate and illuminating techniques for studying religious and spiritual history—in particular for studying sacred texts. Vanished are the times when we can seriously think of sacred books as somehow literally the word of the Divine Being. Fundamentalism is, or ought to be, dead. Moreover, the opening up of the world enables us to see that there is not just one profound faith ; but that other religions apart from those of our own cultural environment must be accorded at the least a measure of truth. And thus we carefully and reverently read the Scriptures for what they enshrine and reveal, rather than with a slavish adherence to the letter.

The consequence of these two elements in our situation is that religion has necessarily to be more expansive. History has to be seen against the background of evolution ; while religious history has to be seen as containing a record of insight and encounter.

These things being so, we already have some glimmering of the metaphysical or theological picture which we feel ought to emerge. On the one hand, we can look to the vast space and time which science and the Indian imagination treat of ; on the other hand, we can look to that sense of direction which both evolutionary theory and the Judæo-Christian *Weltanschauung* suggest. It seems important to us that a satisfactory picture of the world will incorporate both these elements, while embracing also the truth glimmering forth from those spiritual insights and encounters which religious history expresses.

Yet at the same time we are bound to feel certain objections to such a programme. For, it will be urged, it is wrong either to attach man too closely to the rest of the world or to assimilate religious experience to ordinary experience. The important things, it may be said, about man are the *differences* distinguishing him from the rest of creation ; while the importance of spiritual intuitions lies in their radical divergence from common experience. For after all the Divine Being is sharply to be distinguished from the world ; and thus experience of that great Being will differ profoundly from experience of the world. Such objections may well seem weighty. And I shall return to them after considering Sri Aurobindo's view of the cosmos and comparing it with that of a fairly recent exposition of an evolutionary standpoint, namely that of the late Père Teilhard de Chardin. Both these views involve an heroic attempt to speak of a gradation of beings, while yet preserving the idea that there are vital differences emerging within this gradation.

Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical view can be briefly stated as follows. He rejects both the illusionism of the Advaita Vedānta and the dualism of theistic

religion—the former because it makes no sense of salvation or indeed of ordinary life; the latter because the great gulf fixed between God and His creation belittles both the individual and the universe. He therefore sees it as necessary to believe that the Divine Being works in a very intimate way through the cosmos. This reflection is supported by the new picture of the cosmos to which I have alluded; and by Sri Aurobindo's recognition of the importance of giving meaning, purpose or direction to human existence. The difficulties of earlier Indian speculations, of Judaeo-Christian dualism and of science are alike resolved, on this view, through the conception that the Divine Being itself evolves through a gradation of beings from matter up to a stage beyond mental life, and in a direction opposite to an initial involution of the Divine Being into matter. From our point of view, we can consider the cosmos as flowering upwards, so to speak, from the obscurity of primeval matter through the stages of rudimentary life and of conscious existence to something beyond. Thus Sri Aurobindo delicately balances the historical insights of Christianity, its emphasis on the importance of the past and its promise of an apocalypse, with the recurrent pantheism of a main strand in Hindu thought. It may be noted that there seem to be two important principles upon which such a picture of the world relies.

First, what is found here in the cosmos at one stage exists already, embryonically so to speak, in previous stages. Second, the progressive raising of individual things to a higher stage involves the reaching-down of that higher stage into the previous one. Perhaps indeed these two principles are two ways of saying the same thing. But their emphasis is different. The first principle is useful from the point of view of unification—of representing the whole flowering of the cosmos as a single process: the future is already contained in the past—and so the history of the cosmos has an inevitable direction. The principle bids us look from past to future. The second principle on the contrary bids us look from one time to its predecessors: we see the universe at this time as having been drawn up, so to speak, from its previous condition through a power manifest now. More important, perhaps, from the strictly spiritual point of view, is the thought hereby expressed that it is by opening ourselves to something beyond that progress is made (a thought expressed in a different context by the concept of *grace*).

When we turn to the views of Père Teilhard de Chardin whose posthumous *Le Phénomène Humain* has recently been translated into English under the title *The Phenomenon of Man*,¹ we find some striking likenesses to Sri Aurobindo's position. It is noteworthy, however, that Père Teilhard claims that his views arise from science simply, and are meant to express a *scientific* vision. Their compatibility with a religious world-view is, so to say, merely incidental. (And

¹ Lothian 1959. Foreword by Julian Huxley.

there is some doubt as to the orthodoxy of his views from a Christian—or more particularly a Roman Catholic—standpoint.) Moreover, whereas Sri Aurobindo is not primarily concerned with a detailed exposition of the empirical facts surrounding the evolution of man, Père Teilhard is very much concerned about this. His object is to make sense of a whole range of empirical phenomena. If the result, however, begins to look like a metaphysical or spiritual doctrine, this is just to say that science of its own volition points in this direction. And therefore though there are differences in method and approach between the two thinkers, the end-products of their thinking can aptly be compared.

What then are Père Teilhard's conclusions? Briefly, they are as follows. In order to see man as a phenomenon amidst other phenomena, one must not think of consciousness as an isolated thing, but rather as prefigured in the whole history of the cosmos. To bring smoothness and unity into his account, Père Teilhard distinguishes between the 'within' of things as against the outer aspect which hitherto has been considered the sole concern of science. With the evolution of more complicated matter and then of living organisms there is an intensification of the psychic energy lying within, until we get to the development of man : hominization, as Père Teilhard calls it. Here mind is manifested and the planet earth can be considered not merely as encircled by the biosphere, but also by the 'noosphere' (another of Père Teilhard's pregnant neologisms). The noosphere, a realm of minds becoming increasingly unified through modern communications, points beyond itself to a further development where it evolves into a thorough unity, a single hyperpersonal reality, called the Omega point. God, for Père Teilhard, is perhaps more Omega than Alpha ! For it may be noted that he hazards a theological interpretation of his bold prophecy. Moreover, and very importantly for our present purpose, Père Teilhard avers that this Omega point could not exercise its attraction in drawing the evolutionary process up towards it unless already it was in some sense in our midst. This thought forms the basis, as far as one can gather, for his Christology. Already the bond of divine love has been manifested in our midst and still exercises its power to draw us onwards to that hyperpersonal unity.

These notions, stated thus baldly, must seem strange and even implausible; and I am far from asserting that they are evidently correct. Nevertheless, there is a certain hypnotism in Père Teilhard's poetical manner of writing, which, when mingled with his appeal to scientific evidence, can hardly fail to arouse our enthusiasm. The merit of this situation is that he makes us see things afresh; and even if we cannot always trust the vision, nevertheless we begin to ask questions. In these respects there is a parallel with the luminous and fascinating prose of *The Life Divine* and of much else of Sri Aurobindo's writings.

But we can see more particularly that there is a considerable overlap in substance between the two systems of thought. Like Sri Aurobindo, Père Teilhard sees that what appears in one stage of evolution is prefigured in earlier

stages. The notion of the *Saccidānanda* working its way upwards through matter and life and mind is echoed by Père Teilhard's emphasis on the 'within' of things, the 'within' that flowers more and more impressively in the course of evolution. Moreover, just as Sri Aurobindo makes use of the principle that the next higher stage must reach down, so to speak, into its predecessor to effect the transformation, likewise Père Teilhard conceives of his Omega point as already here exercising its power. Again, just as Sri Aurobindo boldly looks forward to the establishment of Supermind here on this planet, so Père Teilhard looks to the evolution of this hyperpersonal spiritual reality from out of the noosphere. More generally, just as Sri Aurobindo detects a more or less unswerving direction to the cosmos, so too Père Teilhard extrapolates from evolution out into the future. Both preach a kind of apocalypse—though neither uses the imagery of the Book of Revelation or anything of that sort. And both see man as the crest of the onswEEPing wave of development: it is out of man's potentialities that the luminous future will be fashioned. Both replace the crude cosmocentric picture of man of pre-Copernican days with a different sort of cosmocentrism. Man no longer is thought of as a spider imprisoned by the web of the world around him; but as the most powerful and significant being so far manifested in the multitudinous cosmos. Both see the human future as something involving a distinctively spiritual flowering forth. Like Sri Aurobindo, Père Teilhard views matter as ultimately subserving the purposes of the spirit; in neither thinker is there a turning away from the material world, as in some ascetic and illusionist doctrines.

There are of course differences; but it is not my prime concern here to draw attention to them. It will, I hope, be obvious by now that there is at least a considerable identity in view over large areas. What, then, are we to say about this magnificent and prophetic idea of an evolution at once both material and spiritual? How does such a view bear on our present situation in religion and metaphysics—the situation which I adumbrated at the beginning?

First, I think that both these men's views indicate that the idea of man as a 'special creation' requires revising. I am conscious that this notion is rather Judaeo-Christian than Indian: for has not the doctrine of rebirth in Indian thought emphasized a sort of solidarity between the animals and men? Nevertheless, the underlying feeling that man is somehow very special is not absent from Eastern spirituality and in any case the cross-current of rebirth is rather different in conception from evolution. So the problem is not merely one for Christians, Jews and Muslims. Yet when we delve a little deeper I think it becomes apparent that it is not so much the concept *special* as the concept *creation* which requires revision (or perhaps *restoring*). For such evolutionary theories as those of Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin bring plainly before our attention the thought that the Divine Being is not to be conceived at all in a Deistic manner. We are wrong, on these views, to look upon God as

so utterly transcendent that He can, so to speak, fix creation from all eternity and then leave it to work out its destiny according to natural laws. Or rather, since it would be absurd and blasphemous to look on the Divine omnipotence as limited in the way which this manner of expressing the matter suggests, we should say instead : We have a false view of God if we think of Him in this fashion. In order, then, to revive our conception of the divine immanence we must turn to the facts of cosmic history : and to do this is to recognize in evolution God's handiwork. This, perhaps, is the first lesson to be learnt. It is not unconnected with what I said earlier about the Aristotelian view of the cosmo-centric Earth. Truly, as far as size and physics is concerned, this tiny puddle which we call the world is but a droplet in the great rivers and seas of creation. Yet on the other hand, it is a conscious puddle : and perhaps has a certain pride of place for that reason. (Yet, one must confess, there may be other claimants to this throne.)

The second way in which this evolutionary view bears on our present situation is this. There is contained in such a view a wide expansion of our concept of history. The Book of *Genesis* has this core of truth contained in it, that even creation must be conceived in an historical manner, that human history and cosmic events are of a piece. And yet the defect of a literalistic interpretation of it lies in the smallness of the cosmos that fundamentalism imagines : moreover, fundamentalism debauches science, with its great sweep, in the supposed interests of religion. And such a debauchery is both bad science and bad religion. Still, this does not mean that we cannot learn from *Genesis*, for it shows us that creation is itself a kind of history. Or should we perhaps say that there is a strong analogy between the evolution of the cosmos and human history ? We would be quite wrong, of course, to neglect the element of free-will and planning implicit in human affairs—an aspect of our history that is, one would think, not evident in evolution. Nevertheless, it is unwise always to look upon science as though it concerns the repeatable alone, as though the paradigm of science must be the laboratory experiment. Clearly biology and cosmology also are intimately concerned with unrepeatable history : in the nature of the case we cannot construct experimental universes to see whether they run true to form. Rather, we must grope for evidence and hints, in the manner of the historian; though instead of written records the cosmologist and the biologist must look to skulls and twisting galaxies. Thus, if we look for a divine interpretation of human history, it is not unreasonable to expect a divine interpretation of the history of the universe and of life.

A third lesson which we can learn from such evolutionary theories as that of Sri Aurobindo is that religious insight or experience must be placed within a wider framework—that it must be seen against the background of other developments. This brings us to an objection which was raised before, namely, that spiritual intuitions, in order to express the 'Otherness' of the Divine

Being, must themselves differ sharply from common experience. It is in the transports of Muhammad, the shattering theophany of the *Bhagavadgita*, the astonishment and quaking of Job—it is in such experiences that we observe the impact of a transcendent realm upon ourselves, and not in the mere gazing at daffodils or drinking beer. It may of course be replied that God can be seen anywhere, in the hardness of a wall, in the raising of a peacock's tail, in human bodies, in the strength of rocks, in the daily task and the washing up. But surely we must recognize that here there are peculiar sorts of seeings. This is not ordinary experience, but ordinary experience transmuted. And how can it be transmuted save by attaching it to the extraordinary insights and encounters to which I alluded ? There seems to be no escape from the thought that it is the extraordinary vision which reveals the Divine Being. Indeed, how can God be divine if He is no different from the dish-towel or the soap-powder ? And how can Sri Aurobindo make his claims except on the basis of extraordinary insight ? Yet, if spiritual insight is so different from everything else, how can it be seen against the background of everything else ? The answer, perhaps, lies in the way in which this seeing occurs. It is possible to place religious insight against this other background only if it is put in the forefront, so that the background gains its significance from *it*. Nevertheless, it is absurd to look upon human beings—beings which are capable of spiritual encounters—as though they were born full-fledged as spiritual beings from the lap of the world. The facts of evolution must be interpreted in the light of religious experience : but it is the *facts* which are to be interpreted, not some fantasies which, for want of science, we might dream up. Still, while we are speaking of the problem of 'Otherness', it is as well to note that Sri Aurobindo's masterly synthesis may yet be held by some, notably by theists, to over-emphasize the immanence of the Divine Being. But that is another story. So far we have overcome the main objection to the evolutionary programme.

The fourth way in which the evolutionary metaphysics bears on our present situation is in regard to the future. Both Père Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo look to a somewhat similar flowering of humanity, a supramental existence. Yet in the present age, we are bound to feel qualms and fears about this. Might not some trigger-happy General or President or Party Secretary one day give the ultimate order ? And amid the incandescent radioactivity of Armageddon, there is neither a vision of God nor of anything else. Again, we may feel that man's evolution in any case may well take a different path : messing around with chromosomes may lead to the Brave New World, not to the luminous future predicted by Sri Aurobindo. Likewise Père Teilhard seems over-optimistic when he says : "I feel entitled to say that we have nothing to fear from these manifold disasters *in so far* as there is any suggestion of premature accident or failure. However possible they may be in theory, we have higher reasons for being sure *that they will not happen*." Yet, we may reply, however

much we may see in the marvellous chances of history the hand of an inner or outer Providence, nevertheless we must also look upon such chances and accidents as chances and accidents. Though it is unthinkable in a way that men should not have existed, or even that I should not have existed, surely there is an atmosphere of radical contingency about these facts ? If a comet had struck the planet, if my parents had not met...we are bound to revolve such contingencies.

These are grave difficulties. But they invite us to think again about Providence and the Divine Immanence. And thinking again is most often a good thing. But at least the dim promise of an apocalypse corresponds to our deepest sentiments :

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on ;
The night is dark, and I am far from home ;
Lead Thou me on ;
Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.”

Though the one step is enough, we look to a glimmering light at the end of the tunnel. Or, as Sri Aurobindo says :

“Life itself is only a coloured vehicle, physical birth a convenience for the greater and greater births of the Spirit.” (*The Life Divine*, p. 42).

The thought we can take away from reading *The Life Divine* is this. If we recognise the possibility of spiritual insight and knowledge, and if we, as we must, accept the great picture which modern science has painted, then how are we to look upon the sweep of history, from the stringing-forth of ultimate particles up to the teeming humanity of 1959 and beyond ? In the Middle Ages, it could perhaps be said with justice that religion constricted the imagination : it dammed a stream which was to break over into the insights of Galileo, Newton, Darwin and Einstein. Perhaps the reverse is true to-day. Science too, treated in a certain manner, where, that is, it too dogmatically imposes a narrow metaphysics upon us, can shackle our excitements and dull our visions. Yet the world is astonishing, mysterious and interesting, in all its manifold inner and outer glories. And one of the more astonishing, mysterious and interesting phenomena in this our universe was Sri Aurobindo.

NINIAN SMART

EDITOR'S NOTE

Mr. Ninian Smart has written with real penetration in general about the divine fulfilment of man envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and there is no mistaking the deeply moved source of Mr. Smart's treatment of the Aurobindonian vision of history. Also, one cannot help appreciating the high inspiration of Père Teilhard de Chardin's *Phenomenon of Man*. It is the one book that has come out of the contemporary West with an insight which may be considered as answering from the scientific world to some of the specific illuminations of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy. But, as Mr. Smart recognises, there are differences—and, as he does not always perceive, these differences lie even in what may seem similar on the surface.

Thus the Omega point of Père Teilhard must be distinguished from Sri Aurobindo's Supermind. Mr. Smart uses the expression "supramental existence" for the flowering of humanity, called by him "somewhat similar", to which both Sri Aurobindo and Père Teilhard look. The word "supramental" may mean, etymologically, whatever exceeds the mental level which is humanity's at present : it may be taken in a wide sense as synonymous with "spiritual". Then Père Teilhard is at one with Sri Aurobindo in positing by his Omega point a transcendence of all humanity by an evolution into the unity of the vast "Within" that is at the back of the emergence of life and mind in matter and secretly makes them move higher and higher towards its own pre-existent divinity. But a participation of consciousness in the Omega point is not yet the realisation and manifestation of the Supermind known to Sri Aurobindo. It corresponds rather to the cosmic Self of the Vedanta, in a realisation spread to all men instead of being confined to a few individuals, a realisation occurring as part of the natural evolutionary drive no less than as part of a special mystical development undertaken by the individual's heart and mind.

Inasmuch as Père Teilhard conceives of this realisation in an evolutionary light he is an Aurobindonian and helps to lay a new-foundation for individual mystical effort ; his philosophy, like Sri Aurobindo's, makes this effort an urge of universal nature herself, a possibility and even an inevitability of earth-history by the very character of that history. But the cosmic Self, no matter how evolutionised, does not imply the tremendous radical transformation of man, individual and racial, which the Supermind as understood by Sri Aurobindo must effect : this transformation includes a complete literal divinising of the most material being of man. For the Aurobindonian Supermind is much more than a hyperpersonal world-unity : it holds in itself the original truth of all terms worked out in evolutionary nature, including the very body in which life and mind emerge and manifest and strain beyond themselves. Unless the divine "Within" is plumbed to the depths (or the heights) where the key to a

total divinisation of the human is found, there can be, in Sri Aurobindo's eyes, no integral perfection, no real establishment of an existence in which all fundamental problems are solved. The Supermind of Sri Aurobindo effects in the utmost measure not only a subjective but also an objective transformation both in the individual and [the] community. It has the power to manifest a heaven on earth by virtue of the earth that has an archetypal reality in heaven. (In the light of such a power we may resolve the problem Mr. Smart posits of the relation between ordinary things and extraordinary experience. What is reached ultimately by extraordinary experience is the divine counterpart of even ordinary things, so that the entirety of our existence, down to the most outer details, discovers its apocalypse.¹)

Here we may remark how Sri Aurobindo, though not starting like Père Teilhard from scientific premises, still draws on all available scientific thought and has ultimately a greater *liaison* with the world of science. His insistence on and promise of a divinisation of very matter—his disclosure of a dynamic Yoga which would achieve to a superlative degree by spiritual means what science tries to accomplish within certain limits by physical—makes him tread superscientifically the field specific to the physicist, the biologist and the physiologist. The process of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo would have a direct repercussion on science's view of the nature and potentiality of Matter, in a more concrete as well as revolutionary fashion than the attainment of Omega point could ever do.

