

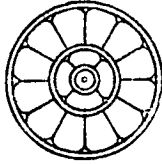
MOTHER INDIA

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth.

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

These two flowers, signifying Silence and Falsehood, can make a very good sentence :

“If you keep silent, you are sure not to tell a lie.”

Tu n’as pas besoin d’être fâché. Tout le monde dit des mensonges. Quand les gens parlent de ce qu’ils ne savent pas, ils disent des mensonges. Et neuf fois sur dix ils parlent de ce qu’ils ne savent pas.

You need not be angry. Everybody tells lies. When people talk about things they do not know, they are telling lies. And nine times out of ten they speak of what they do not know.

(Apropos of flowers falling from the Mother’s hands)

Tout ce qui tombe est pour celui qui sait s’abaisser.

All that falls is for him who knows how to bend.

RÉPONSES — ANSWERS

Q. Douce Mère, Sri Aurobindo nous dit : "First be sure of the call and of thy soul's answer", avant de poursuivre le chemin du yoga, sans quoi la fin serait un désastre. Mais comment savoir si l'appel est vraiment là ou non ? Et quant à notre âme, ne choisirait-elle pas toujours le yoga ?

R. Sri Aurobindo veut dire qu'il ne faut pas prendre une ambition du mental ou un caprice du vital pour l'appel spirituel ; car lui seul est un signe certain qu'il faut entreprendre le yoga. L'appel spirituel se fait entendre quand le moment est venu, et alors l'âme répond et s'engage sur le chemin ; elle ne se laisse pas tromper par une ambition, un orgueil ou un désir, et tant qu'elle ne reçoit pas l'ordre du Divin de se mettre en route, elle attend patiemment, sachant que de partir trop tôt est pour le moins, inutile et peut-être néfaste.

La Mère.

Q. Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo has told us: "First be sure of the call and thy soul's answer", before taking up Yoga, otherwise it will end in disaster. But how to know if there was the true call or not? As to our soul, wouldn't it always choose to do Yoga?

A. Sri Aurobindo means that a mental ambition or a vital self-will should not be mistaken for a spiritual call : for the latter alone is a sure sign for taking up Yoga. The spiritual call makes itself heard at the right moment ; then the soul answers and starts on the path ; it cannot be deceived by ambition, pride or desire, and as long as it does not receive the Divine Command to start on the way, it waits with patience knowing that to start too soon is, to say the least, useless and perhaps harmful.

The Mother

Q. Douce Mère, Sri Aurobindo nous dit : "God's grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals". Que veut dire ceci ? Est-ce que la Grâce Divine ne se verse pas sur nous toujours, et qu'il s'agit seulement de notre réceptivité ?

R. La Grâce est toujours là, éternellement présente et active ; mais Sri Aurobindo dit qu'il est fort difficile d'être soi-même dans la condition de la recevoir, de la garder et d'utiliser ce qu'elle nous donne.

Sri Aurobindo dit même que c'est plus difficile que de boire à la coupe des dieux qui sont immortels.

Il faut pour pouvoir recevoir la grâce divine, non seulement une grande aspiration, mais aussi une sincère humilité et une confiance absolue.

17-10-1960

La Mère

Q. Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo says : "God's grace is more difficult to have or to keep than the nectar of the Immortals." What does it mean ? Does it mean that the Divine Grace does not always pour on us and that one has to be receptive in order to have it ?

A. The Grace is always there eternally present and active ; but Sri Aurobindo says that it is very difficult to be always in a right condition to receive it, keep it and to utilise what it gives us. Sri Aurobindo even says that it is more difficult to have it than to drink from the cups of the Gods who are immortal. In order to receive the Divine Grace, one must have not only a great aspiration, but also a sincere humility and an absolute confidence.

17-10-1960

The Mother

Q. Douce Mère, Pourquoi n'est-il pas possible de vivre à la même hauteur de conscience toujours ? Quelquefois je tombe en dépit de tout effort et toute aspiration.

Sri Aurobindo parle d'une période d'assimilation, qu'est-ce, Mère ?

R : C'est, parce que, un individu n'est pas fait d'un seul morceau, mais de beaucoup d'entités différentes, parfois même en contradiction les unes avec les autres ; les unes veulent la vie spirituelle, les autres sont attachées aux choses de ce monde. C'est un long et difficile travail de mettre toutes ces parties d'accord et de les unifier.

La force et la lumière que les parties les plus développées reçoivent, se répandent peu à peu dans le reste de l'être par un procédé d'assimilation et pendant cette période d'assimilation le progrès des parties qui sont en avant semble interrompu. C'est de cela dont Sri Aurobindo a parlé.

29-10-1960

La Mère

Q. Sweet Mother, why is it not possible to live always at the same height of consciousness ? Sometimes I fall in spite of my best effort and aspiration.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of a period of assimilation, what is it, Mother ?

A. It is so, because an individual is not made of one single piece, but of many different entities ; sometimes they are even in contradiction with one

another. Some want the spiritual life, others are attached to worldly things. To put all these parts into harmony and unify them is a long and difficult labour.

The force and the light received by the most developed parts extend little by little over the rest of the being by a process of assimilation and during this period of assimilation, the progress made by the parts which are in front seems to be interrupted. That is what Sri Aurobindo means.

29-10-1960

The Mother

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. Mamilal, 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 sixth 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.)

DECEMBER 26, 1938

AT about 5.30 p.m., four of our group—C, S, Dr. B and N—were seated on the carpet behind the head of Sri Aurobindo's bed and were whispering among themselves. Over some topic C broke into suppressed laughter and had to run away from the room. S and N controlled themselves with difficulty. Then at about 6.30 we all assembled by the side of Sri Aurobindo. P was still absent.

SRI AUROBINDO : *(looking at us)* : What Divine Descent was it ?

N : It was C who burst into laughter.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, it was then Vishnu's Ananda that descended !

As soon as he encouraged us by his voluntary question we flocked near his bed.

C : It is peculiar how I break into laughter so easily. Formerly I used to weep also at the slightest provocation. It seems to me that because I live more outwardly I laugh like that.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a reaction of the superficial vital which is touched easily by simple outward things : there is a child in the nature that bursts out like that. It is the same as the Bala-bhava of the Yogis, responding without thought to the slightest touches. The deeper vital does not so easily get touched.

By this time Dr. B was preparing for a question. We noticed the peculiar change of his whole face, particularly the parting of his lips, and we knew that he was about to come out with some problem.

Dr. B : What is meant by self-offering ? How is one to do it ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*with a surprised humourous frown*) : How ? I don't know how. One simply does it !

C : (*interrupting the talk*) : My eyes always remain watery.

SRI AUROBINDO : Virgil had eyes like that, while Horace used to breathe hard. Once Mycaenas, the great patron of literature in the reign of Augustus Caesar, was sitting between the two poets and said, "I am sitting between sighs and tears." (*Laughter*)

To get back to B's question : one offers one's vital being, one's heart and one's mind to the Divine, rejecting all desires, attachments, passions etc., and grows into the Divine's consciousness.

Dr. B : Are day-hours better than night-hours for meditation ? I seem to get more concentrated at night.

SRI AUROBINDO : That may be due to the calm and quiet atmosphere at night and also to your being accustomed to meditate at that time. It is because of the quietude of night and of early morning that these periods are supposed to be the best for meditation.

Whether at night or during the day it is good to be regular. We ask people to have a fixed time for meditation ; for, if they make a habit, form an अभ्यास (habit), the response comes more readily : the response too gets into a habit of fixed time !

But, of course, there are variations with different cases. Lele asked me to meditate twice in the day, and when he heard that I didn't do it he gave me no chance to explain that my meditation was going on all the time. He said I was caught by the Devil.

N : Sometimes meditation is automatic.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, at that time you just have to sit down. Otherwise you feel uneasy. It was like that with Dr. M, as you know.

Dr. B : The other day I was having a lot of peace and ananda, got a vision of you, with a vision of the Sincerity-Flower following it. But I had to stop the meditation in order to sleep, for I thought that if I kept up at night I might fall ill. Is there any significance in the vision of that particular flower and no other ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. There was a special purpose in it. It was a call to you to aspire for sincerity. By sincerity is meant the lifting of all our movement towards the Divine.

N : Wasn't Dr. B's fear of illness merely a mental notion ? How can one fall ill by sitting a long time in meditation ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not just by sitting like that ; but if one keeps awake too much at night, there is the chance of a physical disturbance. The physical has its limits. The vital being can go on feeling energy or peace or any other thing, but the physical can't be taxed beyond its capacity. The over-taxing happened to many sadhaks here. M once felt such a flow of energy that he thought he could clean the whole Ashram and went on increasing his work till a reaction set in. The Force comes for the work allotted to you, so that it may be done better. It is not meant for increasing the work and to be used for other purposes. If you go on overdoing things, then the natural reaction is bound to come. A certain amount of common sense, of reasonableness, is required even in spirituality.

C : At one time I also used to feel a lot of energy while working with the Mother and I was never fatigued even by working day and night. Only one or two hours' sleep were sufficient and I would feel as fresh as ever.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is because you opened yourself to the Energy. As for sleep, even ten minutes' sleep may be sufficient, but then it is not ordinary sleep but a going deep within. If one can draw the Force with equanimity and conserve it, wonderful things can be done. As I said, many sadhaks felt extraordinary energy when we were dealing with the vital being. But afterwards the sadhana came down into the physical, there was not that push any more and people began to get easily fatigued, feel lazy, unwilling to work. They began to complain of ill-health due to overwork, and the doctors helped them in their feeling. Do you know H's idea ? He says people have come here not for work but for meditation.

N : He says also that you are increasing his work and Pavitra's by increasing the number of disciples. He is helping you—

SRI AUROBINDO : Only helping ? I thought he was doing everything !

I dare say that if we had not come down into the physical but remained in the vital and mental like other Yogis, without trying to transform earth-nature, things would have been rather different.

At this time the Mother came in and we meditated for a while. After she had gone, the talk was resumed. Someone remarked : "N had a good meditation. He didn't know the Mother had gone."

N : Good meditation ? How do you know ?

SRI AUROBINDO : By the inclination of your head perhaps.

N : I can't say. All I can say is that I was having many incoherent dreams and visions—perhaps by the surface consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO : The surface consciousness of the inner vital being. Such experiences are common. Of course, when one goes still deeper, one doesn't see incoherent dreams and visions. There is a point between the surface consciousness and the deeper vital which is full of these fantasies. They are apparently incoherent, but when one gets the clue one finds that

everything is a linked whole. This I have seen many times in my own case. In the physical a mouse turning into an elephant may have no meaning, but it is not so in the vital. These fantasies have no coherence such as is found in the physical, but they have their own coherence—that of the vital plane. It is this world from which X's paintings come—what the Europeans call the goblin world. Anybody who has the least experience of the subtle planes can at once say where his paintings originate.

N : Does X see them before producing them ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't think so. Some people see these fantasies but don't paint them.

N : How is it that people and he himself call his work great ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Everybody calls it great and wonderful ; so he himself begins to think it so !

Then the talk turned on various experiences.

N : I once felt as if my head were suspended in the air and the other parts of the body did not exist.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's the mental consciousness separating from the rest.

N : Are you able to know what experiences the sadhaks are having—I mean any experiences and not only the decisive ones.

SRI AUROBINDO : No ; for I am not in contact with the sadhaks. But the Mother knows whenever it is question of consciousness. She can see in the sadhaks whatever changes are taking place. When she meditates, she can know what line a sadhak is following—the line indicated by her or the sadhak's own—and afterwards what changes in the consciousness have been brought about.

N : And when the experiences happen, are they all given by you and the Mother ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What's the use of giving our own things to the sadhaks ? Let them follow their own lines of growth. I may put in a Force for people who are in a habitual bad condition, people who are always going in the wrong direction. And I try to work out the results of the Force so that the condition may improve. If a sadhak cooperates, then it is comparatively easy. Otherwise, if the sadhak is passive, the result may take a long time : it comes, goes, again comes—and ultimately the Force prevails. A case like B's, for instance. When we put in a strong Force, he became lucid but soon the whole vital being used to rush up and catch hold of him. On the other hand, if a sadhak actively cooperates, the time taken is only one-tenth.

NOTE

Nirodbaran acknowledges the help given by A.B. Purani who has added a phrase or a sentence in some places in the record of this talk.

