

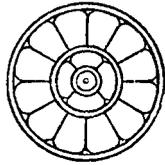
# MOTHER INDIA

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

In Answer to Questions on the Teaching of Literature

### TO THE TEACHERS

It is not so much the details of organisation but the *attitude* that must change.

It seems that unless the teachers themselves get above the usual intellectual level, it will be difficult for them to fulfil their duty and accomplish their task.

10-8-1960

*Q. What is the real purpose, the aim of our Education Centre? Is it to teach Sri Aurobindo's works? and these only? And all or some of these? Or is it to prepare students to read Sri Aurobindo's works and Mother's? Is it to prepare them for the Ashram life or also for other 'outside' occupations? There are so many opinions floating around, and even those older people whom we expect to know make so many different statements, that one does not know what to believe and act by. Then on what basis can we work without any real sure knowledge? I pray, Mother, give us your guidance.*

A. It is not a question of preparing to read these works or other works. It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so, out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to those who are here to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing, it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to live and become a *true being*—and that the aim of the education here is to prepare the children and make them fit for *that life*.

For all the rest, the human way of thinking and living, the world is vast and there is place out there for everybody.

It is not a number that we want—it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.

—THE MOTHER

*Q. At present many of our Higher Course students do not know sufficiently well any one language in which they could express their thoughts and feelings adequately and sensitively. Is this required or not, Mother? And if so, which language should they learn? Should it be a common or international language or their vernacular.*

(The Mother underlined the words "a common or international language" and wrote her answer in the margin.)

A. If only *one* language is known this is better.

*Q. What is the value of Literature?*

A. It depends on what you want to be or do. If you want to be a *littérateur*, you must read a lot of Literature. Then you will know what has been written and you won't repeat old things. You have to keep an alert mind and know how to say things in a striking manner.

But if you want real Knowledge, you can't find it in Literature. To me, Literature as such is on a pretty low level—it is mostly a work of the creative vital, and the highest it reaches is up to the throat-centre, the external expressive mind. This mind puts one in relation with outside things. And, in its activity, Literature is all a game of fitting ideas to ideas and words to ideas and words to one another. It can develop a certain skill in the mind, some capacity for discussion, description, amusement and wit.

I haven't read much of English Literature—I have gone through only a few hundred books. But I know French Literature very well—I have read a whole library of it. And I can say that it has no great value in terms of Truth. Real Knowledge comes from above the mind. What Literature gives is the play of a lot of common or petty ideas. Only on a rare occasion does some ray from above come in. If you look into thousands and thousands of books, you will find just one small intuition here and there. The rest is nothing.

I can't say that the reading of Literature equips one better to understand Sri Aurobindo. On the contrary, it can be a hindrance. For, the same words are used and the purpose for which they are used is so different from the purpose for which Sri Aurobindo has made use of them, the manner in which they have been put together to express things is so different from Sri Aurobindo's, that these words tend to put one off from the light which Sri Aurobindo wants to convey to us through them. To get to Sri Aurobindo's light we must empty our minds of all that Literature has said and done. We must go inward and stay in a receptive silence and turn it upward. Then alone we get something in the right way. At the worst, I have seen the study of Literature makes one silly and perverse enough to sit in judgment on Sri Aurobindo's English and find fault with his grammar !

But, of course, I am not discouraging the teaching of Literature altogether. Many of our children are in a crude state and Literature can help to give their minds some shape, some suppleness. They need a good deal of carving in many places. They have to be enlarged, made active and agile. Literature can serve as a sort of gymnastics and stir up and awaken the young intelligence.

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

*This is the seventh 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 27, 1938

SRI AUROBINDO himself opened the talk by addressing P : "I hear X is going about in his car with a guard by his side and two cyclist policemen front and back." Then the talk continued regarding Pondicherry politics, most of it being by us. Then Sri Aurobindo remarked : "When I see Pondicherry and the Calcutta Corporation I begin to wonder why I was so eager for Swaraj. They are the two object lessons against self-government and one's enthusiasm for it goes out."

N : Was the Calcutta Corporation so bad before the Congress came there ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, there was not so much scope for corruption; at least we didn't know of such scandals. It is the same with other Municipal Governments. In New York and Chicago the whole machinery is corrupt. Sometimes the head of the institution is like that. Sometimes one or another Mayor comes up with the intention of cleansing out the whole institution but one doesn't know after the cleansing which state was better. The Gangster Alcapone of Chicago was a great criminal but all judges and police officers were in his pay.

In France also it is about the same thing. It is not surprising that people get disgusted with democracy. England is comparatively less corrupt. The

English are the only people who know how to work out the Parliamentary System. Parliamentary Government is in their blood.

P : It seems then our Indian system was the best. How did it succeed so well ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The Indian system grew out of Life. It had room for everything and every interest. There were monarchy, aristocracy, democracy. Every interest was represented in the Government, while the Western system grew out of Mind. In Europe they are led by reason and want to make everything cut-and-dried without any chance of freedom or variation. If it is democracy, then democracy only; and no room for anything else. They can't be plastic.

India is now trying to imitate the West. Parliamentary Government is not suited to India. Sir Akbar Hydari wanted to try a new sort of government with an impartial authority at the head. There in Hyderabad the Hindu majority complain that though the Mohamedans are in a minority they occupy most of the offices in the State. By Sir Akbar's method almost every interest would have been represented in the Government and automatically the Hindus would have come in but because of their cry of responsible government the scheme failed. They have a fixed idea in the mind and want to fit everything to it. They don't think. And we take up what the West is throwing off.

S : It is possible in Hyderabad which has a Nizam, but how to do the same in an All-India Constitution ? What is then your idea of an ideal Government for India ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Sir Akbar's is as good as any. My idea is like what Tagore once wrote. There may be one Rashtrapati at the top with considerable powers so as to secure a continuity of policy and an assembly representative of the nation. The provinces will combine into a federation, united at the top, leaving ample scope to local bodies to make laws according to their local problems. Mussolini started with the fundamentals of the Indian system but afterwards began bullying and bluffing other nations for the sake of Imperialism. If he had persisted in his original idea, he would have been a great creator.

P : Dr. Bhagawan Das suggested that there should be legislators aged above forty and completely disinterested like the Rishis.

SRI AUROBINDO : A chamber of Rishis ? That would not be very promising, for they would at once begin to quarrel—*nānā munir nānā mat*<sup>1</sup>—as they say. Rishis in ancient times could guide the kings because they were distributed over various places.

P : His idea is like R's idea of gathering all great men together.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : And let them quarrel like Kilkenny cats, I suppose. The Congress at the present stage—has it not the look of a Fascist dictatorial organisation ? There is no opportunity for any difference of opinion

<sup>1</sup> many sages, many opinions

except for the Socialist Members who are allowed to differ provided they don't seriously differ. Whatever resolutions the Congress passes are obligatory on all the provinces, whether the laws suit the provinces or not. There is no room for any other independent opinion. Everything is fixed up before and the people are only allowed to talk over it—like Stalin's Parliament. When we started the movement, we began with the idea of throwing out the Congress oligarchy and opening the whole organisation to the general mass.

N : Srinivas Iyengar retired from Congress because of his differences with Gandhi. He objected to Gandhi's giving the movement a religious turn and bringing religion into politics.

SRI AUROBINDO : He made the Charka a religious article of faith and excluded all people from the Congress membership who could not spin. How many even among his own followers believe in his gospel of Charka ? Such a tremendous waste of energy just for the sake of a few annas is most unreasonable.

P : He made that rule perhaps to enforce discipline.

SRI AUROBINDO : Discipline is all right but once you begin to concentrate on a particular thing you tend to go on concentrating.

P : The Charka failed in agricultural provinces and seems to have succeeded in other places, especially where people had no occupation.

N : In Bengal it didn't succeed.

SRI AUROBINDO : In Bengal it didn't. It may be all right as a famine palliative but when it takes the form of an all-India Programme it looks absurd. If you form a programme that is suited to the condition of the agricultural people it sounds something reasonable. Give them education, technical training, and give them the fundamental organic principles of organisation, not on political but on business lines. But Gandhi doesn't want any such industrial organisation, he is for going back to the old system of civilisation and so comes in with his magical formula "Spin, spin, spin." C.R. Das and a few others could act as a counterbalance. It is all a fetish. I don't believe in that sort of autarchy, for that is against the principle of life. It is not possible for nations to be like that.

In what a well-ordered way have Denmark and Ireland organised their agriculture ! Only now they are beginning to suffer because other nations are trying to be self-sufficient.

P : What do you think of Hindi being the common language ? It seems to me English has occupied so prominent a place that it will be unwise and difficult to displace it.

SRI AUROBINDO : English will be all right and even necessary if India is an international State. In that case English has to be the medium of expression, especially as English is now replacing French as a world-language. But the national spirit won't allow it and also it is a foreign language. At the same time Hindi can't replace English in the universities, nor the pro-

vincial language. When the national spirit grows it is difficult to say what will happen. In Ireland after the revolution they wanted to abolish English and adopt Gaelic, but as time went on and things settled themselves their enthusiasm waned and English came back.

I don't remember exactly how we drifted to the question of the Jews. P. said that he didn't understand why the Jews were being persecuted so much by Hitler.

N : I understand that the Jews betrayed Germany during the First World War.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nonsense ! On the contrary they helped Germany a great deal. It is because they are a clever race that others are jealous of them. Or for anything that is wrong you point to the Jews—it is so much better than finding the real cause. People want something to strike at. So the popular cry “The Jews, the Jews.” Do you remember my telling you about the prophecy regarding the Jews—that when they will be persecuted and driven to Jerusalem the Golden Age shall come ?

It is the Jews that have built Germany's commercial fleet and her navy. And the contribution of the Jews towards the world's progress in every branch is remarkable.

But this sort of dislike exists among other nations also : for example, the English don't like the Scotch, because the Scotch have beaten the English in commercial affairs. There was a famous story in the *Punch*—two people were talking. One said, “Bill, who is that man ?” And Bill answered, “Let us strike at him, he is a foreigner.”

And then in Bengal the West Bengal people used to call the East Bengal people “*Bāngāl*” and composed a satire, “*Bāngāl mānush noy, oi ek jantu.*”<sup>1</sup>

Once I used to wear socks at all times of the year. The West Bengalis used to sneer that I was a *Bāngāl*. They thought that they were the most civilised people on earth. It is a legacy from the animals, just as dogs of one quarter don't like dogs of another.

S : But things will improve, I hope.

SRI AUROBINDO : If these things go, we may be sure the Golden Age is coming. All my opinions are naturally on the basis of the present conditions. But, of course, the conditions would be quite different when the Supermind came down.

N : You are tempting us too much with your Supermind. Will it really benefit the whole of mankind ?

<sup>1</sup> “These *Bāngāls* are not men, they are beasts.”

SRI AUROBINDO : It will exert a certain upward pull but in order that it may bring about a considerable change, that it may be effective, 200 sadhaks of the Ashram can't be enough. There must be thousands whose influence can spread all over the world, who by actual test can prove that the Supermind is something superior to the means hitherto employed.

P : Will it have a power over humanity ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Let us leave it to the Supermind to decide.

N : The materialists and scientists say that Yogis have done nothing for human happiness. Buddhas and Avatars have come and gone, but the sufferings of humanity are just the same.

SRI AUROBINDO : Did Avatars come to relieve the sufferings of humanity ? It was only Buddha who showed the way to a release from the sufferings. But his path was to get away from this world and enter into Nirvana. Does mankind follow him ? And if they don't and can't get rid of their sufferings, it is not Buddha's fault !

N : People say that by scientific inventions and medical discoveries they have been able to improve the conditions of the world: for instance, by cholera injections, small-pox vaccinations, the death rate is reduced.

SRI AUROBINDO : And are people happy ? Vaccination ? Intellectual people say that vaccination has done more harm than good.

N : But that is the opinion of intellectuals, not of doctors.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why, the intellectuals have surely studied the subject before giving their opinion. Doctors may have reduced cholera, etc., but what about other things that they have brought in ? As for suffering, it cannot go so long as ignorance remains. Even after the Supermind's descent the suffering will remain. If you choose to remain in suffering, how can it go ?

N : Doctors can compel people to take injections even against their will and thus benefit them. Can spiritual Force give such benefits ? The Yogis have been busy with their own salvation while the world has remained just the same.

SRI AUROBINDO : Evolution has proceeded from matter through animal to physical man, vital man, mental man and spiritual man. When mental man or spiritual man appears, the others don't disappear. So the tigers and serpents don't become men. In this upward growth of the human consciousness you can't say that Buddha, Christ etc. have played no part.