An important implication of the difference between the Aurobindonian fulfilment of history and that which Père Teilhard visualises is : the latter philosopher, not signifying by his Omega point the realisation and manifestation of an infinite all-fulfilling Truth such as Sri Aurobindo's Supermind, puts the realm of perfection still beyond the earth and thus stops short of what the evolution or unfoldment of the Divine hidden in matter should logically reach—a new creation here which would answer in all essential terms to the epiphany that already exists in the Divine beyond. In fact, Père Teilhard tends even in his far-reaching *Phenomenon of Man* to make his vision finally compatible with Roman Catholic Christianity, and in his other works he shows the priest in him very clearly as most anxious to assimilate the new vision to the traditional. A somewhat elastic Roman Catholicism which would not exclude his mystic-scientific *weltanschauung* of evolution, with its "heretical" suggestions of pantheism and panpsychism, would wholly satisfy him. He wants to retain the old form as much as possible for his novel substance : otherwise he could not remain a devout Jesuit in spite of the Church's suspicion of his philosophy. So, while *The Phenomenon of Man* remains a glorious testament of scientific acumen

¹ See the next feature, "*The Life Divine*" of Sri Aurobindo, for some indications of the Supermind and its Super-Nature.

wedded to poetic perceptiveness and bringing forth a semi-Aurobindonian world-view, we would be misled in thinking that all the other works of its author develop its central thesis in the contexts of various life-problems. What is of progressive value in his philosophy to the world today in the throes of a new self-orientation lies in this one great book : his other works, for all their originalities of insight, are ultimately a Procrustean fitting of them into past religious traditions that have little to give of a spiritual consummation to the modern genius of scientific thought. Not that those traditions are all devoid of truth. Many have wonderful indispensable experiences behind them, but they must pass to a wider secret of the world and discover the real sense of what science, often along mistaken lines yet with a correct goal, gropes for—namely, life's fulfilment here and now. Unless they do this, there can never be a genuine *rapprochement* between spirituality and that in the modern age which has come to stay in man's consciousness and can be rejected only at the price of a wilful obscurantism. By his attempt to orthodoxise his "heresy" Père Teilhard takes away from the momentousness of his *Phenomenon of Man*. Consequently, it would be perilous to go outside this book and take him as a whole for one's guide to the future. We shall find ourselves completely side-tracked from the true purport of his masterpiece and reach not the fine harmony of a profound scientific strain with the philosophy of Śrī Aurobindo but a subtle perversion of it, robbing it of all its authentic progressive force.

We must understand this when we introduce his name in any discourse dealing with Śrī Aurobindo, all of whose works stand variously in the luminous presence of the same spiritual vision and experience,

Like one entire and perfect chrysolite.

But in so far as Mr. Smart treats of that particular book of Teilhard de Chardin he is justified to a fair extent indeed in discussing broadly—and with an admirable perspicacity—its message side by side with the more comprehensive revelation by which Śrī Aurobindo charges history with a supreme significance.

K. D. SETHNA

THE LIFE DIVINE OF SRI AUROBINDO

ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

CLASSIFIED EXCERPTS

SECTION IV: (V) SUPERMIND

It is the cryptic verses of the Veda that help us here; for they contain, though concealed, the gospel of the divine and immortal Supermind and through the veil some illumining flashes come to us. We can see through these utterances the conception of this Supermind as a vastness beyond the ordinary firmaments of our consciousness in which truth of being is luminously one with all that expresses it and assures inevitably truth of vision, formulation, arrangement, word, act and movement and therefore truth also of result of movement, result of action and expression, infallible ordinance or law. Vast all-comprehensive-ness; luminous truth and harmony of being in that vastness and not a vague chaos or self-lost obscurity; truth of law and act and knowledge, expressive of that harmonious truth of being : these seem to be the essential terms of the Vedic description.¹

Supermind is the vast self-extension of the Brahman that contains and develops. By the Idea it develops the triune principle of existence, consciousness and bliss out of their indivisible unity. It differentiates them, but it does not divide. It establishes a Trinity, not arriving like the Mind from the three to the One, but manifesting the three out of the One—for it manifests and develops—and yet maintaining them in the unity—for it knows and contains. By the differentiation it is able to bring forward one or other of them as the effective Deity which contains the others involved or explicit in itself and this process it makes the foundation of all other differentiations. And it acts by the same operation on all the principles and possibilities which it evolves out of this all-constituent trinity. It possesses the power of development, of evolution, of making explicit, and that power carries with it the other power of involution, of envelopment, of making implicit.²

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.³

This Supermind in its conscious vision not only contains all the forms of itself which its conscious force creates, but it pervades them as an indwelling

Presence and a self-revealing Light. It is present, even though concealed, in every form and force of the universe; it is that which determines sovereignly and spontaneously form, force and functioning; it limits the variations it compels; it gathers, disperses, modifies the energy which it uses; and all this is done in accord with the first laws (a Vedic expression) that its self-knowledge has fixed in the very birth of the form, at the very starting-point of the force.⁴

Supermind sees the universe and its contents as itself in a single indivisible act of knowledge, an act which is its life, which is the very movement of its self-existence. Therefore this comprehensive divine consciousness in its aspect of Will does not so much guide or govern the development of cosmic life as consummate it in itself by an act of power which is inseparable from the act of knowledge and from the movement of self-existence, is indeed one and the same act.⁵

The Supermind then is Being moving out into a determinative self-knowledge which perceives certain truths of itself and wills to realise them in a temporal and spatial extension of its own timeless and spaceless existence. Whatever is in its own being, takes form as self-knowledge, as Truth-Consciousness, as Real-Idea, and, that self-knowledge being also self-force, fulfils or realises itself inevitably in Time and Space.⁶

...in the principle of Supermind itself it [the Divine Consciousness] has three...general poises or sessions of its world-founding consciousness. The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many; the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego.⁷

Obviously, these three poises would be only different ways of dealing with the same Truth; the Truth of existence enjoyed would be the same, the way of enjoying it or rather the poise of the soul in enjoying it would be different. The delight, the Ananda would vary, but would abide always within the status of the Truth-consciousness and involve no lapse into the Falsehood and the Ignorance. For the secondary and tertiary Supermind would only develop and apply in the terms of the divine multiplicity what the primary Supermind had held in the terms of the divine unity.⁸

Supermind or the Truth-consciousness is the real creative agency of the Universal Existence. Even when Mind is in its own darkened consciousness separated from its source, yet is that larger movement always there in the workings of Mind; forcing them to preserve their right relation, evolving from them the inevitable results they bear in themselves, producing the right tree from the right seed, it compels even the operations of so brute, inert and darkened a thing as material Force to result in a world of Law, of order, of right relation and not, as it would otherwise be, of hustling chance and chaos.⁹

The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere (*Parārdha* and *Aparārdha*) is where mind and supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity ; for by that rending, by the illumining descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing all-blissful Ananda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and Matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence.¹⁰

But the Supermind keeps always and in every status or condition the spiritual realisation of the Unity of all ; the intimate presence of that unity is there even within the completest grasp of each thing, each state given its whole delight of itself, power and value : there is thus no losing sight of the affirmative aspects even when there is the full acceptance of the truth of the negative.¹¹

Mind, Life and Matter are the realised powers of the evolution and well-known to us ; Supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda are the secret principles which are not yet put in front and have still to be realised in the forms of the manifestation, and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movement and therefore not easily recognisable. But their evolution too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming,—there must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter.¹²

The spiritual man has evolved [in terrestrial Nature], but not the supramental being who shall thenceforward be the leader of that Nature...as mind is established here on a basis of Ignorance seeking for Knowledge and growing into Knowledge, so supermind must be established here on a basis of Knowledge growing into its own greater Light. But this cannot be so long as the spiritual-mental being has not risen fully to supermind and brought down its powers into terrestrial existence. For the gulf between mind and supermind has to be bridged, the closed passages opened and roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence.¹³

For a real transformation there must be a direct and unveiled intervention from above ; there would be necessary too a total submission and surrender of the lower consciousness, a cessation of its insistence, a will in it for its separate law of action to be completely annulled by transformation and lose all rights over our being. If these two conditions can be achieved even now by a conscious call and will in the spirit and a participation of our whole manifested and inner being in its change and elevation, the evolution, the transformation can take place by a comparatively swift conscious change ; the supramental Consciousness-Force from above and the evolving Consciousness-Force from

behind the veil acting on the awakened awareness and will of the mental human being would accomplish by their united power the momentous transition.¹⁴

A supramental change of the whole substance of the being and therefore necessarily of all its characters, powers, movements takes place when the involved supermind in Nature emerges to meet and join with the supramental light and power descending from Supernature. The individual must be the instrument and first field of the transformation ; but an isolated individual transformation is not enough and may not be wholly feasible. Even when achieved, the individual change will have a permanent and cosmic significance only if the individual becomes a centre and a sign for the establishment of the supramental Consciousness-Force as an overtly operative power in the terrestrial workings of Nature,—in the same way in which thinking Mind has been established through the human evolution as an overtly operative power in Life and Matter. This would mean the appearance in the evolution of a gnostic being or Purusha and a gnostic Prakriti, a gnostic Nature.¹⁵

This consciousness, this living in the spiritual totality and acting from it, a satisfied totality in essence of being and a satisfied totality in the dynamic movement of being, the sense of the relations of that totality accompanying each step, is indeed the very mark of a supramental Consciousness and distinguishes it from the disintegrated, ignorantly successive steps of our Consciousness in the Ignorance.¹⁶

All supramental gnosis is a two-fold Truth-Consciousness, a consciousness of inherent self-knowledge and, by identity of self and world, of intimate world-knowledge ; this knowledge is the criterion, the characteristic power of the Gnosis. But this is not a purely ideative knowledge, it is not consciousness observing, forming ideas, trying to carry them out ; it is an essential light of consciousness, the self-light of all the realities of being and becoming, the self-truth of being determining, formulating and effectuating itself. To be, not to know, is the object of the manifestation ; knowledge is only the instrumentation of an operative consciousness of being.¹⁷

(vi) THE TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

The world is therefore not a figment of conception in the universal Mind, but a conscious birth of that which is beyond Mind into forms of itself. A truth of conscious being supports these forms and expresses itself in them, and the knowledge corresponding to the truth thus expressed reigns as a supramental Truth-consciousness organising real ideas in a perfect harmony before they are cast into a mental-vital-material mould.¹⁸

I take the phrase [Truth-consciousness] from the Rig Veda,—*ṛta-cit*, which means consciousness of essential truth of being (*satyam*), of ordered

truth of active being (*rtam*) and the vast self-awareness (*brhat*) in which alone this consciousness is possible.¹⁹

The Truth-Consciousness is everywhere present in the universe as an ordering self-knowledge by which the One manifests the harmonies of its infinite potential multiplicity. Without this ordering self-knowledge the manifestation would be merely a shifting chaos, precisely because the potentiality is infinite which by itself might lead only to a play of uncontrolled unbounded Chance.²⁰

But beyond this movement of spiritual Mind is the higher experience of the supermind Truth-Consciousness; there these opposites disappear and these partialities are relinquished in the rich totality of a supreme and integral realisation of eternal Being. It is this that is the aim we have conceived, the consummation of our existence here by an ascent to the supramental Truth-Consciousness and its descent into our nature.²¹

...for the spiritual being, once inwardly liberated, can develop in mind the higher states of being that are its own natural atmosphere and bring down a supramental energy and action which are proper to the Truth-consciousness; the ordinary mental instrumentation, life-instrumentation, physical instrumentation even, could then be entirely transformed and become parts no longer of an ignorance however much illumined, but of a supramental creation which would be the true action of a spiritual truth-consciousness and knowledge.²²

The Truth-consciousness, finding evolutionary Nature ready, has to descend into her and enable her to liberate the supramental principle within her; so must be created the supramental and spiritual being as the first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the Self and Spirit in the material universe.²³

(vii) THE REAL-IDEA

The view I am presenting goes farther in idealism [than the idealist philosophies]; it sees the creative Idea as Real-Idea, that is to say, a power of Conscious Force expressive of real being, born out of real being and partaking of its nature and neither a child of the Void nor a weaver of fictions. It is conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own imperishable and immutable substance.²⁴

[In Supermind] the idea is only the light of the reality illumining itself; it is not mental thought nor imagination, but effective self-awareness. It is Real-Idea.

In Supermind knowledge in the Idea is not divorced from will in the Idea, but one with it,—just as it is not different from being or substance, but is one with the being, luminous power of the substance. As the power of burning light is not different from the substance of the fire, so the power of the Idea is not different from the substance of the Being which works itself out in the Idea and its development.²⁵

The type of all perfection towards which we grow, the terms of our highest evolution must already be held in the divine Real-Idea; they must be there formed and conscious for us to grow towards and into them : for that pre-existence in the divine knowledge is what our human mentality names and seeks as the Ideal. The Ideal is an eternal Reality which we have not yet realised in the conditions of our own being, not a non-existent which the Eternal and Divine has not yet grasped and only we imperfect beings have glimpsed and mean to create.²⁶

...the Mind tries to clamp everything into rigidly fixed forms and apparently unchanging or unmoving external factors, because otherwise it cannot act; it then thinks it has got what it wants : in reality all is a flux of change and renewal and there is no fixed form-in-itself and no unchanging external factor. Only the eternal Real-Idea is firm and maintains a certain ordered constancy of figures and relations in the flux of things, a constancy which the Mind vainly attempts to imitate by attributing fixity to that which is always inconstant.²⁷

But then it appears immediately that as Mind is only a final operation of Supermind, so Life is only a final operation of the Consciousness-Force of which Real-Idea is the determinative form and creative agent. Consciousness that is Force is the nature of Being and this conscious Being manifested as a creative Knowledge-Will is the Real-Idea or Supermind.²⁸

The growth of the tree out of the 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.²⁹

...everything is arranged with the precision and perfection of an intrinsic knowledge. In all material things reside a mute and involved Real-Idea, a substantial and self-effective intuition, an eyeless exact perception, an automatic intelligence working out its unexpressed and unthought conceptions; a blindly seeing sureness of sight, a dumb infallible sureness of suppressed feeling coated in insensibility, which effectuate all that has to be effected.³⁰

(To be continued)

Compiled by NATHANIEL PEARSON

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SRI AUROBINDO AND PRESENT-DAY HUMANITY

(A speech by Herr J. B. Sperling, Resident Administrator, German Social Centre, Rourkela-2, Orissa.)

BEFORE I left Germany for India I did a little homework to prepare myself for my new job at Rourkela. Besides reading various books and articles on India which came my way I started seeking advice left and right in my excitement. I now realise that of all sorts of advice I received the best one came from an old family friend of ours : he told me to study the lives of some eminent Indians, he thought that was the best way to get the correct introduction to India. His list included the name of Sri Aurobindo. I am sorry I could not make full use of his advice because I could not finish his list before my departure.

Fortunately for me, I was introduced—and that also by mere coincidence—to the writings of Sri Aurobindo after the first few months of my stay at Rourkela. And, as might be expected, his writings were new revelations to me. I don't, of course, pretend that I have fully understood the philosophical system he built up, but even through my first casual acquaintance with his writings it was obvious to me that I had encountered an unusually great mind who was born to fulfil a God's mission.

His unique achievement as a poet and a patriot is there for everyone to see and one can speak volumes on it. But his greatest achievement is in the field of the highest human thought, the appreciation of which demands much greater effort and concentration than I am capable of now, though it is my serious intention to study the works of Sri Aurobindo in a more favourable condition and time of my life.

So, obviously, with my inadequate knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's thought I was from the very beginning reluctant to enlarge on my feelings towards this great personality in a light-hearted appraisal of this sort. But since I cannot ignore the request of my valuable friends I shall say a few words on "Sri Aurobindo and Present-day Humanity". As his views on this subject are clear and precise, the understanding of them will not present much of a problem, if one has an unprejudiced mind and a concern for humanity beyond the borders of one's own country.

Here I must say, it should strike anyone who has the faintest acquaintance with Sri Aurobindo's writings, that, though like all other sages and savants he gave an important place to the individual, he never forgot the society as such. Here he completely differs from other Indian sages and savants.

I also want to add that many things have been written on him since his withdrawal. In Europe emphasis was put on the idea that he was a link between East and West, and some said it was very likely the real one after centuries. But I feel he is not a bridge between the two mentalities but rather like a tree with its roots extending eastward as well as westward, its top towering over the two sides.

Some people in the West have tried to express Sri Aurobindo's view by explaining what Indian spirituality is. On the other hand, Indians have been surprised to see all western conveniences and comforts linked in his Ashram with the high spirituality of his teachings. I feel, they both forget that Sri Aurobindo is not a compromise between the two tendencies but their synthesis because, as I understand from his teachings, the truth is never a compromise and no tendency is entirely wrong or entirely right. Whenever two opinions contradict each other on any level, the truth lies at a higher level and embodies both opinions.

Now to understand Sri Aurobindo's solution of the present-day crisis of humanity let us see how he defines the purpose of humanity and human existence, because he is nothing if not logical and, if we grasp the central truth of his exposition, it will be easier for us to arrive at the solution. The purpose of humanity, briefly, according to him, is "the transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human living into the divine way of life". And how is this to be achieved? As the "Mother" says: "the realisation of human unity through the awakening in all and manifestation by all of the inner divinity which is one."

So, if we don't lose track of the central purpose of human existence as propounded by Sri Aurobindo, we can surely find out or design a path leading to the solution of all the besetting problems of humanity. I am purposely leaving out the question of "the deep and wide spiritual consciousness and integrated inner and outer existence", the two prerequisites for human emancipation as laid down by Sri Aurobindo, from my present discussion; I shall concentrate on a more mundane level just to show how practical his opinions are.

According to him, "the idea of humanity as a single race of beings with a common life and common general interest" should be the concern of all serious thinking persons. I was indeed surprised to find that he believed in a single European entity and he also believed that the European unity would start first from the economic unity of Europe. I wish the people who conceived the idea of a European Common Market would acknowledge their debt to Sri Aurobindo who had a vision of European Economic Unity years before the idea crystallised in the minds of the present-day sponsors of European Economic Unity.

Now let us come to the subject of how he suggested we should solve the present-day human crisis which he anticipated before his passing away.

1) For the permanent solution of the crisis he believed in the ultimate

formation of a world state and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequalities and subordination of one to another would have disappeared. Here he warned us against the danger and impracticability of unity through compulsion as it ignores spirituality and denies freedom to individuals.

2) A free union of nations would have the greatest chance of long survival or permanent existence.

3) The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it can't be founded on anything else. Here again he warned us against shallow sentimentality. For brotherhood is not a matter of either physical kinship or intellectual agreement. When the soul claims freedom, it is the freedom of its self-development of the Divine in man, in all His beings. When the soul strives for brotherhood, it is the founding of that equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling based upon the recognition of this inner spiritual unity.

This in a nutshell is the central core of Sri Aurobindo's teachings. I know I am exposing myself to the charge of oversimplification but I have deliberately done it because I feel here we can only deal with the essence of the problem. In fact many of present-day human problems could be solved if we chose the essential from the inessentials, if we knew the wood instead of getting lost amongst the trees.

So if we could have comprehended the central purpose of human existence the world would not have been divided into two warring camps threatening annihilation to each other.

But is there any hope for humanity to get out of this deadlock? To this question as well as to so many others, Sri Aurobindo's message provides an answer and very likely the satisfactory one. The present state of chaos, the great peril of complete destruction which threatens humanity through its recent scientific discoveries can be remedied only by recognition of the spiritual destiny of mankind. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, a spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. The religion of humanity does not mean a universal religion or a new creed; it means the full realisation of "a secret spirit, a Divine reality, in which we are all one". According to Sri Aurobindo, the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of those men who will realise the truth and seek to develop it in themselves. So if the minds of men are unable to grapple with the real solution of human problems, the truth of the spirit will step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.

But it should be mentioned that Sri Aurobindo, realist as he was, never decried the value of temporary agreements or what he called "a mechanical solution" of the problem. He believed that in this imperfect world any human endeavour that helps to strengthen brotherhood among the nations should be

welcome, as humanity can reach its cherished goal only through stages. His writings on the League of Nations etc. and his prophecies regarding the problems of the contemporary world are the proofs of his practical thought. Only the big question-mark is whether humanity is prepared for this. In the satisfactory answer to this question lies the solution of the crisis of present-day humanity.

Before I conclude my talk I wish to quote an extract from the writings of Sri Aurobindo as it has great relevance to one of the major controversies of the world. He said, "The triumph of socialism in some countries is not bound up with the progress of internationalism. Socialism is an attempt to complete the growth of national community by making the individual do what he has never yet done : live for the community more than for himself. It is an outgrowth of the national, not of an international idea."