GLIMPSES OF SRI AUROBINDO

III

EVENING TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO Second Series¹

(In an earlier issue (Mother India, February 1960), we published under the above title a review of A.B. Purani's compilation, Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo, First Series. There a further instalment was promised as soon as the next volume in this series was to come out. The second volume of the series has just been published, and here is a brief appraisal.)

A.B. PURANI'S new volume on the *Evening Talks* which has just been published by the Ashram at Pondicherry is a fine compilation which will be used with avidity by all lovers of Sri Aurobindo lore. The talks recorded in this series cover a period of barely four years, from 1923 to 1926, and do not include any of the conversations of the post-1938 period as in the earlier volume. But the material it contains, if not more varied perhaps than in the first volume, is certainly more full on the points it touches. The new volume leaves on the whole a more satisfying impression. One feels as the talks proceed, as if one were being taken more and more intimately into the Presence. The barriers drop and at one time one can almost see the Master as he appears refulgent in the midst of his disciples and pronounces his Birthday message. There is a lurking suspicion that these Birthday talks are going to be his last and that he may within a short time retire behind the doors...We again express our gratitude that Purani has once more let us into secrets which might otherwise have remained the guarded possession of the few admitted to those delightful sittings.

A compilation of this nature is bound to contain some repetitions, and one can always suggest a different method of arrangement. In choosing to report the talks not in the strictly chronological order in which they were given, but under certain specific subject-headings, Purani follows a *via media* which has an obvious disadvantage: all the talks included under a particular heading could not relate to the same subject, unless, as has been frequently done in the case of Sri Aurobindo's letters, they were split up and distributed under the

¹ Recorded by A.B. Purani. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, April, 1961. Rs. 8. 00.

appropriate headings. But these are after all minor blemishes in a work that might with confidence be described as one of the rare historical documents for the period it covers.

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Some of the reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo's early life recorded by Purani might be quoted at length, as they help to dispel legends that grow easily around a great name.

Somebody had suggested, "Moti Babu [the late Motilal Roy of Prabartak Sangha who first came into contact with Sri Aurobindo in his Chandernagore days] has related that when you were five years old you got a vision of a great light at Darjeeling and you became unconscious."

"And then, what happened? (*After a pause*) All that is legend. I told him something because he was constantly asking me about my childhood. I had no such experience of light when I was a child. My uncle told me that I was very bright, but I have no recollection of those days and if you want the truth, it was not light but darkness that I saw at Darjeeling.

"I was lying down one day when I saw suddenly a great darkness rushing into me and enveloping me and the whole of the universe. What I told Moti Babu was that after that I had a great Tamas—darkness—always hanging on to me all along my stay in England. I believe that darkness had something to do with the Tamas that came upon me. It left me only when I was coming back to India.

"If people were to know all the truth about my life they would never believe that such a man could come to anything."

"Moti Babu related to me about your conversion to Christianity..."

"What is all this legend? I never became a Christian and never used to go to Church. Who has built up this fantastic story?"

"The only thing that happened was [this]. There was once a meeting of Non-Conformist priests at Cumberland when we were staying in England. The old lady in whose house we were living took me there. In such meetings, after the prayers are over, all disperse and devout people generally remain a little longer afterwards and it is at that time that conversions are made.

"I was feeling completely bored. Then a priest approached me and put me some questions. I did not give any reply. Then they all shouted out, 'He is saved, he is saved,' and began to pray for me and offer thanks to God! I did not know anything. Then the priest came to me and asked me to pray. I was never in the habit of praying, but somehow I did it in the manner in which children recite their prayers before sleep, in order to keep up an appearance. That was the only thing... I was then about ten years old...."

“I was a great coward virtually [vitality] ; and I was weak physically and could not do anything. Only my will was bright. Nobody could have imagined that I could face the gallows or carry on a revolutionary movement. In my case it was all human imperfection with which I had to start and feel all the difficulties before embodying the Divine Consciousness.”

“Moti Babu told us that you caught the revolutionary spirit from Shelley’s *Revolt of Islam*.”

“That is not quite true. *The Revolt of Islam* was a great favourite with me even when I was quite young and I used to read it again and again—of course, without understanding everything. Evidently it appealed to some part of the being. There was no other effect of reading it except this that I had a thought that I would dedicate my life to a similar World-change and take part in it. (*After a pause*)

“No, I had no extraordinary spiritual experience in my early life. I remember only three experiences. One was the Darjeeling experience. And the second came upon me at the age of twelve or thirteen. I was extremely selfish and then something came upon me and I felt I ought to give up selfishness and I tried in my own way—of course, imperfectly—to put it into practice. But that was a sort of turning-point in my inner life. The last came just before I left England. It was the mental rather than the spiritual experience of the Atman. I felt the One only as true ; it was an experience absolutely Shankarite in its sense. It lasted only for a short time...”¹

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The book contains a number of other references to Sri Aurobindo’s life and work in his own words,—for example, how he began his practice of yoga, what bearing it had on his work for India’s independence, why he took up writing for the *Arya* and the way he did it,—which one feels tempted to quote at length. But the main theme of these Talks centres round Sadhana, and especially the descent of the Supermind. Then as now, the disciples were anxious to have a precise idea of what the Supermind is and what one has to do in order to prepare oneself for it. Some of the answers then given might be of interest even now.

“On the plane of mind you have abstractions. It is the mind’s way of representing realities of planes higher than the mind. Behind these abstractions there is a Reality. On the plane above the mind there are no abstractions, there are realities and powers.

“For instance, you form an abstract idea in the mind about the Supermind. When you get to the Supermind you find it is not an abstraction at all.

¹ pp. 164-67

It is more intensely concrete than Matter, something quite overwhelming in its concreteness. That is why I called it the Real-Idea and not an 'abstract idea'.... Before the Supermind, Matter dwindles into a shadow."

"What is that concreteness like?" someone asked.

"The sense of solidity, mass. That is perhaps what the Veda meant when it said, 'Agni is wide of light, and concrete of body.' You can say that the Supermind is harder than the diamond and yet more fluid than the gas.¹

"As a matter of fact, the Truth that is coming down is not mental, it is an infinite Truth. The form it would take would be an organisation of that infinite Truth. But if you bind it down to a mental formula and say, for instance, that it should be democracy or communism or socialism or anything of that sort, you naturally limit the Truth.

"The one thing that Sadhana has done for me is that it has destroyed all 'isms' from my mind...

"The Supermind itself will create its own forms. It may be fluid and plastic and can be infinitely complex in its working out.

"What we are doing at present is to make ourselves fit instruments for the higher Truth, so that when it came down there would be the proper instrumentation for its working. We won't reject life; we have to bring a new consciousness into the external work...

"Life has no 'isms' in it, Supermind also has no 'isms'. It is the mind that introduces all 'isms' and creates confusion. That is the difference between a man who lives and a thinker who can't.

"Not that I have no idea about the work that would be done when the Truth comes down. But immediately, at present, we have to bring down a change in the physical mind, the nervous being and the vital mind, so that they may become fit instruments of the Truth. That is a big enough work, I should think..."²

How is one to prepare, the disciples asked.

"Two things are necessary in this yoga: balance and a strong hold on the earth. By balance I mean the different parts of the being adjusted to one another, or some steadiness, a quiet poise somewhere in the man,—not an unsteady inner condition.

"A strong mental being is also very necessary. Otherwise, when experiences come the man turns upside down. In India, our mental development—I mean the outer man's development—is not at all proportionate. There is the psychic being ready in many cases, there is the aspiration for spiritual life and faith

¹ p. 291

² pp. 102-5

also. But mind, reason, intelligence—the dynamic mind—are very crude. That is why I hesitate sometimes to give the yoga....

“To combine the inner development with the outer would be ideal. Science, for instance, steadies reason and gives a firm grounding to the physical mind. Art—I mean the appreciation of beauty pure and simple without the sensual grasping at the object—trains up the aesthetic side of the mind....Philosophy cultivates the pure thinking power. And politics and such other departments of mental work train up the dynamic mind. All these should be duly trained with the full knowledge that they have their limited utility... If the training is given to these parts with an understanding of their limitations, then they may serve very usefully the object of this yoga.¹

“One of the most fundamental requisites for the search of the Truth is a critical reason, almost a cynical mind which tears off the mask and refuses to accept current ideas, thoughts and opinions. It is a kind of solvent. Man must have the courage to see the Truth as it is without any deception about it.

“The second thing that a man must have in order to reach the Truth is the aspiration for a Truth higher than what has been attained. He must watch all ideals, principles and truths and see which are possible and how far each ideal can be realised ; and most important of all, he must know the conditions required for the fulfilment of such an ideal....”²

The ideal of Supermanhood had already gained ground and a disciple asked, “Is it possible to have some idea of the minimum requirement for being a Superman ?” and “Has anybody attained Supermanhood ?” Sri Aurobindo’s reply to the second question was “a categoric “No”.

“But”, with regard to the ideal, he added, “one may say that it requires : (1) complete opening from the highest mind to the most material part—all must open to the Truth—a sort of perfect square from top to bottom ; (2) raising the centre of consciousness into the plane of the Truth-consciousness so that one is normally seated on the Supramental plane.”

“All the time ?”

“Yes, all the time. The third thing needed is the establishment of harmony between, and organisation of, all the movements of nature—mental, vital and physical, in the light of the Truth. All this, not in order, one after another, but at the same time.”

“When all the parts of the being are opened to the Truth, does the struggle with the hostile forces become more acute ?”

“That depends on the work that is done before the opening : that is to

¹ pp. 74-75

² p. 224

say, one must have worked out to some extent the impurities in the nature before the opening. All this one must have done consciously.¹

“I do not know about other yogas ; but this yoga means growing conscious every moment of what is going on in oneself. One has to give consent to the higher working, rejecting the lower movement. That is the basis.... Unless you consent to His working, even God does not help man. In this yoga there is that perfect liberty to the individual to make his choice.²

“Transformation would be complete if one could bring down the Higher Consciousness that you get in the mind and the vital being, into the physical being and even into the very cells of the material body. The conditions of complete transformation are that you should be able to keep the same deep peace, wideness, strength, purity, power and plasticity from the mind downward to the very material cells. That is the fundamental basis”.³

*

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There is in this book, more than in the earlier volume, a considerable space given to questions of current Indian politics. Much of it has now only a historical value, but it might interest the general reader to know of Sri Aurobindo's views on the industrialisation of India and the problem of India's poverty.

It is commonly supposed that India has always preached the gospel of poverty. This, Sri Aurobindo says, is an incorrect notion.

“This idea of poverty was never the Hindu ideal, not even for the Brahmin. There never was any preaching of poverty. Of course, there was Sannyasa, having the ideal of ‘no-property’. But that is quite a different thing from remaining poor.

“What the Indian ideal is you read in the Ramayana where the civic life is described. There was no man who was poor in Dasharatha's kingdom, none who had no garden. That is the Indian ideal.... Not to be attached to property was the idea, but it is quite a different thing from remaining poor.”

“ Did Buddhism preach poverty ?”

“There was a division : the monks and the householders. The monks owned no property and for them there was the communal property. For the householders poverty was not regarded as an ideal.

“Our people never preached poverty.”⁴

But how about the situation today ? “What are the possibilities of indus-

¹ pp. 108-9

² p. 89

³ p. 98

⁴ pp. 135-36

trialism in India—I mean the system of large-scale production through big machines ?” someone asked.

“Big machines are bound to come. The poverty of the people can only be removed by large-scale production....Big machinery does not necessarily imply all the evils of industrialism....New forms of social organisation will rise with the advent of large-scale production....”

“Will India have to pass through all the evils of industrialism ?”

“But why should India wait till other countries solve the problem, so that it may imitate them afterwards ?”

“How will India avoid the evils ?”

“Let her first acquire wealth. Without wealth they cannot expect to make any progress.”¹

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Finally, a word about man and his ultimate place in the scheme of things, and we shall leave the reader to make his own exploration through this treasure-house which Purani has opened to us.

“How is it that man is regarded as the highest being in creation ?”

“It is the egoistic ignorance of man that makes him think so. He is high because there is in him the possibility of evolving a divine life. You can say also that he is high because he has developed a mind and the mind gives him a chance of conscious evolution. But it does not necessarily follow that because man is a mental being he has used his mind for his evolution. Exactly because he has a mind, man has an infinite capacity to be devilish. He brings to the help of his devil a mind, and the devil himself can't be so bad as man with his mind when he puts it at the service of his vital being ...”