I consider the Supramental the culmination of the spiritual man. In the Supramental evolution one is not required to flee from life. It is something dynamic that changes life and nature. It will open the mental, the vital, even the physical to the intuitive and overmental planes.

You want comfort and happiness. In that case Truth and Knowledge are of no value.

The discoveries of modern science have outrun the human capacity to use them. The scientists don't know what to do with them and the discoveries

have been used for the purpose of destruction. Now they are trying to kill by throwing germs from aeroplanes. At least cholera and small-pox end suffering by death, but by bombing etc. you mutilate for life.

Politics, science, even socialism have not succeeded in finding a way out of suffering. They have rallied people to kill one another, and they have the State in peril. Is that an improvement unless you say that murders and massacres are necessary? From this condition of chaos and suffering, there have been shown ways of escape, but about the people who have shown the way out you say they are not useful. Of course I am assuming your argument that everybody has to be useful.

No, no, all that is a superficial view of things. One has to consider the whole civilisation before one can pass an opinion.

It is because Western civilisation is failing that people like Aldous Huxley are drawn to Yoga.

#### 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.*

## GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters)

### THE INNER BEING

SRI AUROBINDO : If the inner being can remain conscious and untouched whenever tamas or anything else rises, half the victory over the other is won.

23-1-1935

Even if there is physical fatigue sometimes, it is not inevitable that it should interfere with the sadhana. The inner movement can always go on.

22-3-1935

*Q. If one constantly supports the Mother's workings, won't the inertia (tamas) get transformed into peace without needing to rise up and darken the other parts?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, that is how it should happen—but it is difficult so long as the inner being is not conscious and receptive at all times and in all conditions—and it is difficult and takes time to establish such a condition.

23-1-1935

*Q. How is one to know whether one's speech is coming from within and is supported and carried on by the inner being?*

SRI AUROBINDO : If one is aware of one's inner being at all one knows. It is an automatic result of consciousness. Of course if one has no inner life or spiritual experience then the question does not arise since then everything, thought, feeling, speech is external.

13-3-1935

If you had no inner being and no spiritual experience then you could have no descent of silence or peace or any pressure of force or anything else. But even those who have a strong inner life, take a long time before they can connect it with the outer speech and action.

14-3-1935

Outer speech belongs to the externalising mind—that is why it is so difficult to connect it with the inner life.

14-3-1935

*Q. Are there not people here who are always in touch with their inner being and merged in the Divine?*

SRI AUROBINDO : To be always merged in the Divine is not so easy. It can be done only by an absorption in one's own inner self or by a consciousness that sees all in the Divine and the Divine in all and is *always* in that condition. There is none who has attained to that yet. 3-4-1935

*Q. If one remains merged in one's inner self for long, will not the realisation of seeing all in the Divine and the Divine in all come by itself ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : At least it will come easily, without the laborious meditation by which people usually try to arrive at it. 6-4-1935

*Q. Is it not inevitable that one should have only intermittent experiences of one's inner self ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : That is so, so long as the whole consciousness is not open or so long as one cannot live always in the inner consciousness, looking at the outer when necessary but not involved in it. 10-4-1935

There is no reason why the inner being should become depressed, but the outer seems to become restless when the inertia is increasing or else it gives some kind of response. If the outer being becomes quiet, then the inner can act—otherwise more force is given to the adverse action of the inertia. 18-8-1935

The inner being does not depend on the subconscious, but the outer has depended on it for thousands of lives—that is why the outer being and physical consciousness's habit of response to the subconscious can be a formidable obstacle to the progress of the sadhana and is so with most. It keeps up the repetition of the old movements, is always pulling down the consciousness and opposing the continuity of the ascent and bringing the old nature or else the *tamas* (non-illumination and non-activity) across the descent. It is only if you live wholly and dynamically in the inner being and feel the outer as a quite superficial thing that you can get rid of the obstruction or minimise it until the transformation of the outer being can be made complete. 19-8-1935

*Q. How is one to get rid of the *tamas* of the outer being and realise the inner permanently ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Not to identify oneself is the first necessity. Not to be depressed or disturbed is the second. Then a little sooner or a little later the change comes. 15-5-1935

There are always two alternatives, either to remain calm and detached and aspire or pray or else to use the Will or other active means as you used to do sometimes before. 19-5-1935

*From* NAGIN DOSHI

# SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

## FIRST THINGS FIRST\*

*(This was a strong admonition to those who despaired of the nation's future and doubted that the only way to progress was the attainment of freedom. A nation that lay prostrate at the feet of others had no future before it.)*

ADVICE is pouring in from all directions to cure us of our extremist views. From every quarter the voice of warning comes by every mail. There is not a newspaper but has got something for the Extremists<sup>1</sup> to read, digest and assimilate. The cry of "Beware, beware, beware" is being every moment dinned into our ears. We are reminded of that prisoner of the story, who when released after serving out a long term of imprisonment felt as it were fished out of water and panted for his long-loved prison home—the free air, the blue open sky, the unhampered movements of the living beings all around were things to which he could not reconcile himself. This also seems to be the case with us.

Like a caged bird, devoid of all recollection of the free exercise of wings, they seem to think that if anyone of their kind even attempts to fly, he can only do it to fall. But having some pretension to education and culture, they cannot at the same time deny the superiority of the ideal we preach and thus seek to dissuade us from our course by a repetition of proverbs they learnt at their grandmother's knees. They tell us, "first deserve then desire, first things first, don't put the cart before the horse," and so on. It seems as though we have walked back to childhood and been introduced to a demagogue with his frowning look and cant phrases. While thanking our kind friends and well-wishers for the trouble they have taken for us, we ask them not to try the impracticable.

The signs of the times should not be ignored. The great truth has dawned on us that it is the desire for freedom which only can set us on the right path to progress. Slaves can no more seek their good than that yoked animals have their own way. It is light and air that favour growth. Cooped and cabined we only pine and die. It is passing strange that our countrymen should fail even to have an intellectual realisation of the facts and like the dog in the manger will neither do anything themselves nor will allow others to try the true though

\* *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 31.10.06.

<sup>1</sup> The name given to the political party led by Sri Aurobindo who had set full independence as their goal during the Swadeshi movement of 1905-10. (*Compiler*)

fearful path. Our friends wish us to be cognisant of our limitations,—not to ride for a fall and so forth. They want us to go up the ladder rung by rung.

The copy-book maxims that are good for the development of an individual mind hardly apply to the case of a whole nation. National upheavals are phenomena which know no law. The sudden disenchantment of a people who were totally benumbed as it were under a wizard's spell may appear to be ominous in the eyes of the unimaginative and the sceptical few, but is not so very unwelcome to those really endowed with a patriotic fervour. It is the dead souls that have lost their inherited impulses and do not know their appointed track. It is these and only these that will not feel a pride in seeing the nation once more seeking to assert itself.

There is a tide in the affairs of a nation. A nation is not exactly built in the way in which a house is built. The laws of gradual evolution do not govern the progress of a nation in the same way as they govern the growth and development of an organism. In the life of a nation the missing links are to be sought at short intervals. Who knew that the Bengalee clerks could unite, undergo sacrifice and work for a common object before the assistants in the office of Burn & Co. had done so ? Who knew that the half-hearted resolution supporting the Muffussil boycott movements could call forth so much determination from our prudent and calculating countrymen ?

The mind is its own place. So long as we choose to make a heaven of hell, we shall acquiesce in the present servitude and go for those who dare to disturb our slumber. But that is no longer to be. We are fully convinced that freedom is the primary condition of all progress. The seed that is to germinate does not allow anything to stand between itself and the light above. The spirit of liberty is the only remedy of the thousand and one littlenesses to the cure of which we are asked to pay our attention first. Confidence in one's self, confidence in one's mission is the secret of all noble careers and we do not know what to think of that people who with the splendid equipment of the Hindoo race condescend to be dragged on like dumb driven cattle.

If every other virtue proceeds from one's being true to one's self, then a nation cannot aspire to be great from its attitude of prostration at the feet of others.

*Compiled by* SANAT K. BANERJI

# SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

(7)

## NATIONAL EDUCATION

### V

THE hooliganism that had broken out in parts of East Bengal in the early years of Swadeshi was the occasion for driving home the urgent need of physical education among our young men. But the main problem was that of organisation. In this the *Bandemataram* gave the necessary lead. Physical education, it said, must be organised on autonomous lines by each district, and in this matter the Provincial Conferences which at that time had begun to play the part later assigned to Congress Committees could take an active share.

“The best thing that the coming Conferences can do is to entrust the prominent men of the different districts with a certain amount of autonomous work. Let them for the present concentrate their attention on two sorts of activities. National education and self-protection are engrossing enough for the energy at our disposal...

“The most important thing is to organise our own physical strength. It is the physical force at the back which gives every institution its weight and authority. The High Courts, the Chief Courts, the Sessions Courts all derive their authority from the authority of the bullet and bayonet. The Magistrate is the supreme being that he is simply because the police are ready to work at his beck and call. And in view of the inevitable conflict of physical forces which work in the contemplated line must lead to, organisation of physical strength should at once be proceeded with.

“Every district should always be in a state of readiness with its own supply of physically strong men when occasion requires. There was a time when every village in Bengal had a number of physically strong men to resist the attacks of thieves and dacoits. Necessity makes everything possible. Because we are weak and helpless it is foolish to think that we cannot be strong and self-reliant if we are in earnest.

“Let the coming Conferences spread the contagion of this earnestness for real work throughout the Province.”<sup>1</sup>

On the day before the Provincial Conference was due to meet at Berhampur

<sup>1</sup> *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 26.3.07.

in Bengal, the *Bandemataram* stressed again the need for organising physical education on a country-wide scale.

“For this is the first Provincial Conference after the historic twenty-second session of the Congress at Calcutta [held in December 1906]. At that session the policy of self-development and self-help was incorporated as an integral part of the political programme by the representatives of the whole nation...and it was decided that a constitution or working organisation should be created for the promotion throughout the year of the programme fixed by the Congress for the whole nation and by the Provinces for themselves. It rests upon the Berhampur Conference to see that proper provision is made for this executive work...

“But there are other fields in which self-development and self-help are urgently necessary ; and it remains for each Province to initiate action in each of them successively according to its own circumstances and under the pressure of its own needs... Since the Congress met, three new necessities have presented themselves for Bengal,—the necessity of National Arbitration Courts, the necessity of Organised Self-protection and the necessity of Prevention of Famine by self-help. The second of these is the one which we should, in our opinion, take immediately in hand ; for it is likely to be urgently needed in the near future and in its absence the national movement will remain deficient in the first element of strength and its defencelessness will perpetually invite attack. If we are to proceed with the work of the nation in peace, we must immediately turn our attention to organising self-protection all over Bengal...”<sup>1</sup>

It seems the exhortations bore some fruit, and the *Bandemataram* could record in a subsequent issue: “In the stirring address of the President of the Berhampur Conference defence was included as a necessary part of our programme in Bengal.”<sup>2</sup> What active steps were taken to implement the decision we do not know. But in the meantime, fresh troubles had broken out in an outlying part of Bengal, and adequate defence measures became urgently necessary. *Bandemataram* again came to the fore and chalked out a detailed plan.

“The fresh disturbances in Tipperah are only so many more arguments for an organised League of Mutual Defence throughout Bengal. Mere individual or local self-protection will not meet the exigencies of the situation. In the towns where the educated community is strong and compact and there are a number of active and spirited young men, the nationalist may be able to hold his own against riot and outrage, official or unofficial, though even here help from outside may become increasingly necessary ; but in villages where

<sup>1</sup> *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 29.3.07.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.4.07.

the educated class is not represented, the need for immediate assistance from outside is imperative. The educated classes have now in Swaraj an idea for which men can fight, and, if needs be, die without fear and even with joy ; and the possession of such an idea gives a moral strength which more than compensates for inferiority in numbers. But we have not had time as yet to instil this sentiment deeply into the hearts of the masses. If we are to carry the peasant and the shopkeeper with us, we must give them a ready support and protection against attack which will accustom them to look up to their educated compatriots as their natural protectors and leaders. Otherwise the sense of organised oppression as is being practised in Comilla will be too strong for the nascent spirit of patriotism and we shall be seriously hampered in our future work.

“We must have such an organisation that the first news of such incidents may be taken as a cry for help and sufficient assistance proceed to the scene of action without a moment’s delay...

“We look to the young men to lay the foundations for such an organised League. The physical training and self-defence movement which we started three or four years ago has to find its wisdom so entirely justified ; but it must now be given a far wider and more thorough realisation and become national and universal instead of local and sporadic.

