



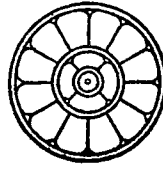
# MOTHER INDIA

SEPTEMBER 1961

Price : Re. 1-0-0

**Annual Subscription: Inland, Rs. 10.00: Foreign, Sh. 16 or \$ 2.50**

**Publication Office : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2**

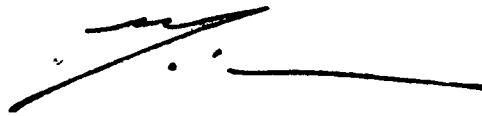


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIII

No. 8

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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## CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
TALKS OF THE MOTHER	<i>A. B. Purani</i>	... 5
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 8
GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO (Letters) : The Ego	<i>from Nagin Doshi</i>	... 16
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE PROBLEM OF MAN	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 18
SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 21
TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	... 24
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM : The Ashram Atmosphere ( <i>Continued</i> )	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 27
<i>The Life Divine</i> OF SRI AUROBINDO : ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS (Classified Excerpts)	<i>Compiled by Nathaniel Pearson</i>	... 38
A PRAYER (with Sri Aurobindo's Comment)	<i>Jyotin</i>	... 42
TWO POEMS : Unite My Mind—Grace	<i>Tony Scott</i>	... 43
SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS : "Vingt-et-uns"	<i>Chimanbhai</i>	... 44

## CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
JOIN THE FARANDOLE (Poem)	<i>Ranajit</i>	... 46
THUS SANG MY SOUL : Poems to the Mother	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 47
THOUGHTS	<i>Girdharlal</i>	... 48
HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US: Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother	<i>Compiled by Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 49
FILMS TO HELP SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF MANKIND	<i>Premmath</i>	... 51

### Students' Section

RÉPONSES — ANSWERS	<i>The Mother</i>	... 53
AUX ENFANTS	<i>The Mother</i>	... 55
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	<i>from NaginDoshi</i>	... 56
TALKS ON POETRY : Talk Thirty-one	<i>Amal Kiran (K.D.Sethna)</i>	... 59
AUGUST 23 : TO ANDRÉ (Poem)	<i>Chinmoy</i>	... 69
LEGEND AND SYMBOL (Poem)	<i>K.B.Sitaramayya</i>	... 69
LINES TO THE ALL-HYPHEN STORM	<i>Leena</i>	... 70

## TALKS OF THE MOTHER

*(These are Notes written down after attending the talks of the Mother in 1947 apropos of her Prayers and Meditations. Every day a Prayer or two were read out and the Mother commented on them or answered questions put to her. Most of the comments deal with perennial problems of the spiritual life. Some refer to particular occasions; but, just because those occasions are now past, the comments do not lose their point : they always have a wider bearing and join up with the general ones. The Notes are by A. B. Purani.)*

6-10-1947

Prayer read : April 19, 1915

I WAS at Lunel in France. The prayer refers to an experience I had when I was not physically well and was in fact narrowly saved from death. I had an inflammation of the nerves.

I was lying in an easy-chair, in front of a garden. I saw that the spiritual power was still active in me : I could go on with occult experiments in spite of the illness. I used to concentrate on things and persons and circumstances and wanted to see if the power worked. It worked very well on the mental and vital planes. Then I broadened the field of activity. I could go on doing my work in various parts of France and America and other places. I could clearly see the faces of the persons worked upon. They could be made to do what they by themselves could not. These were controlled experiments.

I could see that nothing could stop the work : even without my body the work could go on.

Wherever the call was, I could attend. People often appeal to a higher force. The appeals sometimes come to me. During the Second World War many appeals came and there was always a helping answer.

*Q. Suppose there are many calls at one and the same time.*

They are all attended to, at once. But not all remain afterwards in memory. Only the most important and the clearest ones continue in the consciousness.

I saw some horrible and atrocious things in the course of my work and

I did not know at that time what they meant but subsequently all the cruelties were perpetrated in the War.

*Q. If people do not know you physically, how can they receive help ?*

The reception depends on their religious beliefs, the sort of mind they have, the form they give to their beliefs, the urgency and sincerity of the call.

During the Second World War Poland called out most for help. The most interesting were the appeals from children. They are very sincere, they feel the horror but have no exaggerated idea of things. I remember two children, a boy and a girl. The boy was about twelve years old, the girl about ten. They came home and found everything destroyed. They called out to their parents and there was no answer. The agony in their hearts was intense when they went from room to room. Then the sister asked the brother not to be disheartened. She sat down and I entered into her and gave her inner support. Her heart got courage and the brother was comforted. Then some help arrived and they were rescued.

7-10-1947

Prayer read : November 2, 1915

The True Consciousness had already been reached. It was only the physical consciousness that now reached the complete identification with the Divine. It happened in Paris.

Now all the sense-experiences were offered up to the Divine—all the movements of life—in a single gesture and not like the ordinary consciousness giving up one thing after another. It was a total holocaust—the offering not of this or that movement of life but Life itself ! Then I found that everything had undergone a change.

When there is no separate individuality, the world appears quite different. It is the little ego that does not allow one to know things truly.

8-10-1947

Prayer read : November 26, 1915

In this experience the mind did not participate. In many spiritual experiences the mind need not participate at all.

I was in a house in Paris, which had three rooms below and one above. It was an *atelier*, a pavillion with a big garden. The time was evening.

The mind, of course, should always be quiet for one to have any deep experience. In my mind there was no preconception.

I became completely identified with the earth consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo explained this experience as a very high one because the consciousness came back to the body directly—that is, to the individual being.

There is a symbolism in the experience but I had no idea at all of the symbols before the experience. That is how it should always be—without any preconception in the mind of the sadhak.