“But, then, there is the great difference between man's body and the animal's.”

“That is all; and even that is not so much as you try to make it out to be. After all, what is the difference between the animal body and the human ? If you see carefully, you will see you have discarded the tail, and instead of walking on four legs you have been using two, and the other two you have changed into hands. There have been slight but very important changes in the brain and some details here and there. You have cast off your fur and horns.... You see, after all, it is not so great a change in the physical as would create a gulf between animal and man.

“No, all that is human nonsense. Man is great because he can open to

¹ pp. 53-54

something higher and can consciously go beyond the mind and live a divine life upon earth...."¹

“What would be the significance of the Supermind to humanity ?”

“What it will mean to mankind may be known later on, not now.”²

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ pp. 238-39

² p. 296

SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

(6)

NATIONAL EDUCATION

IV

OUR ideal then, in Sri Aurobindo's view, was to be that of the Kshatriyas of old. But how were we to realise this ideal in our system of national education ?

The recent history of India had virtually made the disappearance of the Kshatriya type inevitable. The Bengalis and the Madrasis had long ceased to fight; that is how Clive became the Lord of Arcot and got a walk-over at Plassey. "The falling to pieces of the Maratha Confederacy and the overthrow of the Sikh power had left the Punjab and the Deccan stupefied and apathetic; the rest of India was politically exhausted and inert."¹ This was the condition of India when the abortive attempt of 1857 failed to rouse the sympathies of the Indian people and the mutiny of troops was crushed with the help and support of our princelings. To take away all remnants of the old spirit of revolt, Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of the seventies, imposed an Arms Act which made it a legal offence to carry a lethal weapon; even the *lathi* became suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy. A generation brought up and trained to distrust all means of self-defence was not likely to produce Kshatriyas of ancient tradition.

The hope of the future lay in those rare aspirations which found voice through the muffled notes of patriotic literature, and in the efforts of individuals here and there to give those aspirations a shape. So, the *Bandemataram* wrote, the poet Rangalal Mukherjee's "splendid word-pictures of Rajput heroism and chivalry are still the glory of Bengali literature....And those who have read...the *Meghanada-badha* aright cannot escape the conclusion that the [poet Madhusudan Dutt's] object in belittling Rama and extolling Meghanada was to awaken courage and manliness in his countrymen."² Later in the century, Bankim Chandra sought the same object through his *Ananda Math* and *Debi Chowdhurani* where he outlined a programme of revolution and a system of physical training that would be necessary for the élite of our youth. Vivekananda's spirited denunciations of weakness and cowardice also did

¹ *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 26-12-1906.

² *Ibid*, 5-7-1907 .

their part in awakening Bengal to the need of physical exercise. Wrestling and other forms of physical culture became popular among some of the aristocratic families through the efforts of Rajnarain Bose; Rabindranath, we might remember, had been trained to wrestle since his early youth.

Physical education on an organised scale did not, however, become popular until Tilak in Maharashtra and a group, led by Sarala Ghoshal and P. Mitter in Bengal introduced *lathi* play and sword drill as a part of regular training for boys and young men about the turn of the century. Tilak, we may believe, had been inspired by Sri Aurobindo with whom he came into close contact soon after the publication of the "New Lamps for Old". The Bengal movement owed much to the Japanese Samurai, Baron Okakura, "who started it", in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "before I went to Bengal...I simply kept myself informed of their work. My idea was for an open armed revolution in the whole of India. What they did at that time was very childish—things like beating magistrates and so on. Later it turned into terrorism and dacoities, which were not at all my idea or intention....We wanted to give battle after awakening the spirit of the race through guerilla warfare."¹

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo sought to make the best use of these nascent movements. "He made his first move when he sent a young Bengali soldier of the Baroda army, Jatin Banerji, as his lieutenant to Bengal with a programme of preparation and action....Centres were to be established in every town and eventually in every village....Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement. As soon as the idea was sown it attained a rapid prosperity; already existing small groups and associations of young men who had not yet the clear idea or any settled programme of revolution began to turn in this direction and a few who had already the revolutionary aim were contacted and soon developed activity on organised lines; the few rapidly became many....Afterwards, there came the partition of Bengal and a general outburst of revolt which favoured the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement....He took advantage however of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin's suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, *Yugantar*, which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control...."²

This was in 1906. By next year the Government took fright and began to incite communal riots and acts of hooliganism against peaceful citizens.

¹ *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* : Nirodbaran. *Mother India*, March 1961.

² *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, chapter 2.

This proved to be a god-send. The *Bandemataram* took up the question. "The supreme need of the hour is to be always in a state of preparedness to ward off blows if not to strike them....In a revolutionary period events are our sole instructors....It is not in vain that the disturbance at Comilla has been followed by disturbances at Dacca and Mymensingh. It is not in vain that the temple of our gods has been desecrated. It is not in vain that executive cunning has exposed the Hindus of Jamalpur to antinational violence at the local *mela*. The use of these events is to cut us off from our moorings—to divorce us rudely and effectually from our peaceful traditions. They brace our nerves, strengthen our arms, steel our hearts. They call forth and develop our fighting powers. They are helping to raise the Bengalee to the same plane as the Sikh and Gurkha. They put aside the pen and serve to bring the sword into use. Their moral is that side by side with the national schools, there should be *akharas* [physical training centres] all over the land. These institutions for the physical and military training of our young men should not be left to their unaided efforts, but should be given preference over every other item in the nationalist programme. The District Conferences, the central bureaus, should take up the matter in right earnest. The student volunteers should no longer play at being soldiers, but learn to defend their countrymen and keep inviolate the sanctity of their temples. The ignominy of the Jamalpur Hindus in suffering their goddess to be insulted covers us all with shame and disgrace. The expiatory fast is but a relief of the old cowardice. The sting of the insult is simply unbearable and if this does not goad us at once to develop Kshatriya virtues, nothing will."¹

Just as "the anxiety of the Government to get the students out of the national movement brought the question of national education to the fore," it was the apathy of the Government in giving protection to the helpless citizen against the rowdyism of a section of the people that gave now the needed impulse to the movement for physical training. "It should not be difficult", the *Bandemataram* wrote, "to see that the demand for official protection in such affairs as the Comilla riots is as unpractical as it is illogical. The object of modern civilised Governments in preserving tranquillity is to protect the citizen.... But the bureaucracy in India is only half-modern and semi-civilised...and the object in preserving tranquillity is not the protection of the citizen but the security of the Government....But the security of the Government...is directly threatened by the Swadeshi movement...To ask the bureaucracy, therefore, to protect us in our struggle for swaraj is to ask it to assist in its own destruction. ...It is urgently necessary therefore that we should shake off the superstitious habit of praying for protection to the British authorities and look for help to the only true, political divinity, the national strength which is within ourselves.

¹ *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 24-4-1907.

“If we are to do this effectually, we must organise physical education all over the country and train up the rising generation not only in the moral strength and courage for which Swadeshism has given us the materials, but in physical strength and courage and the habit of rising immediately and boldly to the height of even the greatest emergency. That strength we must train in every citizen of the newly-created nation, so that for our private protection we may not be at the mercy of a police efficient only for harassment, whose appearance on the scene after a crime means only a fresh and worse calamity to the peaceful householder, but each household may be a protection to itself and when help is needed, be able to count on its neighbour. And the strength of the individuals we must carefully organise for purposes of national defence, so that there may be no further fear of Comilla tumults, of official Gurkha riots disturbing our steady and rapid advance to national freedom.

“It is high time we abandoned the fat and comfortable selfish middle-class training we give to our youth and make a nearer approach to the physical and moral education of our old Kshatriyas or the Japanese Samurai.”¹

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ *Ban Jemata am*, Daily Education, 18-3-1907.

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

ILLNESS

SRI AUROBINDO : All ill-health is due to some inertia or weakness or to some resistance or wrong movement there, only it has sometimes a more physical and sometimes a more psychological character. Medicines can counteract the physical results. 8-12-1935

Whatever it may be—the power of illness to prevent the sadhana ought not to exist. The Yogic consciousness and its activities must be there whether there is health or illness. 27-7-1935

You must arrive at a complete separation of your consciousness from these feelings of the body and its acceptance of illness and from that separated consciousness act upon the body. It is only so that these things can be got rid of or at least neutralised. 27-7-1935

It is a detachment of even the physical mind from the pain that makes one able to go on as if nothing were there but this detachment of the physical mind is not so easy to acquire. 25-6-1935

Q. Even when the soul does not identify itself with the nature-parts, why are there so many difficulties, sufferings, revolts at present ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because the mind does identify itself. If the mind as well as the soul kept separate, the higher vital would follow suit, and these things would become again suggestions only which could be repelled from the lower vital and physical consciousness. 21-12-1935

Q. My brother says that in my sleep I put my hands on my thigh where the sciatica is. When the sciatica was in the right thigh, the hands were there. When it changed to the left, the hands also shifted their position ! Is there any meaning here ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a natural movement of the hands to go where pain or uneasiness is felt. If one has force in the hands (vital or other) it may even have some palliative or curative effect. 22-8-1935

Q. Can a thing like sciatica persist even when the Force, Peace and Silence descend even into the material ?

SRI AUROBINDO : A special force is needed for that and the response of the physical. 19-9-1935

Q. I sometimes despair because of the constant weakness of the body which, even when there is no sciatica, does not allow me to do prolonged physical work.

SRI AUROBINDO : That also is *tamas*. If you throw off the idea of weakness, the strength would come back. But there is always something in the vital physical which is pleased with becoming more weak and ill so that it can feel and lament its tragic case. 13-10-1935

When the physical inertia came and suspended the higher experience the vital demand awoke, the demand for the physical love and its satisfaction so the awakened inner part of the vital could not act and the confusion increased, all became passive and helpless and there was no aspiration, inner action or reaction against illness and inertia. 20-10-1935

You have to be careful about your eyes. Reading by night (too much) is undesirable. There are two suggestions of the sun-treatment man which I have found to be not without foundation. First, one should blink freely in looking at things or reading and not fix the eyes or stare. (2) palming gives a very useful rest—palming means keeping the hands crossed over the closed eyes (without pressing on the eyes) so as to shut out all light. 9-10-1935

Q. The eyes are much worse now. Have their resistance to the Divine Force any psychological cause ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, except in so far as a state of inertia predisposes the body to non-resistance to physical ailments. 21-12-1935

The first thing to do is to get rid of the constipation. Perhaps you could try Ambu's *asan*, if your sciatica allows ?

A says M who has constipation from childhood found it very effective. I believe it consists only of lying on the back and raising your legs over head and keeping them there for a fixed time. 18-1-1935

Food is necessary for the maintenance of the body which is the instrument of the *sadhana*, so it must be taken in sufficient quantity for that, it is not to satisfy the appetite but for this purpose that you must take sufficient food. 20-3-1935

Q. Somebody, referring to our food, said : "We cannot eat such vegetables. They are not meant for human souls. People ought to know that we are not divine"

souls. We pass our outer life just like worldly men, but the food is not like that of such a life. In other Ashrams, people feel a glow of renunciation, owing to sannyasa ; therefore they don't mind what they eat."

SRI AUROBINDO : Does the human soul eat vegetables ? If they don't want to be divine souls why are they here or if they have no aspiration. Aspiration to the Divine ought surely to give a glow sufficient for not minding about vegetables.