“Wherever ten or twelve young men can gather together let them form an institution, however small and unpretentious, for the training of the body, discipline and the habit of physical courage and activity. Let them put themselves in communication with similar bodies near them, form local leagues in neighbouring places where they do not exist. Let every youth who is not an active member of these institutions be looked down on as deficient in manhood, patriotism and his duty as a citizen.

“In this way the foundation may be laid for a National League of Defence. Older men may give ideas and advice ; it is the young who in these days of revolution must lead in action ; for on their foreheads is the light of the new dawn and theirs are the million arms of the awakened Mother.

“The work to which we call them is not less pressing and urgent than the maintenance of Boycott and Swadeshi ; for without it neither Swadeshi nor Boycott can endure.”<sup>1</sup>

And again, a few days later :

“We reiterate with all the emphasis we can command that the Kshatriya of old must again take his rightful position in our social polity to discharge the first and foremost duty of defending its interests. The brain is impotent without the right arm of strength. India is now conscious of this long-forgotten truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 2.4.07.

“And the hand must hold up-to-date arms. And where the arms cannot be procured in a fair way people are driven to underhand methods, not to kill their own men, as the *Englishman* designedly insinuates, but to protect their life and limb, home and hearth, as they had to do at Comilla, as they will shortly have to do at Mymensing. The song that nerves the nation’s heart is in itself a deed. That song may lead to persecution, but as the *Punjabee* has said, ‘Today we are in the firing line, but our recruits are at our back, ready to take our places the moment we drop down.’ This music can no longer be silenced and keeping time with it the coming Kshatriya is forging his thunder...”<sup>1</sup>

*(To be continued)*

SANAT K. BANERJI

<sup>1</sup> *Bandematararam*, Daily Edition, 8.4.07.

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

(Classified Excerpts)

## (v) THE UNKNOWABLE

THE Unknowable, if it is at all, may be a supreme state of Sachchidananda beyond our highest conceptions of existence, consciousness and bliss ; that is what was evidently meant by the Asat, the Non-Existent of the Taittiriya Upanishad, which alone was in the beginning and out of which the existent was born, and possibly too it may be the inmost sense of the Nirvana of the Buddha : for the dissolution of our present state by Nirvana may be a reaching to some highest state beyond all notion or experience of self even, an ineffable release from our sense of existence. Or it may be the Upanishad's absolute and unconditioned bliss which is beyond expression and beyond understanding, because it surpasses all that we can conceive of or describe as consciousness and existence. This is the sense in which we have already accepted it ; for the acceptance commits us only to a refusal to put a limit to the ascension of the Infinite.<sup>1</sup>

## (vi) NIHIL

Actually when we examine closely the Nihil of certain philosophies, we begin to perceive that it is a zero which is All or an indefinable Infinite which appears to the mind a blank, because mind grasps only finite constructions, but is in fact the only true Existence.<sup>2</sup>

But out of absolute Nothingness nothing can come, not even anything merely apparent, not even an illusion ; and if the absolute Non-existence is not that, then it can only be an absolute eternally unrealised Potentiality, an enigmatic zero of the Infinite out of which relative potentialities may at any time emerge, but only some actually succeed in emerging into phenomenal appearance. Out of this Non-existence anything may arise, and there is no possibility of saying what or why ; it is for all practical purposes a seed of absolute chaos out of which by some happy—or rather unhappy—accident there has emerged the order of a universe. Or we may say that there is no real order of the universe ; what we take for such is a persistent habit of the senses and the life and a figment of the mind and it is useless to seek for an ultimate reason of

things. Out of an absolute chaos all paradox and absurdity can be born, and the world is such a paradox, a mysterious sum of contraries and puzzles, or, it may be, in effect, as some have felt or thought, a huge error, a monstrous, an infinite delirium....But, pushed too far, this view of things leads to the negation of the whole aim of philosophy, which seeks for knowledge and not for chaos and which cannot fulfil itself if the last word of knowledge is the Unknowable, but only if it is something, to use the words of the Upanishad, which being known all is known.<sup>3</sup>

#### (vii) NON-EXISTENCE

Existence plunging into an apparent Non-Existence, Consciousness into an apparent Inconscience, Delight of existence into a vast cosmic insensibility are the first result of the fall and, in the return from it by a struggling fragmentary experience, the rendering of consciousness into the dual terms of pain and pleasure are the necessary process of the labour of self-discovery.... Still, because the Non-Existence is concealed Existence, the Inconscience a concealed Consciousness, the insensibility a masked and dormant Ananda, these secret realities must emerge.<sup>4</sup>

The Inconscience is an inverse reproduction of the supreme super-conscience : it has the same absoluteness of being and automatic action, but in a vast involved trance ; it is being lost in itself, plunged in its own abyss of infinity. Instead of a luminous absorption in self-existence there is a tenebrous involution in it, the darkness veiled within darkness of the Rig Veda, *tama āsīt tamasā gūḍham*, which makes it look like Non-Existence ; instead of a luminous inherent self-awareness there is a consciousness plunged into an abyss of self-oblivion, inherent in being but not awake in being.<sup>5</sup>

#### (viii) THE IMMUTABLE AND THE IDENTICAL

The Identical to our notions is the Immutable ; it is ever the same through eternity, for if it is or becomes subject to mutation or if it admits of differences, it ceases to be identical ; but what we see everywhere is an infinitely variable fundamental oneness which seems the very principle of Nature. The basic Force is One, but it manifests from itself innumerable forces ; the basic substance is one, but it develops many different substances and millions of unlike objects ; mind is one but differentiates itself into many mental states, mind-formations, thoughts, perceptions differing from each other and entering into harmony or into conflict ; life is one, but the forms of life are unlike and innumerable ; humanity is one in nature, but there are different race types and every individual man is himself and in some way unlike others ; Nature insists on tracing lines of difference on the leaves of one tree ; she drives differentiation so far that it

has been found that the lines on one man's thumb are different from the lines of every other man's thumb so that he can be identified by that differentiation alone,—yet fundamentally all men are alike and there is no essential difference. Oneness or sameness is everywhere, differentiation is everywhere ; the indwelling Reality has built the universe on the principle of the development of one seed into a million different fashions. But this again is the logic of the Infinite ; because the essence of the Reality is immutably the same, it can assume securely these innumerable differences of form and character and movement, for even if they were multiplied a trillionfold, that would not affect the underlying immutability of the eternal Identical.<sup>6</sup>

The finding of the one truth underlying all things will be the Identical discovering identity and identical truth everywhere and discovering too the power and workings and relations of that identity. The revelation of the detail, the circumstance, the abundant ways and forms of the manifestation will be the unveiling of the endless opulence of the truths of that identity, its forms and powers of self, its curious manifoldness and multiplicity of form bringing out infinitely its oneness. This knowledge will proceed by identification with all, by entering into all, by a contact bringing with it a leap of self-discovery and a flame of recognition, a greater and surer intuition of truth than the mind can reach; there will be an intuition too of the means of embodying and utilising the truth seen, an operative intuition of its dynamic processes, a direct intimate awareness guiding the life and the physical senses in every step of their action and service to the Spirit when they have to be called in as instruments for the effectuation of process in life and matter.<sup>7</sup>

*Compiled by* NATHANIEL PEARSON

#### REFERENCES

1. Vol. II. Ch. XII, p. 507 (A); p. 676 (U).
2. Vol. I. Ch. IV, p. 29 (A); p. 35 (U).
3. Vol. II. Ch. XII, p. 507-8 (A); p. 676-8 (U).
4. Vol. I. Ch. XXVIII, p. 263 (A); p. 344 (U).
5. Vol. II. Ch. X, p. 491 (A); p. 654 (U).
6. Vol. II. Ch. II, p. 307-8 (A); p. 403-4 (U).
7. Vol. II. Ch. XXVII, p. 872 (A); p. 1169 (U).

# SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

## THE ASHRAM ATMOSPHERE

(Continued)

WE could write to Sri Aurobindo any time up to 11 p.m. when the Ashram gate closed. Letters were generally addressed to the Mother and left on a tray in a corner of the stair-case near the door of the first floor. We received replies early next morning. X wrote twice a day continually for four years. There is an instance of one of us writing thrice a day. One or two sadhikas, innocent of English, were answered by the Master in their own mother-tongues. Heaps of letters, at times up to a hundred, received his attention every night.

Sri Aurobindo would read out each of them and give replies in his own handwriting, using slips of paper of various sizes. Letters with space on the margin or at the bottom had his notes thereon. The Mother would write the names of sadhaks on variously painted or artistically decorated envelopes, using, in particular instances, pink-coloured envelopes symbolising the psychic being. Thus we had the blessing of a double touch. The closed letters were taken by the Secretary to each addressee. His arrival was welcome like the breath of a spring morning.

Let me cite a known case to illustrate this double touch.

X was under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings till he was 24. He would not look at the face of a girl and took care that his sight always fell on her feet. He hoped to be *Jitendriya* by following the method of control by will-power.

When he came here he did not know what suppression or rejection signified. He thought he had enough control over himself and was on the way to self-mastery.

After 5 or 6 years' stay he found that his whole body was afire with what he thought he had conquered. He was, as it were, possessed by it and felt helpless.

Fortunately he concealed nothing and was frank and bold enough to put everything before Sri Aurobindo. By the way, if letters concerned sadhana, even those addressed to him Sri Aurobindo would read to the Mother. In reply to the sadhak in trouble he wrote :

"I suppose you had pressed down the sex-desire into the subconscious and from there, as usually happens when it is suppressed but not eradicated, it has risen up to the surface. This uprush of suppressed subconscious forces has al-

ways a certain irrational violence about it. But you should not allow yourself to be alarmed by that. Keep the mind and higher vital calm and quiet, detach yourself from the sex-desire and regard it as a foreign element, and reject it quietly and firmly till it passes away. It must be thrown away outside of the consciousness altogether. Naturally, you must always call in the Mother's Force as your main reliance, supporting it fully with a calm and unswerving will..."

Under this note there was:

“Mon aide et mes bénédictions sont toujours avec toi.” —*La Mère*  
 (“My help and my blessings are always with you.” —*The Mother*)

Showing me the letter in the original he said—“This was not mere writing. Both poured themselves (what the Upanishads call *śaktipāt*)<sup>1</sup> on me and gave me the strength to fight out the battle once for all.” Today he feels quite free. Of course, total change will come in its time but he is no longer a slave to passion. He is quite persuaded that sex is no necessity. It invades us from outside. This he could not discern before. He asserts that anyone trying sincerely can free himself from animality.

Once a sadhak had a vision of Sri Aurobindo seated in a chair and writing something. Behind his head there was a circular green light. To a question what this meant he wrote : “The green light is that of dynamic vital energy (of work). As I was writing—at work—it is natural that that light should be behind my head.”

Even one word from his pen would transport our heart with delight. A sadhak heard a voice—“You are born to do this Yoga”. On his reporting this to the Mother Sri Aurobindo confirmed it with his “Yes”. This one syllable once imprinted on the soul, could it ever be erased ?

X heard the Mother saying in a dream : “These days you have made a marvellous progress.” On his referring this to the Mother, the Master wrote back : “Yes. It is a contact (with the Mother) in the inner being.”

Another voice was heard—“Your realisation is certain.”

SRI AUROBINDO : “These voices express what is being done—these expressed the certitude of realisation now that so much purification has been made. They are not prophecies but assurances.” (1-9-1936)

One heard a voice not in the heart but in the head : “You are one with the Truth.”

SRI AUROBINDO : “These are symbols of the union of the being with the higher truth in the highest mind centre.”

To a question about what as many as seven visions in a day indicated, the answer was : “A great activity of sadhana in the inner being.” (9-6-1936)

<sup>1</sup> Infusion of spiritual strength by the Guru.

Again on being asked what four to five experiences almost daily signified, the Master wrote :

“It is an increase in the power of the sadhana for realisation and experience.”  
(18-8-1936)

X had a standing regret that he could not visit Brindavan, before joining the Ashram. From his school life he had been dreaming of meeting Sri Krishna face to face. One difficulty was that often a dark force would rise in his heart and heap ill-names on Sri Krishna. Over this he would shed unending tears. He had taken a vow that he would visit Brindavan only when he would have the capacity to compel Sri Krishna to appear before him.

Afterwards during a trip to Hardwar and Rishikesh in quest of a Guru he could easily have visited Brindavan but he did not. In the meantime an unseen hand brought him to the feet of Sri Aurobindo. Here in a few months he felt the tightly screwed-up parts of his being unloosened and the doors of heaven flung open to him. A letter from Sri Aurobindo confirms his feeling.