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## 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 ninth 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 30, 1938

DURING the sponging there was a little talk on Homoeopathy. Somebody said he was puzzled how an infinitesimal quantity could act.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is no puzzle to me. Sometimes the infinitesimal is more powerful than the mass. It approaches more and more the subtle state and from the physical goes into the vital or dynamic and acts vitally.

In the evening the talk was started by a reading of S's letter describing vividly his sense of persecution by people.

P : These people get possessed by the idea of persecution.

N : Is it a possession ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, a possession of the nervous system and the vital mind, though it is not like insanity. It is, however, very difficult to convince these people that their ideas of persecution are false. There are two types : one imagines all sorts of things—eighty percent of cases are of this type—and the other twists everything.

My brother Manmohan had this persecution mania. He was always in fear of something terrible happening to him. For instance, he used to think that the British Government was going to arrest him.

N : He was a very successful professor, I hear. People used to listen to his lectures with rapt attention.

SRI AUROBINDO : He was very painstaking. Most of the professors don't work so hard. I saw his books interleaved and marked and full of notes. (*Then looking at Purani*) I was not so conscientious as a professor.

P : People who heard you—even those who politically differ from you—speak very highly about your lectures.

SRI AUROBINDO : I never used to look at the Notes and sometimes my explanation didn't agree with them. I was Professor of English and for some time of French. What was surprising to me was that students used to take down everything verbatim and mug it up. This sort of thing could never have happened in England.

N : But we did it in England.

SRI AUROBINDO : Did what ?

N : Take notes.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's different. You can take notes and utilise them in your own way.

N : No, we used to take everything down verbatim. The professors brought in many theories, a lot of recent discoveries. Besides, each professor had his own fad. So we had to do it.

SRI AUROBINDO : In Medicine it may have been so, for there is not much scope for original thinking there. But in Arts it was different. You listened to the lectures, noted down what you liked and then made what you wanted of it. There was always a demand for the student's point of view. In India the students, besides taking down my notes, used to get notes of professors from Bombay, especially if they happened to be examiners.

Once I was giving a lecture on Southey's *Life of Nelson*. And my lecture was not in agreement with the Notes in the book. So the students remarked that it was not at all like what was in the Notes. I replied that I hadn't read them. In any case, they are mostly rubbish. I could never go into the minute details. I read, and left it to my mind to absorb what it could. That's why I could never become a scholar.

Up to the age of 15 I was known as a very promising scholar at St. Paul's. After 15 I lost this reputation. The teachers used to say that I had become lazy and was deteriorating.

N : How was that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because I was reading novels and poetry. Only at the examination time I used to prepare a little. But when now and then I wrote Greek and Latin verse my teachers would lament that I was not utilising my remarkable gifts because of laziness.

When I went up with a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, Oscar Browning commented that he had not seen such remarkable

papers. As you see, in spite of my laziness I was not deteriorating !

N : Was there any prejudice against Indians at that time ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. There was no distinction between an Englishman and an Indian. Only the lower classes in England used to shout "Blackie, Blackie." But the prejudice was just beginning. It was brought by Anglo-Indians and Englishmen returning from the Colonies. It is a result of democracy, I suppose. But among the cultured Englishmen it was unknown and they treated us as equals.

In France one never heard of such prejudices. I don't know if you have read in the papers the story about a Paris Hotel. Pressed by a number of Americans, this Hotel asked some Negroes to leave. As soon as the news reached the President's ear, he sent an order that if the Hotel proprietor did this his licence would be cancelled. The French have Negro Governors and other Negro officers, not to speak of taxi-drivers etc. There was even a Senegalese Deputy who used to dominate over the Governors. But I wonder why they have never appointed an Indian Deputy in Pondicherry.... The English people, on their side, have a certain liberality and common sense.

N : Liberality ?

SRI AUROBINDO : By liberality I don't mean generosity but a freedom of consciousness and a certain fairness. Because of this, along with their public spirit, there is not such corruption in public life as in France or America. They can vehemently criticise one another in the Press, even personally, but that does not affect their private relations. You have seen how Brailsford has attacked Chamberlain, but their friendship or private relations won't be affected.

N : That will only be appearances.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, no. It is quite genuine. And there is a great freedom of speech in England.

N : Vivekananda said that it is difficult to make friends with Englishmen but once it is done it lasts a lifetime.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite true.

P : The Japanese, Jean Herbert says, are also like that. Generally they are only polite and formal, but once you can make friendship they are very good friends.

SRI AUROBINDO : Has he been to Japan ?

P : Yes, and to China also.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, they are very polite in their manner and conduct. But they don't admit you to their private life. They have a wonderful power of self-control. They don't lose their temper or quarrel with you, but if their honour is violated they may kill you afterwards. They can be bitter enemies. They have a sense of honour as well as of dishonour, unfortunately, and in one case they may kill you and in the other be killed at your door. If a Japanese killed himself at an Englishman's door, it would be impossible for the English-

man to live there any more. If a robber entered a Japanese house and the householder told him that he required some money, the robber would part with some of his loot; but if the householder said that he had a debt of honour to pay, then the robber would leave the whole sum behind and go away. Imagine such a housebreaker in England or America !

The Japanese have a high sense of chivalry too. In the Russo-Japanese War, when the Russians were defeated the Mikado almost shed tears thinking of the Czar. That was a true sense of chivalry.

When a congregation of fifty or sixty thousand were caught in a fire due to an earthquake, there was not a single cry, not a flutter. All were standing up and chanting Buddhist hymns. That's a heroic people with wonderful self-control.

N : If they have such self-control they would be very good for Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ah, self-control is not enough for Yoga. The Japanese are more an ethical than a spiritual race. Their ethical rules are extremely difficult to follow.