Lastly, those who are in search of a solution of the world crisis should try to recall the advice of Sri Aurobindo once more. He said : "Until man in his heart is ready, a profound change in the world situation cannot come; or it can be brought about by force, physical force or else by forces of circumstances but that leaves all the real work to be done. A frame may have been made, but the soul will have still to grow into the mechanical body."

How long our world will have to grope for the attainment of supremacy of soul and spirit over matter ? It need not be too long, I am sure, if we all try to imbibe the teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

J. B. SPERLING

INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

WHAT is it that we call *Veda* ? It is already known to us that the Vedas are the perennial fount of Indian culture and education, the foundation of Hinduism and the basis of the Aryan civilisation. He who defies Veda is an atheist, a non-Hindu, an untouchable and a non-Aryan. All the various religious systems and scriptures of the Hindus look upon the Veda as the sole authority. What is inconsistent with the Vedas is false and unacceptable. It is no hyperbole to say that all our scriptures are but elaborate commentaries on the Veda. Even men of revolutionary ideas who want to preach some new doctrines have not the courage to stand against the Vedas face to face. They try to find out passages in support of their views or interpret the Vedas in their own light or at least declare that the Vedas neither refute nor confirm their views.

Hinduism is the most catholic of all the religions. It is the most complex and diverse. It has housed peacefully a good many different creeds. And for all these esoteric mysteries the Vedas are solely to be credited. The message of the Vedic Rishi Dirghatamas has inspired the Hindus and the heart of India through aeons. That message is still as familiar and living as ever. *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti* (The same truth has been expressed differently by different seers".) The *Gayatri Mantra* which has become as natural as the air we breathe in and breathe out was first sung by the immortal sage Viswamitra of the Veda. Even in the 20th century we follow the injunctions of the Vedic seers in conducting the ten principal functions of our social life right from our birth to death.

Therefore, according to us, the Veda is as immutable and sempiternal as the supreme Brahman. The root meaning of the term "Brahman" is the Word, the Word inspired. Hence the Veda is eternally true from the birth of the creation to the present age. Nobody has created the Vedas, nor could anybody do it, not even the Rishis. The seers simply heard them with a supernatural faculty of hearing and saw them written before their mental vision; whereafter they arranged them in a systematic manner. That is why the Veda is no human creation. The staunch Hindus subscribe to this view.

Can we look upon the Vedas as the Christians look upon the Bible and the Mohammedans the Koran ? All the epithets that we apply to the Vedas are equally applied by the Christians and the Mohammedans to their respective holy scriptures. And it is no wonder that every nation should extol its own scripture to the skies. But it behoves us to ascertain the value of the Vedas

impartially. We must discover whether it is true that they deserve to be called an infallible and supernatural creation.

It is a need of the hour to investigate the contents of the Vedas. The Europeans are to be credited with having started this bold enquiry. Such enquiry has been termed 'Higher Criticism' in Europe. It applies not only to the Vedas, but to their own scriptures as well. It is the inherent characteristic of the Europeans not to accept anything without putting it to a severe test at every step. They are not prepared to accept anything on the ground that it has been handed down from generation to generation. Needless to say that the value of such a habit is incalculable. And to our misfortune we lost this habit long ago. In the present age we take pride in the mere mention of the Vedas without caring to know about their contents. We should remain beholden to the Europeans that a new wave from the West has awakened us to a true spirit of enquiry.

It is quite surprising that very few people in India have any acquaintance with the Vedas. Most have not been fortunate enough even to have a glimpse of this mighty work. But the fate of the Bible has been otherwise in Europe. The common run of people in India were satisfied with the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. And the learned few concerned themselves with the Upanishads and the six systems of philosophy. Even Rammohan Roy who infused the Hindus with a new spirit and light could not go beyond the domain of the Upanishads. Besides, the few who engaged themselves in a discussion of the Vedas confined themselves more to the commentaries on the Vedas than the Vedas proper. The grammar of Panini, Nirukta, the science of derivation of meanings from the roots, *Mīmāṃsā*, the commentaries on the Vedas and, above all, the commentaries made by Sayana Acharya made it so difficult to understand the text of the Vedas that it looked like the peak of a mountain that could hardly be reached through deep and intricate forests. Whenever we heard the name of the Veda, we used to give a wide berth to it with reverential awe. Our object here is not to discuss who or what is responsible for such a pass but simply to make a plain statement of the bare fact.

Europe made bold to launch an assault on this inaccessible fortress. There is no reason why the Europeans should have the same feeling of reverence as is aroused in our hearts at the mere mention of the Vedas. To them the Veda is but an ancient human product. They did not approach it to derive any cultural benefit from it. All that they wanted was to make themselves acquainted with the Aryan Hindus. The nebulous veil that existed round the Vedas was rent and set aside by them and they replaced it with the daylight of modern thought. We shall later on deal with what followed their rash attempt, but it must be admitted at the very outset that, inspired by their example, the Hindus mustered courage to delve in the Vedas. And what did the European scholars, freed from bias, discover? They found that the unusual reverence of the

Hindus for these scriptures was simply due to traditional superstition devoid of any rational cause. According to them, the Vedas are the first attempt of man at literature. They are a mere collection of pastoral songs comparable to the lisps of a baby. Man in his uncultured and innocent state used to feel every object infused with light and imagined spirits behind the forces of Nature. Therefore he prayed to Indra and Varuna for rain, to the Sun for its rays of light. Frightened by the hurricane and storm he would implore the Maruts for safety, and charmed by the soothing beauty of Dawn he would sing her eulogy.

The gods and demons imagined by the naive and simple mind possessed miraculous powers—prompted by such notions men used to convey their salutations to those mighty Beings, ask them for their daily necessities, material prosperity and welfare in the other world after death. Cows and horses were the chief means of their livelihood. So they prayed for cows yielding abundant milk and horses possessing dynamic strength and energy. They used to fight among themselves—one clan against another—and specially against the robbers who were the Dravidians of ancient India, while they were the Aryans who had come from abroad. Hence they needed arms and weapons and they naturally wanted to defeat the enemy. And that is why they sought the help of the gods for victory.

They used to perform some special rites known as sacrifice, in which they would arrange on an altar some dried sticks of holy trees in a particular formation and kindle a fire in which to pour oblations of clarified butter and many other good things. They offered wine (the juice of soma) to the gods and partook of it themselves. It seems, fire was to them a new discovery. That is why they appreciated its value so much. Moreover, they lived in a frigid snowy region. Hence they looked upon fire as the chief Deity of their worship.

So far we have dealt with the Western approach to the Veda. In subsequent issues we shall present our Indian esoteric interpretations.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali in "Rishi Madhuchhandar Mantramala")

INTUITIVE INSPIRATION

TWO POEMS BY NIRODBARAN, WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS

I

(Before Sri Aurobindo's correction)

I AM thy loneliness,
I am thy white fire;
In thy heart's silences
My spirit-lyre

Sings a celestial tune
Unendingly,
Like the carol of the moon
In a measureless sea.

My nights and days are shaped
Into thy mould
Which is a sky-vast, draped
With thy sun-gold.

Clouds and stars come and pass
Into a wide void;
But my heart's crystal glass
Reflects unalloyed

Thy image beauty-born
And intimate,
Like ever-widening dawn
Of a timeless state.

(After Sri Aurobindo's correction)

I am thy loneliness
And thy white fire;
In thy heart's silences
My spirit-lyre

Sings a celestial tune
Unendingly,
A carol of the moon
On a measureless sea.

My nights and days are cast
In thy heaven-mould
Like to a cup sky-vast
Wrought in sun-gold.

Clouds and stars come and pass
In a shadow-void,
While my heart's crystal glass
Reflects unalloyed

Thy image Beauty-born
And intimate,
And the ever-widening dawn
Of thy timeless state.

3-4-1938

Q. This poem looks like intuitive.

SRI AUROBINDO : Right. Intuition all through.

Q : I have doubts about the third stanza. Perhaps the alternatives are better?

SRI AUROBINDO : Right.¹

Q : What about the last line and the alternative 'thy' to 'a' ?

SRI AUROBINDO : With 'thy' it is unexceptionable and very fine.

¹ The alternatives were almost the same as what the third stanza is in the corrected version.

II

In my heart stirs a voice,
A rhythm of a star,
Glowing on a deep poise
Nothing can mar.

To a vast heaven it is wed
And bears a white
Silence around its red
Circle of light.

Winging still distances
It comes to rest
On a brow of loneliness
With a moon-crest;

Then falls down from the sky
In hues of dawn,—
A golden memory
Infinite-born.

5-4-1938

SRI AUROBINDO : The original inspiration is intuitive and it is that in its sense and substance, but the expression has become rather mentalised, losing the intense inevitability of word-choice—a certain kind of felicity remains.

Q : What do you think of the word 'red' in line 3 of stanza 2 ? Seems to have only a rhyme-value.

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, it can be 'red', I suppose, and something like 'red' is needed as a contrast to 'white'—unless you prefer to write 'thread circle' in place of 'red circle' as more vivid and significant.

Q : I would like to know how the intuitive inspiration gets mentalised.

SRI AUROBINDO : The mentalisation is a subtle process which takes place unobserved. The inspiration as soon as it shakes the mental layer (where it first becomes visible) is met by a less intense receptivity of the mind which passes the inspired substance through but substitutes its own expression, an expression stirred by the force of inspiration into a special felicity but not reproducing or transmitting the inspired text itself.

REFLECTION

GRANITE years—
Like blank crags
Which stare from under ice-hewn lids
At frozen skies—
Grey-lipped clouds
Concealed the summits of experience,
Met ennobling dawns
With the blistered mirth
Of storm's extinction.

A clawing exodus
From Time's bleak womb—
Burning birth.

Still advent
On plains of harmony...

TONY SCOTT (ANURAKTA)

TO THE PSYCHE

PURE lustre, crystal white heart,
Rend the veil to show thy beauty.

A marvel is thy presence,
Adventurous and glorious thy journey,
There is no summit to halt thee !

Swimmest thou the limitless ocean
And measurest its endless depth.

Secret support of each action,
Ever fresh and new thy nature,
Aware of its own omnipotent Reality !

MOHANLAL

A SCENE

THE pure white foam of the sea's delight
Kisses the shore of loneliness ;
The sun above is the witness light
In a solitary noon's recess.

Recumbent lie the sea-nymphs there,
Relaxing from their dance and song ;
Earth's drowsiness they also share,
Afloat on a lolling water's throng.

Sea-gods descend beneath the foam,
They too have respite from their toil ;
In their mysterious shadowy home
Their burden in slumber they uncoil.

The storm-winds sleep in distant skies,
In silence plunged the sea-shore dreams
Of high unreachd infinities,
And yet enamoured of the streams

PRITHWI SINGH

A DELEGATE

BRING me the opal cups of the bloom of Morning Glory ;
Fill them with the wine brewed from the Divine Ecstasy ;
I have been named a delegate to the Festival of Light.

Bring me the crown of fire,
Sprinkle silvery dust of the stars in my hair ;
The spring-tide has verily flooded my soul.

Bring me a psyche-rose, love-fed source of perennial delight,
Make up my lips with the yearning of the pomegranate seeds ;
Glad hymns of a realised dream haunt my ears.

Bring me the sandals that tread the path of the tenderest love,
And the mystic flag, blue and gold of undying hope ;
Summon the crescent-moon to take me to the Carnival.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

NEW ROADS

BOOK XII

(1)

THE Dawn Rays
 filtered through the translucent waves,
Bounded the shores
 of 'sleep' and filled the caves
Of Darkness with New Light.

We stood alone—
 an island splendour looking out :
A sea of hebetude
 encompassed us about—
The world in shadowed Night.

Were we released from wonder,
 free of life's grief and pain ?
Were we purged of the Fear,
 cleansed of the ultimate stain ?
Or was this too a dream of 'youth' ?

Had we trod the labyrinthine dark
 and emerged into glorious Day ?
Journeyed long,
 traversed the difficult Way,
Here to a summit of Truth ?

Or was this marmoreal calm
 a cold respite ?—
Merely the appetency
 of the Night
Seeking the Promised Day ?

A sea of Doubt
 ventured to surround
And waves of darkness
 essayed the sunlit 'ground'
Only to be devoured by the Dawn-spray.

Conflict and passion
 were there, but seemed apart
 From this Golden Peace
 That entered now the heart
 With heaven's own certitude.

A new security
 encircled all the earth—
 A new power and force
 had entered into birth :
 We need only Gratitude.

NORMAN DOWSETT

MYTH AND SYMBOL

HERE is a Super-Robinhood
 Who robs the good
 And tortures the pure
 To make sure
 That no rival enters the Realm.
 He strips them naked of all that hides
 The Beauty that abides.
 They turn to Him in tears,
 Their gloom He clears,
 His gifts their hearts overwhelm.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

THE BEAUTY OF BEYOND

(A SHORT STORY)

NAVARUN is a real artist, a lover of natural beauty. More than once has he journeyed to the snow-capped Himalayas and other places of scenic grandeur. After returning from such trips he shuts himself up in his studio and remains absorbed in painting pictures, developed from the numerous rough sketches he has made on the spot.

With the intention of making some sketches, he arrives one day at the old famous city of Vishnupur in Bengal.

During the reign of the Hindus, this town was very prosperous ; and its king, a devotee of Sri Krishna, built enormous temples of superb architecture. He dug dozens of artificial lakes known as 'bandhs'.

The big temples are now all in ruins though their main structures still stand, defying the ravages of time. These temples inspire awe and admiration in the tourists and newly arrived visitors.

During the first few days Navarun cannot do any drawing. He wanders alone through the dense jungles which have engulfed the entire mass of the old town. The modern town seems to have been built in the midst of a thick forest.

Alone, seated on the grassy bank of the vast Krishnabandh, Navarun one day starts his drawing. The huge temple standing on the edge of the water is his object of contemplation.

Like a silent giant, over whom the multiple events of many centuries have passed, it stands mortally wounded but yet unconquered.

In the quiet wood, far away from the boisterous activity of the towns, the temple speaks in inaudible voices to those who know how to listen in the silence of their own hearts.

Navarun not only sees the temple, but hears it speaking. His drawing is not merely a perfect reproduction of its physical structure ; he catches the vibrations of unspoken words, and he instils them into his work. He is carried back to those times when this temple was not standing lonely, broken, rejected, as if thrown away from human localities as an outcast, but as when thousands of devotees used to come and adore the deity within. He hears the joyous chants and ardent prayers that rise from human souls towards the Supreme.

Navarun works happily, and hums in his melodious voice :

"In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?"

Amidst his absorption he is startled by a sudden rustling noise. Looking aside he is amazed to see a living picture, mute and radiant.

A young girl is looking straight at him: with her hands she has pushed aside some branches of wild bushes, which she is holding even now. An amused smile has parted her lips a little, in her eyes dances a mirthful lustre.

He fixes his gaze upon her and it stays fascinated.

Somebody calls out from somewhere far behind :

"Shwetu, where are you ?"

"Here, daddy, coming."

And the picture has vanished.

Vanished ! Oh, no ! not from the sensitive artistic vision of Navarun.

Quickly he takes up a piece of paper, and his hand is busily occupied in drawing some lines that gradually give shape to the graceful form of an exquisitely beautiful girl, framed in green bushes.

At the same time Navarun whispers to himself :

"O my vanishing Beauty, O ephemeral eluding Love, you cannot escape from me altogether, I shall catch you yet."

How the time has passed he never feels. But he is disturbed again. A singing voice speaks just behind him :

"O ! it is wonderful !"

He looks up and sees the girl. She exclaims :

"How could you draw my picture so perfectly? You saw me there only for a few seconds."

Navarun looks up at her and then at the sketch, and he is much pleased. He smiles and says: "If you go and stand there for a few minutes more, I shall be able to give some more important touches necessary for completing this picture."

Shwetu instantly goes and stands where she was standing a little while ago, and says :

"I can remain till daddy calls me again."

"Where is he?"

"There, sitting comfortably under a shady tree, absorbed in his book. We came from the town for an outing."

What a face ! what a complexion ! Navarun has never seen so much beauty in any Bengali girl. He asks :

"Your name is Shwetu?"

"Yes, Shwetabarani. You are a stranger to our town?"

"I am a Bohemian. I like your forest town. The gigantic ancient temples in the midst of the forest are enticing. I hope to fill up a whole sketch book before I leave for Calcutta. But please do not let us speak; if you stand there

quietly for some moments more, I shall offer you a boxful of cream chocolates I always carry wherever I go."

The girl giggles and says :

"Do not tempt me with bribes, sir; but will you let me have that portrait? I shall show it to daddy."

Navarun answers with a long drawn face :

"I do not give away my works ; they are part of my existence; especially from this one I shall never be able to separate. But if you can come here daily I shall make another portrait of you which you may keep. Will you come, Shwetu ?"

"I'll try my best."

They remain quiet for a long time. At last Navarun calls her to him :

"Thanks for your patience, Shwetu; now come and see the result of my humble effort."

Shwetu looks at the picture and questions :

"Am I really as beautiful as you have made me here ?"

Navarun, turning towards her, remarks :

"There is no comparison; mine is a poor imitation, but you are a marvellous creation of the supreme Artist whom I adore and try to come in contact with through His creation. I cannot look at anything in this universe without admiring its Creator."

"Will you not paint my portrait for me, sir ?"

"I would like to; but you will have to come here for some days together."

"I will come, but I must go now, my father may call any minute."

The girl retreats quietly; Navarun follows a little and asks : "Excuse me, but what is your father's name ?"

She turns and says, "Himbaran Ghoshal; he is a lawyer; but you have not told me your name."

"Navarun Ray; good-bye till to-morrow." Her sweet enchanting voice rings out—"Good-bye."

According to their mutual understanding Shwetu comes regularly to the place of appointment, poses for her portrait, and takes Navarun to various parts of the jungle where there are hidden temples which it would be impossible for him to discover without her guidance.

They sit on the soft grassy banks of large 'bandhs' and happily share their meals. Shwetu has a sweet voice, she sometimes sings to Navarun. One day she declares :

"Although you are a stranger, I seem to know you perfectly."

"You were never a stranger to me, Shwetu; I recognised you immediately I saw you."

"Recognized me ? How do you mean ?"

"I mean that I have been searching for something; I knew that somebody

who possessed it would bring it to me one day. You are that person, Shwetü."

"I do not understand your riddle; but that does not matter in any way. I have found a friend, a companion in you. I have full confidence in you. It will be difficult for me to pass my days when you go away."

Navarun looks at her affectionately and says: "You need not worry, Shwetü, you will never be separated from me. If I lose you I shall find you again as I have found you now."

Shwetü has kept a surprise for her dear old father. When her portrait is completed, she has it framed and places it in her study. She invites her father to come in.

"Daddy dear, come to the study, there is something I would like to show you."

With happy expectation Himbaran Babu enters the room. Shwetü slowly unveils the portrait. He looks at it dumbfounded and exclaims:

"I have never seen a portrait painted with so much perfection. Whoever has done it is a master at his art."

"He is a stranger, father, he has come from Calcutta. I met him on the bank of Krishnabandh."

Himbaran hardly hears what she says. He contemplates the picture. There Shwetü is standing, almost life-size, by the side of the great temple in ruins; a glowing crimson light is emanating from her, and after enveloping the temple it falls on the rippled surface of the water: a tint of yellowish red light shines on the green tops of the trees—a soothing vibration of joy, peace and light comes from the picture and penetrates the observer. He says:

"It is alive; the picture is throbbing with life. Where is the artist? I must see him."

"He may be there, father, near that temple. He is simply in love with it. He regards it as the abode of a gracious god."

Father and daughter get into a carriage and reach the place, but Navarun is nowhere to be found. For several days Himbaran continues the search for him; all is in vain: nobody can give any information about the strange artist.