“The crown of the head is the place through which the Force usually descends ; the mind is now free and the higher consciousness is well-founded there, the emotional centre open so that the Force can pass through ; but in the lower vital centres it has still to make a pressure (that is what you feel in the waist, hips and lower down—for the navel and the abdominal centre are the vital proper). The lowest centre is the physical and the pressure in the legs shows that the Force has passed into the material layers.” (25-12-1932)

Still he kept feeling a wrench that he had not met Sri Krishna. Then came from the Master a gentle nudge :

“Whether you visit the physical Brindavan or not does not matter ; what is necessary is to find the inner union through love and Bhakti.” (30-11-1932)

This gave a full-scale turn to his sadhana. Sri Aurobindo’s letters are dynamic agents in moulding the lives of sadhaks.

To speak only of joy in Ashram life without mentioning the hurdles in the way would be giving an incomplete picture. Each one had to contend (even as now) with odds, sometimes tremendously. When two instances were cited as having met with no difficulty the Master replied that neither A nor K had found the path a Grand Trunk Road.

All have to pass the test. Some pass with ease. Others fail to attain even bare pass-marks despite hard labour. To those who assume an air of superiority the following words of the Mother should serve as a warning : “It is only the small consciousness that seeks to show superiority. Even a child is more developed than such a being ; for it is spontaneous in its movements. Rise above all smallness.”

There were some trying days of dryness, as part of the austere life, of *tapasyā*. By *tapasyā* we do not mean the ordinary forms of asceticism. For

us *tapasyā* meant, and still means, spiritual discipline : “When the will and energy are concentrated and used to control the mind, vital and physical, and change them or bring down the higher consciousness or for any other Yogic purpose or high purpose, that is called *tapasyā*”.<sup>1</sup>

But that is not an easy job. The reactions of the vital were painful, its demands exacting. Almost immediately after each *Darshan* there were cases of turning back to the ordinary life. Only a few of the resolute souls out of the number of sadhaks of those days stuck on.

The period extending from February to August (there being in those days no *Darshan* in between) would appear like crossing a long desert. If one wanted to take to spirituality one must be ready to pass through seemingly endless deserts. In these burning deserts also there is a visit of spring. If an unfailing stream of inner peace flows within, outer drought does not matter much.

Once, in 1940 I heard that Nolini Kanta Gupta, who is known for measured living, was a bit out of sorts. On meeting him I asked, “How do you do?”

“I never fall ill,” came his easy reply. At another time, to a remark, “Now summer has set in,” he said, “Where is summer here? Here it is always spring”.

But all cannot rise to this height. There are letters of Sri Aurobindo which affirm the invasions of depression. In fact, during this period depressions were frequent, weighing heavily upon the sadhaks—often to such an extent as to render them totally helpless. Despite the Mother’s help they could not shake them off.

One look, one touch, one word from the Mother at the Pranam-time would be enough to lighten the burden for a while and to sweep away the clouds but they would gather again and again. The Master gives the reason:

“It is not easy to overcome gloom, depression, grief and suffering because something in the human vital clings to it and almost needs it as part of the drama of life....The mind and the physical of man do not like suffering, for if they did, it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give a spice to life. It is the reason why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of them, because this in the vital responds, goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is got going and insists on turning the whole round of the oft-repeated record.”<sup>2</sup>

All around there are thorns, in the midst of which one has to bloom like a rose—this is the life of a true sadhak. Occasions were not rare when life turned out a veritable battlefield. One could see an array of forces and counter-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Fourth Series), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series), pp. 380-81.

forces facing each other. Why it so happens is brought out very clearly in the following letter of 6th June 1930.

“It is a common experience in one form or another of all who try to rise above their ordinary nature...there are contradictory elements in human nature and in every human being through which he is made to act in a way which his better mind disapproves. This happens to everybody, to the most ordinary men in the most ordinary life. It only becomes marked and obvious to our minds when we try to rise above our ordinary external selves, because then we can see that it is the lower elements which are being made to revolt consciously against the higher will. There then seems to be for a time a division in the nature, because the true being and all that supports it stand back and separate from these lower elements. At one time the true being occupies the field of the nature, at another the lower nature, used by some contrary force, pushes it back and seizes the ground,—and this we now see, while formerly the thing happened but the nature of the happening was not clear to us. If there is the firm will to progress, this division is overpassed and in the unified nature, unified around that will, there may be other difficulties, but this kind of discord and struggle will disappear.”<sup>1</sup>

In the days of struggle and depression, correspondence with Sri Aurobindo was the divine lever of our souls. Always he would have our hearts filled with light instead of letting them struggle with darkness. When nights of doubt and depression haunted us, his letters would often shine forth as the morning star of hope and joy.

We all know how Nishikanta wished to leave the body and be reborn as a child to join the Green Group of the Sportsground. That was not a solitary case. Another person wrote : “There are so many kinds of vital as well as physical troubles; why not get rid of this body and be born again better equipped to do the sadhana ?” Sri Aurobindo discouraged the idea as no remedy. By that sort of death the same difficulty would have to be faced in the next birth.

At times the help would come like a boon and disperse the gloom, opening the way to the sun-lit path. There is no hard and fast rule about whom the Grace will choose. There are sadhaks here who can breast the waves and keep serene amid blinding storms.

But it is not always those who are great and men of high calibre that are chosen here.

“Well-known or unknown has absolutely no importance from the spiritual point of view. It is simply the propagandist spirit. We are not a party or a church or religion seeking adherents or proselytes. One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Fourth Series), pp. 383-84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* (Second Series), p. 479.

“Strength,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is a power for spiritual realisation; a greater power is sincerity; a greatest power of all is grace.”<sup>1</sup>

Very much depressed, a sadhak once felt suffocated as if shut up in an air-tight compartment. No prayer arose from within. The only thought that seized him was “Why is the Mother punishing me so severely ? Where is the mistake ? Why am I made to suffer ?” At times it appeared that somebody was sucking his blood drop by drop. At other times he had promptings from within, urging him to go away; happily he realised at length that they were not his own movements but intrusions from outside. So he wrote to the Mother.

An hour after, he felt a great relief. At night he dreamt that he was being carried in the Mother’s car. The car was speeding as if through the air. Then he questioned : “Mother, where are you taking me ?” And the car stopped. Then the Mother got down and walked towards a house. The door-keeper, a black being, obeyed the Mother like a servant and showed her in. The sadhak could not remember what happened just after this. But the next thing he recalled of the dream was that he met Pavitra smiling at him, as if saying, “So the Mother helped you across the desert !”

Such experiences would make us pour our hearts’ worship unreservedly at the feet of the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo’s writings had a magical effect on us because we could know from them what was going on in us and how the sadhana was progressing. He knew more of us than we knew ourselves. What could be a greater joy to an aspirant than to know from his Guru how he was faring on the way ?

“You seem to have made a good progress on the whole. You need not feel troubled about the resistance—such periods always happen when some part of the being, not yet opened, interposes its obscurity and interrupts the full course of the sadhana. It is done so that these parts may be worked upon, opened and brought fully into light; afterwards the sadhana continues with a completer movement than before.

“In your case it is the mind that has been open to the influence; the emotional and vital being was less open. The action in the heart (the pain was there because of some obscure vital resistance) and the something trying to come out from within was the result of an attempt of the psychic being to come to the front. If the psychic comes forward, the mind being already open to the working of the Yoga-force, then the emotional and vital can be opened also, purified and made a field of sadhana.”<sup>2</sup>

When X wrote a letter he would keep awake till 12 or 1 a.m. in the hope of receiving something consciously. All of a sudden either his heart or the whole being would get filled with Light or Peace. He would at once know that his letter was being read because the inner illumination or the intensity of the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series), p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> 13.8.1932.

experience would last only a few minutes and would happen invariably after he had written a letter.

After 5 or 6 years' stay, whenever he had a good experience or a descent of Peace, its effect would last for hours. Once he felt that the whole earth was full of peace, even the roaring sea had calmed down; but often he had physical sufferings.

To a question whether it was the beginning of the Peace settling in the vital, the Master wrote: "Yes, the difficulty comes when one goes down into the physical and subconscious to have it changed..." (12-4-1937).

Letters of general or of cardinal importance were for all to see and when one such letter was put up on the notice-board it drew instantaneously a crowd of readers. Not unoften it proved a collective spur.

When a letter on Peace (since published in *Lights on Yoga*, p.63) was first released, I remember very well, every word of it acted like a mantra. How to make it part of us was the thought that it inspired. Such was also the case when *Bases of Yoga* first saw the light (1936). The release of this book seemed to release the forces, massed in it, right into the atmosphere.

A successful lawyer chanced upon the book in a book-shop at Varanasi. He bought it, read it and felt that it had decided his future.

Blessed are they whose Sadhana has been fostered directly by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The most interesting occasions of life were those into which were inserted gems of spiritual experiences. The inner meaning and deep bearing that Sri Aurobindo disclosed of them are landmarks in spiritual history.

Who would not dismiss as sheer nonsense the vision of one's offering a stone to the Mother? And who but Sri Aurobindo could suggest that it might mean an offering of the material being?

Offering the body as a fruit—what did it mean? The answer was: "The body here is the physical being and the sense of being a fruit indicates surrender" (15-6-36). To another question the answer came: "White bricks indicate the building of a new consciousness" (4-7-37).

An experience was disclosed to Sri Aurobindo. It was a vision of a cyclonic blast smashing the physical being. A column of light fell headlong as a thunderbolt piercing the obscurities of the lower vital. The sadhak was horrified. Sri Aurobindo interpreted the vision as follows:

"It is simply that some part of the nature has come up which is not yet open to the descent. The fear of it is common to these lower vital and physical — so it must be something there. Aspire for the opening of this part.

"There should have been nothing horrifying in this last experience. It meant only a descent into the subconscious physical plane but under very favourable condition, a descent of light, not into obscurity. A tempest also may mean only a movement of inner change, the action of *Indra*, the *Maruts*

to clear the atmosphere of the Vritra forces. Whatever the experience, the fear or alarm should always be rejected". 19-2-1933

We were novices and often wrote, as Sri Aurobindo characterised it, "at random and wasted their time."<sup>1</sup> In 1930 he wrote to one of us—"The twenty-four hours are already too short for what I have to do." Just after three years he wrote again :

"You do not realise that I have to spend 12 hours over the ordinary correspondence, numerous reports etc. I wrote three hours in the afternoon and the whole night up to 6 in the morning over this." 17-6-1933

Someone suggested that if instead of wasting time over such correspondence he utilised it in writing other things, marvels in literature could be produced. Sri Aurobindo simply asked whether, if he spent his time in writing fine poems, that would build up a new race.

This explains why despite his marvellous poetic gifts his poetic output is relatively small. "I never thought politics or feeding the poor or writing beautiful poems would lead straight to Vaikuntha or the Absolute."

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

<sup>1</sup> In those days tooth-sticks were not in use in the Ashram. A dentist from Gujarat recommended them instead of tooth-brush and paste. A sadhak referred the thing to Sri Aurobindo. Even such letters he would read and answer.

## EVER YOUNG LIFE

WAKING from sleep,  
Rushing of feet  
for birth, return to Earth,  
ever recurring joy of being.  
One should not hurry but wait his turn.  
All must go  
And no one remain for too long;  
like the waves of the ocean that rise  
and surprise one another for a moment  
then disappear to rise again  
under a new name.  
The grains of sand pulsate  
like the Nova or the heart of compassion  
animated by the same force  
too common, too little known.

Why tears and weeping ?  
Where is death or parting?  
Admire the tireless effort of a Power  
reaching out to Immortality  
from the tiny rings of plasma  
through bodies with secret doors  
more and more open to a subtler light.

The changing colours, mobile bosom of the sea,  
ever the same, never the same, always young,  
mirror of the eternal becoming,  
Seven bands and a million shades,  
momentary oblivion and blissful change,  
Life forges forward through death.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

## MY CRADLE

THY two loving palms, my cradle of delight,  
Close on my soul like sun on happy shade,  
Like warm praying fields of corn sweet and bright,  
Like soft moss and crisp grass on still soil of a glade.

Wide and long I stretch in clasp of wild thyme,  
In sweet fragrance, in green sigh beauty-rooted,  
And with Thee, my Mother, my prayer I rhyme.  
By my rapture-cry the whole world is muted.

In Thy loving palms I lie, a bundle of bliss,  
And in wide open skies Thy heart-throbs I seek.  
From vaults of light falls a trembling sun-kiss,  
A golden drop of Grace on my happy cheek,

Blue winged birds swaying on Thy magic thread  
Before my enchanted gaze to Thy hands fly,  
In a heaven of smiles that for me thou hast spread  
Rock my dreams to tunes of Thy Lullaby.

Let me learn to fly where the blue winged bird flies  
And sway for ever on the swing of Thy beam.  
Let me grow to sweep the shining floors in Thy Skies  
And build vast and proud vaults for Thy White Fierce Dream.