But these things perhaps belong to the past. It is a great pity that people who have carried such ideals into practice are losing them through contact with European civilisation. That is the great harm which European vulgarisation has done to Japan. Now you find most people mercantile in their outlook : they will do anything for the sake of money.

Naka's mother, when she returned from America to Japan as is the custom with the Japanese, was so horrified to see the present-day Japan that she at once went back.

That the Japanese are not a distinctly spiritual race can be shown from an example. Hiraswa, a friend of Richard's and the Mother's, was a great patriot but he did not like the modern tendencies of Japan; so he used to say, "My soul has become a traitor."

P : Have you read Noguchi's letters to Tagore defending Japan's aggression ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No; but there are always two sides to a question. I don't believe in fanatical shouts against imperialism. Conquests of that sort were at one time regarded as the normal activity of political life; now you do it under pretexts and excuses. Almost every nation has been doing it. What about China herself ? She took Kashgar in the same way. The very name "Kashgar" shows that China had no business to be there. There is also the question of war. Apart from new fashions of killing, there is nothing wrong in war as such. All depends on circumstances. It is the Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy that cries out against it. The French people don't.

P : It is said the French people don't usually lose their head, but when they lose it, they lose it well.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes; India also was considered docile and mild, like

an elephant, but once the elephant is off the line you had better keep out of his way !

Now there is a new morality in the air. They talk of pacifism, anti-nationalism, anti-militarism. But the talking is done by those who can't do things. In any case it has to stand the test of time.

P : Jwalanti (Madame Monod-Herzen) used to be wild when England began to shout against Italy's war on Abyssinia. Of course, she does not defend Italy but England should be the last nation to raise a cry.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so. England was the only country that defended air-bombing because she wanted to kill the Pathans !

N : Has European civilisation today nothing good in it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It has lowered the moral tone of humanity. No doubt, it has brought in hygiene, sanitation, etc. But even the nineteenth century civilisation with its defects was better than what we have now. Europe could not stand the test of the last World War. The ancient peoples tried to keep to their ideals and to raise them still higher while Europe lost all her ideals after the War. People have become cynical, selfish. What you hear of post-war England or post-war Germany is not all wrong. Have you not heard Arjava (J. Chadwick) inveighing against post-war England ? I suppose it is all due to commercialism.

DECEMBER 31, 1938

We were thinking how to begin the talk. Time was passing and yet none could find any question. Then P came forward with a few paintings of Picasso. There were four or five pictures. One was that of a man and woman, another of a human figure with a birdlike face, and a third of a figure with three eyes.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is some power of expression in the picture of a man and woman. The other one looks like a Brahmin pandit with a *tiki*—tuft of hair—on the head. The face represents the animal origin still left in him and one of the eyes seems the Prajna-Chakra, another the throat-centre and so on. When these modern artists want to convey something, the spectators find it difficult to understand. How on earth is one to make out what the artist means—even if he does mean to convey something ? It is all right if you don't want to convey anything but merely express yourself and leave people to feel about it as they like. In that case one gets an impression and even though one can't put it in terms of the mind one can feel the thing, as in the case of the two figures here. But, instead, if you convey something and say like the Surrealist poets, "Why should art mean anything ? Why do you want to understand ?", then it becomes difficult to accept. Take the picture of the Brahmin pandit. It would have been all right without those eyes. But the

eyes, or what seem to be eyes, challenge at once the mind to think what it all means.

(Addressing P) Have you seen a certain Futurist painting representing a man in different positions ? The artist wanted to convey movement in painting—most absurd ! You may just as well draw our guest-house “Golconda” walking about.

Each art has its own conditions and limitations and you have to work under those conditions and with those limitations.

P : I hope the aspiration for purification will purify the field of art also. Élie Faure has an idea that France sacrificed her architectural continuity of five hundred years for securing the first place in painting in Europe. There is no all-Europe name in painting in any other country.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course. France leads in Art. What she begins, others follow. But architecture has stopped everywhere.

P : Élie Faure says the machine is also a piece of architecture.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

P : Because it is made of parts and fulfils certain functions.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then you also are a piece of architecture. Everything is made of parts. The motor-car too is architecture then.

P : X finds these paintings of Picasso very remarkable.

SRI AUROBINDO : Does he understand anything about them ?

P : I suppose the more mysterious a thing, the more remarkable it must be !

SRI AUROBINDO : People are getting to be mystic without their knowing it. You know, Hitler is a sort of mystic. He says he is guided by an inner voice. He goes into silence in his palace and waits for the voice. Whatever the voice says he will carry out. Jwalanti's son's friend writes that he is absolutely undependable. His generals, financiers etc. don't know what his next step will be. Today he may say one thing and tomorrow he may say quite the contrary and upset everything. Most unreliable and inconsistent. He is possessed by some supernormal Power and it is from this Power that the voice, as he calls it, comes. Have you noted that people who at one time were inimical to him come into contact with him and leave as his admirers ? It is a sign of that Power. It is from this Power that he has constantly received suggestions and the constant repetition of the suggestions has taken hold of the German people. You will also mark that in his speeches he goes on stressing the same ideas—this is evidently a sign of that vital possession. But he is not insane. What he says on the whole hangs perfectly together.

I think it is in a photograph in *L' Illustration*, where Hitler, Goebbels and Goering are together, that the characters of the three come out very well. In other photos the disclosure is not so striking : the expressions get hidden,

But here Hitler gives the impression of the face of a Paris street-criminal. Goebbels shows a narrow sharp-cut face with cunning eyes. Goering is marked by disequilibrium : he was actually in a mental hospital for some time. The three are possessed by forces of the Life plane.

In Hitler's case it is successful ruffianism with a diabolical cunning and, behind it, the psychic being of a London cabman—crude and undeveloped. That is to say, the psychic character in the man consists of some futile and silly sentimentalism. It is that silly sentimentalism that finds expression in his paintings, I suppose.