28-10-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

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

(Classified Excerpts)

SECTION III — STEPS TO THE ABSOLUTE

(i) THE SILENCE

It is out of this Silence (the negative aspect of the Brahman) that the Word which creates the worlds for ever proceeds ; for the Word expresses that which is self-hidden in the Silence. It is an eternal passivity which makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems.¹

Again, if we remain absorbed in the Silence, the creative Consciousness and her works disappear into the Silence ; Nature and the creation for us cease to exist or be real. On the other hand, if we look exclusively at the Being in its aspect of the sole-existent Person and Ruler, the Power or Shakti by which he does all things disappears into his uniqueness or becomes an attribute of His cosmic personality ; the absolute monarchy of the one Being becomes our perception of the universe. Both these experiences create many difficulties for the mind due to its non-perception of the reality of the Self-Power whether in quiescence or in actions, or to a too exclusively negative experience of the Self, or to the too anthropomorphic character our conceptions attach to the Supreme Being as Ruler.²

If there is an eternal Existence which is a conscious being, it must be beyond Time which it contains, timeless as we say ; it must be the Eternal of the Vedanta who, we may then conjecture, uses Time only as a conceptual perspective for His view of His self-manifestation. But the timeless self-knowledge of this Eternal is beyond mind ; it is a supramental knowledge superconscious to us and only to be acquired by the stilling or transcending of the temporal activity of our conscious mind, by an entry into Silence or a passage through Silence into the consciousness of eternity.³

(ii) NIRVANA

For we find that this Nirvana, this self-extinction, while it gives an absolute peace and freedom to the soul within is yet consistent in practice with a desire-

less but effective action without. This possibility of an entire motionless impersonality and void Calm within doing outwardly the works of the eternal verities, Love, Truth and Righteousness, was perhaps the real gist of the Buddha's teaching,—this superiority to ego and to the chain of personal workings and to the identification with mutable form and idea, not the petty ideal of an escape from the trouble and suffering of the physical birth.⁴

There may be even an extinction, a Nirvana both of our active being and of a sense of self into a Reality that is indefinable and inexpressible. But also we can realise that this self is not only our own spiritual being but the true self of all others ; it presents itself then as the underlying truth of cosmic existence. It is possible to remain in a Nirvana of all individuality, to stop at a static realisation or, regarding the cosmic movement as a superficial play or illusion imposed on the silent Self, to pass into some supreme immobile and immutable status beyond the universe.⁵

At the stage when from the mental it (the individual being) has to move towards its supramental status, one most liberatingly helpful, if not indispensable experience that may intervene is the entry into a total Nirvana of mentality and mental ego, a passage into the silence of the Spirit.⁶

If earth circumstances begin to seem unreal to a soul passing into a different world or another plane of consciousness, that would not prove their unreality ; similarly, the fact that world-existence seems unreal to us when we pass into the spiritual silence or into some Nirvana, does not of itself prove that the cosmos was all the time an illusion. The world is real to the consciousness dwelling in it, an unconditioned existence is real to the consciousness absorbed in Nirvana ; that is all that is established.⁷

There are a hundred ways of approaching the Supreme Reality and, as is the nature of the way taken, so will be the nature of the ultimate experience by which one passes into That which is ineffable, That of which no report can be given to the mind or expressed by any utterance. All these definitive culminations may be regarded as penultimates of the one Ultimate; they are steps by which the soul crosses the limits of mind into the Absolute. Is then this realisation of passing into a pure immobile self-existence or this Nirvana of the individual and the universe one among these penultimates, or is it itself the final and absolute realisation which is at the end of every journey and transcends and eliminates all lesser experience ? It claims to stand behind and supersede, to sublimate and to eliminate every other knowledge; if that is really so, then its finality must be accepted as conclusive. But, against this pretension, it has been claimed that it is possible to travel beyond by a greater negation or a greater affirmation,—to extinguish self in Non-Being or to pass through the double experience of cosmic consciousness and Nirvana of world-consciousness

in the One Existence to a greater Divine Union and Unity which holds both these realisations in its vast integral Reality.⁸

(iii) BUDDHA

The Non-Being permits the Being, even as the Silence permits the Activity. By this simultaneous negation and affirmation, not mutually destructive, but complementary to each other like all contraries, the simultaneous awareness of conscious Self-being as a reality and the Unknowable beyond as the same Reality becomes realisable to the awakened human soul. Thus was it possible for the Buddha to attain the state of Nirvana and yet act puissantly in the world, impersonal in his inner consciousness, in his action the most powerful personality that we know of as having lived and produced results upon earth.⁹

The divine soul reproduces itself in similar liberated souls as the animal reproduces itself in similar bodies. Therefore, whenever even a single soul is liberated, there is a tendency to an extension and even to an outburst of the same divine self-consciousness in other individual souls of our terrestrial humanity and—who knows?—perhaps even beyond the terrestrial consciousness. Where shall we fix the limit of that extension? Is it altogether a legend which says of the Buddha that as he stood on the threshold of Nirvana, of the Non-Being, his soul turned back and took the vow never to make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single being upon earth undelivered from the knot of the suffering, from the bondage of the ego?¹⁰

The inexorable law of Karma is irreconcilable with a supreme moral and personal Deity, and therefore the clear logic of Buddha denied the existence of any free and all-governing personal God; all personality he declared to be a creation of ignorance and subject to Karma.¹¹

How is it that the Ignorance exists ?

Buddha refused to consider the metaphysical problem; the process by which our unreal individuality is constructed and a world of suffering maintained in existence and the method of escape from it is all that is of importance. Karma is a fact; the construction of objects, of an individuality not truly existent is the cause of suffering : to get rid of Karma, individuality and suffering must be our one objective; by that elimination we shall pass into whatever may be free from these things, permanent, real: the way of liberation alone matters.¹²

The spiritually realised, the liberated man is pre-occupied, says the Gita, with the good of all beings; Buddha discovering the way of Nirvana must turn back to open that way to those who are still under the delusion of their constructive instead of their real being—or non-being...¹³

(iv) NON-BEING (AND ASAT)

Here, in the perception of this pure Self or of the Non-Being behind it, we have the starting-point for a second negation,—parallel at the other pole to the materialistic, but more complete, more final, more perilous in its effects on the individuals or collectivities that hear its potent call to the wilderness,—the refusal of the ascetic.¹⁴

Out of the Non-Being, says the ancient Scripture, Being appeared (Taittiriya Upanishad). Then into the Non-Being it must surely sink again. If the infinite indiscriminate Existence permits all possibilities of discrimination and multiple realisation, does not the Non-Being at least, as primal state and sole constant reality, negate and reject all possibility of a real universe. The Nihil of certain Buddhist schools would then be the true ascetic solution; the Self, like the ego, would only be an ideative formation by an illusory phenomenal consciousness.¹⁵

Another Upanishad rejects the birth of being out of Non-Being as an impossibility; Being, it says, can only be born from Being. But if we take Non-Being in the sense, not of an inexistent Nihil but of an *x*, which exceeds our idea or experience of existence,—a sense applicable to the Absolute Brahman of the Advaita as well as the Void or Zero of the Buddhists, the impossibility disappears, for That may very well be the source of being, whether by a conceptual or formative *maya* or a manifestation or creation out of itself.¹⁶

And when we say that out of Non-Being Being appeared, we perceive that we are speaking in terms of Time about that which is beyond Time. For what was that portentous date in the history of the eternal Nothing on which Being was born out of it or when will come that other date equally formidable on which an unreal all will relapse into the perpetual void? Sat and Asat, if they have both to be affirmed, must be conceived as if they obtained simultaneously. They permit each other even though they refuse to mingle. Both, since we must speak in terms of Time, are eternal. And who shall persuade eternal Being that it does not really exist and only eternal Non-Being is? ¹⁷

...as the perfect man would combine in himself the silence and the activity, so also would the completely conscious soul reach back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without therefore losing its hold on Existence and the universe.¹⁸

Only, the positive and synthetic teaching of the Upanishads beheld Sat and Asat not as opposites destructive of each other, but as the last antinomy through which we look up to the Unknowable.¹⁹

(To be continued)

Compiled by NATHANIEL PEARSON

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THE TRINITY OF BENGAL

RAMMOHAN, Bankimchandra, Vivekananda—these three personalities represent the three steps in the process of evolution in modern Bengal. Like the three strides of Vishnu these three great souls have occupied three stages of the evolving consciousness of Bengal. The soul of modern Bengal awoke in Rammohan, and then its mind blossomed in Bankim, subsequently its life-energy burst forth in Vivekananda.

In fact we may generalise that all disciplines and ways of creation proceed in the same order. The truth that is to manifest in the material world in a concrete physical form appears at first in an apperception of the inner heart, —*hr̥dīpratiṣyā*—an intimate consciousness of the soul. The mind then seizes upon it and gives a manifest form (*manasābhikṣapta*). Next it takes a step ahead and becomes more distinct and secures vitality, and leaving the core it starts revealing itself without. Finally, it incarnates in a body, possesses a gross physical form, becomes concrete and real.

In the stirring of the Soul, in the gleam of the psychic being the truth, in its dynamic expression, takes birth—there is its seed-form, its essential integrality. In the mind, the diverse lines of growth are first sketched out, the play, the kaleidoscope of myriad possibilities. In the vital it becomes living and forceful with a definite mould. At last it brings down into the body its material shape.

First then the awakening of the psychic Person. When this central being of a man becomes conscious, when it is awakened from slumber or trance or from self-absorption, it opens its eyes to the outside world and its manifest organisation, and demands its due right and fulfilment. In the common man's speech, it is said that the call has come to the man or his time is ripe. The truth is that at the profound depth of the consciousness, in the inmost subtle world, there has been this awakening. The awakened force or the truth of the Soul Reality begins to work though from behind the veil or a curtain. Normally it is not always possible for man to apprehend its full influence and motive in his normal consciousness.

Thus, in Rammohan is visible the primal stage of the consciousness of Bengal. It is he who may be called in this sense the psychic being or the causal being of modern Bengal. He alone before all others has brought forward the consciousness of Bengal to the free air and light of the modern era from the antiquity, the mediaevalism of the past. He has initiated the country into the religion of the new era. In him sprouted the first seeds of all future creations. Each flash of

consciousness, intense with a deep and pregnant meaning that sprung in his intuition gradually blossomed into a lush of foliage and flowers and fruits. He brought a new birth, a new life and a new creation everywhere in all the fields of the collective life of state, society, religion, culture, literature and language. He made the fundamental scheme, the blue print for the future fulfilment of the country. It is he who laid down the first principles. The future architects have made a new and solid structure on these as their basis. Rammohan was indeed the very soul. The Upanishad says that the nerves of the body-vessel are assembled in this heart-sky and from here they go out everywhere in all directions. Likewise in Rammohan too a new orientation in the mind and life of the nation, the modern consciousness in all its branches of culture has centred and from him all flow out into activities and enterprises of a new achievement.

When the truth takes birth and grows considerably in the soul then only it can reveal itself in the mental plane. Reason and intelligence seize on it and apprehend it to know its meaning and endeavour to bring it to the fore of the critical perception of an enlightened intelligence.

We have already said that the mental being (Manomaya Purusha) of the country awoke in Bankimchandra. It is he who gave a fluent expression, in thought and in an outer attractive language, to her hopes, aspirations and inner feelings. And it is in him that the first revelation of a new curiosity, inquisitiveness and sensitiveness is to be found. His was the inspiration and channel for an unceasing quest, a many-sided research through mental seeking and logic and argument which inundated the entire country like a flood. Many are the lines of investigation and imaginative display that bear testimony to the mind's manifold inquisitiveness. A deep longing, a luminous perception of the Soul developed and expanded in hundred branches. The mind's business is to manifest and apply a soul intuition in as many fields and forms, in as many directions as possible; one form through which mind finds expression is literature.

In Bankim literature the mind of modern Bengal has begun to take a definite shape. If there is in the Bengali race a capacity to understand and appreciate readily and easily the new modern thoughts, and new ideas, if there is in them a keen earnestness to discover and follow revolutionary principles and ideals, then that found an adequate instrument and initiation in Bankim. An alert and capable mind, an intellect shot with lucid humour—not dryly arguing, but inspired with an intuition—dynamic ideas that demand fulfilment, be it in the practical field or in the realm of imagination, by giving a shape to their beauty—this is the domain created by Bankim—his great gift—in the consciousness of modern Bengal.

Now for the next stage, whatever has thus become manifest and taken form in the mind, becomes living, dynamic and concrete when it descends into the

vital. Vivekananda is the living embodiment of the life-energy of modern Bengal. Not simply in the world of mental imagination, not in the mere sport of thought, but in the flesh and blood of life to make the truth dynamic is the arduous tapasya of Vivekananda. It is from Vivekananda that the life-force, the vitality of the nation has taken a new turn, a fresh and full-flooded stream—the light of a new achievement has glimmered into the people's real and practical life. What was in Rammohan a recondite and deep realisation of the Soul became a dream, imagination, hope and ideal in Bankim and culminated in Vivekananda as an unavoidable necessity of life, as an object to be realised, as a supremely desirable material asset.