JANINA

## 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 !*

13

THESE clinging senses foil us at every step !  
Grant us, O Lord of mighty strains and strides,  
A modicum of Thy vast intangible skill  
Wherewith Thou walkest secure, serene, untouched,  
Mid a thousand snares of hands, convention-knit,  
On every side Thou chooseth to stir abroad.

Ah, but these Doorways dupe us, vex us, tax us—  
Unwary sentinels who would rush out straight  
At every beck or knock, to manipulate gates  
For traffickers inept who have endless needs  
But not slight art of opening just a tithe :  
For lo ! the motley rabble's always there,  
Lounging and loitering on the pavement-floors,  
Poking untoward snouts through window-bars  
And prying with roving eyes of vagrant greed  
To catch a glimpse profane of mysteries,  
Astir behind walls opaque to untaught eyes !

Teach us, O Lord enthronèd dais-on-dais,  
How to sort Thy couriers from out counterfeits,  
When to unlock—and keep locked—Thy sevenfold gates,  
And keep steady vigils by Doors Thou hast devised and installed in us.

## 14

The keys of our Inmost Shrine do rest with Thee,  
 And 'tis when Thou choosest Thou settest open wide  
 The doors we've waited patiently by for hours,  
 And hours have crept with the creeping pace of years !

Waited; and, haply, worked out restive wits  
 That fidgeted vainly to meet the moment unripe :  
 Waited; and, haply, discovered Thy Rhythmic Grace  
 Descending gently, coolly, to clear all trace  
 Of the outer yard's insolent dust and heat,  
 And to bear us anew within the tensile stress  
 Of aspiring ascent and awaital of descent !

When lo ! the Moment Blessed comes sudden-strange,  
 And we rise full-flushed and bend our baptised eyes  
 Unto the Vision August, slow-showering smiles  
 And with smile-keys opening chambers one by one,  
 So swift and deft we scarce know how or when,  
 And, having oped, and seen, and sanctified,  
 Retiring majestic from our unkempt gaze,  
 So for very shame we can't say Yea or Nay,  
 But can only stand entranced by wide-open Doors  
 Of the Sanctuary we have seen—and been—for a Moment Rare !

CHIMANBHAI

## THUS SANG MY SOUL

(37)

### VIII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

*(continued)*

#### 68. O MAKE THY LOVE SUPREME FOR ME !

O MOTHER, make Thy Love supreme for me  
And let my widening self of purity  
    Grow broad beyond the borders of the world  
To get fused with Thy leaned infinity.

May never a hostile false conspiracy  
Manoeuvre an evil chance to pounce on me;  
    O mould my luminous pliant surrendered self  
To be the vessel of Thy ecstasy.

When stay with me Thy blessings evermore,  
My hero-soul what conquest cannot score ?  
    Keep my head lowest of all little things  
That, humble made, Thy Love I may impore.

If willest Thou, all world's mud on me throw,  
Make me drink poison, strike Thy fiercest blow,  
    Thereon my grateful smiling soul may voice :  
"O Love, whatever way, within me grow."

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## THOUGHTS

MANY have let me down. To name a few : my body, my mind, my possessions. Yet I have to confess that there is one who has always stood by me; who has never betrayed me.

Who ?

The Bliss that is at the root of all creation.

\*

\*

Earth, by its nature, will tend to fall, even if you carry it up.

Fire, on the other hand, tends to rise, even if you turn it downwards.

The work of a sadhak who would bring glory to 'Purna Yoga' is very arduous, for he is called upon to perform a feat far more difficult than such child's play as physical askesis. He has to transform his earth-stuff into the ever-ascending fire-stuff. Even the gods blench from it.

\*

\*

Had I not soared high up in the sky overhead I would never have understood the secret meaning of the crescent moon that adorns the matted hair on Lord Shiva's head.

Had I not plunged deep into the murky waters underneath my feet I would never have understood the secret meaning of Lord Vishnu reclining on the serpent king.

Never, never could I have understood the mysteries that could be unravelled only by Experience, had I groped in a thousand bypaths.

GIRDHARLAL

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

## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

### REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER<sup>1</sup>

OUT of the blue, ill-health attacked me. One day I was perfectly healthy doing my work and the next I seemed to go all to pieces. The doctors said it was my blood-pressure which caused all the trouble. It kept on shooting up dangerously. There was a tightness over my heart, breathing became difficult at times. My head felt burning hot, confused and unsteady all the while, and there was giddiness which incapacitated me completely.

This condition continued for twenty days. As a teacher, a clear and precise mind was the most essential thing to me and the state I was in distressed me greatly. Doctors could not find the cause of this erratic blood-pressure of mine. They were thinking of having some complicated tests done for my eyes and my ears, to help them cure the crippling giddiness.

I have known the Mother in Pondicherry for over thirty years. During this illness, as always, I kept her informed through a relative at the Ashram. On the 25th of the upsetting month I wrote an urgent appeal to the Mother to come to my aid and take me completely into her hands. I realised that the absolutely mind-crippling condition should not be allowed to go on. On the 26th, at night I went to bed a sick person—my head churning, fatigued and defeated, and such vertigo that I could not turn my head from one side to the other without the whole room seeming to go round and round. Then there was a feeling of tightness over the region of my heart.

On the morning of the 27th I woke up an entirely cured person. My head was crystal-clear; there was no trace of giddiness, no mind-fag. The swelling over my eyes of the last twenty days was gone and my vision-focus had returned to normal. No medicines can explain the sudden rapid transformation.

This overnight cure was surely one of the wonders the Mother has wrought for me and my family through the years.

M.N.C.

*Compiled by* HAR KRISHAN SINGH

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

## SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, COLOMBO, CEYLON

*(Inauguration speech by Tulsibhai Patel, Resident Member of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, South India, on November 15, 1960)*

It is a great delight to me to have come to Ceylon which has historical, cultural and spiritual ties with India from ages immemorial. There was a time when the great Asoka sent his messengers specially to this land to spread the message of Lord Buddha and found a response in the aspiration of its people. Ceylon is thus a fertile land and the response it has given once again to the message of Sri Aurobindo as is evidenced by the opening of this Centre is a further proof of its spiritual fertility. Indeed, when I was invited to come here, I did not imagine that within the short period of a month, I would have the privilege of inaugurating a Centre dedicated to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

It is interesting to note that corresponding to the two poles of existence, Matter and Spirit, there is already a parallel movement of material and spiritual conquests in the history of mankind. The truth is that Matter is a vehicle of the Spirit and therefore the greater the capacity of Matter, the greater will be the possibility of spiritual transformation. It is therefore not surprising that the present age of material advancement and discovery and invention culminating in what we call the Sputnik Age should coincide with a greater conquest in the form of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental Manifestation which ushers in a new Supramental Age. It is true that to most of the people this greater conquest is not evident, but that is because of the material preoccupation of mankind. The message that I have the privilege to bring to you is that a new Power has come upon the earth which will answer the inmost demand of our Age, namely, the transformation of nature.

There was a time when Yoga was given to a select few and mankind was left to its ignorant rounds of dualities; but now the Time Spirit presses upon the whole of humanity to do Yoga. Yoga has now come to humanity, for humanity in its march has approached Yoga. This is a truth that Sri Aurobindo has revealed to us. But along with that revelation, Sri Aurobindo has given mankind a Yoga which he has termed the "Sunlit Path" and which, in spite of the stupendous results aimed at, is yet the easiest path. It demands no physical austerities or ascetic practices, but a sincere, an all-giving heart aspiring for the Divine and Divine alone.

The truth of our existence here is that all our endeavour is a secret effort and yoga of Nature: we are instruments of Nature. Answering to this

endeavour is a higher Nature which fulfils the aspiration from below. Without the answering Grace and flow of the Supreme Power, nothing can be effected. The principle of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is to apply this truth in practice; he therefore asks the embodied human nature to surrender completely to the Supreme Power which he calls the Supermind and allow it to effectuate itself and manifest the Divine Power on earth.

This is the kernel of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, but in its practice and consequences it is tremendous and stands as a great challenge to mankind. For Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied even with the attainment to the heights of spiritual realisation and Nirvana; he wants to bring the power of this realisation into the minutest acts of our life on earth. He demands a complete sincerity and will to change, an aspiration to be completely and exclusively the Divine's.

The emphasis is on practice and Sadhana. And on this occasion too, instead of theorising or speaking much, it will be better if we start right now with a drop of practice.

The true inauguration of this Circle may therefore be made by meditation, by an inner call from us to the Supreme Power, the Mother, to descend into us and to take us upwards in our spiritual journey.

## IN MEMORIAM : NARENDRA NATH DAS GUPTA

ON May 23, at 9.30 a.m. Narendra Nath Das Gupta breathed his last.

He was a double M.A. of the Calcutta University. Besides, he won the gold medal in Experimental Psychology. It was in the good old days when that University housed all the students of Dacca, Assam, Behar and Orissa. He had excelled in philosophy. His knowledge of Western philosophy equalled that of Eastern philosophy.

But there was about him a more impressive quality than all these. It was his childlike simplicity.

When he was a Professor of the Feni College in the district of Noakhali, Bengal, Sri Aurobindo asked him in a letter to send him a copy of a book written by Bertrand Russell.

It is but few that are chosen. But he was specially fortunate in having close intimacy with his Master who was easily accessible in the early days and who, many years back, advised him to leave the fiery Revolutionary Movement and launch into the field of Yoga. In due time the Master's call brought him over to the Ashram.

It is said that Sri Ramakrishna used to pine for the pure in soul like Naren (afterwards Swami Vivekananda) and others and would loudly invite them from the house-top : "Come, Mother's children, from all the points of the compass so that I may get solace from the company of your candid hearts."

As Sri Ramakrishna's Naren served his Master in his own grand way, even so Sri Aurobindo's Naren played his own humble but effective role.

Das Gupta was Head of the Department of Philosophy in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. He was also entrusted with the management of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press. At every critical moment he used to seek the Mother's instructions which he carried out to the letter. A world of enthusiasm was he. He looked upon all the workers of the Press as his own family members. They too duly reciprocated his affection.

He has left behind him a record of sixty-seven fruitful years. May the devoted soul reincarnate soon to do his mite in the Mission of earth's transformation initiated by the Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

CHINMOY

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Evolution of Thought** : A short survey of Philosophical thought *by Ramraj.*  
(For copies : Palaniappa Bros. Madras-5, Rs. 3)

According to Hegel the true history of mankind is the history of philosophy; for philosophy directly embodies the highest aspiration, the deepest seeking and endeavour of man down the ages. The evolution of the philosophical thought of mankind in various countries and ages, therefore, makes a very useful and interesting study. No doubt, the subject is exceedingly vast and often baffling.

In this little book under review the author has tried his utmost to give a bird's-eye view of the development of different systems of philosophical thought in different countries in different periods,—ancient, medieval and modern. In the Introduction the author pointing to the problems of thought says : “Thought of man endeavours to find answers to the questions ‘What exists ? How did it come into existence ? Why do we act thus and not otherwise ? What is the purpose of creation ? What is its ultimate goal?’...Human thought bears the impress of progress and evolution and constantly old problems disappear, new ones taking their place.”

The book discusses the development of Indian thought (some of the aspects of Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhistic and Vedantic philosophies), that of Chinese thought (some of the aspects of the philosophies of Lao-Tze and Confucius), that of Greek thought (the main ideas of the systems of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus and others), that of Roman thought, and modern contemporary thought (taking into account the philosophical systems of Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitehead, Sartre and Sri Aurobindo).

The author deserves our thanks for making an earnest effort to grasp the essentials of the main philosophical systems and put them down in such a short space. The statements at places have been unusually brief, perfunctory and need clarification. We, however, feel that the eager inquirer in the author will one day mature into a keen thinker.

PRAPATTI

# Students' Section

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## FOOD AND FORCES

### LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

*Q. I always take salt with curds and vegetables. Is it good?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not good. On the seashore one ought not to take too much salt. Salt in curds is always bad for health. 7-3-1933

*Q. X says that a little pepper should be taken with certain kinds of fruits. She got this bit of advice from you!*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is very strange—Pavitra himself gives me daily pamplemousse with sugar, never with salt and pepper. So how I could have written that, I do not know—there must have been a mistake somewhere either in my writing or her reading.

Pepper is not to be eaten with fruits—it is very bad for it would spoil the effect of the fruit. 6-7-1933

*Q. Is not a greedy desire for food and drink a movement of the vital being? Can it get felt as a physical need?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. The first effect of such a desire is on the physical.