In a photograph of the Munich Pact I saw Hitler with Chamberlain. This man with a great diabolical cunning in his eyes was looking at Chamberlain who looked like a fly before a spider on the point of being caught—and he actually was caught.

Mussolini had a great power. But when I saw the two dictators together after Munich, strangely enough I found Mussolini almost weak by contrast, as if Hitler could put him in his pocket. Daladier claims to be the strong man of France but he also is nothing beside Hitler.

N : What about Stalin ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Stalin has the face of an astute and confident ruffian. No one thought of Hitler as having anything in him. Then came the vital development, the vital Power holding him in its clutch. Mussolini is at least human with a human character. Hitler is terribly cruel—another trait that comes out very clearly in his photograph. It is strange to see this outburst of cruelty after the humanitarianism of the nineteenth century—it exceeds even the Christian religious tyranny. In ancient times there was at least pride, sense of honour etc., for which people died. We say that the Romans were cruel, but even they were human if not humanitarian in comparison and they would have been shocked by what is done in Hitler's Germany, like the deliberate cold-blooded murder of the Jews.

P : I was extremely shocked to hear of Von Schleicher being murdered in a new purge.

SRI AUROBINDO : Hitler killed his lieutenant who had raised him to power on a charge of immorality, and that again is the London cabman mentality. But it is an instance of his diabolical cunning. He had known all the time of that man's homosexuality.

P : Schomberg was telling me : "Mr. P, we say but we can't act."

SRI AUROBINDO : Because it is only a mental idea. That is what humanitarianism comes to. It can't act.

It seems strange that the destiny of the whole world should depend on one man and yet it is so—for everybody looks up to him. From one point of view there never was a time when humanity had come down so low as it has

now. It looks as if a small number of violent men were the arbiters of humanity and the rest of the world ready to bow down before one man.

P : It is the lowest depth of Kaliyuga, I suppose.

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*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 these talks.*



## GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

### Ego

*Q. Suggestions keep coming that I should be used as an instrument to bring X back to the right attitude in sadhana. Are they connected with egoism?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course, such suggestions are meant to wake the ego. I suppose they persist because they still have a hope of waking the ego. Even when one is quite free, all kinds of suggestions can come. One either takes no notice of them or else gives a glance to see whether there is any fragment of ego still lurking somewhere. 27-9-1935

Your ego does come up from time to time without your seeing that it is the ego. It comes up not in your higher parts but in your physical mind and consciousness and you think that because your higher parts are clear this also is clear. 1-10-1935

These are the feelings of the tamasic ego—the reaction to a disappointment in the rajasic ego. Mingled with the true attitude and experience or running concurrently along with it was a demand of the vital “What I am having now, I must always have, otherwise I can’t do sadhana; if I ever lose that, I shall die”—whereas the proper attitude is “Even if I lose it for a time it will be because something in me has to be changed in order that the Mother’s consciousness may be fulfilled in me not only in the self but in every part.” The lower forces attacked at the weak point, made demands through the vital and brought about a state of inertia in which what you had clung to seemed to be lost, went back behind the veil. So came the tamasic reaction of the ego, “What is the use of living, I prefer to die.” Obviously it is not the whole of you that says it, it is a part in the disappointed vital or tamasic physical. It is not enough that the active demands should be broken and removed; for this also is a passive way of demand “I can’t have my demands; very well, I abdicate, don’t want to exist.” That must disappear.

*Q. What is the tamasic ego?*

SRI AUROBINDO : The tamasic ego is that which accepts and supports despondency, weakness, inertia, self-depreciation, unwillingness to act, unwillingness to know or be open, fatigue, indolence, do-nothingness. Contrary to the rajasic it says “I am so weak, so obscure, so miserable, so oppressed and

ill-used—there is no hope for me, no success, I am denied everything, am unsupported, how can I do this, how can I do that, I have no power for it, no capacity, I am helpless; let me die; let me lie still and moan”, etc. etc. Of course not all that at once or in every case; but I am giving the general character of the thing.

14-10-1935

So long as you had fully the attitude of surrender, the rajasic ego could only take the form of suggestions from outside, uprisings from the subconscious. It was suppressed in the vital. When the inertia rose and the energy of will receded, it began to try to come in again.

14-10-35

Do you mean to say that you never had any rajasic element in you ? There is not a human being who has not got it in him so long as he is not divinised in his vital. What were all the vital suggestions coming to you so insistently always except appeals to the rajasic ego ? When you threw out sex, jealousy, vanity etc. what were you throwing out but the rajasic ego ? What was the demand at the pranam or the disturbance caused there but a movement of the rajasic ego ? Some of these things you threw out successfully—others still kept a response.

14-10-1935

*From NAGIN DOSHI*

## SRI AUROBINDO AND THE PROBLEM OF MAN

*(Points from a short talk recently given by the writer under the auspices of the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry.)*

MAN is the most miserable creature on earth, and also the one most full of promise for the future. For he contains in himself all the discordant elements out of which the world is formed—matter, life and mind—and also the principle—the soul element—that has the power to reconcile them all and lead him towards an infinite progression.

Our problem arises from the fact that we have reached our present stage through a long process of evolution; at each crucial stage of this evolution, a new element has been added to our make-up, an element that finds it difficult to harmonise with the earlier ones. Nothing has been destroyed, as is nature's wont. Our problem is to find a harmony between them.

Here are some illustrations of our internal discord. Our base is material; like all material things, our body needs stability, for inertia is its very substance; it craves for permanence and security and freedom from illness and death. Life introduces the kinetic element; it is all for action and motion and adventure; it does not care for security nor does it mind the death or malaise of the body if only it can satisfy its propensities, for it knows that it is itself immortal. Mind cares for neither of these; it does not care if the body loses its health or life is denied its satisfactions, so long as it can satisfy its own whims—its curiosity to know, its penchant for rigid principles, its assertion of will.