If we look into the personal history of many a Bengali youth of the modern age, we would find almost everywhere an initial inspiration and the influence from Vivekananda. True, not all are influenced or likely to be influenced by this colossal soul so as to follow him solely in the field of religion and spirituality. But it was his upsoaring vitality that quickens the ideal into a reality for which Vivekananda was so dear to one and all.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali essay in "Bānglār Prāṇ")

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE ASHRAM ATMOSPHERE

(1926-'39)

AFTER 1926 there came a perceptible change in the inner and outer atmosphere of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo always preferred "to communicate through the silent consciousness because speech addresses itself to the mind while through the silent consciousness one can reach something deeper..."¹

Before 1926 Sri Aurobindo used to give a short speech on 15th August. The above extract is from his speech on 15th August 1924. From 1926 this practice was discontinued.

Instead, there reigned a silence, pregnant with Power, emanating divinity. Peace became the basis of our sadhana and our activities—an inner calm up-bearing all outer movements. It was from such creative silence that the Ashram began to emerge and grow.

The silence that intensified itself on *Darshan* days and created a wonderful atmosphere could be sensed and experienced rather than expressed. What the Mother and Sri Aurobindo gave on *Darshan* days seemed to deepen the spiritual atmosphere of the pervasive silence.

A state of indrawnness appeared to be the general experience. '*Darshan is coming.*' was on every body's lips. The Ashram would vibrate with various activities but there was vital exuberance. The atmosphere was marked by a compelling silence and a feeling of its impact by everybody. If on great occasions like this the inner state of man has an outer reflection it could be said that the sadhaks looked fully collected and concentrated. Each would approach with a prayerful heart and come down enriched with something ineffable.

The following remarks by Sri Aurobindo may give us an idea of how rapid was the progress in the beginning and why the sadhana was brought into the physical :

"...if the Mother were able to bring out the Divine Personalities and Powers into her body and physical being as she was doing for several months without break some years ago, the brightest period in the history of the Ashram, things would be much more easy and all these dangerous attacks that now take

¹ *Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A.B. Purani.

place would be dealt with rapidly and would in fact be impossible. In those days when the Mother was either receiving the sadhaks for meditation or otherwise working and concentrating all night and day without sleep and with very irregular food, there was no ill-health and no fatigue in her and things were proceeding with lightning swiftness....Afterwards, because the lower vital and the physical of the sadhaks could not follow, the Mother had to push the Divine Personalities and Powers,...behind a veil and come down into the physical human level and act according to its conditions and that means difficulty, struggle, illness, ignorance and inertia.”¹

What riches of the spirit Sri Aurobindo used to lavish on us on the Darshan days can be known from the Mother’s words :

“At one time, when Sri Aurobindo himself gave Darshan, before he did it, there was always a concentration of some forces or of some realisation which he wanted to give to the people. Then each Darshan marked a step forward; every time something was added. But that was a time when the number of visitors was very restricted. It was organised in a different way; and that formed part of the necessary preparation.”²

In the thirties, the atmosphere of sadhana was marked by a spirit of self-imposed discipline. Everybody was careful not to do anything that the Mother might not approve of. That was almost the law that ruled our life. We knew only one delight : to sense what the Mother would like us to do and then to act accordingly.

One would not call on another without his consent or without the Mother’s approval. No present would be accepted without reference to the Mother. Presents made to a sadhak would be sent up to the Mother who would send them back to the sadhak concerned. Then would the person feel free from any sense of having succumbed to a temptation.

Most of us were exclusively shut up within ourselves. There was no off-time enjoyment of mutual companionship or talk, no merry-making, feasting or idle gossiping.

Why this isolation ? Let us listen to the Mother.

“Usually you open yourself in all directions to everything and everybody in the world. You open your surface being and receive there all influences from all quarters. So inside you there comes about what we can call a hotch-potch of all contrary and contradictory movements : and that

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 384.

² *Bulletin of Educational Centre*, February, 1961, p. 59.

creates difficulties without number. Now instead of that, live away from the surface, from the outside and open up to the Divine and receive nothing but the Divine force. If you can do that, all difficulties practically disappear. But, of course, the trouble is there. Unless one is alchemically conditioned, it is an impossibility to have relations with people, to talk to them, to deal with them, have interchanges with them and yet not absorb something out of them. If one can surround oneself with an atmosphere that acts as a filter, then all that come from outside are checked and sifted before they reach you or touch you. That needs a good training and a large experience. That is why people in ancient days who wanted an easier path took to solitude, into the depths of the forest, on the top of a hill or under a cave so that they might not have to do with people—for that naturally reduces undesirable interchange.”¹

The evening service in the dining room would be over by sunset after which hardly anybody could be seen in the streets except for some urgent work. Day and night were divided between work and rest. Sadhana pervading both as far as possible.

Practically there was no separate cooking. To avoid heaviness in the stomach which might hamper meditation (during the days when there was soup distribution) some of us would prefer to go without evening meal or have only a slice of bread or a banana. Our needs were modest and few. Till 1939 the Mother gave Rs. 2/ to each permanent member, as pocket money at the Prosperity time. We did not know what to do with it. Some did not feel the need to have it. Others collected it month by month and made an offering of the sum on their birthdays.

A single instance will show how the inmates by themselves try to keep up with the discipline now. The Dining service opens for the second time at 11-15 and closes at 12-30. Sri Aurobindo used to have his lunch at this time in 1914.

One day a new comer from overseas finding the dining service closed was quietly going back. A sadhak offered to intercede and get him food. At the sadhak's repeated persuasion he politely replied—It was my mistake, I didn't care to be in time. In order to keep discipline I have decided not to have anything to-day.

In course of a further talk with the sadhak he said, 'I was a tramp, a vagabond, I have travelled much but when I saw the Mother, I felt, 'Here was India in her depths, I would no more move about.'

The period extending from 1930 to 1938 cannot be closed without reference to the sadhaks' correspondence with the Master and his luminous replies

¹ *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, part VIII, p. 127.

which are our richest treasures and unfailing source of inspiration. The replies received were looked upon as blessings and matters of high privilege.

Sri Aurobindo's writings, his letters to his disciples have not a little to contribute in charging the air of the Ashram with the vibrations of Truth along with purity, serenity, clarity, discipline and orderliness. To be born in an age when the Divine himself blesses the earth in human form is in itself an unprecedented good fortune. The inner side of this communication was communion. And this communion helped each to be on the height of his consciousness.

The Sri Aurobindo literature in the form of letters is huge in quantity, diverse in character and covers a multiplicity of subjects. They are mainly of two categories — sadhana and literature.

To get into the heart of mystic or symbolic poetry one has to have some glimpse of the poet's experiences and an uplook to the heights he is exploring. Letters in reply to queries throw a vivid light on the nature of the spiritual poetry, for it is the poet himself who can unlock the significances of symbols and metaphors. All the letters on *Savitri* written to Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna) two of them running upto 20 and 22 printed pages, are appended to its latest edition (1954). They throw a flood of light on his great Epic and are of immense help in one's approach to the book.

The general correspondence began diminishing in volume from 1937 and practically came to a close in 1938 with the exception of letters to Amal Kiran on *Savitri* or to some others. The last letter he received on the Epic was in 1948, though other communications continued up to a month or so before the Master's passing.

Further, in the letters to the disciples we come into touch with the creative personality of the Master. They go home to our soul. Glimpses of what changes took place in the life of Sri Aurobindo can be had mostly from them. Hence such letters carry an inestimable value and rank high in literature. They run to 1715 pages.

A visitor from Punjab who had come here in 1951 had some misgivings in his mind about whether he was on the right path. He was a devotee of Sri Krishna. In a dream he saw himself climbing a mountain and afterwards when passing through several valleys he had the feeling of hearing the Voice of Sri Krishna 'you are on the right path. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are my forms. They have come to the earth to raise it to a higher level of consciousness'.¹

Before coming here an Ashramite used to repeat the name of Sri Krishna one lakh times a day, but he did not know how to meditate. On coming here for the first time he tasted the joy of meditation but only for a while. To his surprise he found while repeating the name of Sri Krishna he would insensibly pass into

¹ *Prithvi par prithvi ko utthane aye hen.*

repeating the name of Sri Aurobindo. He felt very much perplexed about losing his loyalty to Sri Krishna. He was now in a fix. He could hold fast neither to Sri Krishna nor to Sri Aurobindo. He was at the time on a short visit. Before leaving Pondicherry he wrote a long letter and earnestly prayed for a reply. He received a registered letter dated 8.3.32. from the Secretary :

Sri Aurobindo says in reply to your letter : "The struggle in you (between bhakti for Sri Krishna and the sense of divinity of the Mother) is quite unnecessary; for the two things are one and go perfectly together. It is He who has brought you to the Mother and it is by adoration of her that you will realise Him. He is here in the Ashram and it is His work that is being done here". Nolini Kanta Gupta.

A pointed answer to questions of comparison between Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishna which agitate some minds can be seen in the following extract of a letter dated 25.2.1945

"You cannot expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna's. The question itself would be relevant only if there were two sectarian religions in opposition: Aurobindoism and Vaishnavism, each insisting on its own God's greatness. That is not the case. And then what Krishna must I challenge, — the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottam...or the Godhead who was incarnate at Brindavan and Dwarka and Kurukshetra and who was the guide of my Yoga and with whom I realised identity?"

NARAYAN PRASAD

THE ROAD

“GENTLY, gently, you crush my mouth,
O voyager hastening towards Eternity,”—
Whispered to me one night the road lying under my feet.
A sudden gust of wind playfully lifted a corner of the veil :
The world shimmered hallowed by a strange light.
The glorious deities of an unborn distant age
Lay densely packed in what refused to be called the common dust;
At each step, I trod on a marvellous face.
The familiar asphalt shone with amorphous hopes;
The Milky Way, jewelled cradle of a million stars,
Seemed but a pale reflection of that mighty splendour.
As a reed hides in its bosom the frozen notes of a mystic sonata,
The Void seemed but a plastic substance
Withholding the endless dreams of an expert Modeller.

NIRANJAN GUHA

SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS

“VINGT-ET-UNS”

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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 !

II

I KNOW not what my master means to do :
He hath cast his challenge to the starry hosts
To take this speck of dust and set it afire !
The serried ranks of heavenly sentinels
Bestir them off complacent slumber-rounds
And, nodding ambiguous heads, step dryly forth,
Straining to fan up mouldering confidence,—
And nip creeping tremors of impending doom
To match one flaring deed of stellar fame !

They come and blow, glow red and hot and green,
And try all feints : alack, to no avail !
The speck yields not : awhile it trembles pale
To a faintest flicker, and soon fades away !

And now, O Heavens, my master calls to me :
And when He calls, what tarrying can there be ?

Waiving all thought, I move and take the speck,
 A sacred symbol, and hold it to my heart :
 My master's eyes meet mine, my consciousness
 Spans dizzy spaces past the farthest stars :
 And a stream of Fire descends, transfiguring me,
 My speck, my stars—all, all—in a cosmic Dance of Sparks !

12

A Double Ladder of Ascent-Descent,
 With one end far into abysmal Night,
 The other far up super-fields of Light,
 And in-between an infinite scale of rungs,
 Whereon are strung our several infant souls,
 Each straining to rise and, falling, to rise again :
 All hopes for such ! all cheers enheartening, too !

But some may find Ascent too hard for them,
 Failing to see the mystery of Descent,
 And choose to stick and atrophy where they are,
 Imperious-growing to any aid or advance,
 Critics untiring and executors grim,
 Exacting toll from all who pass them by :
 All praise to their part in Nature's economy !

But flowing hymns and rising paeans of joy
 Unto Them alone who can ascend sky-high
 And yet descend redemption-armed, Grace-charmed,
 Down into Night to lift up fainting souls
 Who cry, executor-gripped, unto Heights hard-glimpsed :
 Unto Ransomers Glorious from inglorious hands,
 And Living Embodied Texts of mysterious Ascent-Descent !

CHIMANBHAI

THE SECRET ENEMY

THE gates of happier realms were just ajar
To let me in, I rode the heavenly steed
Of Grace that galloped with a marvel speed
To take me to the Goal afar, afar !

One single passion raged within my frame—
To reach that Home and meet my Love divine.
Drunken was I with His maddening crystal wine:
My poor self turned to a ceaseless mystic flame.

My eyes beheld His cooling diamond light
In one and all, in man, the dog, the tree
And stone. Exulting, wondering, happy, free
I thought : For ever gone is now the night.

My hopes were fearless, thoughts were sorrowless, all
Appeared a glimpse of holy golden land.
But then what sorcerer with what gloomy wand
Changed all and open gates became a wall ?