The puzzled girl proposes:

"If we go to Calcutta, father, we may find him. But I do not know his address."

Himbaran looks with tenderness at his cherished daughter and answers:

"Then it will not be at all easy to find him. Yet we shall surely know his whereabouts. He is a gifted artist, a genius. I must know more about him. But, darling, you should not have kept him a stranger to me. You ought to have introduced me to him long ago, the very day of your first meeting."

Shwetabarani smiles: "I wanted to surprise you, first, with my portrait and then with the artist, but the latter has surprised us both. He is a playful young man, father. I hope he will return soon."

Her voice becomes heavy at the end.

Himbaran consoles her : "Your artist friend cannot disappoint you, darling. I have full confidence that my daughter can never make the acquaintance of a stranger who is a deceitful person. Now smile, and let us go for a pleasant trip on the banks of Krishnabandh."

By this time Navarun has reached Calcutta. He is a changed man. He shuts himself up in his studio and works incessantly. He muses within himself:

"I have found it, at last I have discovered it. I have tapped the eternal source of joy, light and beauty."

He is developing all the sketches he has brought from Vishnupur. In every picture he places Shwetabarani.

Only his mother is allowed to enter the studio. One day she can no longer control her curiosity and questions :

"Who is this girl, Navu ? She is extremely beautiful, and there is something in her beauty which can be called supernal."

Navarun is overjoyed : "You have detected it, mother, because you have the insight into things. This girl is not an ordinary human being, although she is not very conscious of her own true being; she hardly knows what she possesses. I recognized it immediately."

"Can you not show me this girl, Navu ?"

"That will spoil everything, mother, she will not understand what I have found in her. Her very sight sent a thrill of joy through my whole being."

"Are you not mistaken, my boy ? Perhaps you have imagined in her an existence of that which is not there."

Navarun protests emphatically : "No, mamma, no; I am not mistaken. Truly I have found in her the goddess of my worship."

The mother is very pleased. For a long time she has been searching for a suitable consort for her beloved son. Now the searched-for is found by herself. The mother will try her best to bring that crimson-glowing girl into her family.

One day she ventures to propose :

"I am very eager to see that girl, Navu; let us go to her place."

He refuses. "I do not want to go near her; I have escaped without even saying good-bye to her."

"Perhaps she is greatly shocked by your abrupt departure. At least you ought to have said good-bye."

He remains silent. But day by day he becomes more and more silent and morose. One day he feels quite incapable of going on with his paintings. He confesses to his mother and suggests :

"We must see her, mother; otherwise I cannot complete my paintings, from which she is now inseparable."

The mother has been waiting for this moment. She writes a letter to Himbaran, informing him of her intention and announcing their day of arrival.

Himbaran is free from anxiety now. The silence of Navarun has been

very disquieting to him. Now he is sure that his daughter will have a companion quite worthy of her.

In due time Shwetabarani hears all about it. With a feeling of humility and gratitude she repeats to herself :

“Father knows my heart.”

Her beauty attracts everybody’s attention. Even her well-known acquaintances and friends remark :

“What is happening to you Shwetetu ? Your beauty becomes not only increasingly charming, but radiant.”

Shwetetu is quite aware of the change which is taking place in herself. Apart from her physical metamorphosis she becomes conscious of an ineffable joy within the depths of her heart.

Navarun arrives with his mother. Himbaran welcomes them heartily. The mother is amazed to see Shwetetu. She declares :

“Shwetetu’s beauty has a celestial air.”

Himbaran asks Navarun : “My daughter is devoted to you, but what is going to be the relation between you two ?”

Without the least hesitation Navarun answers : “There is no question of my having a personal relation with her; there can never be any. She is the source of my inspiration; when I looked at her I came in contact with the ideal beauty for which I was searching. I do not know how to explain it but without her presence I cannot make that contact. Something emanates from her; she is a channel through which flows the ethereal beauty which I try to embody in my paintings. She has become indispensable for my Art which is my whole life.”

Himbaran is puzzled, and cannot decide what he should do. After speaking frankly with Shwetetu he gives his full approval for their free companionship.

Navarun and Shwetabarani roam in the jungles of Vishnupura; Shwetetu sings and Nava paints.

Ordinarily they do not speak much to each other. But sometimes Navarun’s feelings burst into words :

“My cherished Love, my radiant Beauty, my Peace and my Joy; Thee have I quested in the Himalayan ranges, in green forests, arid deserts—everywhere. It is for Thee that I have lived and toiled. It is Thou who art the goal of my life, the light of my eyes. O heavenly Grace ! I have found Thee !”

Shwetabarani smiles to herself. There was something in herself of which she was not at all conscious. This artist has acted like a priest. He has awakened that latent entity in her. She is grateful to Navarun. She finds fulfilment in herself. She knows perfectly that Navarun’s adoration is not for her but for the Presence which he himself has invoked in her by the purity of his appeal.

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the last issue)

I

A FEW years back, after one of my eyes had been operated upon, the doctor advised me that during the summer days I should move to some sanitarium for the sake of my health. With the Mother's permission and blessings I left the Ashram for a stay of a couple of months in North India.

We spent our first month sight-seeing and visiting various spots of beauty or of historical importance. Later I moved to a religious institution (Math) whose Mahant, many years back, had inherited a Shiva's Temple and a big piece of land. By his own efforts this Swami had developed the land into an ideal farm yielding a bumper seed-crop of about ten thousand rupees per year. He had won, for his nursery products, a gold medal and the first prize in the Government Exhibition. This model farm has since become a place of inspiration for governmental and other visitors. They have nothing but praise for his horticultural genius. He also runs a free homoeopathic dispensary for the benefit of the local population.

The farm, about two acres of cultivated land, is separated from the Math and the Temple by a river canal whose water is used for irrigation purposes. There is a small hand-made bridge joining the two wings of the property. The Math comprises a big compound with a main gate, a new two-storeyed building in the centre, the temple in the courtyard surrounded by small houses occupied by the servants, farmers and refugees, a flower-garden, a dairy and half an acre of land forming part of the temple property. The ground floor of the building is occupied by the Mahant, while the upstairs is occupied by the visitors.

During those days, the State Government had passed a law according to which any fallow land in the State could be utilised for development purposes. It seems that the law was being misinterpreted and became a very good excuse for some officers to harass the public and fill their pockets through bribery or loot.

In the very first fortnight of my sojourn at the Math, just when the sun was about to hide its crimson-glory behind the cliffs, two officials with two peons called on the Mahant and gave him an ultimatum that he should clear off the crops of the Temple Farm within two days or they would be obliged

to call the police and clear the crops off to utilise the land for Government development purposes.

The Mahant pleaded that he had been the legal proprietor of the Temple and of the land for the last thirty years, the land was not fallow, rather it yielded an ideal quality and quantity of crop which would be ready after a month or so. Asked whether they had any written order against his name, dispossessing him of his fertile land, the Government officials reported that there was a standing order of the Government. After giving the threats, they left the place.

The Swami was extremely disturbed, yet he did not want to bribe the officers : it could hardly be expected from a person of his type. So I advised him to seek the protection of the court, otherwise it would not be surprising if one day a host of people pounced upon the property and looted it. The very next day, he got summons issued on the said officers to clarify their order to the Mahant within four days.

Two days later, just after midday, the servants, farmers and refugees of the Math became nervous and informed me that the neighbouring factory property had been invaded by a mob of over 1200 persons. There was every reason to believe that, as soon as the looting on that side was over, the turn would come for the temple property.

By this time we heard a tumult of people with axes, knives, sickles and ropes, cutting down huge trees and crops and trying to enter the premises of the neighbouring factory. Workers of the factory who tried to defy the crowd were beaten back and the looting continued.

The Mahant was out in the court and there was no responsible person in the bungalow. The apprehensions of the servants and farmers were mounting and the danger was at hand not only to property but even to life. Meanwhile the servants brought over as many things as possible from the other side of the bridge to the stores in the bungalow. Now as the 200 workers or so of the factory could not deter the looters, the owners, it seemed, arranged with the officers to divert the course of the barbarous crowd to their next target—the Temple Farm.

Meanwhile a momentous struggle started within my own self. The danger to my life was evident and real, especially because of my demeanour giving the impression of a fabulously rich man. There were only two ways open to me : either to face the danger courageously, even risking my life, or to disengage myself from the misfortune of the Swami and move away from the temple at the earliest.

I was really placed in a paradoxical predicament. "Why should I risk my life in a situation of such evident danger," I thought, "a life which has been mortgaged to someone else, the Divine ? I have no right to risk it when I can see the peril before my very eyes." "But," came another thought, "it is unbecoming of a guest to run away when the host is absent, and cowardice for a

disciple of Sri Aurobindo to escape when there is the time for courage and a bold decision. The Mother and the Master have been teaching day in and day out in word and deed that life and life alone is the field of their Yoga, and every inch of ground needs to be won at great cost and with fortitude."

I recalled Sri Aurobindo's words written to me many years back, "X, there is in you a warrior's being, loyal and sincere to the Divine...." It was a time of test for me. I determined to pass through it and avail myself of the opportunity to put myself in tune with the Mother's Force.

I burst into a loud supplication, remembering and calling her for urgent and immediate help. And lo! I was filled with a vivid and ready response. A courage, a sense of security and a joy in facing the ordeal arose in me. I felt also the familiar Force of the Mother, surrounding me as well as the area with protection.

II

By this time the crowd had swarmed over the Farm like caterpillars. There were screams of delight from the looters, and the booty was being carried away with terrific speed. The farmers trying to stop the looting were beaten and thrown back. They watched this horrible scene with tears in their eyes and dread in their hearts. There were many valuable things outside the building itself and, once the looters crossed over to the building side, nothing that was visible or that came handy to them could be expected to be spared. I put everything inside the building and, going in, bolted all the doors. I took a huge lathi and a sort of *bircha* (sharp iron implement) for my protection.

These in hand, I started moving upstairs on the balcony and, really, I looked like a strong man, a Sandow to the sight, who would not be cowed down or be easy to subdue. From there I started giving the necessary orders to the farmers and workers to guard the bridge and at any cost prevent the raiders from crossing over it to the main building. Even when the workers were attacked they did not allow a single person to cross the canal.

On the other hand, some people standing in the courtyard of the Math were instigating the looters from a distance, "Bravo, bravo, make haste, make haste." I could not bear the sight. I got down and, moving towards the police and the officials present, asked, "Are you Government officials? You are supposed to be the custodians of law and justice and public security. How can you see the property of a private peaceful citizen being looted in your presence?"

"What can we do? It is the Government's order," was their reply. Then they moved away from the scene.

Within a short time, the six-foot high precious seed-crop, the green-growing symbol of peace and prosperity, vanished from the farm. Three-fourths of the

looters left the place after they had finished their job and collected their booty.

When the Swami came back from the court and entered the courtyard, he was stunned and stood aghast for a while at the sight of complete devastation of his land. Everything, including the wire-fencing with posts and a hut of wood useful for agriculture, had disappeared along with the entire crop and the supporting posts.

The farmers and their wives and children started weeping loudly in front of the Mahant and narrated to him the terrible ordeal they had borne to save the crops. Pointing to me, they said, "If this Swamiji had not been present in the house, everything including doors and windows would have been taken away by the looters." The refugees also spoke of the fear shown by the looters when they had seen me parading the balcony with the *bircha* and the huge *lathi*.

The Swami, who himself was shaken to the roots, asked them to be calm. He looked completely exhausted as he entered the house. "Let them do whatever they like. It is no use living here where one's life and property are looted. I will go away from here and spend a peaceful life in my home town." His condition invited the pity of any person who looked at him.

The atmosphere was completely gloomy. The land full of green and gaily-swaying crops and vegetables in the morning had become like a football ground or a cricket field. Even then some women and children were busy collecting grain and wood in the farm and the neighbours had let loose their cattle to graze.

Late at night I persuaded the Swami to send some urgent telegrams to all Government officials for inquiry into the looting, and for restoration of the land and compensation for the loss of crops. Although this was done, the Swami was worried as to how he would support his permanent staff consisting of farmers and other servants. I gave him some monetary help which he reluctantly accepted, for I thought that when I had taken upon myself the responsibility of helping him I—in order to be true to my conscience—should help him in all possible ways. And this I did in spite of the fact that I had very little money with me at that time.

For three days, no inquiry was instituted into the flagrant injustice done to the Mahant. The neighbours still continued to uproot the small crops left here and there, even when chased by the watchmen. The Swami felt exasperated and nerve-racked. His condition was serious. I passed anxious days beside his bed. I asked him to move the governmental authorities for protection. But I found him very reluctant and helpless.

So, three days later, I told him that if he was not going to do anything in the matter, it was better I left the house, for still it was not out of danger and anything might happen any moment. There might still be a conspiracy to loot his building. He was deeply disappointed. He agreed to approach the Government and asked for my help. I readily consented.

III

We tried to contact the high officials so that we might get their help to repair the gross injustice done to the Mahant, but mostly in vain....

Then we approached the Minister of Police. We pictured to him the entire situation. On hearing us, he assured his immediate help and protection.

As we returned home, within an hour or so, we found many of the Government officials rushing to the Mahant's residence for on-the-spot inquiries. Soon a Minister and other high officials and about thirty policemen were present in the Temple courtyard. They started an inquiry into the incident. I asked the Mahant to speak to the Minister first, so that as soon as he related his woes I could pick up the thread and put the whole case before him in a more appropriate and forceful manner. As I spoke to him on the situation, he replied, "All land belongs to the Government. Whenever the Government wants it, it can take it."

"Yes," I answered respectfully yet emphatically, "but there are laws to take it. I am myself a landlord. I know the laws and the conditions under which the Government can secure land."

He agreed and told me that there had been some mistake in the interpretation of the law and the Government would do its best to rectify the mistake and pay compensation.

But my concern at that time was not compensation. The foremost and immediate problem was of the return of land to the Swami who had to feed and provide for a host of paid farmers. On my constant insistence, the Minister ordered that the land should be given back to the Swami.

Then I requested the Minister to wait there till we fixed a fenced boundary. Otherwise, we felt, it would be impossible to protect the land against any fresh assault. The entire harvest had been looted, the wood of the fence removed and the goats let loose in the fields for grazing. There was no wood left with the Mahant. With the help of the police we got the looted wooden pieces back from the nearby houses and fixed the fence. The goats were removed to the police station.

While the reclamation of the land was being done and posts were put as fencing on the old boundary, the officers came inside the Swami's residence and wrote a detailed report about the incident and our claims for compensation. One officer wanted to see the documents which gave the Swami authority over the land. He was given the documents for inspection. When the Swami and other officers were found busy giving and taking cigarettes and as the tea-cups changed hands, he took the opportunity to change the papers themselves.

I was watchful. As soon as the officer took out his pen and wanted to demark the original plan of the property to suit his purpose, I held his hand

and said respectfully, "Sir, you can't write anything on this. It has been given to you for reference. You have no right to make changes in the document." Everybody's attention was drawn to this. He felt ashamed. The Mahant was saved from being dispossessed of the ownership of his land.

At the fall of darkness, the neighbours came and removed the whole fencing we had fixed in the evening. I asked the Swami to go to the court and get the restoration of land duly testified and documented by the court and also to get a photostat copy of the Government records affirming his ownership of the Temple land and property.

This having been done, we again tried to contact the high Government officials for compensation of the losses, but all to no fruitful result.

Then we decided to make wide publicity of this injustice in press and public. I drafted a Declaration from the side of the Mahant and after getting it approved by a pleader sent printed copies of it to as many officers of the Government and other public institutions as possible. The news spread like fire. Sympathy was shown towards the Swami by people from various States.

Later, some of the Ministers who could be contacted advised the Swami to go to the court for justice. Now the inquiry started seriously and the police report said that "the loss was more than actually estimated".

As my day for leaving the place was approaching, the Swami became restive. Two things were needed to bring him back to his former self. First, he should get the boundary of the land fixed and have the land cultivated, and the second that he should get compensation for the losses incurred during the loot. We had already got a writ from the court confirming the Mahant's lawful ownership of the Math and its attached land. Then with the help of the Police Commissioner and other government officials we got barbed wires fixed around the land. New seedlings were planted. But the question of compensation was very difficult.

When I came to Pondicherry, I was informed that an official inquiry was instituted for compensation as a result of which the Swami was expected to be repaid favourably for the losses.

Reported and Compiled by HAR KRISHAN SINGH

(To be continued)

THE DANCE

I

SPIRIT of the Earth
Patient and forbearing
Drop now your cloak of war and darkness,
Great Spirit.

Spirit of the Water,
Immense white hands
Dancing upon the deeps
Teach me your dance, Great Spirit.

Spirit of the Air
Elusive, fleet of foot
Motion of the elements, rejoice
And teach us to rejoice, Great Spirit.

Spirit of the Fire
Pre-natal Energy
Bright, middlemost particle of the Being
Burn the knot of desire, Great Spirit.

Spirit of the Ether,
Unthinkable, intangible
Pool of the Unknown
Be manifest, Great Spirit.

2

They come, these Harpies
Big-mouthed, naked
Keen-clawed.
Ah hapless me !

They come flying in nocturnal flocks.
Nightmares.
The underworld's deadened shadows
Shadows petrified.
Ah hapless hapless me.

Maker and shaper of the elements
My Maker
Space-Spirit and Time-Spirit
Circle and whirl at your command.

Send your great angel-battalion
Drive these Harpies back,
Back to their caverns.

Voice of the upper worlds
Breath sun-transparent
Blow your winds through my Being.

Take flight, O Harpies,
Big-mouthed, keen-clawed, naked
Monstrous deformities born from my dreams.
Take wing never to return again.
The Eternal Spirit comes.

3

In the heart of the world
I take refuge
In the deep heart of the world
Strong motherly.

I have renounced everything.
Renounced my memory
And my oblivion
Renounced my transitoriness
My dream and my mission.

Earth-scents come to me
Winds blow to me from my favourite seas
But I have renounced them
I have plunged into the great Aloneness.

In the deep heart of the world
Where the eagle and the world meet
There have I drowned my desires
In the dark waters.

Five spirits keep vigil
 Spirits of super-elements.
 In the narrow door of my cavern
 Five great Spirits stand sleepless.

They shout their prophecies
 All together
 The earth, the water, the air, the fire and the ether
 Tremble and listen.

The shadows of the Harpies have gone below the elements.
 Rejoice, unveil your bodies
 Appear in your pristine brightness
 And dance the farandole.

4

Dance with swift feet
 On the summit of Matter
 Dance for ever.

Griefs fall scattered and die
 Under the dancing feet
 Stars rain from every movement
 Each vibration becomes the beginning
 Of a newer life.

Lilacs of mortal loveliness
 Fade and fall
 Below the dancing feet
 Tears drop from blind eyes
 Unquenchable thirst is quenched for ever.

Dance faster and faster
 Dance from death to non-death
 From non-being to being
 Dance from shadow to knowledge
 Dance faster and faster.

Whirl round the sun
 Whirl round the burning Pillar
 Dazzle the worlds.

O ebb and flow of the dancing body
O waves of the dancing body
Dash against the rocks
Batter the rocks and break the rocks
Of world-ignorance.
Dance dance dance for ever.

5

Beautiful body
First-born flower
Rose of loneliness
Dance the farandole.

God's tabernacle
Patient forbearing
Deep-seated root
Of human existence.

Waves of life
Rising and falling
White foam-crested
Join the farandole.

Sleepless motion
Cradle of the earth
Unbounded branches
Of infinite energy

Light-footed master
Of muse and idea
Mirror of mystery
Flower of Aurora.

Wind from the farthest
Seas of dream
Fantasy abysmal
Dance the farandole.

Middlemost particle
Wondrous soul
Light of the worlds
Join the farandole.

Freedom and delight
Gold-red flames
Become the leader
Of days and nights.

Unknown wonder
Ethereal beauty
Music unbounded
Join the farandole.

Come from your heights
Pervading the elements
Centre and circumference
Of the Great Creation.