*Q. Y told me that if anything comes to us without our asking for it we should not reject it. For example, someone offers us sweetmeat : we may accept it. But we should not be depressed when things desired by us are not given to us. What do you say about that?*

SRI AUROBINDO : How can such a rule stand? Supposing someone comes and offers you meat or wine, can you accept it? Obviously not. A hundred other instances could be given where the rule would not stand. What the Mother gives or allows you, you can take. 24-3-1933

*Q. I believe that one should not accept any food from outside. But when an impulse—desire for food or sex-urge or anything else—arises, should not one let it spread in full in oneself so that one might offer all of it to the Mother and aspire for its transmutation?*

SRI AUROBINDO : If you do that, the impulse may spread so far as to take hold of you and master you. If a wrong impulse comes, you must reject it as soon as you become aware of it. 24-3-1933

*Q. People who take outside food fall ill very often. Do they suffer merely because of the food or because they have been disobedient?*

SRI AUROBINDO : For both reasons. The food is bad or full of bad influences—also they create a struggle in themselves between the Yoga force and a foreign force. 1-12-1933

*Q. How is it that some people enjoy outside food without feeling any struggle?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It creates no conscious struggle if one does not care for the sadhana, but even then it accumulates bad forces which end either in illness or some other adverse result. 3-12-1933

*From NAGIN DOSHI*

## TALKS ON POETRY

*(These Talks were given to a group of students starting their University life. They have been prepared for publication from notes and memory, except in the few places where they have been expanded a little. Here and there the material is slightly rearranged in the interests of unity of theme. As far as possible the actual turns of phrase used in the Class have been recovered and, at the request of the students, even 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-NINE

MALLARMÉ, with precise yet puzzling image-combinations that would suggest a meaning as elusive as in wordless Music, sought to embody in poetic words a supra-intellectual sense of some perfect Beyond of Silence. His attitude to the work he had undertaken is stated by Stefan George (pronounced Gayorgay), one of his early admirers, in a forceful German phrase :

Und für sein denkbild blutend Mallarmé,

which means,

And bleeding for his ideal, Mallarmé.

It is well known how whole-heartedly Mallarmé dedicated his life to achieving his poetic object. But people who feel that he sought some Beyond mistake certain expressions in his poetry as giving the real mystic magnet to which his aspiration was drawn. Thus Robert Conquest, at the end of a sonnet, has very memorably but still mistakenly summed up Mallarmé's search by a contrasting combination of him with another poet, the English Andrew Marvell. The sonnet-end formulates a general ideal for poetry :

Marvell's absorption into local green,  
Mallarmé's cry for supernatural blue..

These are splendid lines and by themselves they set up an ideal worth pursuing. Marvell, as you perhaps know already, was a poet of the time of

Crabbe, Crashaw, Herbert, Donne, Vaughan : he belonged to the seventeenth century group which includes all these and whose members are called "the Metaphysicals". These poets carry that label not because they were all aching for something mystical: their chief characteristic is a marriage of physical sensations with abstract ideas by means of imagery that is intellectually ingenious and drawn from subtle learning and scholarship and philosophical and scientific literature—imagery escaping, for all its cleverness and far-fetchedness, the charge of being mere fancy and stark conceit. Thus Donne in an inspired lyric compares himself and his sweetheart to a pair of compasses : whether the lovers are near to each other or removed and apart, their relationship is shown very acutely as the posture or play of the instrument for describing circles, with two legs connected at one end by a movable joint. Most of the Metaphysicals did have strong religious leanings. But, as the phrase quoted about Marvell makes it clear, Marvell was not quite mystical-minded : he was more interested in earth's beauty than in the beauty of an otherwhere, and he was interested in local settings—the particular things in front of us. Into these things however, he infused a very novel significance and expressed himself with a sensitive and subtle wittiness.

Thus, in a famous poem, one on a Garden, he speaks of

Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

This couplet Conquest has in mind when he speaks of

Marvell's absorption into local green.

Marvell himself refers to a spot where trees make a shade over him, a green shade whose cool colour sinks into him, making him forget the entire world, mentally destroy as it were the whole of the creation and concentrate himself in just a delightful consciousness drenched in the sensation of greenness. But that is not all : there comes here, I believe, a bit of subtlety. The annihilation of all that's made does not only mean an exclusion of everything except a thought filled with the presence of the green shade : it means a creation by the mind, of something of its own from the objects of the world, so that all that is physically sensed is submerged in a subjective vision, vivid and wonderful, at the same time centred in the immaterial and matching the objective environment. Marvell would not be a Metaphysical without such a shade within a shade. But the delight in the local earth-scene is definitely there despite the inner touch. And this delight is, according to our sonneteer, one of the two important functions of the poetic imagination : the poetic imagination must not lose hold on earth, the small limited objects before us, the elements of our immediate experience.

The other important function is to save us from being earth-bound : we should be able, while keeping our grip on the terrestrial, to soar to the utmost limits of perception and conception. Away to the farthest distance our mind must penetrate with an insatiable hunger for the Supreme—for the supernatural, the divine. This counterpoise to local interest is set forth in the mystical suggestion of the line :

Mallarmé's cry for supernatural blue —

a line recalling the phrase I quoted to you some days back from Mallarmé himself :

Je suis hanté : l'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur! l'Azur!

Evidently this phrase has haunted Conquest. It is also the phrase, by the way, with which the students at the School where Mallarmé was condemned to teach English used to tease him. Every day they would scribble it on the blackboard. Poor Mallarmé would look each morning at the blackboard, forgetting that the same words would be there. He must have got sick seeing one of his most effective lines repeated endlessly. Yes, it is an extremely effective line and in itself sums up faultlessly the other extreme to what Marvell on the whole represents. A complete ideal comes in those two lines, very poetically worded. It is the same ideal that Wordsworth embodied at the close of his lyric on the Skylark. The Skylark is a bird pictured by Wordsworth as enjoying "a privacy of glorious light" in the lofty ether where it wings and sings, but the poet makes it still no despiser of "the earth where cares abound." Even while it is musically ecstatic in the celestial heights its eyes are on the little nest down below in the local tree spoken of by Marvell—down below in the Marvellous green which balances the Mallarméan blue high above. Wordsworth puts the beautiful balance of extremes in the couplet calling the Skylark

Type of the Wise who soar but never roam,  
True to the kindred points of heaven and home!

I wonder if this couplet could apply also to the spirit of my lectures ? But it would perhaps be too much of a compliment. The more correct way to state the truth about the peculiarity of my twice-a-week speechifying would seem to be :

Type of the Strange—a-soar while being earth-rover,  
Fixed on a point though wandering all over !

And the immediate point of the latest digression is that Mallarmé's *Beyond* in the fullest, in the final sense is not any superhuman blue.

No doubt, as that line from him attests, our Symbolist poet was concerned considerably with the Azure. But if we understand exactly how he was concerned, we shall see that it was not the God of his ultimate aspiration. To begin with, we have to relate the Azure to what his mind was bitten with from the very beginning of his poetic career : the state which he calls *Ennui*. There was always in the midst of life's movement and variety a gnawing boredom. This boredom, this *Ennui* had two shades. One came from the idealist in Mallarmé : his impatience with ordinary day-to-day existence with its meaningless triviality set in the midst of a huge grossness, the fatigue of soul which, as he said Hamletwise in *La Musique et les Lettres*, "one feels with this too solid and heavy world." The other shade was connected with the artist in him. The artist, obsessed by the idealist's boredom with the commonplace and the average, sought to bring forth a poetry expressive of what truly signifies, something the commonplace and the average cannot give—what Mallarmé terms "something other than the real". But this search for the right kind of poetic utterance was frustrated : the artist was unable to catch the truly significant to his heart's satisfaction : hence the fatigue of mind under the load of the inexpressible. And behind this sterility there is a strange experience which overwhelmed Mallarmé at a very early age.

Not knowing where to turn from the tiring banality of life, he had a yearning for some sort of self-annulment, a plunge into some sleep as it were of living death, a sleep which he at once dreaded and desired. This yearning seems to have become intense enough to bring about a subjective crisis. In his twenty-fifth year he had the experience that he was just an apparition through which a Void was somehow acting, that he was himself a Void strangely turned into name and form ! In a letter to his friend Cazalis he said that while writing he had actually to sit before a mirror in order to mark his own body and reassure himself of his own existence : if the mirror were removed he would feel faded into a vacuity. The words he used remind us strongly of a few phrases in two sonnets of Sri Aurobindo's. Of course, there is a difference in the quality of the Aurobindonian experiences and that of Mallarmé's, but the basic drive behind them seems identical. The sonnet called *The Word of the Silence* begins with the quatrain :

A bare impersonal hush is now my mind,  
A world of sight clear and inimitable,  
A volume of silence by a Godhead signed,  
A greatness pure of thought, virgin of will.

And in the sonnet named *Nirvana* we have the lines :

...A Peace stupendous, featureless, still  
 Replaces all. What once was I, in It  
 A silent unnamed emptiness...

Mallarmé writes to his friend : “Je suis maintenant impersonnel, et non plus le Stéphane que tu as connu, mais une aptitude qu’a l’univers spirituel à se voir et à se développer à travers ce qui fût moi.” (“I am now impersonal and no longer the Stéphane whom you have known, but a turn which the spiritual universe possesses for seeing itself and developing itself through what was I.”)

But there is no unmixed joy of release here : there is a delight but also a devastation, because Mallarmé seems to have contacted something deeply superconscious through something abysmally unconscious. His letter, at the height of the crisis, says : “J’ai imploré la grande Nuit, qui m’a exhaucé et a étendu ses ténèbres.” (“I have implored the great Night, who has hearkened to me and spread out her darknesses.”) When this experience of a painful paradise of self-erasure, behind which was active the truth stated by Sri Aurobindo at the close of another sonnet :

The darkness was the Omnipotent’s abode,  
 Hood of Omniscience, a blind mask of God—

when this experience was passed through the consciousness of the artist Mallarmé trying to poetise “something else than the real”, it assumed the character of an infinite ideality which refused to yield its secret in language. It got symbolised by the blank piece of paper before which he so often sat at night. In the inner room his wife would be in bed, with their little baby-girl, but in the outer room he would be sitting, all alone, a mirror on the opposite wall, a sheet of paper under his pen, his eyes gazing a while in the mirror and then fixing themselves on the whiteness. He would be unable, on the one hand, to lower himself by giving tongue to life’s commonplaceness and, on the other, to heighten himself into the speech of what is free and pure from the taint of the trivial. This suspension, sometimes night-long, between two incapacities is well touched off in those lines of his :

...la clarté déserte de ma lampe  
 Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend...

(...the lonely lustre of my lamp  
 On the empty paper guarded by its own white...)

This whiteness of the paper in front of him became a symbol at once of his sterility and of the dazzle of a Perfection he vaguely intuited. It is for the sake

of that dazzle which was as yet no more than a delightful daze that Mallarmé tells us he spent during his youth a period of bitter idleness, fighting with the difficulty of his poetic job and forsaking

l'enfance  
Adorable des bois de roses sous l'azur  
Naturel...

(The infancy  
Adorable of rose-woods with their crown  
Of natural azure...)

Here the Azure is recalled as if it were an Eden of young hopes and innocent hungers, an Eden of contentment with fresh inexperienced life, a self-contained felicity within Nature's own circle of flowers around and of the blue sky above—two realities that are often together and even merge in his moods.

But natural happiness, however sweet, was not for Mallarmé. Within this happiness he felt a variety of shades that, even while attractive, crossed the crystallinity of the new vision that he was developing out of his self-lost and world-lost contact with a Profound simultaneously dark and divine, the new aspiration that he was cultivating by fusing this contact with the aesthetic Platonism growing from his dissatisfaction with all tangible forms and his ache for the ideal Form enfranchised from limits and changes. We shall mark all the shades felt by him within the Azure. At the moment I shall end with repeating that the Azure was not his final cry. On the one side he was being sucked up into an enormous Black: on the other he was drawn towards a vast White. Within him they appeared to mix in a most disturbing manner. Beyond him they were felt as one indefinable Mystery. Between that depth of divine distance and his own perplexed existence there hung the multifoliate Azure.

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

## MY BODY

WHY should I think my body to be mine ?  
Mother's it is; Her Will has given it birth :  
Through the dream of the mortal mother that was mine  
It is the fruit of her creative mirth. .

Her child eternal and not this body am I.  
I live soul-free of this body made for me.  
It is mere Nature's tool in my soul's eye.  
And a living wave of Her vast Matter's sea.

Let this whole form contain the Mother Divine,  
Let it be guided by Her light and power,  
Within it may the Psyche always shine,  
And quickly bring its all-transmuting hour.