What adverse goblin spelled me, what wild fire
Burnt every bliss to ashes and what thief
Stole all my inner treasures, strength, relief ?
Ah, 'tis the secret enemy—desire !

From this wide hostile snare and deadly dream,
Come save me, Friend Eternal, Sun Supreme !

DEVAKI NANDAN

ANOTHER VIEW OF THIS "NEW AFRICA"

THIS nationalist roar,
This freedom clang !
Hollow imitated bellows
By young dictating fellows,
Shouts for factories, money, mines;
Concrete cages,
Metal faces,
The clutching, crushing fingers
Of dirty, greedy turbines !
No love,
No heart,
All speed,
All noise.

(The African I knew was kind,
Gentle, soft, with sympathy
For all who stumbled past his door,
And slowly reaching for the light
From nature's massy undergrowth.)

Don't guide,
Don't lead,
Push, pull,
Drag, drive,
To cities of glare,
Of hatred and sin.
"Ah ! but he's FREE !
We gave him the Vote !"
Free to slave,
A vote for Hell !—
Show him his soul,
Give him his God..."

TONY SCOTT

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(36)

VIII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

(continued)

67. MOTHER-REFUGE OF THY FEET

BRING peace to my malicious mind, O Mother.
What caprine crooked ways it has adopted,
Forgetful of its dread doom, it has opted
To pin-prick others' ills, this black self-loather !

It chooses to overlook the in-lain blackness
Of its own garb : a myriad false devices
Show out its silvery gaud of artifices
Seeking to hide its heritage of weakness.

As a beaten frightened child or a hot-chased dove
Runs for the nearest shelter round the wind,
So now this fretting and frustated mind,
World-shunning, self-marred, turns to Thy Feet to seize Them;
O may its dust-flat meekness never release Them !
Their mother-refuge be the goal of its love !

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THOUGHTS

O EARTH, thy outcry I have heard. Thy heart-piercing importunity and the sight of ghastly wounds on thy body shook me to my roots and sapped all life from me.

But soon I recollected my pedigree...

Lo and behold ! I am riding the best among the best of horses. I am in the heart of the battle and I am determined to fight to the bitter end.

O earth ! Now there are only two possibilities. Either all thy wounds shall be healed or I shall be riddled with wounds.

*

*

The cloud hovers in the sky. But today the stone has stuck into the sky.

The psychic being in the heart always realises the Oversoul. The intelligence can win true vision by bathing in the ether of Sachchidananda. Today even my physical senses have achieved seerhood. Things that stood as obstacles in our way no longer impede us. On the contrary they have become aidant powers.

Hitherto Lord Vishnu had to ride the Garuda to come down from his supreme abode to the earth. But today man can sit on a stone and fly aloft from the world of Death to the world of Immortality. Man no longer needs a Viman to rise to heaven he can rise to it with his body.

GIRDHARLAL

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

MEMORIES AND MUSINGS

ONE DAY GOD...

ONE day God said to his wife—"I am the lord of the three worlds. I am the creator and the preserver and the destroyer . And my will is the law of nature."

And She, smiling her enigmatic bronze-image smile, said "And can you feed all the living beings in all your three worlds—Creatures of the earth and the Seas and the Spheres—so that none goes without food and all that lives is fed and satisfied of hunger and thirst ?" And he said : "Yes, I can. If it be my will". She looked at him. And in her look there was a doubt and a challenge while she said : "Reveal it then to me. And let it be to-morrow. And I shall see for myself and judge of the truth of your speech." Whereupon he nodded his head in willingness.

She awoke next day before it was dawn. All was quiet. And the earth lay in darkness and in sleep at the feet of the mountain. There was unawakened silence everywhere as yet undisturbed by the commingled sounds of many birds.

After her morning bath she performed her daily ritual of worship. And she said to herself : "Big is my lord's boast; let me see how he can abide by his words, for I have determined to prove him wrong."

And so saying, she brought a tiny little jewelled box and, picking up a little black ant from the ground, she secured that ant in that box.

Soon the day passed. And when the night came she went to her lord and said : "Well, my lord, how does your universe ? And is everyone fed and is there naught that goes hungry ? And is everyone from the mightiest to the tiniest satisfied of its hunger ?" And he said : "Yes, my universe is well fed and there is naught that goes hungry to-day." And in great jubilation she picked up her little jewelled box and said : "It is not true. It is not true. Here look. There is one that goes hungry to-day in your great universe." And she opened the little box and behold, there was a little black ant inside and it was sucking greedily at a Kumkum-stained grain of rice. For the grain of rice had slipped and dropped into the box that morning from the auspicious mark of Kumkum and rice that she had set on her forehead during worship.

And as she lifted up her face to look at her lord, it was strange that instead of humiliation there was pride in her eyes.

CHANDRALEKHA

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US¹

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN TOUCH WITH THE MOTHER

(28)

ON Monday, the 17th April, 1961, my houseboy was washing woollen clothes in washing spirit (petrol) in the bathroom of my house, which was approximately 10 to 12 feet away from our kitchen. He put the petrol into a bucket from a tin and was washing the clothes in it. The tin contained another two gallons of petrol and was left on one side. Inside the kitchen, my Indian cook was busy preparing our meal. Suddenly, probably owing to the flame in the kitchen, the petrol in the bucket caught fire.

The cook noticed a glow inside the kitchen. In the first instance he thought that some oil might have dropped on the charcoal fire and was burning, but soon he discovered that the whole passage between the bathroom and the kitchen was in flames. He at once closed the kitchen door facing the bathroom, and through the rear door managed to reach the bathroom, where he saw that the whole ground was swept by flame but that the petrol inside the tin had not started burning. Somehow or other he managed to remove the tin with the aid of a stick to safety. The petrol in the bucket was burning furiously, and the whole bathroom, the W.C. door and the kitchen door were all a conflagration.

A huge crowd gathered, and someone summoned the Police and the Fire Brigade for assistance. I was in my office at the time and was informed about the incident over the 'phone. The Police and the Fire Brigade arrived in a matter of seconds, but before they arrived, the whole fire subsided by itself, and they did not have to take any action. As soon as I reached the house I saw a large crowd of people inside, and everybody was surprised and telling me that something divine had helped me and prevented the fire from spreading to any other place. By the Grace of the Mother, I found everything was safe and quite in order, and from my inner heart I shouted, "Mother, You are always by my side to protect me." Neither the cook nor the houseboy who was washing with petrol nor any member of my family was hurt, and no damage at all was done to the house.

(To be continued)

Compiled by HAR KRISHAN SINGH

¹ Readers are invited to send their experiences to the Editor or to the Compiler—or directly to the Mother.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Education and the Aim of Human Life by *Pavitra (P.B. Saint-Hilaire)*
Publishers : Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.
Price Rs. 1.50.

This book, tiny in appearance and bulk, but weighty in thought and substance, appears at a time when educationists all over the world are seriously engaged in rethinking the fundamentals of education and some of them even in breaking the bonds of the old, rigid and unpsychological aims and methods of education, and when in the atmosphere there is a feeling and readiness to look for still something more novel, more true and more effective. The thesis of this volume is directed to answer this feeling and it might even well satisfy it.

The author of this volume is very well aware of the various modern attempts in the direction of theoretical criticism and experimental research in new methods of teaching and his appreciation of these attempts is clear when he says that as a result of these attempts, "an entirely new conception of education has gradually emerged". He quotes a long passage from Cousinet's "L'Education nouvelle" to show "the tremendous, the really revolutionary change". He, however, considers that although these attempts are in the right direction they have not yet touched the root of the problem.

The root of the problem is, as the title of the book suggests, the relation between education and the aim of human life.

In the first part of the book, the author shows that the purpose of education has two aspects : collective and individual. These two aspects, he points out, have their own claims and implications which need to be harmonised. This harmonisation can be achieved by a correct understanding of the relation between the individual and the society. The author, however, underlines the fact that the recent trend in social thought is to give more importance to the society and to regard the individual as a subordinate unit. He illustrates this trend by showing how the present educational programmes are framed so as to meet the growing need for scientists, engineers and technicians and by the numerous new institutions that are created to satisfy this demand. The present society is, the author points out, competitive and, therefore, has a tendency to throw out the weak. But, as the author rightly remarks, "the trouble is that the weak are not eliminated from society. They are simply demoralised and sometimes broken down, filled with despair or rancour." This combined with the role that money plays in the present society means for the students

"a race for diplomas, with its well-known bad effects on education itself." In such a society, the prospect will be bright for a few but many will have to accommodate themselves to a life far different from their cherished dreams. The author concludes: "almost all are anxiously looking for a principle of action that would at the same time satisfy their conscience and ensure the security of their life."

In this connection, therefore, the author goes on to discuss in the second part of the book the nature and import of the conception of Progress, which has gradually spread over the whole world and is presented as the guiding principle of modern humanity.

This part is perhaps the most interesting in the whole book. It traces, briefly, but covering as many points as possible, the main stages of the evolution of the social horizons from the time when they were almost static to the present day, when, in the words of Gaston Berger (quoted in the book, p. 26), "Mankind today has the privilege—and the responsibility—to transform itself knowingly." The author makes a rapid analysis of the major stages of the development and shows that "it is with the seventeenth century that the notion of progress dawned upon the human mind". The Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution are shown to be concomitant with the development of this idea of Progress. The author then traces the consequences of the achievements of the modern age and underlines, especially, how mankind has since been experiencing disillusionments one after another. The exploitation of man, leading to the origin of syndicalism and a fertile ground for class hatred whose seeds have been deliberately sown by Marxism, was the first disillusionment. The second disillusionment has been due to the fact that the expectation that more knowledge would make man wiser, better, more impartial and just, has been belied by the subsequent course of events. Then there is the disillusionment with regard to the ideals of French Revolution, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. And finally, in the words of the author, "science has abandoned the ideal of 'truth'. The author rightly and pointedly remarks that science has today come to the conclusion that it can truly know nothing and that it must confine itself to efficiency and convenience.

This is the stage where we are at present. To quote the author: "Humanity has definitely turned its face towards the future. Man knows he can change his lot.... An elimination of poverty and disease, a life of abundance and leisure are almost within the reach of the most advanced nations....But we know also that all the material achievements however needed, will not satisfy us in the end, if they come alone. They will leave us weary and empty."

The author then puts the question: "What then is missing?" and answers: "...The Spirit, the Divine, within presses for emergence and mastery. When this spiritual element in man comes forward and gains ground.....then true

joy reveals itself. Here only can we find plenitude and happiness, a satisfaction which does not leave any bitter taste."

This solution may very likely be confused with what goes under the current notion of religion, but as the author shows religion takes its inspiration from the past or emphasises on an existence beyond the world and exhorts man to escape from the world. While showing the need of both these aspects of religion, the author points out that these alone will not satisfy the modern man. For "It is the urge of the Spirit towards mastery and perfection that is the motive power behind the modern conception of Progress." Mankind has awakened to the possibility of some perfection and mastery in the material and social life and it is here that the spirituality has to be made living and effective.

In this connection, the author refers to the new "Prospective" movement in France started by a number of men in positions of authority and mostly in industry, finance and education. The basic idea of this movement is that planning has become imperative and that this requires the knowledge of the future. But the future, it is maintained, is not a mere continuation of the past, but it is something determined by the present as well as something that determines the present and therefore whose knowledge is necessary to understand the present. It becomes then imperative to penetrate into the innumerable possibilities that the future contains and analyse them. And this necessitates what is called "the prospective" attitude, which is "a disponibility of the mind, which refuses to be imprisoned within rigid frames, and for which nothing is ever decisively settled and everything may at any time come back into question." (J. De Bourbon-Busset, quoted in the book, p. 25).

This prospective attitude has a great bearing while we are planning for the future of India. And the author therefore rightly asks the question as to how to link the past of India with her future. For it is evident that the past way of life is being much altered by the rapid industrialisation which is inevitable. But there is a question as to whether she too will have to go through the same disillusionments as the West. India too would be prosperous in due course; but will she too undergo the same experience of emptiness and weariness as the prosperous West of today?

The author maintains that this need not be if we can wisely plan and perceive the way of linking the Past with the Future. India has a spiritual heritage with dynamic potentialities for the future. And here the author introduces the reader to Sri Aurobindo who affirms that "the highest aspirations of the race can and will be fulfilled here upon earth, that we are at the dawning of a New Age, and that an unimaginably wonderful future lies ahead of humanity."