Dance the farandole
Turning and turning
Dance the farandole
On the summits of Matter.

RANAJIT

AT THE SAMADHI OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE dawn sprinkles a serene smile,
The golden morn prostrates herself
In sincere surrender,
The flowers flutter in petals
With dewy thrill of ecstasy
And agonies release themselves
Into sighs perfumed !...

O, Master ! Thou hast cast off
Thy 'material envelope'
And yet remained imperishable,
Like an immortal shrine carved in the rock of Time.
Again thou hast become the illimitable,
Transforming by thy very presence
Every atom into 'spiriton' !...

Day and night, in sun and shower
The "Service-tree" sheds golden flower
On thy sacred samadhi !
No, not flowers, golden tears are they,
Tears of the joy of fulfilment
Flowing from thee through its veins :
And the ocean of silence that swells around
Makes thy greatness eloquent evermore !...

O. Airy All ! Nothing, yet Everything !
The longing human soul casts off
The mantle of Ego beside your samadhi
And proceeds on the path supreme !
The scorching heat of his self
Melts into thy lustre, forming a halo of light
Eluding the grasp of the dark night
That envelops the universe !
Agonies creep to thy lap
With an infant air,
The words return to their ethereal nest,
And all our humannesses are extinguished !...

O Harbinger of prophecies divine !—
 Remaining in thy mighty solitude
 Thou shapest the destiny of this universe
 Into perfect harmony !

Here are my humble offerings—
 These words which rise from my blood;
 May they shake my being from its mortal slumber
 And bear me aloft !

GOVIND R. JOSHI

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(39)

VIII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

(Continued)

72. LIKE A BABY-CAT UNDER THY FEET

O MOTHER, let me crouch under Thy Feet.
 I, like a new-born little baby-cat
 Paw-held by Mother safely, wish to seat
 My meekness under Thy protective sole.
 Throughout my life my stiff adulthood sat
 Graceless in closely guarded ignorance,
 O let my smart mind's vagrancy now roll
 Its stupid wavering limbs to curb, withhold
 Its waywardness so that its earth-bound sense
 Blind and encased in its own haughty groove,
 Find saving shelter of Thy Feet of Gold :
 First pedestal-steps towards Thy infinite Love.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS

“VINGT-ET-UNS”

The poems came to the writer some two decades ago; revised recently, they are now being serially published in batches of twos.

The pieces number Twenty-One in all; and each of them comprises of just Twenty-One lines: hence the cryptic sub-title “Vingt-et-uns”.

Apart from their recondite value as psychological signposts in the growth of the writer's being, the poems might presumably provide amusing and useful material for aesthetic enquiry—as to the adequacy or otherwise of the novel mould into which spiritual experience is here sought to be cast and the technique-mode governing the multilateral symbolism thereof.

Incidentally, the writer knows only now that ‘Vingt-et-un’ is a gambling card-game; and that Knowledge imparts to him the hope that his successful(?) gamble with the new Form may well inspire other lovers of the Muse to try their hand at this new Form-and-Game and come off with better windfalls!

21

THIS Love of Thine is strange ! It pours and pours,
A ceaseless fountain, o'er the stony floors
Of these our beings that beat back instant spray,
Shattering and sheer, unto the Descending Grace
That, circling, branches into myriad curves
And scatters wide its blossoming crystals fine !

Ah, how it pours and pours, nor ever asks
Why secret locksprings in the marble squares
Should drain to a drop, and hardly proffer back
A millionth fraction of the drained contents !
The doors that open nether-wise as yet
May open upwise in due course of time,
Paying glad tribute of holy gratefulness
In a thousand fountain-satellites set free,
Or else may keep forever shut and sealed
To the lovely vision of selfless Love self-rapt !

What's that to Thee ? A heavenly vault is there,
Blue-fixed for Time, Infinity-vast and wide,
And a constant source is there, Eternity-deep :
And both between them watch and view this play—
This weaving of etheric gauze to vesture nude gaunt VOID !

CHIMANBHAI

THOUGHTS

KNOWLEDGE and Ignorance, which is the mightier of the two ?

Knowledge ? No.

Many spiritual beings have lived on earth, even Avatars like Rama, Krishna and Buddha.

If Knowledge were more powerful than Ignorance, then how is it that Ignorance has not been stamped out of earth ?

The granite rocks of Ignorance have been sledge-hammered but they stand uncleft ; rather it is the sledge-hammer that has been blunted.

Knowledge and Ignorance, unity and multiplicity—if they range themselves against each other, then none will win. If the one sees its face in the other, then both will come out victorious and shall thrive.

Between the upper and the lower hemispheres of existence neither is stronger than the other. Both are evenly matched.

Man, if thou aspiest to fulfil thy manhood, plumb the depths of both.

★

★

Are you a hermit ?

No.

Are you a householder ?

No.

You look like a hermit and yet are you not one ?

No.

You are dressed like a householder and yet are you not one ?

No.

Then, who are you ?

I am the confluence of renunciation and household. Where the liaison between renunciation and life of the world takes place in such a way that both help each other to blossom out—that is my life.

Where on earth is that point of confluence ?

It is nowhere on earth. It is where both are transcended and where both emanate.

GIRDHARLAL

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

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE ASHRAM ATMOSPHERE

(6)

A YOUNG devotee of the Mother, Keshavdev Poddar, had a great longing that there should be a paper which could express not only the spiritual and cultural but also the social, economic and even political thought of Sri Aurobindo and discuss the solutions of all problems from his point of view. The devotee's idea was that it should be couched in such terms as would appeal to people at large and reach their hearts. This longing of his took shape in *Mother India*, a fortnightly review published from Bombay from February 21, 1949. In 1951 it was turned into a purely cultural monthly.

It opened up a new line of activity in the life of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo looked upon it as "My Paper" and from the very beginning the Mother took interest in giving it shape.

K. D. Sethna who had been in touch with the Ashram since 1927 and is a man of vast literary capacity was called upon to take the responsibility as Editor. Though new in the field, he rose to his highest in voicing the thought of Sri Aurobindo in his leading articles each of which was read out to Sri Aurobindo before publication. The Master's approval or comment used to be sent by wire. A Yogi directing the course of a semi-political organ from his seclusion was an unheard-of thing. No wonder this new feature of Sri Aurobindo's work had its novel impact upon the Ashram atmosphere.

Mother India did not simply mirror the situation as it was at the moment but showed an insight and a far-reaching outlook set forth with powerful reasoning, depending not only on reports of local observers but also and mainly upon what Sri Aurobindo saw with his own unerring vision as the Seer of the Age. Consequently the solutions suggested were far above the current level of statesmanly thinking.

The future trends of things that Sri Aurobindo envisaged at the time are now in process of turning out to be realities.

He had spoken of China as a menace to India and now we see how the menace has materialised and put the Government and the people of India in an insecure position. After the Chinese Communists' occupation of North Korea their infiltration and influence in South East Asia has been a growing reality. But this is no place for further expatiation. What Sri Aurobindo had foreseen in 1950 we could not visualise even four years later.

One of Sri Aurobindo's last letters was about Korea. It was written on June 28, 1950 in reply to K.D.Sethna's request for some indication for his editorial about the Korean war which was at the time the topic of the day. It was published in August, all over India as a special Message from Sri Aurobindo. We quote the letter in full as it throws light on Sri Aurobindo's reading of the world situation :

"I do not know why you want a line of thought to be indicated to you for your guidance in the affair of Korea. There is nothing to hesitate about. The whole affair is as plain as a pikestaff.

"It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to dominate and take possession first of these Northern parts and then of South East Asia as a preliminary to their manoeuvres with regard to the rest of the continent—in passing Tibet as a gate into India.

"If they succeed, there is no reason why domination of the whole world should not follow by steps until they are ready to deal with America. That is, provided the war can be staved off with America until Stalin can choose his time.

"Truman seems to have understood the situation if we can judge from his moves in Korea, but it is to be seen whether he is strong enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be incomplete and unsuccessful, since they do not include any actual military intervention except on sea and in the air. That seems to be the situation, we have to see how it develops.

"One thing is certain, that is, if there is too much shilly-shallying and if America gives up now her defence of Korea she may be driven to yield position after position until it is too late. At one point or another she will have to stand and face the necessity of drastic action even if it leads to war.

"Stalin also seems not to be ready to face at once the risk of a world war and if so, Truman can turn the tables on him by constantly facing him with the onus of either taking that risk or yielding position after position to America. I think that is all, that I can see at present. For the moment the situation is as grave as it can be."

We have dealt at length with the "Atmosphere of the Ashram", covering various aspects and events that contributed to its change in colour and quality. The line in *Savitri*—

...the atmosphere never grows duller in colour

fully applies to the Ashram. And how the spiritual force of the Mother could prevent the atmosphere from being disturbed for long will be our next study.

We shall begin with the most momentous event of 1950, the passing of Sri Aurobindo.

THE DEEPER RETIREMENT

(1)

Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal from our view on December 5, 1950, threw over most of us a thick pall of gloom and like a blinding snow-storm it benumbed our consciousness. The step he took was as revolutionary as it was sudden for all of us. Living on the human plane he was always above it. That is why his ways were unpredictable by us humans. We could never even for a moment harbour the idea that he would consent to withdraw himself from his body. He who had saved so many from the jaws of death, how could death touch his person ?

Up to the last day even Champaklal who had been in his personal service for about three decades and whom in the last days the Master had blessed by "drawing him to his heart several times" could not allow the thought to creep into his mind that the Master was taking leave and that the tenderness was the parting message.

As great an event in this disciple's life took place at the very beginning of his connection with Sri Aurobindo. As a boy of 18 in 1921 he had once visited the Master and gone back to Gujarat. A small spiritual group had been set up there by the Maharashtrian Yogi Lele. Champaklal belonged to this group. But some years later it was dissolved and one of its leading members came to Pondicherry to give Sri Aurobindo the detailed report about the dissolution and take instructions for the future. After he had had the necessary talk with Sri Aurobindo he made ready to go. The plan he had formed was to return with his wife. At the moment of his departure Sri Aurobindo said, "Bring Champaklal also with you." To Champaklal this remembrance of him by Sri Aurobindo and the spontaneous call to him are a most cherished memory. They show how the Master on his own could play a decisive role in the lives of those who were drawn to him.

Champaklal came to Pondicherry in 1923 for good. From the start he addressed Sri Aurobindo as Father and the Mother as Mother. This was at a time when the Mother had not been openly recognised by all of Sri Aurobindo's followers.

One day, in the early period of his stay, he approached the Mother and said, "I intend to wash my Father's dhoti." In reply the Mother said that she would speak to Sri Aurobindo. At that time the way of life among those who were around Sri Aurobindo was neither meditation nor work. People were living somewhat light-heartedly and by themselves. It was only later, when

the Mother took charge of things, that the ideal of service came to the fore. So, when service was not at all thought of seriously, Sri Aurobindo told Champaklal apropos of the latter's offer : "People will laugh at you, joke about you, mock you. Are you ready ?" The young disciple was ready. Here was the first example of the body's direct service to the Divine.

Now to return to 1950. All the functions of the 1st and 2nd December were allowed to go on as usual. What powerful hold on the situation was required to let things go on as ever without letting anybody know of the imminent tragic event that was to overtake the Ashram ! Reading the lines of *Savitri* in "The Book of Fate" which had created a sensation in the atmosphere the day it was out in typescript, could anyone say that the Master was taken unawares¹ by any kind of illness or did not know the consequences of the course he was going to adopt to hasten the achievement of his goal ?

In consonance with the usual way of his oceanic calm he did not allow any item of the Mother's programme to be curtailed or disturbed. Nor did the Mother allow any leakage of news or the least indication of the happenings upstairs. It shows also the Mother's hold on the critical situation. On December 3 the Mother did not come to the playground. This was a new thing. Since the playground activities had begun, there had hardly been a day when the Mother had not presided over them. This made us enquire what the matter was. A few of us came to know that Sri Aurobindo was not well. But we could never conceive that it would mean anything serious for the person of the Master.

Later it became known that the seriousness of the illness had been kept a secret to avoid any kind of upheaval in the atmosphere. From November 17 the symptoms of the malady had begun going from bad to worse. Till one o'clock on November 24th it was not decided whether there would be Darshan or not. But so many had come for Darshan and would have had to go away disappointed; hence the Master conceded the favour. We were asked to walk past him with quick rather than lingering steps, yet to some of us the penetrating look he gave was unforgettable. It was like passing through the rays of a blazing sun. But it struck none of us that it was to be our last privilege of coming before him.

As the functions of the Education Centre grew in importance many visitors coming for the November Darshan used to stay on till December 2nd and leave on the 3rd. For them the Mother appeared on the verandah facing the courtyard to see them off. Her face was lit up with the same gracious smile, her movements were marked by the same calm that are her usual feature. All

¹ When in 1925 R's wife sought permission to come here, the Master spoke to her husband that she would not live more than a year and he should prepare himself to live alone. Actually she died a year after.

this was sufficient for our hope that there would be nothing serious and whatever suspicion was there was dissipated.

Who can probe the mystery of why the Master chose to take this grim step ? But the calm determination with which the battle was fought was quite characteristic of him. It is recorded in the writings of those who were present at the time. Hence we shall not enter into the details here.

At the request of Nirod a wire was sent to Dr. Sanyal, Professor of Clinical Surgery, Calcutta Medical College, then a regular visiting Sadhak. On reaching here on November 30th, when he entered Sri Aurobindo's room and knelt before the Master, Champaklal called out :

"See, Sanyal has come." Dr. Sanyal writes in his memoir : "He opened his eyes fully, looked at me and smiled—Oh, such a smile, serene and beautiful, it carried one to ecstasy, lighting the innermost corners of the heart.

"He placed his hands on my head and lovingly patted it a few times... I asked him what the trouble was.

"'Trouble ? Nothing troubles me. And suffering ? One can be above it.' "

On the doctor's enquiry about the specific difficulties, he answered, "Well, yes, I had some difficulties but they have been relieved, and now I do not feel anything."¹

"Not once would he say or at any time indicate that he was uncomfortable or thirsty, but if we changed his position or offered him a drink he smilingly accepted it....

"The Mother came with us into the ante-room and then for the first time declared : 'He is fully conscious within but is losing interest in Himself.' Dr. Satya Sen was restless as energetic treatment could not be instituted. She simply said : 'It all depends on Him.' "

It struck Champaklal that Sri Aurobindo was keeping rather neutral about his illness instead of exerting himself to get rid of it. So, to confirm his impression he put the Master the question : "Are you not using your Force ?"

The reply came : "No."

Nirod picked up courage to ask : "Why not ? If you don't use your Force, how is the disease to be cured ?"

The quiet cryptic answer was : "Can't explain. You won't understand."

On December 4th Sri Aurobindo wished to sit up. The doctors helped him

¹"It is no doubt possible to draw the illnesses of others upon oneself and even to do it deliberately. Narayan Jyotshi, a Calcutta astrologer, who predicted, not knowing then who I was, in the days before my name was politically known, my struggle with Mleccha enemies and afterwards the three cases against me and my three acquittals, predicted also that though death was prefixed for me in my horoscope at the age of 63, I would prolong my life by Yogic power for a very long period and arrive at a full old age. In fact, I have got rid by Yogic pressure of a number of chronic maladies that had got settled in my body." (8.12.1949)—*Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 287.

out of the bed. To their surprise "all distressing symptoms had magically vanished. He walked to the arm chair to rest". It roused a wave of joy in the hearts of those present but it was short-lived.

When the news of his passing was broken to us it took our breath away. We were stunned speechless. It looked as if the light of our life had gone out.

From the early morning of December 5 (1950) the gates of the Ashram were thrown open for the first time since 1926¹ to all who wanted to have Darshan and pay their last homage. The news spread all round like lightning. The whole town came pouring in. An unending queue extended from the Master's room up to a good length in the street and continued without a break till about 3 p.m. It happened so the next day too; then hours were fixed two times a day.

The news had caused a tremendous stir all over India. Sri Aurobindo's followers, admirers, disciples whoever even once had had the occasion to stand before him rushed by plane, train and car to have his Darshan.

Towards the evening it was heard that the Mother would give a message. The preparations for the samadhi were brought to a standstill. All eyes hung upon the Mother. The air was filled with hope and expectation that some unheard-of thing might happen. Prayers too deep for words surged in every heart to see Sri Aurobindo again in his shining body. At last came the message which was later sent to the Press.

"The funeral of Sri Aurobindo has not taken place to-day. His body is charged with such a concentration of Supramental light that there is no sign of decomposition and the body will be kept lying on his bed so long as it remains intact."

Its immediate effect was unspeakable. With the setting of the sun a profound silence fell over us.

A sadhak was struck by the sharp difference in Sri Aurobindo's looks between the Darshan day of November 24 and the morning of December 5. No trace of weariness, emaciation or dull complexion. Here was a mighty hero, his complexion changed overnight into shining gold in perfect repose after a great victory. Not a shade of death. The figure was of personified victory over death.

To quote Dr. Sanyal again :

"The Mother whispered, 'As long as the Supramental Light does not pass away, the body will not show any signs of decomposition and it may be a day or it may take more days.'

¹ In the beginning no one used to keep the gate. Once (1927) a Dr. Sloni went straight up to Datta and worried her with a battery of questions. Then the Mother asked Dyuman if he would take a chair, sit at the gate and watch it. Since that time someone or other has been there all the time from 4.30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Since 1950 there has been an arrangement for two persons to be there during the day.

"I whispered to her, 'Where is the light you speak of ? Can I see it ?' She smiled at me and with infinite compassion put her hand on my head. There he was—with a luminous mantle of bluish golden hue around him."

On the 7th the French Chief Medical officer felt surprised to see a body from which life had gone looking so bright and life-like; after 55 hours of his passing he certified officially that there was no sign of decomposition in the body.

That very morning the Mother made the statement :

"Lord, this morning Thou hast given me the assurance that thou wouldst stay with us until thy work is achieved, not only as a consciousness which guides and illumines but also as a dynamic Presence in action. In unmistakable terms thou hast promised that all of Thyself would remain here and not leave the earth atmosphere until earth is transformed. Grant that we may be worthy of this presence and that henceforth everything in us be concentrated to the fulfilment of Thy sublime work."

For 90 hours the body remained intact. On December 9, signs were discovered of the withdrawing of the body's "golden hue" and preparations were set afoot for Samadhi. At that time very few knew about them. Only there was a whisper that the Master would not return to his body. From about 8 o'clock we were allowed to have our last Darshan.

Some months later—next year—we came to know what had passed between the Master and the Mother on December 8 :

"When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered : 'I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in a supramental way.'"

At 3 p.m. on the 9th the body that had held this greatness was laid in a rose-wood box prepared in our Harpagon workshop and lined completely with silver sheet and satin and having at the bottom a velvet cushion. In the centre of the lid Sri Aurobindo's symbol all in gold was fixed with gold screws. His body had been covered with a gold-embroidered cloth. The Mother told Champaklal that after the Indian Consul General in French India, Mr. Tandon, who had happy relations with the Ashram had come into the room and seen Sri Aurobindo, Champaklal should put over Sri Aurobindo's face a small similar piece of cloth which had been chosen by her. After this was done, Udar screwed down the lid on the box.

Before the box was brought down, Nolani offered Pranam to the Mother then the others who were present did the same. The gesture signified that although Sri Aurobindo was not physically present the Mother was still there as a complete embodiment of the Divine and that in her he still stood amongst us. We had been taught by Sri Aurobindo himself that his Consciousness and the Mother's were one. Even while he was in his body, he had put the Mother in the forefront : she was the life and light of the Ashram from day to day.

At 5 p.m. the box was carried to the ground-floor by several sadhaks and taken to the vault specially built and kept ready from the 5th in the centre of the Ashram courtyard.