At the point we have reached in our evolution, we are apt to consider ourselves primarily as mental beings. As such, we demand the right to control the life and the body with the help of the mind. But mind itself is divided against itself, and its power of control over the other elements is far from perfect. How then can we hope to control them with the sole power of mind? At every step we are deceived by the life or the body; we have to acknowledge frequent defeat at their hands. In truth, for most men, it is not mind that governs at all, but the vital being in us. It is the desires and impulses and instincts of the vital being, the desire-soul in us, that are at the very core of our being and dominate the thoughts of the mind and the actions of the body. At best, the mind finds wonderful justifications for all the stupid things we are made to do by the vital being. The poor body has to serve two masters and has to forego to its detriment its own true interests and needs.

As with individual man, so with the group. Man at his highest has dreamt of a harmonised existence for the entire world and has preached the ideal of world unity. But here again, discord seems to be the rule. The nation is the biggest group-unit he has so far evolved. But within the nation as well as in the relations of nation with nation there are many unresolved problems that lead to disharmony. The so-called "advanced" nations wish to believe that they are governed by reason and benevolence. But, so far, history does not show that there is any code of decent conduct which the nations have not broken in their relations with other nations. Here again, it is not reason and idealism but vital interest, ambition and desires that are the true motives of action. The attempt at an organised international life based on civilised rules of behaviour, like those envisaged by the United Nations Organisation or the old League, is something very recent in human history.

Within the nations too, the seeds of discord persist. At an early stage of national development it was the war of clans and tribes and cities for domination over the rest. In the medieval period wars were carried on in the name of religion and dogma. Now it is the war of political parties and social and economic classes, of creed with creed, of principles pitted against principles. We wish to believe that we are guided by reason. But here too, it is the vital being that truly governs and the intellect acts as a docile servant and instrument. The vast body of men who constitute the most material part of national life simply obey as if hypnotised.

It is idle to suppose that man's unaided intellect which has so far failed in guiding the individual and the national life with any sure success will solve the much larger problem of world unity. We have either to give up the game as lost, or else move from experiment to experiment and stumble somehow on the right path. This will mean an enormous waste of time and effort, and may not avert catastrophe.

Is there any hope for a better future ? Sri Aurobindo says there is a way out : the key to the problem lies within man himself. Man—not merely a small élite but every human being whatever his status in life or his accomplishments—carries within himself, deep beneath his surface mind and life and body, a fourth element, the truly divine element in him. This Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being, which grows from life to life till it reaches a maturity which helps it come forward and govern the outer man. Every experience, whether we call it fortunate or unfortunate, painful or pleasurable, helps in this growth; naturally, the growth is immensely facilitated by yoga. Once the psychic being comes forward and takes its rightful place as the leader of our march, then man becomes truly himself, master of himself and his destiny. He can then solve the discords between his warring elements, put each in its appointed place and proceed to conquer the higher regions of the spirit and make them also

operative in his life. With the psychic being in front, the possibilities of his progression are unlimited, for there can be no end to progress.

The nation too has a soul, a distinct entity which secretly governs the national evolution even when most of the people who constitute the nation are wholly unaware of the fact. The nation too, like the individual man, has to discover its soul, make it operative in its internal and external life. If this is done consciously, national life will soon be purged of its discords, world-unity will be achieved on a secure basis. For the soul of the nation, like the soul of the individual man, is something divine, something that derives directly from the highest Truth. It therefore tends towards all that is true and harmonious.

It is this highest Truth that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have incarnated in themselves. Their work has been and still is and will continue to be to help the psychic being of the individual and the nation's soul to come forward, take charge of the individual and the national life, and create a new and diviner life both for the nation and the individual, and for the world as a whole. The Ashram is there for that, the Education Centre has been planned with that end in view—to show that the thing is possible. We live here in a kind of miniature world where all the problems that face the world are to be solved in the right manner, and an example given to the world to follow. When the problem of man is solved here, it will be easier of solution elsewhere.

Is there a hope that the problem *will* be solved? The answer is that it is no longer a hope, it is a certainty. The Power of the Truth, the Supramental Power, has been infused into the earth atmosphere by the sadhana of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Power is now at work. It is making for changes in man's way of living, thinking and being. It makes it easier for the psychic being to make its presence felt. It helps the nations to look for their souls.

As the victory of the Truth progresses and the darkness recedes, the rapidity of change becomes more and more obvious. A time will come when even the blind and the sceptic will see and believe.

SANAT K. BANERJI

# SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

(8)

## NATIONAL EDUCATION

### VI

WE have by now formed an idea of what Sri Aurobindo envisaged during the Swadeshi epoch as the type of national education India might adopt in order to prepare herself for her future role in the affairs of the world. In order to be truly national, it was to be closely related to the aspirations of the growing Indian nationality and be rid completely of its dependence on a foreign ideal and an alien government. It was, besides, to be as many-sided in its scope as possible so that it might help the future generations to grow as full-bodied men and not mere tamasic automata destined to repeat parrot-like all that had to be thrown out as no longer needed by our manhood. In an article written in 1909 for the *Karmayogin*, he sums up the position briefly thus :

“...If India is to arise and be great as a nation, it is not by imitating... but by carrying her own civilisation, purified of the weaknesses that have overtaken it, to a much higher and mightier fulfilment than any that it has reached in the past...To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perceptions, Indian energy, Indian greatness, and to solve the problems that perplex the world in an Indian spirit and from the Indian standpoint, this in our view is the mission of Nationalism...We have to return to the fountainheads of our ancient religion, philosophy, art and literature and pour the revivifying influences of our immemorial Aryan spirit and ideals into our political and economic development...