O body, child of the Mother infinite,  
Be thou a ground serene for Her golden play,  
Ever the Spirit's embrace in all things meet,  
And divinised live in Her Grace's deathless day.

SUDHIR CHAUDHURI

## CHILDREN'S SONG

We are Mother's children,  
We are Mother's children.  
No less are we, let Death come, we shall win at ease.  
Dangers we face on the way, and trample them under,  
Our battle-cry dries up oceans, sways over mountains.  
Sun and moon and stars move at Mother's word :  
Children are we of this Mother; who calls us weak ?  
What is sin for us, what is heaven or hell ?  
The work done, at eve-tide the Mother takes us in her lap.

CHANDIKANANDA SWAMI

*(Translation by Nolini Kanta Gupta from the Bengali)*

## SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

HISTORY was regarded at one time as a chronicle of dynasties of kings and a story of their conquests and defeats. Then it became, the story of the peoples, their development and growth. Later, it ceased to be only a registering of events and a mere objective reading of them in fact, a completely objective view is not even possible. Then the economic interpretation of history came and a way was opened not merely to an interpretation but to a philosophy of history. Oswald Spengler tried to read the working of 'destiny' in the course of historical time. Sri Aurobindo's two books *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Human Cycle* give us a new interpretation of human history. They lay bare the psychological basis of man's collective life, tracing the growth of human collectivities from the small and simple family to the big and complex nation-unit.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of history is related to his vision of an "Omnipresent Reality" of which he writes in his great book *The Life Divine*. The Omnipresent Reality is not merely an abstraction of philosophy. It is dynamic through all time and has manifested all the infinite universe we see, including the collective life of man. For, this Reality takes three positions, (or say rather, it is triple) in its view of man : Transcendental, Universal and Individual.

It is the universal aspect of this Reality which is seen in the drive for collective manifestation in Nature. Life is the field for the working out of this impulse and it takes two lines in the human being : one is the creation of a distinct individual or, say, ego-centre and the other the creation of greater and greater units of collective life.

The drive towards collective living is not confined to the human race; in Nature, the animal and insect worlds have the same trend : the beehive and the anthill are typical examples of a perfectly organized society. The difference is that in the lower kingdoms there is no individuality except perhaps functional individualisations of the group into workers and fighters. In the lower rung of Nature the instinctive function, as also the collective life, is fixed. In the case of man his collective life is evolutionary, starting from small units and tending to create ever greater aggregates.

It is important to note that the first hint of collective life, the family, contained strong psychological elements in its formation. It has slowly gone on evolving larger aggregates that assimilated the small ones and destroyed those that could not be so assimilated. Today humanity has attained to the nation as the largest realized unit of collective life.

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Now we shall deal with some of the ideas in *The Ideal of Human Unity*.<sup>54</sup> *Heterogeneous Empires*. The author has written about two kinds. One kind is that in which the nation-unit expands and includes other aggregates within itself. The example cited is that of France. The French had the idea of "France beyond the seas", which implied the inclusion of other races in the fold of the French family. Here would be an empire in which races that accept French culture and look up to France as the mother country would be admitted. Sri Aurobindo is doubtful about the success of this idea and it may have perhaps worked out if the French had possessed the genius of doing the right thing at the right time as the English generally have shown in their history. As things are, the idea has not been successful. The nation idea is too strong for the races in Africa and beyond the seas. England, who is the pioneer in colonial empires, freed Egypt and Iraq after the First World War and India, Burma and Ceylon after the Second; whereas France, though somewhere in her national consciousness genuinely wanting to include all African and other races in the French family, has signally failed to move with the time-spirit. It is after inviting a crisis in her own constitution that she had to delegate dictatorial powers to General De Gaulle in order to solve her Algerian problem.

Sri Aurobindo indicated that Europe and Asia could—in spite of all fundamental differences—come together on the bases of freedom and equality, to the mutual benefit of both. The distinct formation of continental groups has not taken place though recently the free Asian powers have tried to organize an Asian block at Bandung under Nehru's inspiration.

*World Empire*. The idea does not now seem to be practicable; even as a possibility it is very distant. So we need not discuss the point except perhaps to hint that such a contingency can only arise if Russia and U.S.A., or Russia and Communist China come together to dominate the world. Both combinations seem to be rather improbable and, even if either of them succeeds, it may prove to be a precarious success.

*The United States of Europe* Sri Aurobindo says that the United States of Europe is a distinct possibility (after the Second World War). But what has actually taken place is a federation, not one that can unite the continent, as was once dreamt of in the times of the Crusades, but a military alliance led by the U.S.A. against Soviet Russia. The NATO does not include all the powers of Europe; even as an alliance it is an uneasy group, France always objecting to U.S.A. leadership and protesting against her being treated as a second class power. The economic, political and commercial unification of Europe is far off; the main obstacles are the complicated system of administration of a modern state; national group egoism; fear; a sense of past grievances.

Sri Aurobindo points out that the United States of Europe, if it had been achieved, might have dominated Asia and Africa. That possibility has receded almost completely.

*The Evolution of the Nation-units.* The nation-unit began in various countries in the form of small states, *e.g.*, in India, Greece, Italy, Egypt, China, Arabia, Israel. Everywhere they began as small, loose, cultural and geographical aggregates. These were cultural units before they became nation-units; they were city states, regional kingdoms or tribal states like Athens, Sparta, the Gana Rajyas, and small principalities in India; some were small cultural republics.

Such small communities full of vigour of common life turned to freedom early; monarchy or papacy could not flourish in them. Sri Aurobindo says : "The tendency to a democratic freedom in which every man had a natural part in the civic life as well as in the cultural institutions of the State, an equal voice in the determination of law and policy and as much share in the execution as could be assured to him by his right as a citizen and his capacity as an individual,—this democratic tendency was inborn in the spirit and inherent in the form of the city state." So in social life "democratic equality is inevitable in a small community."

These city states advanced in culture because of the great creative force due to "complete participation not of a limited class, but of the individual generally in the many-sided life of the community, the sense each had of being full of the energy of all and of a certain freedom to grow, to be himself, to achieve, to think, to create in the undammed flood of that universal energy."

Modern life is trying to restore this condition in a clumsy fashion with vaster forces at its disposal.

The city states had three defects : 1) their slaves and women had no rights; 2) they could not solve the problem of interrelation of states except by war; 3) they became subject to narrow insularity.

So after the collapse of the Roman Empire the creation of nation aggregates was the work which Nature took up. The ancient city states and regional kingdoms, being cultural units in a geographical aggregate, had many points in common but also many divergences. These divergences prevented them from becoming a nation. In Egypt and India the attempt was made with partial success but generally the welding together of small units into the nation came about by subjugation of all by one clan or city, or regional unit, *e.g.* Rome, Macedon, the mountain tribes of Persia.

These new states of Asia instead of consolidating the nation went out for expansion and conquest under military impulse. The nation was not yet "firmly rooted, self-conscious, irresistibly one." So the pre-national empires, Assyria, Macedon, Rome, could not endure.

Where was the error ? The error lay in not carrying out the objectives of nature in the evolution of the nation aggregate. Sri Aurobindo says : "Aggregates of mankind are organised—small or great—on the same basis as the creation of vital organisms in physical nature." The methods employed are

primarily external and physical, but the object is to deliver, to manifest a supra-physical, a psychological principle latent in nature, behind the operation of life and body.

The vital ego is first organized. In the small aggregates the psychological element is strong along with the vital and physical; in the larger aggregates of the nation the psychological sense and vital energy are there but they are not organized. So, in the formation of the larger nation-unit all these elements are to be organized. These large nation-units would have to contain small groups, minor units within themselves. "The problem is," says Sri Aurobindo, "how the component units shall be subordinated to a new unity without their death and disappearance."

"In physical Nature vital organisms cannot live entirely on themselves; they live either by interchange with other vital organisms or partly by that interchange and partly by devouring others. This is common to separated physical life ... In unification of life, on the other hand, an assimilation is possible." And the problem of the larger nation-unit is that of such assimilation. Sri Aurobindo says: "There can be instead an association of units consciously subordinating themselves to a general unity which is developed in the process of their coming together."

The defect of the Roman Empire was that it destroyed the cultural individuality of the units it governed and so died of starvation for want of vital energy flowing to it from these units.

*The European Cycle of Nation-building.* This was a slow process in three stages of unity without killing the constituent elements. It was in the mediaeval age that it began. These stages are inevitable under complex modern conditions : 1) externally, circumstances and institutions compelling some kind of sufficient order and common civilization, 2) stringent order directed to unity : establishment of central control; 3) free internal development.

The first stage tends to create a social hierarchy based on a division of functions : religious, political, economic, work or labour. This process took place in Europe and in Asia under different names, but the principle was the same.

And yet it is curious to observe that Islam, based on equality, failed to evolve the nation-unit. In the struggle of church *versus* state, the latter won in Europe. Sri Aurobindo says: "It was a symbol of the law that a self-conscious and politically organised nation can have only one supreme and central authority and it must be a secular power." This is proved by the working of a theocratic state such as Pakistan in modern times. It has proved a retrograde step in the evolution of collective life. That it could not function effectively under a democratic constitution and that it was obliged to bring in a military dictatorship to save itself from chaos shows that a theocratic state in modern times is an anomaly. Pakistan is also a state that has come into being against the historical trend towards human unity.

The second stage is directed towards unity, towards establishing a centrality of control, a levelling and uniformity under central direction. When this stage became effective the hierarchy created by the first must loosen its grip or dissolve itself. In India British domination did this work. This stage takes away the freedom of the individual but establishes a central control : one law, one central authority.

In this connection, the historical role of monarchy has to be judged differently from the current view. It has to be seen as a powerful factor in bringing; the nation-unit into existence : for example, Ivan, Peter and Catherine in Russia; the Tudors and Plantagenets in England; the Capets in France; the Hohenzollerns in Germany; the Mikado in Japan—all these contributed to the attainment of maturity by their respective nations. Where this stage failed as in Poland, the result was disastrous. The severity seen during this stage was an inevitable stage in the formation of the nation-unit by political and mechanical means. Says Sri Aurobindo, "It was not the natural wickedness of the rulers. Monarchical authority concentrated in its activities the whole national life."

The second stage was bound to topple. The bourgeoisie led the revolt; they had talent, were irritated by inferiority, awakened by thinkers and they took the masses with them. The large nation-unit then came into existence.

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, the ideal of the democratic nation came to the front in France. It caught the mind of all the people, but even in Europe it did not work out immediately. Central Europe and Russia were imperialistic, Germany was monarchical, but still the idea had triumphed not only in Europe but in America and even in Asia where Turkey, Persia, India and China caught it. France gave the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

It was Germany who gave the first organized state in Europe, thus lending shape, unconsciously, to the socialistic ideal of equality. It was the perfectly organized state that gave Germany the tremendous successes she got initially in the First World War. And even though Germany was defeated, Sri Aurobindo says that the idea for which she stood, the perfectly organized state, had won and other states in Europe followed the state idea. It is this which now figures in some of the nations as democratic socialism.

"The nation-unit is not formed and does not exist merely for the sake of existing," says Sri Aurobindo. The race is in labour of formation of a larger mould. Yet the nation-unit may stand in the way of unity of mankind.

But "liberty" has become the watchword of the race : religion suppressed liberty and had to abdicate; kings trampled liberty under their feet—they had to go. Capitalism tried to put down liberty; it is threatened with extinction. "With liberty man gets his dignity and freedom of manhood."

"The real strength of this tendency is in its intellectual, idealistic and emotional parts. Its economic causes are partly permanent and therefore

elements of strength and secure fulfillment, partly artificial and temporary and therefore elements of insecurity and weakness. The political incentives are the baser parts of the amalgam; their presence may even vitiate the whole result and lead in the end to a necessary dissolution and reversal of whatever unity may be initially accomplished."

With liberty, justice is necessary and therefore equality—not absolute equality, for that is not possible, but equal opportunity in life, training, share in the state. This is the proclaimed goal of secular, democratic socialism.

"The new Supranational Order must be a free association of international life constituted by free nations and it must lead peacefully and by a natural unfolding of the spiritual and ethical progress of the race to such a secure, just and healthy political, social and economic foundation as might enable mankind to turn from its preoccupation with these lower cares and begin at last that development of its higher self which is the nobler part of its potential destiny, or if not that—for who knows whether Nature's long experiment in the human type is foredoomed to success or failure—at least the loftiest possibility of our future which the human mind can envisage."