Udar who was put in charge of all arrangements had been instructed by the Mother that Champaklal should be the first to put his offering of a potful of earth into the vault of the Samadhi. He was followed by Nolini and then, one by one, most of the Ashramites. Mr. Tandon was also present. He and the Head of the French Settlements were the first to offer their wreaths at the Samadhi.

The ceremony was free from any sectarian or religious rite. Dumb spectators, we looked on. The last symbolic homage was a scene of massed silence within and without.

The whole earth's plunge into darkness after sunset synchronised with the completion of the burial and symbolised our condition. Who knows how long it would have taken us to come out of the gloom, how long human feelings would have swayed the atmosphere, if the Mother's Force had not filled it ?

In the midst of our overwhelming sense of loss we gathered from her the assurance that the Master had not yielded to crass casualty but had sacrificed himself for the cause he had come to fulfil. Hence, knowing the deep secret, she stated : "To grieve is to insult Sri Aurobindo. He is with us conscious and alive."¹ She also declared : "The lack of receptivity of the earth and men is mostly responsible for the decision Sri Aurobindo has taken regarding his body. But one thing is certain; what has happened on the physical plane affects in no way the truth of his teaching. All that he has said is perfectly true and remains so. Time and the course of events will prove it abundantly." (8.12.1950)

(2)

Before dwelling on these matters further, it is necessary to take a look at the background of the Service tree under which the Master's body rests. Why was the place, where the Service tree stands, chosen for the Master's resting place, why did the Mother take such particular interest in this tree and look to its growth with such tenderness ? Again, how is it, that this plant commanded so much devotion of the sadhaks right from its transplantation as a sapling from the Colonial Gardens ? Let us find the answer for ourselves.

When the Ashram was taking form there was no space, no courtyard, no garden in the centre of the main buildings, as we see to-day. The old building

¹ This calls back to our mind what she had said much earlier in the same year : "It is the devil of depression and despondency that we shall slay to-night so that all those who have the sincere will to get rid of this disease will receive the necessary help to conquer."

that was there in the centre was pulled down except for the small room which was utilised for long as the Flower Room. Later, it was made into a raised platform for flower pots. After the Master's passing, the platform was dug up, a very deep vault was built in, to serve as the repository of the material frame of the Master.

The present Service tree on which poem after poem has been written was planted in 1930. It was not flourishing well; so the foundation of the old building was removed to the last brick and new earth, leaf-mould, etc., were put in. There was no hired labour in those days except for a few hands for domestic work. The sadhaks alone removed the debris, pulled out the foundation with heavy crow-bars. Their hands were covered with blisters; they went on, caring nothing for the physical strain till they changed the site into a smiling garden. The determination to do the Mother's will was their only incentive.

Whatever structures were to the south of the newly laid-out garden were demolished and turned into a courtyard.

After the demolition of the original Flower Room the Service tree was given free scope for expansion and some of its branches hung so low that sadhaks had knocks on their heads while passing below them. When permission was sought for pruning big branches the Mother sent for the man-in-charge and, pointing to the tree, said, "See how nice it looks !" This was sufficient to indicate her mind.

Shortly afterwards, on her way back from the 'Prosperity' she halted a moment and turning her eyes to the tree admired its growth and beauty.

"But people are objecting to their heads being hurt," said someone standing by.

"They must learn to bend their heads," came the answer.

Later, when more and more branches hung low covering a larger and larger area, the Mother spent a lot on erecting a cement framework to support them but did not allow a single branch to be lopped.

While digging the earth around its foot a root or two were cut. When this was reported to the Mother she expressed her strong disapproval by saying that no root or branch of this Service tree should be cut.

After the celebration of the Golden Day when the Champak tree to the east of the Reading Room was fast decaying, it was removed with the Mother's permission. And when suggestions were made for planting another Champak tree or one of "Patience" or "Realisation" or "Supramental Sun", she only favoured some tender plant. Perhaps she did not like another big tree to block the majestic view of the Service tree.

About twenty days before the passing away of Sri Aurobindo a sadhak, who has been here for long, dreamt that Sri Aurobindo had come out of his room into the open and was sitting at the foot of a big tree leaning against

1 trunk, with his legs stretched in front. Very much surprised he asked the attendants, in the dream itself, why the Master was there. They replied that from that time on he would only be there. Unable to decipher the meaning, the sadhak thought it to be a distortion or an impure expression of his own mind, and put it aside to be forgotten as soon as possible; not to be spoken of to anybody, not even to the Mother. Then in those historic days, from the 5th to the 9th December 1950, he had the Darshan of the Master, a number of times daily, in the room where the Master lay at rest; but he remembered nothing about the dream. At last when he saw the Master's body being placed in the vault beneath the Service tree, the dream flashed before his eyes, and this time the meaning seemed to be clear. Some days later when he got an opportunity he told the Mother of his dream, and she said that it was truly premonitory.

Others too had premonitions. On the 5th itself (December 1950), just before dawn, a young girl, a sadhika in the Ashram, saw in a dream Sri Aurobindo telling her that he was going away. She actually began to weep on hearing such shocking news, but Sri Aurobindo asked her not to weep and told her to speak only to her uncle, another old sadhak, about it. She awoke and sat up owing to the strong emotion. Then she heard somebody calling her. She came out and was told by a fellow sadhak that the Master had passed away and that she could go and have the last Darshan.

B's husband came here in 1949. It is through him that she came to know about the Ashram, and she is now settled here. At the time of the Master's passing she was at her own place. One day she had heard in a dream her husband saying, "Baba has passed away."

(3)

The Master has gone but he has not left us. His Samadhi is our "temple of delight"—a shrine emanating light, guidance and strength to the erring and the lost. In the beginning there was an idea to erect some kind of monument but from the very next day the devotion with which the members of the Ashram began to pour their heart's prayers and offer flowers was such that the idea was dropped. From early morning to eleven in the night there burn incense sticks. The pattern of decoration and the flowers composing the pattern are changed twice a day. That helps to keep up the freshness. On Darshan days as well as on December 5 and 9 the Samadhi is spread over with rose petals. Hundreds daily take a flower to secure themselves for the night against any hostile influence.

Sri Aurobindo's departure from the earthly scene gave rise to a spate of questions and speculations as to the future of the Ashram. There was a fear

in some minds that the Mother would not consent to keep her own body. Dr. Sanyal's talk with the Mother did much to remove the fear :

"In my foolish way I voiced my apprehension for her health and the strain she put on her fragile frame. She smiled at me and asked, 'Do you think I get all this energy from my frugal meals ? Of course not, one can draw infinite energy from the universe when needed.' She also added, 'No, I have no intention of leaving my body for the present. I have yet a lot of things to do. So far as I am concerned, I am in constant contact with Sri Aurobindo.'"

Here two other statements of the Mother deserve special mention.

"Our Lord has sacrificed himself totally for us...He was not compelled to leave his body, he chose to do so for reasons so sublime that they are beyond the reach of human mentality. And when one cannot understand, the only thing is to keep a respectful silence." (26-12-1950)

"We stand in the Presence of Him who has sacrificed his physical life in order to help more fully his work of transformation.

"He is always with us, aware of what we are doing, of all our thoughts, of all our feelings and all our actions." (18-1-1951)

These forceful truths did much to tone up the atmosphere. They sounded in our hearts like hymns and gave us a new lease of life. Automatically, effortlessly we began to feel ourselves in-drawn. Meditation grew spontaneous. Slowly our minds got rid of the idea that the Master had gone. During our Pranams to the Samadhi and in our visions and dreams he appeared again and again, illumining our consciousness.

To give a few instances. H was feeling very depressed. All of a sudden at night on December 11 he heard a voice—"Do not feel disheartened. I am here and everywhere." This was followed by a peace and serenity together with a smell of incense. The whole atmosphere grew beautiful and blissful. All his feeling of agony was gone once for all.

Three or four days after the Master's passing, a sadhak saw white rays of light shooting up from the face of the Master from within the depth of the Samadhi like a searchlight and the place round the face was illuminated.

A little boy of 7 or 8 after receiving blessings from the Mother came to the Samadhi for Pranam. He did not raise his head for long. His father waited and waited for him. Then he came up to his father and asked, "What does the word '*tapasyā*' mean ?

"Why do you put this question ?" asked back the father.

"I was calling to Sri Aurobindo, 'Get up, won't you, how long will you sleep?' Then I heard his voice, 'Do *tapasyā* for me, then I will get up.'"

Towards the end of January 1959 an inmate of the Ashram while standing near the Samadhi with closed eyes saw Sri Aurobindo emerging from it in a golden colour.

On August 15, 1959 when the Mother came up on the Balcony for the Darshan, X saw, a little higher up in the air, the full figure of Sri Aurobindo in a sitting position, just above the spot where the Mother stood.

A visiting sadhak from Jalandhar in course of a talk said, "It is my experience that now answers to problems are given the moment one stands in reverence before the Samadhi. Actually at times one hears a voice." (24-4-1961)

When Departmental Heads used to send their reports they often mentioned in them various matters. Recently (August '61) there was some misunderstanding between Y and Z. Daily Y used to stand before the photo of the Mother and pour out his heart whenever possible. That day he could not do so. The thoughts hovered in his mind about the misunderstanding.

Next day, at about 4-30 a.m., he saw in a dream a letter with about 10 lines scribbled in pencil. When he woke up all he remembered was that it said he was not in fault. He realised that there is an eye that sees all we do, and a ear that hears all we say.

W went up to the Mother with the hope of receiving a reply to his letter written a day before his birthday but there was nothing of the kind. This caused some depression in his mind. Next morning while he was offering Pranam at the Samadhi, head bent down, he saw the Mother in her usual form saying to him—"Why worry, I'm not displeased with you !"

Now when letter-writing has stopped and the Mother's talks have stopped, inner communications have not stopped. Those who have an inner life feel no void.

NARAYAN PRASAD

(*To be continued*)

SOME QUESTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND YOGA

A Letter

(Continued from the October issue)

Now take the case of Yoga. It is a science or, rather more correctly, it is a general name for many methods of self-culture. The various methods depend upon the different instruments of human nature with which they start. One starts with the body. Another starts with the nervous system and the vital. Yet others start with the mind, or the emotion, or the will.

Each of these has been experimented with, for hundreds if not thousands of years in India and each has been formulated into a scientific method. The basis of all goes back to the Veda, the Upanishads and Gita and other original sources and authorities of Indian culture.

I would therefore want you to take up the attitude that it is not Yoga that is on trial as against modern psychology. It is quite the reverse. It is modern psychology that is on trial against the established reality of Yoga-methods. I shall mention only one point out of many in which modern psychology falls short of the yogic methods, and even of man's highest requirements. The total field of modern psychology is confined to man's conscious and subconscious self. It explains or tries to explain the conscious by the subconscious. It is all the time pointing to the past stages of evolution, like the animal and the insect. But it has no vision of the future. It ends in the blind-alley of human mind at the end of its labour. Now, if evolution is a process which is still going on, then there must be some higher reach possible to man's present psychological make-up. Modern psychology has nothing in that direction to point out to man; whereas Yoga and Indian Philosophy prove the necessity of the Super-conscious and point out the paths of attaining it. In fact, the Subconscious, the Conscious and the Superconscious would be the true parts of the field of psychology. To be more exact, the parts would be :

1. The Inconscious
2. The Subconscious
3. The Conscious
4. The Subliminal
5. The Superconscious

Indian Yoga lays down a very scientific and safe path from the mental to what is beyond—or shall I say, from the human to the Divine ? Sri Aurobindo's contribution to this subject is his grand synthesis of the many systems of Yoga.

He broad-bases his synthesis on the general psychological principles operating in man. He has freed Yoga from all local and cultural colour and by his universal vision has made available to modern man a new path organised and made safe by a life-long effort of psychological self-discipline and experiment. He has made out an unanswerable case for a normal growth of mind to what is now superconscious to it—the Supermind.

Now I know you will perhaps tell me that you personally accept all this but are asking on behalf of *others* who do not either understand or accept the standpoint of Sri Aurobindo. Let me tell you as a friendly hint not to be anxious personally to preach his gospel or to convert others, because in most cases it will defeat its own purpose. This Yoga is not meant for those who seek it as a curiosity, or as a passing interest or diversion. There must be a sincere seeking and also a readiness to make Yoga a lifelong job. It cannot be safely taken up as a side-activity. That is to say, it must become a need—an inner need.

And you will observe that such earnest seekers have their own difficulties and troubles—because Yoga requires the readjustment of the whole apparatus of knowledge, feeling and action of man. But they hardly come to grief or to such troubles as you speak of in your last letter. For instance, one may find that his mind does not become quiet when he sits for meditation. But one does not become hysterical, or unbalanced in his nerves. When such troubles appear, generally—not always—they are due to want of sincerity in the aspiration or some egoistic vein or ambition in the man. Very often, it is better to leave it to the inner force to work the change in other people.

Now to other pointed questions in your letter.

1. The subconscious manifests on all the levels of consciousness in the same way. That is to say, it acts as a repository of all that is driven from the conscious parts of the being. Take a mental movement, or a fixed idea or impression. If the sadhaka finds that it is an obstacle he rejects it from his conscious mind whenever he happens to notice it. If he is sincere in his rejection the movement or idea or impression goes away from the conscious mind. The sadhaka may even think or believe that it has permanently disappeared. But in reality it has not been either dissolved or transformed. It sinks into the subconscious and remains there ready to come up to the surface of consciousness as soon as it finds the conditions favourable. From there it tries to recur even after a very long time.

In the vital level also it acts in a similar way. There it takes the form of desires, impulses, instincts, habitual movements, old impressions etc. These, when noticed by the aspirant and rejected successfully from the conscious vital, sink or take refuge in the subconscious vital and remain there ready to sprout up again into the consciousness when the sadhaka is off his guard, *i.e.*, when he is in depression or assailed by doubts, or when he is attracted by the lures of the vital.

The general rule with all inner movements is threefold : (1) Persistence, (2) Resistance, (3) Recurrence. This applies to the conscious parts generally and to good as well as evil tendencies. The third item—recurrence—takes place from the subconscious.

In spiritual progress one does not generally get into the subconscious except after a long time. Besides, the transformation of man's nature cannot take place unless his subconscious is transformed. You know Sri Aurobindo has written about the function of the subconscious. It is the stronghold of habits, of all actions—mental, vital and physical—which are automatic. It is that which makes men feel that their nature *cannot* be changed.

The subconscious is supported by the Inconscious. Therefore it cannot be transformed till the physical consciousness or, to be more exact, till the material consciousness is transformed. It is like a subterranean ocean full of mud and dirt over which stand man's conscious mind, life and body. It gives stability to the conscious parts but also its inertia and incapacity and unwillingness to change.

2. Various bodies on the levels of consciousness on which man lives. If he lives upon a level consciously, he *can* use a body made of the element or stuff of that level. For instance, a man can use, if he is developed, a vital being which can have a vital consciousness and a vital body made of the vital stuff. We call it "body" by analogy only. There is nothing common, except form, between the physical body and the vital body. The vital body can be and in fact is free, elastic, capable of almost instantaneous movement to the desired point. It can change its size—*i.e.*, is not fixed down in narrow limits like the physical body. If a man has a developed mental being and his aspiration takes place in the mind, then naturally his spiritual experience will begin on the mental plane. But he may not experience, or begin his experience by being conscious of, his mental body as you suggest. There are cases in which one feels "peace" or "silence" or "illumination" in the mind and not any consciousness of a mental body or even a mental self.

In fact, it is not necessary for the sadhaka to know these things in advance with his mind because it would prevent the spiritual experience from developing itself along the lines of spontaneous growth.

3. No, there are no Chakras in the mental and the vital sheaths. The Chakras are centres in the subtle physical sheath to which certain plexuses in the body correspond. They are connected with psychological and inner movements of consciousness which render a communication with the outer being possible. It would always be safe not to connect schools of Western psychology with Yoga. To keep them apart is best.

4. Sri Aurobindo knows very well about Theosophy and its concepts. There is no correspondence between the Master in theosophy and the Master within of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks.

It is better not to mix up Theosophy and its ideas with Yoga. It would require a special article to deal with Theosophy. Its good point is its tolerance and catholicity, but in this the Theosophists are not alone. Its system of secret doctrine has nothing to do with spirituality as we understand it in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

5. I think in the light of what I have written about modern psychology you will understand how correct Sri Aurobindo was in making the remark about Freud. Freud cannot be a stepping-stone to Sri Aurobindo. Those who believe in Freud must first grow in acuteness of intelligence to see that Freud is not right in his analysis of human nature.

I will relate to you the circumstance under which that remark about Freud was made. In the year 1929 or 1930 there came a young advocate from Andhra, a part of India. He had studied Freud and psycho-analysis before he came to Pondicherry. Then while trying to practise Yoga here he wanted to see if both could be combined and he wrote to the Master about it, saying that he believed in the method of "experience" and not rejection because rejection would only create a complex, etc., etc. So the remark was in connection with Freudian psycho-analysis with all the modern schools of psychology added to it. The Master knew full well what modern psychology means and with his full sense of responsibility has uttered that note of warning. So far as Yoga and the application of psychology is concerned I believe we must accept him as the highest authority.

But why on earth did you advise the girl sadhaka to go to New York ? Those who take up Yoga earnestly must have faith in the Divine protection. If they can't have that they can have faith in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But no true sadhaka ever can think of taking the help of a psycho-analyst who, to say the least, does not know who he is and who the patient is !

You will find that psycho-analysis *cannot* free her from her trouble. It is only the Divine Mother who can do it. It only requires sincerity in the aspiration and persistence in the rejection and a constant surrender to the Divine. There cannot be a more potent help than that in the world.

The best advice you can give her is to have the sincere aspiration and constant rejection with inner prayer to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and a faith that she will succeed.

Not psycho-analysis as it is practised, but separation of the witness self and nature—Purusha and Prakriti—can help. That is to say, if the individual could separate his true self as the witness and watch unconcerned his nature and its movements, then it would be easier for him to get rid of the impurities of nature. But this is not psycho-analysis.

6. There will be many changes in Nature's so-called laws if and when the Supermind comes down into the material consciousness. The changes will be spontaneous and may not be noticed by those who might profit by them,

unless they have a capacity to perceive the process of change and the force which would bring it.

7. Sri Aurobindo never wants anyone—at least not one who wants to do Sadhana—to dabble in occultism. To become a medium willingly might open the man to a number of undesirable forces and it is not always easy to get them out afterwards.

If one has already been under the undesirable influence of either a person or a force, the first thing to do is to stop all connection—even exchange of word or letter or any article—with him. If one wants to take the help of a Guru—if one has a Guru—he can do it. But success will depend upon his sincerity, earnestness and capacity of rejection.

A. B. PURANI

(To be continued)

RISHI RAJNARAYAN BOSE

THE FATHER of our Master Sri Aurobindo's mother Swarnalata, the 'grandfather of Indian Nationalism', the militant defender of his country, the Olympian champion of truth, the ruthless antagonist to sham and, above all, a holy personage of hallowed memory that arouses a profound esteem and veneration in the hearts of the Bengalees, is Rishi Rajnarayan Bose.

He was a fond child of the Goddess of learning. Not once but twice he successfully proved himself matchless : as a student and as a teacher. "It was my principle," the Rishi said, "as a teacher to guide the boys by means of love." He was thoroughly at home in English literature. He had an easy access to the mines of Sanskrit and Arabic literatures.

Some of his countrymen took him amiss. They took him for an old man who cherished a clinging to the education and culture of ancient India, be it supremely good or abysmally bad. In fact, what he wanted was to draw the attention of his countrymen to the silliness of holding such notions as that 'the Indian way of eating, the Indian way of dressing, the Indian way of learning'—in a word, whatever India could offer to the world in any sphere of life—are too insignificant, while whatever the English would offer should be worth having for a man in a civilised society. According to him, no other country in the hoary past dared belittle India for anything. And now why should it be otherwise ? The Indians must be Indians heart and soul. To ape the English is to ask the presiding Deity of India to quit her own throne. And what, after all, would they get by this mad pursuit ? Nothing short of self-perdition. He was a pioneer in the field of giving concrete shape to Indian Nationalism.