“The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which the young Nationalism has always insisted...Most vital of all, the spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which we ought to devote ourselves. As the loss of originality, aspiration, and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective.”<sup>1</sup>

To what extent were these hopes fulfilled during the short period of the Swadeshi movement ? Did national education as originally envisaged by its sponsors take root in the country ? Did the students cooperate and the orga-

<sup>1</sup> *Karmayogin*, 25.9.09.

nisation prove sufficient? Sri Aurobindo gives an answer in the same issue of the *Karmayogin*.

"To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which make earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency. We had hoped by means of National Education to effect this great object as well as to restore to our youth the intellectual heritage of the nation and build up on that basis a yet greater culture in the future. We must admit that the instrument which we cherished and for which such sacrifices were made, has proved insufficient and threatens, in unfit hands, to lose its promise of fulfilment and be diverted to lower ends."<sup>1</sup>

In a later number of the journal, he gives a fuller explanation.<sup>2</sup>

"From the beginning of the national movement, in spite of its enthusiasm, force, innate greatness, a defect has made itself apparent, a fatality of insufficient effectiveness has pursued it, which showed that there was a serious flaw somewhere in this brilliant opening of a new era. The nature of that flaw has been made manifest by the period of trial in which, for a time, the real force which made for success has been temporarily withdrawn, so that the weaknesses still inherent in the nation might be discovered and removed.

"The great flaw was the attempt to combine the new with the old, to subject the conduct of the resurgence of India to the aged, the cautious, the hesitating, men out of sympathy with the spirit of the new age, unable to grasp the needs of the future, afraid to apply the bold and radical methods which could alone transform the nation, sweep out the rottenness in our former corrupt nature and, by purifying Bengal, purify India.

"It is now apparent that it was the Nationalist element which by its energy, courage, boldness of thought, readiness to accept the conditions of progress, gave the movement its force and vitality. Wherever that force has been withdrawn, the movement has collapsed. The older men have shown themselves utterly unable either to supply the moral force that would sustain the forward march of the nation or the brain-power to grapple with national problems.

"In Swadeshi the force of sentiment supplied, and the persistence of the great mass of silent nationalism in resisting any attempt to draw back from boycott has preserved, the movement to prefer indigenous and boycott foreign goods, but the withdrawal of active Nationalist endeavour has resulted in the stoppage of progress. Swadeshi maintains itself, it no longer advances.

<sup>1</sup> *Karmayogin*,

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* I.I.10.

“National Education languished because the active force has been withdrawn from it; it does not absolutely perish because a certain amount of Nationalist self-devotion has entrenched itself in this last stronghold and holds it against great odds under the most discouraging circumstances. A certain amount only,—because part of the active enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which created the movement has been deliberately extruded from it in obedience to fear or even baser motives, part has abandoned it in disgust at the degeneration of the system in incapable hands and the rest is now finding its self-devotion baffled and deprived of the chance of success by the same incapacity and weakness at headquarters.

“The National Council of Education, as it is at present composed, has convicted itself of entire incapacity whether to grasp the meaning of the movement or to preserve or create the conditions of its success. To the majority of the members it is merely an interesting academical experiment in which they can embody some of their pet hobbies or satisfy a general vague dissatisfaction with the established University system. To others the only valuable part of it is the technical instruction given in its workshops. The two or three who at all regard it as part of a great national movement, are unnerved by fear, scepticism and distrust and, by introducing the principles of Chanakya<sup>1</sup> into its public policy, are depriving it of the first condition of its continued existence.

“It is folly to expect that the nation at large will either pay heavily or make great sacrifices merely to support an interesting academic experiment, still less to allow a few learned men to spoil the intellectual development of the race by indulging their hobbies at the public expense. That the people will not support a mere technical education divorced from that general humanistic training which is essential to national culture, has been sufficiently proved by the failure of Mr. Palit’s Technical College to command adequate financial support.

“Unless this movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visibly to all, a nursery of patriotism and mighty instrument of national culture, it cannot succeed. It is foolish to expect men to make great sacrifices while discouraging their hopes and enthusiasm. It is not intellectual recognition of duty that compels sustained self-sacrifice in masses of men; it is hope, it is the lofty ardour of a great cause, it is the enthusiasm of a noble and courageous effort.”

We shall conclude in the next issue this long indictment of the system that had developed in the name of National Education. We shall also see that the balance was not perhaps wholly on the debit side.

SANAT K. BANERJI

<sup>1</sup> The Indian Machiavelli



## TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

“TAGORE has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way.” Sri Aurobindo wrote these words in the thirties and their full significance can be grasped only when it is understood that the two master souls, in their different modes of being, were at one in the central purpose of their lives. Also there is a further bond of natural affinity between them centring round the fact that both were poets, in a deeper sense, seer poets—Rabindranath the Poet of the Dawn, Sri Aurobindo the Poet and Prophet of the Eternal Day, a new Dawn and Day for the human race.

And both had the vision of a greater Tomorrow for their Motherland and that was why both regarded her freedom as the basic necessity for the recovery of her greatness. How the inspired songs and speeches of Rabindranath and the flaming utterances of Sri Aurobindo created a psychological revolution almost overnight in the mind and heart of the people during the Swadeshi days forms a glorious chapter in the history of India's freedom movement. Profoundly touched by Sri Aurobindo's soul-stirring lead to the country, Rabindranath wrote a memorable poem, addressing Sri Aurobindo, which is still enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. Rabindranath himself called on Sri Aurobindo and read out to him his heart's homage. We remember with a thrill the majestic opening lines :

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee !  
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,  
Of India's soul !...