In the third part of the book—which is highly illuminating—the author expounds the main outlines of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and shows how the problems raised in the first two parts can be adequately solved in the light

of this vision. In this light, it becomes clear that it is possible to harmonise the claims of the individual and society at a spiritual level and that the world is marching towards the creation of a spiritual society in which the individual soul and the collective soul would act in harmony and mutuality with each other. And most important, it is clearly brought out that it is this ideal which human life is seeking secretly and that it is the function of man to discover this ideal and make it dynamic for the society. The author affirms with force and conviction : "I maintain that the the nation which will accept this vision of the future and make it a living ideal in its national and international life will be the leader of the New Age."

The author shows that the problem of education is closely connected with the aim of life and the social set-up in which education is being imparted. In the fourth and the last part of the book, the author shows that it is this perspective which is lacking in the modern attempts at reformation in education. On the positive side, then, the author outlines the principles of education which follow from the recognition of this perspective. But this perspective is normative and derives its direction from the vision of the future outlined in the third part. In effect, the author shows that education must demand and give an aim of life which is in conformity with the new social goal which humanity should aim at if it wants true harmony and well-being, social and individual.

There are three main heads under which the author considers the problem of education : the child, the teacher and the teaching. And it is shown that an education which accepts the goal outlined by Sri Aurobindo and which takes into account the entire complexity of man's nature can rightly be termed an "integral education". The author then proceeds to expound the fundamental principles of the integral education under the following four heads : the Physical Education, the Vital Education, the Mental Education, the Psychic and the Spiritual Education. Each of these aspects is subtly analysed and the analysis is as brief and yet as comprehensive as possible. This part ends with an outline of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education which is tentatively trying to translate the integral system of education into practice. He shows that the necessary conditions for the experiment in this new direction are obtained here so as to be hopeful for its success.

It is evident that this book has clearly pointed out where exactly the trouble of the educational world lies; it is not so much a question of organisation or of methods; it is a question of awakening to the very meaning of life and existence, individual and social. Thus the author has raised the question of the most fundamental basis of education. Evidently, the treatment of the subject has not been exhaustive, but an exhaustive treatment would have meant a large treatise and dealing with great details of history and other subjects which, in view of the fact that the book was primarily dealing with education, might have been irrelevant. The purpose of the writer seems to be rather to give a large back-

ground which is necessitated by the fundamental question that is raised and at the same time to focus the attention of the reader to the issue of education. The task is very difficult and it must be said that the author has succeeded in attaining the balance and keeping to the right proportions. In fact, one feels that as one reads along, a picture is being unfolded, a picture on a large canvas on which are put large and suggestive figures, hues and colours that would present to the reader in almost a visual way the basic idea of the modern history, its meaning for the question of the aim of life and its consequent bearing on the problem of education.

We are sure that the book has come out at a very right time and will help the educational world, especially in India, to think on the lines it has suggested and contribute to the evolving educational thought and experiment.

K.M.J.

Students' Section

TALKS ON POETRY

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

TALK TWENTY-EIGHT

LET us continue from where we left off in the last lecture—or, if you think that what I spoke last time left you in a bewilderedly broken condition of mind, I shall refer not to the last lecture but to the last fracture. Perhaps my words now will set some of the broken pieces together.

Mallarmé's is a mysticism of a very mystifying kind. Before him there had been mystical poetry, but except for Blake it had not the quality of mystification which this Frenchman brought into play. His was a step necessary in the evolution of the poetic consciousness towards what Sri Aurobindo has called the Future Poetry, a poetry written not only with the substance drawn from beyond the mind but also with the very form, the very mode of expression drawn from there. Mallarmé on the whole falls short of the Aurobindonian spiritual revelation. But that was to be expected. He is a transition-stage—perfect so far as he goes. And his success is all the more notable because he wrote in French. French is the speech *par excellence* of mental *netteté* and *ordonnance*, the clearness and orderliness belonging to the thinking mind. The French people, by and large, have not yet accepted Mallarmé. We have a few critics who go mad over him but the majority of Frenchmen look on him as a sort of traitor to the literary genius of France and condemn his work as mostly a failure. But Mallarmé's wrestle with a tongue like French had its own advantages for his admirers. This tongue imposes certain restrictions on anarchy of expression. Its stress on shapeliness, its insistence on connectedness saved Mallarmé from running riot in ambiguity. English lends itself far more easily to the ambiguous, so that English Mysticism often seems to deserve being spelt *Mysty Schism*—Schism (pronounced *Sizm*) meaning in

general a separation from the main body of a doctrine, especially a religious doctrine. The nature of the French language is ever a check against becoming involved in idea and expression and construction. Thus Mallarmé was forced, by the very medium in which he worked, to produce with each poem a systematic whole of enigmatic imagery.

Of course, it was because he was a true artist—unlike the Dadaists and Surrealists who came in the wake of his Symbolism—that he aimed at the significant form that goes with all Art; but if he had not worked in French his enigmatic imagery might have created much less of a perceptibly systematic whole: he would have been tempted to greater laxity in total contour. His achievement lay in making his imagery enigmatic not by a chaos of wandering phantasmagorias but by a cosmos of related figurative queernesses. He broke through the surface of intelligible statement not with a number of haphazard punctures but with a collection of piercing points which when added up constituted a big aperture sucking the reader into a world unknown to the thinking mind, particularly the French thinking mind. If we may indulge in a bit of punning, a poem of Mallarmé's was at the same time a systematic Whole and a systematic Hole. His art may be described as a sort of camouflage by which you are made to see a well-built well-carved slab of stone and invited to step on it and the moment you step on it you find that what you took to be a stone is nothing save a grey gap with a sharp outline. Straight you drop through the apparently solid into a depth where your mind can get no hand-hold or foot-hold.

Assiduously Mallarmé took care to make his readers' hands grip emptiness and their feet dance in a vacuum. In this he differs from the poetry to which Sri Aurobindo points. That poetry is unclear, if at all, because it seeks to reveal what cannot be rendered quite discernible to the ordinary mind; it wants to reveal the ultra-mental to the fullest extent—without mentalising it but also without seeking non-clarity for its own sake or as if non-clarity were the very condition of spiritual speech. Mallarmé had no notion that when you go far beyond the mind you enter into a realm where Truth can disclose itself massively as well as minutely. On the Spirit's Himalayan heights there is a divine power of expression by which the divinely inexpressible by mental words stands internally self-lit in living language. Mallarmé did not know the Everests and Kanchanjangas and Gaurishankers of the Spirit. His mystical domain—except on a few rare occasions when he touched the Aurobindonian light—was what Sri Aurobindo terms the middle worlds, the occult planes whose self-utterance is often in itself a crypticism, a baffling pattern. Mallarmé is keenly conscious of this crypticism and sought always to avoid being clear though never falling into the chaotic. Obscurity he felt as the key to the mystery which he intuited beyond the thinking mind. And his preoccupation with the obscure is well hit off in an anecdote. Once he was lecturing. Looking

at the faces of his audience he got the impression that they seemed to make out what he was saying. A member of the audience had taken notes for publication. At the end of his lecture Mallarmé asked for those notes, saying : "I want to put some obscurity into them."

To make a fetish of obscurity in order to poetise the mysterious is to misconstrue the proper mode of poetic embodiment. In our own day we are frequently faced with amorphous stuff, shapeless disjointed descriptions, a jumble of phraseological fragments. And we are told that this kind of thing is necessary in order to convey vividly the broken state of the modern mind and the modern world. Our life is all in bits : our poetry about it should also be a splintered composition : how else can we faithfully transmit to the reader a sense of our subject ? But such an argument is just like saying : If there is a heap of pieces and we want to reflect them in a mirror, the mirror should also be a broken one ! The truth is that in order to reflect exactly and effectively a world in fragments and a life in splinters our art should be a very bright whole, a polished intact mirror. Art lies in communicating with a perfection of expressive form whatever it takes for its subject : intense skill of description, penetrative cunning of suggestion, synthesising genius of presentation, these are the artist's means of catching faithfully even the amorphous and disjointed, even the elusive and cryptic. Not that art should always be simple and immediate in its effects : it can be complicated and oblique, but whatever form it adopts in response to its theme and according to the temper of the artist must have a fundamental relatedness and an ultimate wholeness : otherwise Form, which is the very mark of Art, would be lacking and there would be no Art but merely a spurt and splash of coloured convolutions.

Mallarmé was too much of a genuine poet to lack Form. And, by its very nature, much of his Matter could not help looking cryptic. But within his subtly realised wholes he tended to go in deliberately for entanglements under the mistaken notion that thus alone could he represent what to the thinking mind would be an entangled domain of poetic reverie.

The two main means of the Mallarméan obscurity were the queer collocation of images and the queer collocation of words. Or, if by poetic words we understand sounds charged with suggestions of images, we may say that Mallarmé's art was a new manner of employing words : to be more accurate, a new status given to the function of words.

Words are always of great importance to a poet. Now that the topic has come up I may as well treat it in general no less than in particular reference to Mallarmé. Some of the things I shall say may look like a repetition of several points made at the beginning of our Poetry Class. But as these points are basic, a little repetition in a novel way will not do any harm. Besides, I count upon your having forgotten at least half of them.

Perhaps the best distinction we may draw between prose and poetry is

that in prose the words are only a means to an end whereas in poetry they are as much an end as a means. Of course in prose too we have to attend to our language, but we attend in order that the thoughts we wish to express may get better clothed. And here we can always distinguish between the thought and the expression. The same thought can be expressed in prose in different ways. Poetry uses words with another spirit. Here words in themselves are the object of attention. Not merely clearness and orderliness of language are our aim. Colour, music, subtlety of suggestion, appeal to emotion, stir of imagination—all these are to be compassed by poetic speech. And, what is more essential, the words are to be not a clothing for whatever is to be said but themselves the very body of it. They cannot be cut apart from the substance just as you can extract the substance or prose from prose-words or as you can take off your clothes and jump into your bath. Poetic words are not like a shirt which has some value for your social life but is not essential to your very existence. It can be pulled out and you will still be yourself, though perhaps not so smart to some eyes. Poetic words are not even like your trousers which are a somewhat more necessary part of civilised living. Poetic words, with their strong charge of beautiful emotion, can make you pant but cannot yet be equated to your pants ! They are a vesture that is intrinsic to the body. This vesture is like your skin. I do not think that if you tried to take off your skin in order to get naked and enjoy a good bath, you will succeed famously. I am afraid you will be bathed in blood instead of in water. And most probably a thorough loss of skin will mean loss of life as well. Poetic substance and poetic words are joined together just as the limbs are joined to the skin : the two are inseparable and the moment you remove the words the substance is no longer what it was and suffers even death.

If we may change the metaphor a little, the words in poetry, are not transmissive as in prose but incarnative. They are not a jeep which you can jump into and drive to a place and then jump out of : they are like your legs in which you can go to places but out of which you can never leap. A further change of metaphor will perhaps bring more pointedly home the difference between mere prose, literary prose and true poetry. Mere prose is like the average man, either simple or clever. God has made him in His own image, but the human copy and the divine original are quite distinguishable. Literary prose is like those remarkable beings whom India describes as Vibhūtis. They are human-looking, yet a breath of the superhuman animates and drives them. They act by inspiration. However, the inspiration is a power which gets into them without their being one with it. The two are still separable. Not so with those rare beings whom India knows as Avatars. The Avatar is the Divine incarnate : the Divine is fused with the human and it is impossible to say where the human ends and the Divine begins. The Divine is the human, the human is the Divine. Poetry is language in which the substance attains

Avatarhood—in two senses. First, when you touch the limbs, as it were, of a poem, you touch the very Spirit moving them : the words of poetry are the substance itself exteriorised : the substance cannot be what it is without the words being what they are. Secondly, the manner in which poetry lives and moves is as the manner of a god—the words make a totality faultless in the shape and rhythm of every detail. The quality of Avatarhood endows words in poetry with extreme importance. Not certainly words as sheer sounds, however lovely. Words as living expressive units are poetic—and words particularly as expressive of something else than what is called an idea. Prose consists of using language as an instrument of ideas. Poetry consists of using language not as an instrument of anything but as the audible self of something else than ideas. Both these aspects come into a story told about Mallarmé and the painter Dégas.