His heart would be uncontrollably swayed while singing the *Bandemataram*, careless of the fact that his voice was sadly wanting in the art of singing. In this connection let us remember what he wrote to the author of *Anandamath* in which shines our national Anthem. He was simply enamoured of the book and wrote to Bankim, "May your pen be immortal!" The Rishi's prayer was fulfilled.

A character with diverse virtues was he. This moment his face shows a thunderbolt determination. The next moment he becomes the personification of irresistible laughter. This moment he tries to identify himself with the innermost Spirit. The next moment he discharges the duties of a wise householder. This moment he gives advice to alumni and the adorers of Bengali literature how to serve the country better through their powerful contributions. The next moment he loses himself in the company of impossible fools.

The Superiority Complex was altogether foreign to his nature. Children had free access to him who was four times as old as they. Tagore was one among

those little ones. One will be frankly bewildered as to how such a thing could take place in Bengal where age is treated with far more reverential awe than in any other part of the world. It was impossible for any one to resist the good humour of the Rishi. Once Sri Aurobindo said to one of his disciples :

“Your question reminds me of the story of my grandmother. She said : ‘God has made such a bad world! If I could meet Him I would tell Him what I think of Him.’ My grandfather said: ‘Yes, it is true; but God has so arranged that you can’t get near Him so long as you have such a desire in you !’ ”¹

“A prophet is not honoured in his own country.” This frequently mouthed proverb proved quite true in the case of Rishi Rajnarayan. His own son-in-law K.D. Ghosh decided to send his children to England to get thoroughly anglicised. As preparatory to the fulfilment of his wishes, perhaps, he had appointed a European nurse to attend on his child Auro and later he sent him to an English convent at Darjeeling for his primary education. But as a contrast, it is equally strange that the very same father should send to his son Auro in England press-cuttings from India describing the injustices and atrocities of British Rule here. Thus he supplied unconsciously, as it were, fuel to the fire of patriotism with which the son appears to have been born. The father did all this, for he intuitively felt that his son Auro was destined to do something very great. His expectations were more than fulfilled in Sri Aurobindo becoming the spiritual Leader of mankind, while his immediate expectations were only partly fulfilled. Aurobindo learnt what the West could teach him, yet he remained out-and-out an Indian in the core of his heart, and was not anglicised as desired by his father. The grandfather’s joy and pride knew no bounds to find in his grandson a unique love for his motherland, for her culture and education, notwithstanding his Western education of the highest order.

One is taken aback to learn that Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Rajnarayan Bose were hand in glove with each other in spite of their having principles poles asunder. Rajnarayan went to the length of tabooing English words in Bengali conversation. For every English word used, his friends and he had to pay the penalty of one pice.

An interesting anecdote. It happened that Vivekananda during his itineracy once paid his homage to the Rishi Rajnarayan at Baidyanath. He was accompanied by his brother disciple Akhandananda. He had already advised his gurubhai not to disclose to Rajnarayan that he knew English and had pretended to have no knowledge of that language. As English seemed Greek to Vivekananda both Rajnarayan and Vivekananda talked in Bengali. Rajnarayan was highly pleased with the Bengali youth who did not use a single word in English during their conversation. But alas, the element of luck went for a while

¹ *Evening Talks* by A.B. Purani, 22-1-1939.

against the old man. By a slip of the tongue he used the word "plus" during their pure Bengali conversation. Thinking that it would be still worse to explain the word in English to the guest, he simply placed one finger across another and thus explained it. At this the present generation may burst into laughter. But to the Rishi, who was dead against the British, it was a matter of supreme importance.

Madhusudan on the other hand could not help saying : "I can speak in English, write in English, think in English, and shall be supremely happy if I can *dream* in English !"

Yet on the eve of his departure to England he presented his famous poem "*Adieu to Bengal*" to Rajnarayan. This can be explained by the fact that no cloud of painful misunderstanding ever cast its sombre shadow upon the light of lucid tenderness and sympathy with which the two mighty souls greeted each other. Needless to say that both had an intense love for the Motherland. In that unique Bengali poem Madhusudan prayed that even if he had breathed his last abroad his Motherland might not forget to retain him in her memory.

Among the mighty minds caught by the spirit of India's renaissance and among the pioneers in the field of national creativity, the Seer of the age, Sri Aurobindo, has seen in only two personalities the true Rishi-vision : Bankim Chandra and Rajnarayan. In his *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda* and *Bankim Chandra Chatterji* he has immortalised Bankim ; to Rajnarayan he has given perpetuity in a sonnet : *Transit Non Perit*

Transit Non Perit

(My grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose, died in September 1899)

Not in annihilation lost, nor given
 To darkness art thou fled from us and light,
 O strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven
 Of ancient joys, no silence eremite
 Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought
 Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour,
 Took back its gift. Into that splendour caught
 Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power
 Remains with thee and the old genial force
 Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks :
 As when a sacred river in its course
 Dives into ocean, there its strength abides
 Not less because with vastness wed and works
 Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

Rabindranath, who had great admiration and veneration for Rishi Rajnarayan, has noted two significant aspects in his character :

“On the one hand he had committed himself and his household affairs entirely to the care of the Divine ; on the other hand he would busy himself making innumerable plans feasible or otherwise for the advancement of the country’s progress.”

It is as well interesting to note the remark made by Devendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath, about Rajnarayan Bose when the latter’s famous lectures *The Superiority of Hinduism* and *Past and Present* were brought to light : “Whatever falls from the lips of Rajnarayan Babu creates a great sensation in the country.”

Now let us pin our attention on his residence. His residence at Baidyanath had won the most prized title : “Mecca” of the social reformers and the lovers of Bengali literature.

Truly Rajnarayan was a patriot of the deepest order—an uncommon personality who combined to an astonishing degree energy in action with boldness in thought.

CHINMOY

BOOK REVIEW

Sri Aurobindo, by *Sharadaprasad Varma*. Published by Yugantar Karyalaya, Surat.

This Gujarati book depicting 30 incidents from the life of Sri Aurobindo is at once inspiring and interesting. The incidents show various aspects of Sri Aurobindo right from his stay in England as a student to his yogic life at Pondicherry. The book is intended to give to small children an inspiring idea of Sri Aurobindo and as such it is highly valuable and one can be sure that it will prove useful for the young students.

KIREET JOSHI

Students' Section

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME GENERAL PROBLEMS OF SADHANA

I

SRI AUROBINDO : Evidently, these things [depression and despair] come from the atmosphere—especially when somebody is badly upset they can try to come. 24-1-1935

I meant when somebody in the Ashram is much upset then the Forces become strong and go about trying to upset others. 25-1-1935

I do not see what reasons can be so subtle as to justify or even appear to justify something that opposes and tries to destroy the sadhana. Whatever stands in the way of spiritual progress, must be a falsehood whatever reasons it gives in its own favour. The best thing is not to listen to its reasons. 7-3-1935

The worst thing for sadhana is to get into a morbid condition, always thinking of “lower forces, attacks etc.” If the sadhana has stopped for a time, then let it stop, remain quiet, do ordinary things, rest when rest is needed—wait till the physical consciousness is ready. My own sadhana when it was far more advanced than yours used to stop for half a year together. I did not make a fuss about it, but remained quiet till the empty or dull period was over. 8-3-1935

There is a natural movement of the ordinary human nature in the material consciousness which takes time to get rid of. Of course we call them forces of the lower nature but one must not regard them as hostile, but only ordinary. They have to be changed but it usually takes time and it can be done quietly. One must be more occupied with the positive side of the sadhana than with them. If one is always thinking of them as hostile things, getting disturbed when they come, considering [them] as hostile possessions, then it is not good.

The things that are really hostile are few and must be distinguished from the ordinary movements of the nature. The first must be repelled, the second dealt with quietly and without getting troubled or discouraged by their appearance.

9-3-1935

There is no objection to doing sadhana, but it must be done quietly without the constant struggle and disquietude—not minding if it takes time, not getting into a constant rhythm of “struggling against difficulties.” That is my point.

9-3-1935

Q. I think that if the difficulties I am having are not immediately checked they may create the worst condition for me for good.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is just the kind of idea to which you should never give acceptance. On the contrary you should regard all difficulties as only passing obstacles on the way.

14-3-1935

Q. A suggestion comes that the non-pranam days are days of rest in the sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the ordinary attitude of the physical consciousness—but once the fundamental consciousness is fixed, there is no reason why the sadhana should stop for a single day or need rest.

1-4-1935

One can be a channel for the Mother’s help, but the idea of oneself helping others comes in the way and so long as it is there one cannot be a truly effective channel.

17-4-1935

Q. The worst of the hostile suggestions is that you are partial in your dealings. When this is accepted a wall comes between you and the sadhak and there is a revolt and then there may be an end of the sadhana!

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is their aim—for it is their one short cut to success, to separate the sadhak from his soul.

3-5-1935

II

It is well understood that the permission given [to go away from the Ashram] does not exclude the possibility of the experiment ending badly. But the experiment becomes necessary if the pull of the ego or outer being and that of the soul have become too acute for solution otherwise or if the outer being insists on having its experience.

20-6-1935

It is especially when the outer being rejects the Truth and insists on living its life and refuses the rule of the spiritual life that the experiment becomes inevitable. I have never said that it is recommendable. 24-6-1935

Q. Is that push for the experiment by the outer being so violent that, in spite of our knowing its nature and the result it would bring, we can do nothing about it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In some it is too strong; they have to go and see for themselves. That does not mean that everyone has to go whenever he feels a difficulty. These are exceptional cases. 24-6-1935

If the external being is too strong for him, and its desires increase, then that means his realisation is postponed. But then there is no other choice. For the only other alternative is a life in the Ashram itself which would be soon a public scandal. 24-6-1935

There is no hopelessness except when the will chooses the worse path. 24-6-1935

Q. Does your allowing people to go out from here mean that now there is no harm in their doing so ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it does not; it simply means that we can't always be holding back people whose vital says "I want to go, I want to go" and they side with the vital. They are allowed to go and take their risk. 18-3-1937

From NAGIN DOSHI

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 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 THIRTY-TWO

WE are ready to take up the third term of our scheme—Logopoeia which comes after Melopoeia and Iconopoeia. Let me remind you of what it stands for. In Melopoeia the prominent feature is the word-music. In Iconopoeia it is the word-imagery. In Logopoeia it is the word-thought—intelligible discourse, play of idea-power, language as a vehicle for reflection. Or, if we go negatively, we may say that Logopoeia means in poetry the expression where neither word-music nor word-imagery is prominent: these features may be there, indeed they have to be there if poetry is to exist at all, but whatever else than they is prominent determines Logopoeia. Since emotion is an indispensable ingredient of poetry and emotion does not need word-music or word-imagery in order to be present we may define Logopoeia as poetic emotion fused with thought-speech more appreciably than with music-speech or image-speech, though never without these last two in some form or other.

It is rather a ticklish job to decide the degree of music-speech or image-speech that would allow poetry to be called thought-speech instead of something else. Take the phrase, perhaps the most famous that Wordsworth has written and one which actually mentions thought itself:

The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

This phrase relating to the face of Newton in the statue of him by Roubiliac at Cambridge—the statue bearing the inscription “Newton qui genus humanum ingenio superavit” (“Newton who exceeded the human race in genius”)—is

Iconopoeia of an extremely high order. The metaphor of "seas" is too open to let Iconopoeia become subdued. If only the word "voyaging" were there—a word which signifies in general English a travel over water—we should realise that seas were intended, but there would be no clear iconopoeic quality. If a less specific word like "travelling" were employed, the iconopoeic quality would be still less in view : a suggestion of concrete movement would be still unmistakable, but it would not call up any precise picture.

Such a suggestion we find in perhaps the greatest phrase Milton ever wrote, a phrase which too introduces the very word "thought" :

....this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity.

The verb "wander" is absolutely vital here : take it away and the phrase will lose its sovereign character as poetry. Put "travel" and see how it reads :

Those thoughts that travel through eternity.

We have more alliteration, but the line moves less profoundly : vibrations are not set up in the deep layers of our receptive consciousness : they occur in a layer which is deep enough to be named, in Sri Aurobindo's terminology of "planes", Higher Mind, but the sense of space on widening space, expanse on expanse of mystery, continuity on endless continuity of conceptual exploration, is lost. "Wander" has a plunging rhythmic effect which in collocation with "thoughts" and "eternity" carries the language to the intense and the immense that are characteristic of what Sri Aurobindo, taking us past Higher Mind through Illumined Mind and Intuition, designates as the utterance of Overmind, the supreme *Mantra*. "Wander" has a central strength and weight in the letter *d*, a plumb resonance in the *n* preceding and combining with it, a dynamic penetrative roll in the terminal *r* and what is perhaps the subtlest yet the most impressive thing is the initial *w*. The letter *w* has always an expansive touch. When we want to suggest spaciousness or massiveness, *w* proves extremely useful. Repeated, its quality becomes unescapable—as in Sri Aurobindo's line :

In the wide workshop of the wonderful world,

where spaciousness overwhelms us, aided by the continuity the three similar o's create. In Wordsworth's

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

in the midst of several other technical points—the aspirated *h*, the reiterated *y*, the long six-syllabled adjective “unintelligible”—the three *w*’s create a mighty massiveness.

To return to our subject. The mantric quality is also supreme in the quotation about Newton’s face and here too it is the rhythmic total which bears up the emotional idea and image to the divinely revelatory pitch. But the overall feature of the poetry is the metaphor “seas”. In Milton’s brief masterpiece the concrete suggestion of a passage through space and time and beyond space-time through an experienced eternity is not openly metaphorical and therefore we have Iconopoeia shaded off into Logopoeia : a concisely colossal creation of word-thought confronts us. To get this effect fixed in our mind, let us look at a phrase from Sri Aurobindo which too speaks of thought in a direct manner without being a creation of word-thought :

...the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.

Here we have two immensities at play—on the one side Nature’s fathomless surge, the infinite Inconscient with its varied evolutionary unfoldment, and on the other the touches, the visitations from the Superconscient in the form of winged thoughts whose home is not Nature’s vast flux but some ample stability concealed beyond her—the hidden shores that are domains of spiritual stillness. The Aurobindonian phrase—again, I believe, a Mantric utterance—is even more clearly iconopoeic than the Wordsworthian : we have not only the images of “surge” and “shores” but also the very vivid image-activity of “wing”. Of course, merely the mention of concrete things is not determinative of Iconopoeia. Poetry has always to make us see and in order to make us see it must deal in concrete suggestions. But there are several ways of dealing in them. Two broad categories would be : explicit and implicit. Sri Aurobindo in the lines cited above is sufficiently outside the borders of the implicit : Milton in his phrase on the intellectual being is not.

Wordsworth who with his thought-seas is explicit enough in the element of sight grows implicit with it at the end of his best short poem, the celebrated *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*. Perhaps the longest title ever given to a poem is this, a title so long that some people’s minds can get quite mixed up and a schoolboy has himself become immortal by mentioning the poem not as *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* but as *Ode on Intimate Immorality* ! Well, this Ode ends with a highly moral idea beautifully vivified and movingly deepened beyond either morality or immorality into an intimate perception of truths behind what Virgil has called “the tears of things”. Wordsworth writes :

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The idea here is very great, the expression is perfect, though the plane may be not quite Overmind so much as a mixture of Higher Mind and Intuition. These planes are not easy to distinguish: we shall one day talk about them and their typical utterances. At the moment we are concerned with drawing a line between Iconopoeia and Logopoeia. The idea Wordsworth has expressed here has strong concrete touches—the concrete “flower” is the focus of attention and “tears” is fairly vivid too, but neither simile nor metaphor disengages itself from the statement and the main purport of the statement is to present not a picture but a thought about certain kinds of thoughts. I suppose you catch the meaning of the lines. Wordsworth is telling us that his perception has got so sensitively in touch with what lies behind phenomena and the vicissitudes of life and Nature that even the most insignificant-looking flower awakes in him a sense of an eternity, an immortality which stands free of all the pains and sorrows of this world of change: he reaches a level of thinking where an abiding peace envelops him and where the realm of tears, so to speak, does not extend. His is a profound philosophic poise that is conscious of mortality yet is conscious also of what can never pass away: the little flower that fades lets him as if through a tiny doorway into the Divine and Deathless, the Godlike and Griefless.

This is surely distinguishable Logopoeia. Still, it is not perhaps Logopoeic in a very positive form. To impress you with a very positive form I shall pick out two lines of Sri Aurobindo’s in which this form is rendered all the more noticeable by being preceded by a very positive instance of Iconopoeia. Here are the lines:

Earth’s winged chimeras are Truth’s steeds in heaven,
The impossible God’s sign of things to be.

Let me first explain the meaning. A chimera (pronounced kimerá, accented in the second syllable) is a queer mythical creature with a lion’s head, a goat’s body and a serpent’s tail—and as if this combination were not enough, its mouth breathes fire. Milton has a line in which several mythological monsters run cheek by jowl:

Gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire.

Sri Aurobindo has made the chimeras even queerer than they usually are: he has given them wings—with, I think, a purpose. He uses the word “chimera” for something fantastic in idea, and what he means to say in his first line is:

"All strange apparently unmaterialisable dreams in earth's mind, all fanciful seemingly unattainable desires in earth's heart—all these are not a mere imaginative play of impossibilities: already are they realities in the depths of the unknown Divine, realities as natural as horses, and they are heavenly originals, truths of God, whose distorted representatives on earth are the chimerical notions of man, notions which have some quality of aspiration about them as if they were cries sent up to the Supreme, as if they were set winging like prayers to the Omnipotent. Further, the realities existing in heaven, the original truths corresponding to the chimeras, are part of a plan for the earth. Just as steeds are part of the plan actualised in the earth's past and present, those original truths are part of a plan for the earth's future." Now, with the full meaning of the line before us, look at the next. It expresses the same essential idea without any image-colour—almost abstractly, one may say, but with perfect pointedness and faultless rhythm—that is, in a thoroughly poetic way yet by suppression of all imagery, except perhaps for a slight indirect touch of it in "Sign." Here is Logopoeia—poetic word-thought—in concentrated clarity matching exactly the compact picturesqueness of the preceding verse's Iconopoeia—poetic word-image.

This concentrated clarity—taking almost an epigrammatic form—is intuitive in essence, though it may be intuition taking a mental shape and not acting in its own original body. All Logopoeia is not intuitive in a direct or a mentalised manner—at least not markedly so. It can be a mental statement with greater or less felicity, pungency, magnificence. There is the couplet which the Greek poet Simonides composed as epitaph for the Spartans who died at Thermopylae. A band of three hundred under Leonidas were ordered by the State to delay the march of the thousands sent by King Xerxes of Persia. At the narrow pass of Thermopylae they fought for several hours, thus giving precious time to the Athenians to reach up from far away. Every one of them perished. The epitaph by Simonides is a short address by the dead to their countrymen of Lacedaemon, which is another name for Sparta : F. L. Lucas has Englished it very well—

Tell them at Lacedaemon, passerby,
That here obedient to their laws we lie.

Heroic unadorned pathos wrought into a masterpiece of under-statement in thought-form is here. The Greeks had a genius for straightforward writing which yet spoke volumes and was extremely poetic. The Indian genius is more rich : Iconopoeia rather than Logopoeia is the Indian tendency in poetry. I am sure there would have been quite an opulence of imagery in place of the bare statement of Simonides if Kalidas had felt a rhythmic relationship with Leonidas and written the epitaph. Of course, Vyas is an exception among Indian poets. Sri Aurobindo has considered him a great master of bare strength.