Sri Aurobindo retired from the outer political world to devote himself more intensively to the discovery and conquest of a new consciousness and force, glimpses of which he was having at the time and which alone, he said, could save mankind and recreate it. From 1910 to 1914 he was silently developing this new power in seclusion and in 1914 he began to give to the world the result of his realisations through his monthly Review *Arya*. In five major sequences published month after month through several years, he envisaged, in the main, the progressive march of man towards a divine life on earth, towards the unity of mankind and a perfect social order. One of these serials was called *The Future Poetry* in which he traced the growth and development that world poetry is undergoing towards its future form that would voice the dawn of a New Age of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo hailed those who feel and foresee this

distant dawn behind the horizon as the Forerunners of the new Spirit, among whom he included Rabindranath, because he saw in Tagore's poetry the first beginnings, "a glint of the greater era of man's living," something that "seems to be in promise". "The poetry of Tagore," Sri Aurobindo says, "owes its sudden and universal success to this advantage that he gives us more of this discovery and fusion for which the mind of our age is in quest than any other creative writer of the time. His work is a constant music of the overpassing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life."

Characterising Tagore's poetry, in reference to a particular poem, Sri Aurobindo once wrote: "But the poignant sweetness, passion and spiritual depth and mystery of a poem like this, the haunting cadences subtle with a subtlety which is not of technique but of the soul, and the honey-laden felicity of the expression, these are the essential Rabindranath and cannot be imitated, because they are things of the spirit and one must have the same sweetness and depth of soul before one can hope to catch any of these desirable qualities." Furthermore: "One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Rabindra Babu's genius is the happiness and originality with which he has absorbed the whole spirit of Vaishnav poetry and turned it into something essentially the same and yet new and modern. He has given the old sweet spirit of emotional and passionate religion an expression of more delicate and complex richness voiceful of subtler and more penetratingly spiritual shades of feeling than the deep-hearted but simple early age of Bengal could know."<sup>1</sup>

Certain coincidences and correspondences in their lives also may be noticed here. The year 1905 and those that immediately followed found them together on the crest wave of India's first nationalist resurgence. Again, both saw in the year 1914 a momentous period marked by events of epochal importance, one of which was the First World War. For Tagore it was "a *yuga-sandhi*, the dying of the old age of Night to the dawning of a new with its blood-red sunrise emerging through the travail of death, sorrow and pain". For Sri Aurobindo it was a cataclysm intended by Nature to effect a first break in the old order to usher the new. The significant year 1914 was also the period when Rabindranath expressed in the magnificent series of poems of the *Balaka* his visions and experiences of the forces at work on earth, and Sri Aurobindo began revealing through the pages of the *Arya* the truths of the supramental infinities that were then pouring down into him and through him into the earth's atmosphere.

So it was natural and almost inevitable—written among the stars—that both should meet once more on this physical earth. Sri Aurobindo had been in complete retirement seeing none except of course his attendants. He was

<sup>1</sup> *Karmayogin*, No. 8.

coming out only four times in the year to give silent darshan to his devotees and a few others who sought for it. It was in the year 1928. Tagore was then out on a tour to the South. He expressed to Sri Aurobindo by letter his desire for a personal meeting. Sri Aurobindo naturally agreed to receive him. Tagore reached Pondicherry by a steamer and I had the privilege to see him on board the ship and escort him to the Ashram. The Mother welcomed him at the door of Sri Aurobindo's apartments and led him to Sri Aurobindo. Tagore already knew the Mother, for both were together in Japan : they saw each other almost daily and once for about a week travelled together. It may be interesting to mention here that Tagore requested the Mother to take charge of the Visva Bharati, for evidently he felt that the future of his dear institution would be in sure hands. But the Mother could not but decline since it was her destiny to be at another place and another work.

What transpired between Sri Aurobindo and Tagore is not for me to say, the meeting being a private one. But I may quote here what Tagore himself wrote about it subsequently (*The Modern Review*, July 1928) :

“For a long time I had a strong desire to meet Aurobindo. It has just been fulfilled....At the very first sight I could realise that he had been seeking for the soul and had gained it, and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light....I felt that the utterance of the ancient Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him, ‘You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, “Hearken to me.”’ ....Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him :

Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabindranath.  
Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of a reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence :

Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabindranath.”

Vibhutis, emanations and embodiments of the higher destiny of mankind appear upon earth from time to time to lead and guide the race on the upward way. And we are fortunate that we are born in an age that has been blessed by two such Shining Ones.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE ASHRAM ATMOSPHERE : 1940-47 (*continued*)

(4)

WHAT Sri Aurobindo did to ward off the greatest world-crisis of our generation we have seen. His concern was not so much with war as such but with its effect on human evolution and its consequences to culture and civilisation. For we have seen him take no comparable direct part in the First World War. It was, however, significant that during those very times, under the roar of guns and crash of cities, he was engaged in writing what he received from above—God's Charter for Man : a promise of Divine Life under Divine Rule for all humanity.

It was in the very year 1914 that the Mother visioned India's independence and told the details of her vision to Sri Aurobindo. Some idea of these details may be had from what she disclosed to A in 1927.

In his early life A was all engrossed in politics. When Sri Aurobindo threw out to him a hint to give up politics and take up a higher life, the very thought he could not entertain. Was it possible to give up the cause of the country, throw aside all family responsibility and do sadhana for personal salvation ? This was the problem that faced him.

In his earlier life, till he took the M.A. degree, he had to borrow books from friends and rely on private tuition to meet his expenses.

While working as a Professor of Philosophy, once he happened to read some extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo, but he could not understand anything. At that time the people of Bengal had given up Sri Aurobindo as lost to the country and A also had no interest in knowing what Sri Aurobindo was doing at Pondicherry.