Dégas was one of those who attended Mallarmé's Tuesday-evenings and listened to his exposition of the Poetic Art. He was already an excellent painter, but now he was fired with the aspiration to write poetry. He made several attempts and found that they were unsuccessful. He was sufficiently a student of poetry to realise that he had failed. But he could not understand the cause of his failure. So he came to Mallarmé and, scratching his head and making a sour face, said to the poet : "*Cher Maître*, how is it that I have so many fine ideas and yet cannot write poetry ?" Mallarmé, gently putting one hand on the dejected shoulders of the painter and with the other caressing his own little beard, replied : "My good friend, poetry is not written with ideas: it is written with words."

What Mallarmé meant was that poetry is an art in which language is a prime force and which has to do with deeper and subtler subjective processes than ideas. So long as ideas dominate one, one will only create prose. Only when one looks on the medium of expression with a particularly sensitive absorption in it, one can be in the mood to create poetry. And if one were genuinely open to inspiration and not just a windbag, one would employ words that manifest what lies beyond the range of the ideative intellect. This distinction between the windbag and the artist is significant. Otherwise the emphasis on words can lead only to wordiness, a luxuriance in language divorced from the supra-intellectual. To escape from mere ideas is not automatically to produce poetry : poetry is a matter of inwardness becoming outwardness. And the true inwardness holds in itself the words of poetry ready for outward projection. Though, when we start writing, we may not be aware of their presence inside, the words of poetry are themselves from deep within. So an approach that is wholly verbal in the outward sense is not Mallarmé's. What Mallarmé intended is to shift the focus from ideas in and to use the spirit of language, free from the idea-grip, as a mode of invoking the expressive activity of the supra-intellectual. A poet's interest in words is always such a mode of invocation. The

poet lets the spirit of language haunt him and then his eyes become entranced and begin vaguely to turn words into vibrant conjurers of strange visions which stimulate the mind to peer into mysteries and bring from the dominions of dreams the passionate patterns of a life more dynamic, more meaningful than the movements of the waking world. Yes, a poet is always an invoker of the beautiful beyond through the magic of word-intoxication. But all poets do not aim at writing the kind of poetry that is Mallarmé's ideal. And we may say that Mallarméan poetry is not the only type worth producing : *la Rêve* et *la Mystère* can be sung forth in many tones. But this is a type eminently worth noting as a stage in the evolution towards the Aurobindonian Future Poetry. And in order to write from beyond the mind his advice about the importance of words is valuable. To still the ideative intelligence and concentrate on words with a will to make them reveal something which that intelligence cannot give : this is an aesthetic sadhana which is bound to be creative in the short or long run. And it is precisely the truth that is behind another saying of Mallarmé's : "Yield the initiative to words."

You may ask : "Why bother about words ? If we concentrate on what is beyond the intelligence, is it not enough ?" No—we may get the touch of the supra-intellectual but not of its speech. The poet is one who approaches the supra-intellectual with a keen word-sense, an ear bent to expressing sounds. Without this movement towards the secret presence of pre-existent words in the Beyond, you can have Yogic sadhana but not the aesthetic sadhana necessary for poetry. You have to be an ardent lover of words, an audacious master of words, a sensitive and receptive slave of words—hearing at all times the vague wandering rustle of their wings in the profundities and the distances of your being. Words of light and power and sweetness already caught by past poets must float about you, tune your heart to their magic wafts until it is thrilled to an intent calling of luminous and lordly and lovely words still uncaught, still waiting for human seizure in the revelatory secrecies that wrap like some starry empyrean the ultimate hush where all splendours fall asleep. It is not enough to look inwardly upward to the constellate spaces : he who would be poet has to strain his ear together with his eye and keep dreaming of the music of the spheres.

"Music" : the term is most appropriate in a lecture on Mallarmé's poetry. For, the sort of poetry he wanted to write by yielding the initiative to words is perhaps best indicated in another saying of his, which his friend and semi-follower Paul Valéry paraphrases : "Our object is to recover from Music our own right." This means that somehow Music has monopolised what should belong to Poetry also. But when Mallarmé's dictum is quoted, people imagine that he wished to create very melodious verse : what we have called Melopoeia. Well, Mallarmé did create certain wonderfully rhythmical lines, but if we wish to have Melopoeia in French we do not particularly go to Mallarmé. We go more to Verlaine than to him—Verlaine with lines like :

Et O les voix d'enfants chantant dans la cupole !

(And O the voices of children singing in the cupola !)

Expressive rhythm, of course, Mallarmé always aimed at, but he never tried to rival the melodiousness, the sheer sound-rapture of Music. In fact, no poet can; nor should any poet regret that he cannot. Poetry has another way with sound. But poetry is capable of a very marked richness of audible values : Mallarmé is not especially after them—what he is after is a subtle movement of words. For, what struck him as the thing for Poetry to achieve is not musical sound but musical meaning. What would you say is the meaning of Music ? How does Music convey its meaning ? No words that you can understand are spoken. No ideas that you can formulate are conveyed. And yet you feel that something momentous, something significant is communicated. Of course, since poetry is written with words that have a certain connotation and not with mere independent sounds, musical meaning cannot be transmitted to the full in Poetry. But to achieve through Poetry as much as possible a catching up of our consciousness beyond formulable ideas, to effect poetically a suffusion of words as far as possible with the feeling of a wordless Beyond through a design of images accompanied by a minimum of directly intelligible discourse—this is to recover from Music the right that is Poetry's as well. And this is what Mallarmé had in mind when he wrote in a sonnet the ideal of the Poet :

Donner un sens plus pûr aux mots de la tribu...

(To give a purer sense to the speech of the tribe...)

Mallarmé divided the use of words into two categories. One he designated as *Rapportage*, the other as *Poésie*. Under *Rapportage* he included all language that informs, describes, instructs, argues, explains: language that has the motive principally to make us understand something and that goes about its business straightforwardly and with no special attention to rhythm. Poetry works by suggestion, allusion, evocation, and brings in both shadowiness of image and subtlety of rhythm. The more we divest speech of demonstrative intention, of rational content, the more poetic we are. Much of the world's poetic output, even at its greatest, is a mixture of *Rapportage* and *Poésie*. The lines, the passages of Poetry at its quintessential are very few. The ideal poet, in Mallarmé's opinion, should go on purifying further and further the speech of the race, the speech even of the poetic tribe, and arrive at a technique of shadowy representation, an art of haunting obscurity. Then he would produce Pure Poetry. And in doing so he would be the true Symbolist.

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)

TO SUMITRANANDAN

This article was written for the Souvenir Volume presented to Sumitranandan Pant on the celebration of his sixtieth birthday, at the Sapru-Hall, New Delhi in June 1960.

It was translated into Hindi for the Souvenir Volume.

Sumitranandan is the leading poet of Hindi and was the recipient of the President's Award this year for his book "Kalā aur Budhā chānd". He is conducting the Sri Aurobindo Circle of Allahabad and celebrating the Darshan occasions in public. His poetry has undergone a change after his visit to the Ashram. He himself has written about this change in his books. The article is being published in English for the first time.

1. "The day when we get back to the ancient worship of delight and beauty will be our day of Salvation."
2. "Beauty and delight are the very soul and origin of art and poetry."
Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*
3. "To find the highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God."
Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*

THE quotations from Sri Aurobindo, to my mind, give the key to Sumitranandan's life and work.

My outer contacts with Sumitranandan have been neither frequent nor of early date. I came into his contact, first, indirectly through correspondence in 1941 while he was at Almora when my daughter, Anasuya, introduced us to each other. I had felt him, even at a distance, as a generous and sensitive soul and I came to owe a debt of gratitude to him for his kindness to my family at Almora. But, I am afraid, it would be wrong to estimate the intimate nature of our relation from these outer circumstances. I believe and know that certain relations are given, not developed or cultivated. And of such relations it is difficult to write in a way that may be understood by others.

When he was working with Udaya Shanker at Madras on his 'Kalpana' (I believe in 1946 or 1947), on my loving pressure he came to Pondicherry where we met personally. It was, and has ever remained—I believe, mutually—a very happy experience. We had prolonged talks. I was glad to find that his mind had not hardened into rigidity in spite of his rational conviction about

the Communistic outlook. He was and has been, mentally alive and alert, elastic and receptive. While many so-called 'intellectuals' with similar convictions get bogged in the search for power—of course, to force happiness on an unwilling and foolish mass—Sumitranandan has retained the sound core of the collectivist outlook, a heart with a genuine and intense solicitude for the average human and a dangerous tendency to translate it into life in his own way. This was, perhaps, natural to his sensitive temperament but I would not be surprised if it laid him open to the charge of weakness or inconsistency from his old comrades, because he did not try to follow up the laid-down unscrupulous path to power, or because he did not shut his mind to other greater lights.

I met him again at Bombay in 1947 and ever since I have been one of his house on my visits to Allahabad. Last time it was in March, 1959, when he had a unique feast of Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*.

Beauty has been regarded as an essential power of the Supreme in Indian Culture from the times of the Veda. In His form of Agni He is called *Madhwada*, "The Enjoyer of Sweetness". The Upanishads speak of Him as *raso vai sah*, "the Divine Himself is the Sap of Delight," and the Vaishnavism named God *nikhil rasāmṛta sindhu*, "the ocean of the entire ambrosia of delight." In mediaeval times saints like Kabir sang *Khule nayana men has has dekhun sunder rupa niharun*—"With open eyes and smiling, I behold the beautiful form of the Beloved." The same strain runs in Tagore—to appreciate beauty and to keep the doors of the senses open. Indian Culture affirms that beauty can lead one—if one knows how to follow the path to the Supreme.

My contact with Sumitranandan was perhaps indirectly responsible for his turning to Sri Aurobindo, but I believe there was a deeper reason. Sumitranandan's flame has been beauty and in seeking it when he came to Sri Aurobindo he found that Sri Aurobindo's vision of beauty opened a new dimension of experience to him. In it he saw that man is more than his appearance, his outer actuality—that man is essentially divine. The possibility of man's ascent to a plane of consciousness higher than mind gives to the dynamic drive of cosmic evolution an aspect of grandeur and beauty. And the consequent transformation of nature by the descent of that Higher Consciousness into man renders possible the attainment of individual and collective perfection. This whole of man's ascent and God's descent makes our tiny speck of earth not merely a spiritually significant piece of Matter but the laboratory of a divine experiment.

This has its appeal to Sumitranandan : it has strengthened the note of optimism in his works, confirmed him in his faith in the possibility of a divine life on earth which is a marvellous vision of supernal beauty. Only, I am afraid, he likes to react to the touches of life around him and play his part in the complex play of forces from his present status which, perhaps, prevents him from finding another higher level from which a more effective action on life can be carried on.

Sumitranandan has, fortunately, never succeeded in acquiring the conventional outlook and attitude towards money and possessions. With all his great literary output and multifarious activities he has been able—even at his age—to retain the child in him which makes him so lovable. And, remember, he wants to be and is a “beautiful” child.

May he live long to embody the vision of beauty which is the compelling drive of his whole life. May Mother India shower her blessings upon him and fulfil his inmost aspirations.

A. B. PURANI

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

(Not by the Immortal Bard)

I DREAMED of our annual show one night,
'Twas Shakespeare,—nightmare version !
For somehow the parts were all mixed up.
Causing great consternation.

The show was one phantasmagoria,
Yet all were blithe and bonny.
And every poet, hand-in-hand,
Sang "Hey Nonny Nonny".

Kireet and Sisir side by side,
Chanting in accents Doric,
And swaying slowly to and fro;
Lamented for poor dear Yorick.

Singing, 'Sigh no more Ladies',
While stirring up a large tureen,
With Olga doing a ghostlike act.
Was Leena D and friend Shireen.

The Khanna Brothers on fife and drum,
Performed a 'pibroch skirl'.
While Mota-Kaka in dainty robes
Danced a 'pas de seul'.

Norman One and Norman two,
Reclining under spreading banyans.
And Richard yelling in accents clear,
'Avaunt, avaunt ye rump-fed ronyons'.

The fantastic scenes went on and on,
And Monoj as handsome Antonio;
Gave ducats to Shylock, ten score and more,
Aided by Mona (Bassanio).

The amazing characters ebbed and flowed,
In one unending stream,
Then I woke with a laugh and realised;
It was Midsummer Night, and a dream.

LEENA

* Any resemblance to a living person by name or action is just dreamagery !