*Fraternity.* "Perhaps liberty and equality, liberty and authority, liberty and organised efficiency can never be quite satisfactorily reconciled so long as man, individual and aggregate, lives by egoism, so long as he cannot undergo a greater spiritual and psychological change, and rise beyond mere communal association to that third ideal which some vague inner sense made the revolutionary thinkers of France add to their watchwords of Liberty and Equality : the greatest of all the three, though till now only an empty word on man's lips, the ideal of Fraternity, or less sentimentally and more truly expressed, an inner Oneness. That no mechanism, social, political, religious has ever created or can create; it must take birth in the soul and rise from hidden and divine depths within."

A. B. PURANI

## FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS OF ALL YOGA

(Basic Document for the All-India Yoga Health Seminar, New Delhi)

1. YOGA is union with the Highest, the Supreme and the Ultimate in existence, the Divine. It is also the method leading by progressive stages to such union. It is, therefore, the science and art of self-perfection too, self-perfection conceived variously as the integration of the *prāṇa*, the life-force, of the *citta-vṛttis*, the mental activities and of the whole personality, the *śarīra*, the *prāṇa*, the *manas* and the *antarātman*, the body, the life, the Mind and the Soul. It has involved an ascension in consciousness through one or other part of personality, the *prāṇa* in Hathayoga, the *manas* in Raja Yoga and the *antarātman* in Integral Yoga. In the case of Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, the parts are respectively the knowing, feeling and willing aspects of consciousness. But yoga has also involved a descent of the Highest into the human *ādhār*, the vessel, the instrument, and consequent transformation of it into the nature of the Highest as in Tantra Yoga and Integral Yoga.

The above characterisation is essentially psychological and it would cover practically all systems of sadhana and yoga, the Buddhist, the Jain, those of the Christian mystics, the Muslim Sufis and others.

2. Yoga is, indeed, the essential education, as it promotes the growth and perfection of personalty and consciousness and not merely its enrichment through acquisition of information. Its aim is to develop the inherent capabilities of life and thus make life fuller, richer and more competent.

Evidently, like education, it is meant for all, though a few may be able to pursue it to its highest levels of perfection. A general atmosphere of yogic interest is bound to promote health and harmony of body, life, mind and the personality as a whole. It will necessarily encourage attitudes of sincerity, honesty and self-examination and thereby promote better social understanding and relations. In this aspect it can, in course of time, begin to influence for good the international relations too. .

In the Indian scheme of knowledge the place of yoga-vidya has been the supreme, the first, as it seeks to improve and enhance the human knower's capabilities of knowing and thereby widen the sphere of the knowable. To it the Absolute too is directly knowable, but only to greatened capabilities of knowing. The significance of this knowledge is inestimable, as it is this knowledge that can give true certitude to all our knowledge of the phenomenal.

Without it the most verified knowledge is, whether in its nature or use, necessarily stricken with doubt, ambiguity and vacillation.

Indian culture too has, accordingly, given to the yogic pursuit the highest value. This has held up standards of sincerity, honesty, self-reform and self-improvement. It has, however, in the past served the ends of individualism, since personal salvation was the supreme goal of life. But, in contemporary times, yoga has received a fresh extension. It has been affirmed that the entire evolution of life, from the animal to the human, has been a progress to higher and higher grades of consciousness and the present mental consciousness of man is further tending towards a more integral and spiritual consciousness. Besides, man is not only an individual; he carries in himself a universality too. He is a particular instance of humanity as a whole and, therefore, an integral part of it. His full development should, consequently, imply the growth of the true individuality in him, but also the universality he represents and that means the development of his kind, his fellowmen. As his fellowmen progress he advances in his universal aspect of consciousness, otherwise he remains handicapped in that part.

This is a most interesting development in the history of Indian spirituality, as it gives it a direct socialistic turn in place of the old individualistic bias.

3. Yoga is, it may be reaffirmed, an integration of the essential energies of life. It is evident that an aim of life, as a whole, is essential to it. A clear aim steadily pursued is itself a great integrative force and all yogic disciplines do involve a definite aim. An aim gives, in fact, a whole philosophy of life. It is, therefore, necessary to emphasize that a proper philosophy of life is a most helpful preparation for yoga and, really, an integral part of it.

4. As a further factor of the total outlook and perspective of yogic practice, it may be stated that yogic effort involves a two-fold movement, a movement from below upwards, of the less organised to the higher integrations, and from above downwards, of the higher integrations to the less organised. The emphasis on the one or the other has varied from system to system, but here the truth of both of them may well be affirmed. It may also be affirmed that all effort, whether of professional work or social service or personal recreation, when made in a spirit of dedication and self-giving to a high and a noble aim, leads to a movement upwards and it evokes an action and response from above downwards too. However, the same effort can be made in a self-indulgent way; then it becomes a disintegrative force, the force of *bhoga*. When not self-indulgent, it may yet be self-acquisitive; then there can be an upward movement of integration but without a reciprocating action of the higher.

This principle is of great importance, since, if rightly understood and followed, it can effectively turn all life into yogic practice and endow it with increasing yogic and spiritual benefits.

5. As to the concrete form of the practice it follows clearly, in particular

from the foregoing point, that the exercises must comprehend all the parts and planes of human personality. They must be physical, mental and spiritual. Under the physical or biophysical come the practice of Asana and Pranayama, under the mental the practice of concentration, pursuit of knowledge, devotion and selfless action and under the spiritual the deepest inspirations and aspirations of life.

Surely, in an attempt to raise the essential standards of life in general or that of bringing yoga nearer to the life of the people and making its benefits available to them, a comprehensive system of exercises must be evolved and recommended.

A general education as to the meaning of yoga, its various systems, the aim of life and the attitudes of self-indulgence (*bhoga*), of self-acquisitive discipline and of self-dedicating activity constitute the preparation for the yogic practice. Self-indulgence, Self-control and Self-Consecration can be said to be the key-words of the art of living. Self-indulgence is dissipation and disintegration, Self-control is egoistic integration and Self-consecration is the way to divine harmonisation, perfection and fulfilment. An understanding and appreciation of these truths is, indeed, the indispensable equipment for the yogic pursuit.

Under the physical or biophysical exercises the practice of Asanas is, indeed, the most useful for a general application. They bring about an integration and enhancement of the *prāṇa-śakti*, the vital force. They give to the body suppleness, endurance and immunity. The soundness of the biophysical part of personality, which the Asanas directly produce, also induces in a measure health and well-being of the mind.

It may, however, be stated here that other forms of physical exercise too, when done with a sense of conscious purpose and openness to the universal energies of life, can lead to the realisation and enjoyment of the yogic benefits.

Pranayama too is a biophysical process, but more directly instrumental to the control and discipline of mind and its vagrant activities. There are many forms of it, but the simplest consists of equal rhythmic movements of inspiration and expiration.

Among the other recognised biophysical processes are the various *kriyās*, the more important being *dhoti* and *nyoli*. These need expert guidance and therefore cannot be recommended for general practice without proper aid.

Under mental exercises come those of concentration, directed and purposive thinking, silence or the capacity to be quiet and free from thinking activity, equality or control and freedom from emotional disturbances and the training of will-power. These can have a great variety of forms. Concentration can be practised on an external object to start with, but one should aim at achieving concentration of consciousness in the head or the heart or both according to

inclination. Such concentration leads to wonderful unfoldments of new capacities.

Among the mental exercises, the fundamental one, which inspires and moves all these and others of the kind, is the urge and force of aspiration, the will, eager and fervent, for things higher and nobler. The force of this will is the energy that makes for progress. The exercises, which enhance aspiration, are therefore the most important. And the chief among them is *satsang*, spiritual fellowship or association with the aspiring persons, directly or through their word.

Further exercises under this head would be those connected with the right regulation of the basic functions of life, *viz.*, Food, Sleep, Activity or Work, Fatigue, Rest etc. A clear understanding of the aim and the purpose of these in life, a recognition of their various qualities, an appreciation of their true qualities and of the method to improve them progressively and the ability of right adjustment of them to the peculiar needs of one's personality are a matter of great personal education and an enormous achievement in life. All this is basically yogic and truly meant for all. This is foundational to all progress in life, mental, moral, social, spiritual.

The right regulation of the basic functions of life primarily involves one exercise, *viz.*, that of cultivation of good habits. Ordinarily, when we want to form a new habit, we try to acquire a piece of behaviour. The whole approach is more or less external. But, in fact, it is a case of reintegration of the will in a particular matter. For that, an aspiration for the right will and right behaviour and a rejection of all interfering and refractory impulses are the process to pursue. And this pursuit, if done sincerely, leads to the acquisition of a habit more effectively, more smoothly and more expeditiously.

The practice of equality and freedom from emotional disturbances has already been referred to. In this connection one should also consider the emotional refinement and elevation through the appreciation and enjoyment of poetry, music, painting, sculpture and other artistic forms and expressions. The highest in this direction is the practice of universal love and delight.

In the training of will the most important principles are the awareness of one's desires and volitions, constant intention to organise and harmonise them, due care in resolving upon a thing and fidelity in its execution. When resolutions made are not disregarded but carefully executed, the joy of achievement leads to a sense of power and an increase in the ability to execute. At its highest through self-consecration one can attain to identification with the Divine Will and a superhuman power.

Under spiritual exercises come the deepest inspirations and aspirations of life. These occur to almost everybody, though they pass off unnoticed and unrecognised for the most part. But even then their potency is the highest in life. It is they that guide and determine the direction and evolution of life.

It is, therefore, extremely important to learn to recognise them through careful and persistent self-examination.

They constitute what is called faith in life and the Gita has effectively clinched the matter in the words **यो यच्छुद्ध सः एव सः** 'as a man's faith, so is he himself'. Thus the practice and the growth of the power of faith is an essential spiritual exercise. This really means an increase in the awareness of the true, the real, the higher and the ultimate. In one word, it means awareness of the destiny of life and the divine guidance of all existence.

The attitude of reverence is intimately connected with the sense of faith. Reverence for the higher leads to a secret awareness of it, which constitutes faith or an inner acceptance of it even though reason has not yet confirmed it.

6. The exercises for the growth of personality are, in fact, inexhaustible. The more important thing to know and to remember is the aim and the objective, which is the increasing perfection of life in its different parts and aspects. If one does that, he will be able to plan and formulate his own appropriate exercises for a particular stage of development.

As to the time in the day best suited for practice and the duration of time, the best general rule is the individual's convenience, capacity and effectivity in working. The effectivity in working of an exercise at a time is relative to an individual's capacity to do it without getting fatigued and to assimilate its effects. For every new mastery a state of freshness, lightness, joy and enthusiasm is obviously helpful. Therefore early morning time, soon after refreshing sleep, is recommended for all kinds of exercises discussed above. Again evening time, after some refreshment and rest at the end of the day's work, is a favourable time. Some would find the time after the mid-day rest very congenial for certain exercises. The individual should aim at determining these points for himself as soon as possible, though in the beginning he may find it difficult to do so. But in any case these occasions and durations of exercise should not be entertained exclusively. All exercises are meant to change life as a whole and any violation and infringement of the right attitude in any exercise taking place at any time should be taken notice of and rectified.

7. Union with the Divine, perfection and fulfilment are today not very dynamic goals for man. In this pragmatic age health, physical and mental, and efficiency in work are the real moving ideals of life. Yoga, which aims at the highest perfection, does certainly include these empirical goals and provides for them as the basis and the preparation for the highest achievement. The Asanas and Pranayama are, indeed, invaluable aids to bodily health. They have a great preventive value. The Asanas have also a high curative value. They do always include a right regulation of the basic functions of life : food, sleep, work, rest etc. Then their value for health becomes much greater.

As to the mental health yoga provides a psycho-synthetic system of prevention and cure of disorders. Under its approach of integration of personality

it demands an increasing awareness of one's desires and volitions and a persistent attempt to organise and consecrate them. This leads to reduction and eradication of inner conflicts and tensions. And the most general cause of mental suffering are such conflicts and tensions. A right management of one's desires and volitions would inevitably be an effective prevention of inner tensions. For cure a psycho-analysis, an analytical understanding and appreciation, of the confused volitions of the past and a proper psycho-synthesis for the future would be needed.

The Asanas and Pranayama too, through the health of the body, contribute to mental health. The latter, however, has even a direct relation with the mind.

Efficiency in work too is a most cherished ideal today. We seek an increasing capacity for work, a comprehensive command over different aspects of a matter and an effective power of execution. All these are evidently related to the qualities of concentration and integration of personality. Yoga, which makes concentration and integration its very goals, must necessarily help the growth of efficiency in work.

It is perfectly possible to turn to yoga for health and efficiency alone. But yoga argues that a total and a comprehensive approach to life is able to mobilise the energies of life more completely and thereby effectuate these lesser achievements more easily. A high aim of life, we have said, is itself a great integrative force. It is, therefore, well worth considering whether to follow the full technique of yoga or avail of a partial aspect of it.

INDRA SEN