Among European poets the most successful in chisellèd Logopoeia after the Greeks was the Italian Dante. The Italians are not particularly distinguished for control over their emotions. Just as the Frenchman talks with his hands and his shoulders, the Italian carries on his conversation with a lot of gesticulation. But Dante was a severe nature and his style has a clear-cut restrained force : he is one of the few who have been sovereignly logopoeic in poetry. The natural medium for Logopoeia is prose, and therefore poets should not attempt it unless, like Dante, they can command great intensity of expression with an intuitive drive behind their thought-movement or else a deep emotion charging the reflective attitude. There is a line of Dante's which Eliot has transposed to his own verse, a line with a catch in the breath and a tug at the heart without bringing any extraordinary words, not even any glimmer of an image. The poet looks at the crowd of the dead in the circles of the Underworld and softly exclaims :

I had not thought death 'had undone so many.

The simplicity of pathos here could hardly be bettered. But a lesser hand would have spoilt the feeling by either too emptily brief a speech or a speech attenuated by being drawn out.

Thus Rupert Brooke in a sonnet which as a whole is a success and which has a splendidly iconopoeic sestet comes quite near to failure in four lines terminating the octave. He also is talking about the dead—the soldiers who fell in the First World War :

These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved, gone proudly friendied;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and fur and cheeks. All this is ended.

The rhythm is good, the pauses are cleverly and effectively varied, but intensity is absent. Although concrete suggestions are present, yet they do not flame up or shine out into real Iconopoeia. Merely tender talk seems to be made in order to create reminiscences of things dear and now lost; the sheer pang is not communicated. The ideas and the phrases are almost hackneyed : they are narrowly kept to the poetic by some sort of artistic arrangement of syntax and rhythm. But even the rhythm appears to go wrong in one place—the concluding words : "All this is ended." That feminine rhyme has hardly the suggestion of death's ultimate inexorableness. Possibly the extra unstressed hanging syllable is meant to give the impression of a decline and a fall of the life-force. But such an impression, apart from being indecisive in itself, is scarcely appropriate in a poem about young men dead in World War I : the sense of sudden violent death is not conveyed. If the previous rhyming phrase could somehow

be managed in another fashion—say, “gone proud of friends”—the last line would close better with a finality of four stresses of varying weight, with the last stress the strongest in the phrase : “All this now ends.” Brooke’s quatrain is less true pathos than a kind of delicate pathostication, the semi-artificial though not quite unskilful stimulation of sad thoughts. Logopoeia, to be successful, has to come from stirred profundities of the reflective mind, no matter how light its touch may be. Of course, Iconopoeia can be a failure too if it is not the inner becoming the outer : no amount of imagery will save the poet from being a versifier if he uses his images with a superficial hand. Even Keats whose superb capacity for the iconopoeic we have observed can come out with a picturesque ludicrousness in an imaged expression :

A bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant’s gums.

But the slipperiness of the iconopoeic path is not as full of banana-skins as that of the logopoeic. It is possible even to write effective Iconopoeia with a banana as part of the vision ! There is a line by somebody—perhaps Roy Campbell :

Buccaneer the world to bring home a banana.

This is a vigorous poetic substitute for the well-known Latin phrase: “Montes parturiunt et nascetur ridiculus mus”—“Mountains are in travail and a ridiculous mouse will be born.” Yes, successful Logopoeia is difficult to achieve. But when it is achieved it can be as memorable poetry as anything iconopoeic. No line, however astonishing in image, has surpassed the Dantesque assertion which we have quoted more than once before :

E la sua voluntade è nostra pace—

whose literal translation is : “His Will is our peace.” Or take the following five lines from Sri Aurobindo :

Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure.
Our life’s repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.

There is a controlled power in the passage, achieving a refined sublimity that states in marmoreal yet living poetic language the final truth about all existence in the cosmos. One phrase in it—

Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure—

reminds me of some lines from Sri Aurobindo's early blank-verse narrative *Love and Death* : after lamenting the frustrating transience of life for human beings who come into birth with "passionate and violent souls", Ruru views their entry into the Underworld and cries :

...Death helps us not. He leads
Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
The naked spirit here...

Very vivid and forceful Iconopieia is in these lines. But the Logopœia of the other lines is no less poetic in its own way, and the line following them—

Our life's repose is in the Infinite—

is one of the greatest—quite fit to rank beside the phrase we have culled from Dante. In fact, it is the articulation of an idea affined to the one in Dante. Both the verses speak of ultimate rest being found only in God : Dante refers to God in action, Sri Aurobindo to God in pure existence, but, as the next line makes it clear, this God-existence is in connection with a life ending not in a cessation of action but in a supreme living, a divine activity in the world as well as beyond. The repose is a consummation, not a quiescence, and in this consummation, according to Sri Aurobindo, there would be what in another peak-moment of spiritual Logopœia he has described as

Force one with unimaginable rest.

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

BIRTHDAY PRAYER

(30-11-61)

O, LET the rays of the golden Sun
 Illumine the mind's pale blue ;
All thoughts be vested one by one
 With the aureate zenith-hue.
Make me a child of the novel world
 Throbbing with joy divine ;
I'll carry Thy banner all unfurled,
 A messenger of Thine.
To Thee my body, life and mind
 Are given utterly;
No earthly chains will ever bind
 Thy child to agony.
Risen from fires of trial I go
 Urged by the mighty soul ;
My upward flight will never be slow
 Before I reach my goal.

(Composed by Sailen for Prahlad)

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

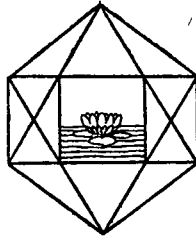
THE Master wrote in English,
Don't you think that He would wish;
As far as we possibly can,
Never to impose a ban
Upon this tongue ?

He must have used it for a reason,
Without a sign of any treason
To the very nation
Who felt such aggravation
For this tongue.

Perhaps it was the only kind,
Containing terms of Supermind;
For His Knowledge to reach the world,
And of course, it was unfurled
By this tongue.

He could have written for a few,
In words unknown to me and you;
But no, He wrote for those who probe
From all corners of the globe
In this tongue.

LEENA



SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

64, Rue D'Orleans
PONDICHERRY
(S, INDIA)

Annual Conference

The Mother has graciously approved the holding of a Conference in Pondicherry from 29th to 31st December 1961, of members of Sri Aurobindo Society, delegates from centres and other interested friends.

For programme, and boarding and lodging arrangements, kindly write to:-

The General Secretary,
Sri Aurobindo Society,
64 Rue d'Orleans,
Pondicherry.

ON EDUCATION AND ITS CONTROL

EDUCATION is as old as time and as new as the marvel of the rising sun. According to Rabindranath, the implications contained in words like love, religion, art, literature, patriotism and friendship surpass all definitions. Even the most deep, learned and revealing explanations about them leave room for many things more to express. This is true in the case of the word education as well. An attempt to give a precise and distinct definition of it is somewhat like trying to fathom the mystery of the sea by a diver's plunge. The pioneers of human progress throughout the world, in all branches of thought, namely politics, science, sociology, economics, ethics, religion and spirituality, have contributed their views on the subject. They have tried in their own way, to unveil the secret meaning of it and to realise it in themselves. At the same time to make its significance realised in the head and heart of humanity they have also taken recourse to diverse means : press, platform, friendly talks and advice and revealing influence and inspiration. But still it appears that all has not been told about it or whatever has been stated in the past needs to be re-stated over and over again, since the central and highest part of their observation, realisation and teaching has yet to materialise.

The modern age is the age of utility. As a result more importance is given, nowadays, in all affairs, to the aspect of utility and less to the subjective or inner side. This has been more so on account of the State idea having coloured the mind and action of the modern world. There is no harm in it, because prosperity gained by the individual, the nation or the world, whether by the successful working of the State or otherwise, has a fundamental value of its own. But to judge everything by the standard of material prosperity and to neglect the subjective side is a gross error. Specially with regard to education such an error carries immense repercussions on the communal life. The existence of the State is indispensable or unavoidable in the present phase of humanity. But the State idea and the State do not mean the same thing. The point will be clear if the motives on which the State idea is taking its support are briefly discussed. The motives are these. First, it is the State which will assure and safeguard the economic and other basic interests of the individual and the community. Then it is the good of the collectivity, the benefit of the community for which the individual should live, not for his separate egoistic interest. Lastly, the good working of the State, its efficiency and organisation and the management by it of all vital institutions will bring about the necessary progress and perfection of the individual and society. These notions are true to some

extent but are altogether mixtures of truth and falsehood and it will be dangerous to pursue them to the end, unexamined by illumined vision and thought equipped with the knowledge of the deep and complex truth of Nature. Particularly in India whose culture is profound and varied and where the people still consciously feel the living spiritual breath of their ancient forefathers, the State idea should not reach its culmination.

The life of a developing community may be compared with a growing garden of various fruits and flowers, each having a different colour, smell and taste, and the guard of the garden with the State or any other administrative machinery. The impression created by the sight of the garden is mainly of beauty, fragrance, greenness and the sense of a living growth. Whereas the vision of the guard brings before us things like rifle and bullet, bow and arrow, stick and sword, a heavy face with a beard and a big turban. The presence and active help of the guard are essential for the garden. It is he who will look after its unhampered growth, prevent theft, plunder and robbery and will be useful to it in many respects. But there is a limit to the scope of his usefulness. He has very little to do with the actual growth and development of the plants. This work automatically goes to some other agencies. The free gifts of nature, earth, rain, air and sun are the main sources from which they will derive help according to their needs. But at times additional artificial help is also required for the successful fruition of the plants' life. Such help can be given only by those who are adepts in the line, who have knowledge of the plants' life and nature, their external requirements and also their inner demand for tender care and subtle understanding. This task in relation to the growth and development of the human community comes under the jurisdiction of education. Naturally such a task is beyond the capacity of a guard since he lacks in the requisite skill, knowledge, subtleness and adaptability. So when, the question of controlling education by any administrative authority comes up, the above factor should always be taken into consideration.

The supporters of the State idea will, no doubt, defy such an analogy and in fact there is some ground for them to do so. They will perhaps, in the first place, say that it is a mistake to see the State separately from the community. For, it is the community itself which is the elector of the organisers of the State whereas the garden is inert and therefore has no say regarding the appointment of the guard. Secondly, it is not a just proposition to compare the learned and efficient organisers of the State with a mere uneducated guard. All this is true but partially and not fully. A little more intimate observation will provide us with something truer which is not apparent outwardly. Sri Aurobindo's view on the matter will clarify the obscurity. "The organised State is neither the best mind of the nation nor is it even the sum of the communal energies. It leaves out of its organised action and suppresses or unduly depresses the working force and thinking mind of important minorities, often of those which represent

that which is the best in the present and that which is developing for the future.” It seems, then, that however learned and efficient the organisers of the State may be, whatever diversity of understanding and clarity of vision they may have, they do not represent the mind and will of the nation nor have they the realisation of the National Soul. Why it is not so is a different problem and will require a lengthy explanation. For the present topic, however, let it be taken for granted that it is not possible with the means which are employed nowadays towards the formation of a State. But it is certain that under the present condition of the State, the individual and the community are bound to suffer the imposition of some collective aims that are thought out by a few or more of the ruling persons, and that may not be in accord with the true spirit and nature of individual and communal development. That is why Sri Aurobindo says, “The State is a convenience and a rather clumsy convenience, for our common development; it ought never to be made an end in itself.” The same statement is applicable to any other machinery which stresses uniformity rather than development.

The importance and scope of action of the State are great and manifold. Even in the field of education it is and can be of immense help but that should be only in certain matters. Thus, in removing illiteracy on a large scale from the common people, the State, with the resources and powers entrusted to it, is the only capable and efficient authority. It can also diminish or abolish the economic and material difficulties which stand in the way of betterment of the existing systems of education and introduction of new ones. But the State or any other similar controlling agency is unable to handle the central and actual aspect of education in the way it should be done. In educating the individuals according to their inborn taste and bent of nature and in conformity with the truth and aspiration of their being, such a control is often an obstacle rather than a help. To quote Sri Aurobindo, “The State is not an organism, it is a machinery, and it works like a machine, without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture, but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create.” Again, “The State tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it and natural variation is impossible to its essentially mechanical nature; but uniformity is death, not life.” From the above statements we catch a glimpse of what are the essential qualities necessary for conducting an educational control and the drawbacks in its way and also the fact that its real function is only to help the individuals grow and unfold their latent powers, possibilities and capacities, which finally will account for the progress of the community.

Individuals are the standard-bearers of progress in the society. The seed of advancement lies dormant in their hearts and when it germinates, it is they who energise the collectivity with new ideas, thoughts and activities. A check to their free and natural growth by any mechanical authoritative intervention is harmful to the community and to humanity as a whole. Man is not only a mind,

life, and body. He is mainly and essentially a soul and the mind, life, and body are the soul's instruments. Expression of the soul's qualities through the perfected instrumentality of mind, life, and body is the opportunity offered to him by his birth in this world. Therefore a perfect educational organ will always take cognisance of all these stratas of human personality and will arrange for their training in such a way that none of them are over-emphasised nor any of them neglected. The result will thus be a balanced, harmonious and integral development of all the parts with the natural variation of qualities according to the individual's soul principle. But this is not all that an ideal system will strive for. It should also give due attention to the aspect of each one's relationship with his own people and nation and also with humanity at large. Sri Aurobindo says, "...there are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity."

The basic and most central theme of true education is laid down above. As regards its practical implementation, no country in the world appears to be so ready yet to give a due consideration to it as India. India's vision of the secret meaning of the world and existence is congenial to the purpose. She has a mission in the world; it is to become an example of unique fulfilment and unprecedented self-perfection. It is not quite a new thing to her. The records of her past history show much of her doings in the line. But now what is demanded of her is the revitalisation of the old and the shaping of the future in the light of the material knowledge and practical efficiency of the present. Perhaps it will not be out of place here to touch, with the help of Sri Aurobindo's writings, upon the views held by India about individual, collectivity, and humanity: "India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit.... Similarly India has not understood by the nation or people an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the National ego,...but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a Swabhava and Swadharma, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical, dynamic, social, and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim."

This then is the ideal of education and culture in India. To achieve it her Spirit, perceptibly or imperceptibly, is always at work. So the children born in India must from the beginning of their education, be made fully conscious of their great cultural inheritance. To render this possible, infinite care and precaution should be taken to chalk out their educational programme.

There may be differences of opinion regarding the work on account of different tastes, and preferences. The differences may be either in respect of the actual subjects to be taught or with regard to the medium of language for teaching. Here also we may resort to Sri Aurobindo's writings on education and, in so doing, enter into the details of the subject but now we shall conclude by giving a short reference only :

"Interest is, after all, the basis of concentration. We make his lessons supremely uninteresting and repellent to the child, a harsh compulsion the basis of teaching and then complain of his restless inattention." "The first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments, and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. When the mental instruments are sufficiently developed to acquire a language easily and swiftly, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can only partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. Moreover, one who has mastered his own language, has one very necessary faculty for mastering another. With the linguistic faculty unsatisfactorily developed in one's own tongue, to master others is impossible." "The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation." "It is God's arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit."

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

(The first four quotations are from "*The Ideal of Humanity*" and the remaining from "*On Education*.")

WORLD UNION SEMINAR

(Held at Tapogiri, Ramgarh, (Naini Tal) U.P. from June 1 to 10, 1961 under the inspiration and guidance of The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry)

on

“INTEGRAL EDUCATION FOR A NEW WORLD”

THE GENERAL CONSENSUS

As members of the Seminar, we who lived together for ten days at the quiet and beautiful precincts of the Tapogiri Ashram and pondered over education—what it is and what it ought to be and the world we live in and the world we seek to have—wish to record our most pleasant general consensus of opinion on what are really the fundamental issues of the present-day educational as well as cultural life.

We feel that what is needed today is a radical re-creation of life and education, a hearty courage to go to the root of the problem and a patience and perseverance to reconstruct from the foundation itself. Further we feel that the fallacy of a superficial reorganisation and a partial amelioration of things should be sincerely recognised, if we do not want to suffer from a perpetual dissatisfaction.

We are aware that all this is a most uphill task and yet this group of the Seminar members feels that we should at least have the courage to recognise the truth and pursue it faithfully to the best of our capacity. That given, we trust, the truth will surely prevail sooner or later.

Our best judgments, which we send out, particularly for the joy of those who have already been thinking on these lines and even doing something in these directions, are as follows :

1) A sincere recognition and pursuit—the best possible—individually, in small groups and in institutions—of the truth that man and his personality are a wide and a large fact, with body, life, mind and spirit as its essential constituents, is our very first need. The body is the physical fact; life, the ordinary impulses, appetites and desires; mind, the intellectual, aesthetic and moral activity and the pursuit after truth, beauty and goodness; and the spirit, the

unity, integrality, comprehensiveness, harmony, peace, self-consecration, spontaneous love of truth, beauty and goodness and the Reality, which embodies them. These constituents have distinct values of their own which comprise an ascending scale with the spiritual values as the highest, giving the right proportion and place to the rest. Further, the present split personality and the divided world need fundamentally the recognition that the integral personality and the fullest development of the varied resources of life must now become more and more the foundation of our educational thought and practice as also of life generally.

2) This really implies a fresh orientation in the way of life. It needs an aspiration and an appreciation of the values of inner joy, unity, harmony, love, enlightenment, self-mastery, and mastery over circumstances, self-collectedness and conscious self-guidance. This is just the opposite to a life primarily governed and regulated by external circumstances, necessities and compulsions, physical and social.

3) Practically all the problems that confront us today in education as well as general life tend to acquire a new prospect of hope and possible solution when viewed in the light of the ideal of integral personality and the largest development of the resources of life. The most baffling problem in cultural life is that of tension and division which are writ large in our life today—from the individual to the international. And if the values of the spirit, of wholeness, harmony, community of the good and oneness of man become real tendencies with us, will the problem not acquire a new prospect? In education, too, if these higher values acquire some force and begin to command some living acceptance in the teacher and others concerned, will the personality of the teacher not automatically become respectable and will the student not be happy with his teachers and will the society be not satisfied with the entire educational process?

4) The problem is, how is a beginning to be made? It can be stated immediately that the beginning cannot be made on a wide front organisationally and administratively. It has to be done in individuals, in groups and in institutions where the will for it exists and where the integral growth and its satisfactions are felt as attractions and rewards enough for the pursuit.

It may also be stated that the higher values of life, in particular, are not a matter of instruction but of life and actual practice.

5) In the beginning, undoubtedly, great resolution and heroic effort would be needed. But soon a general tendency may take shape and progressively gain in momentum. To promote such a growth, it will be good if individuals, groups and institutions, which feel responsive to the ideal of Integral Education and wish to collaborate in this approach and work, develop mutual contacts as also with the World Union so that a collective effort may progressively grow and be organised.

THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE SEMINAR

We the members of the Seminar and sympathisers, as a result of the inspiration of the thought and work of the Seminar on 'Integral Education for a New World' held at Tapogiri (Ramgarh, Naini Tal, U.P.) from June 1 to 10, 1961, record that we shall henceforth more than ever devote ourselves to the following objectives :—

- 1) Pursue the ideal of Integral Self-education personally more and more.
- 2) Reach out this message and, in particular, in the form of the general statement sent forth by the Seminar to responsive individuals, groups and institutions to our best capacity personally, through the press and other possible means.
- 3) Seek to bring together interested persons and institutions into mutual contact and into contact with the International Centre of World Union so as to help the growth of a general social trend towards an integral growth and a balanced pursuit of material, intellectual, aesthetic, moral and spiritual values of life.

INDRA SEN

WORLD UNION, International Centre, Pondicherry

Note :—

The subject for the next Seminar will be : "What is the Whole Man ?" The intention is that the subject of "Integral Education for a New World" should now be studied and examined in greater detail, and an appreciation of the 'Whole Man', of the fuller resources of human knowledge, feeling and action, is virtually basic to all effort for a new world and a new life, more harmonious and more collaborative. After that we would possibly return to the problem of application of this knowledge to education and life.

The dates of the next Seminar are June 11 to 20, 1962, and it meets at the same place, Tapogiri, Ramgarh (Naini Tal), U.P. and the admissions are intended to be limited to 20.

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