During the non-co-operation movement A heard a call within : "Sacrifice yourself for the country." And he joined the freedom movement.

Once a copy of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* accidentally came into his hands. He had a liking for the Gita from his early years, though he could not understand much of it. Reading the *Essays on the Gita* he felt that none could say such things except Sri Krishna himself. He wrote a postcard to Sri Aurobindo seeking permission to render it into Bengali and at the same time sought some advice on sadhana.

Thus began his connection with Sri Aurobindo. He had heard from

C. R. Das who had visited the Ashram in 1923 the personal name of the Mother as she was known in those days.

After coming in touch with the Master he received a force which made his speeches flow of themselves and move his audience. That was his first experience of the working of the spiritual force. And henceforth whatever he did proved a success. People hung upon his words.

Just a month after Sri Aurobindo had written to him, A was sent to jail. As he was now free to mould himself as he liked by utilising his time in jail he again approached Sri Aurobindo for some instructions about the sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo wanted to know what would be his future course of life on coming out of jail. If he intended to take up sadhana then only he could count upon his help and support.

Though he had by that time risen to the status of a leader he felt that without Sri Aurobindo's support he could not hope to achieve success either in politics or in sadhana. Hence he chose to seek his help and came to Pondicherry in May 1926 but went back in October.

In the meantime Sri Aurobindo retired but made an exception in favour of A and gave him an interview on his return (December 11, 1926).

When he asked about the future of India Sri Aurobindo said : "India's independence is decreed. It has been sanctioned by the Supreme."

In those days the Mother used to pay special visits to the rooms of the Sadhaks. One day he asked her : "How is India likely to get freedom ?"

Mother : "Hear ! The British did not conquer India. You yourselves handed over the country to the British. In the same manner the British will themselves hand over the country to you. And they will do it in a hurry as if a ship were waiting to take them away."

A asked when this would happen.

The Mother replied : "When a Japanese warship will come to the Indian Ocean India will get freedom."

The Mother said this to A in 1927—all of it was fulfilled to the letter in 1947.

Before passing on to the next great event in the history of the Ashram let us touch on some intervening matters of importance. Among them was our having an up-to-date press fitted with two Monotype casting machines.<sup>1</sup> A Heidelberg printing press of German make is a recent addition (1961). *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo* with its symbolic picture drawn by the Mother herself, all printed on Ashram-made paper, is the first turn-out from this machine. Generally one ton of paper is required per month, on Darshan occasions two tons. For the Educational Centre Series 5 tons per issue per year (1961).

<sup>1</sup> *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* was the first book printed on the Treadle machine in 1946. At that time the Cylinder machines were not fitted up.

The Annual Number of Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta, and the *Advent*, Madras, a Quarterly, made their first appearances in 1942 and 1944 respectively under the able editorship of Nolini Kanta Gupta.<sup>1</sup>

These were prolific sources of joy for us especially because of the ever refreshing thoughts of Sri Aurobindo with Nolini Kanta's brilliant presentations and expositions.

Whenever incorrect and inaccurate statements were made in the press outside we had no means of correcting or contradicting them in public. There was a haze in the public mind about what the Ashram was doing. A lot of misconception was in the air. We could hardly voice the true state of affairs. Hence the press removed a long-felt need and has been a blessing. It served to foster, as it has since been doing, the new spirit introduced by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo into the world atmosphere.

The year 1943 saw a very small beginning of what has now developed into the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Thanks to the admission of children into the Ashram, access to the Mother became unexpectedly easy. That we should enjoy the Mother's Presence from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily and be able to speak to her at need, even play with her—all this had been beyond even our wildest dreams. All important functions, seasonal games, dances, dramas were graced by her Presence. It looked as if she had lost herself in the younger section of the Ashram. She gave them lessons, narrated stories, personally gave them marks and took interest in almost all their activities. Her evening classes of little children, ending with distribution of sweets, were beautiful scenes in which restless and noisy children grew quiet and silent, as if discipline had sprung into being of itself.

The combination of physical culture with a spiritual life in sharp contrast to the prevailing Indian ideas of Ashram life sprang a surprise upon all. When youthful girls of aristocratic families took to sports in shorts and shirts, throwing shyness and reserve aside, it caused a happy wonder in all.

It also marked a sudden change in their outlook on life. A new strength and overwhelming joy seemed to seize on them. Numbers of them had various sorts of physical troubles. Whoever sought medical treatment was advised to take physical exercises. Even ladies with grey hair were seen running, doing march past along with the men, in a separate group.

The use of medicine was reduced to the minimum. An elderly lady had been suffering for long from a pain in the legs; the Mother wished her to take some sort of exercise. Generally speaking, whoever wanted to join playground activities got encouragement from the Mother.

<sup>1</sup> Now these as well as other periodicals, *Bartika* (Bengali), *Aditi*, *Sah Bharat Mata* (Hindi), *Dakshina* (Gujarati), *Sanyeevan* (Marathi), *Dipu* (Kannadi), *Navajyoti* (Oriya), are printed in our press. French and German books are also printed and block and pictures are reproduced

To-day life in the Ashram is not so austere as before. The scare of desert-crossing is now almost a thing of a forgotten past. Nonetheless one cannot escape the difficulties of the sadhana. "If one is not prepared for labour and tapasya, control of the mind and vital, one cannot demand big spiritual gains,"<sup>1</sup> says Sri Aurobindo.

With the entry of the children there opened up a new phase in Ashram life. Almost everything naturally came to be dealt with according to the needs of the younger ones.

Reactions to this changed atmosphere were varied. There was an air of all-round cheerfulness. With the mood of inwardness were now combined intense forms of physical activities. The Ashram covered wider fields. The inner no longer remained divorced from the outer.

"Oh for the days that are no more ! Oh for the serenity, the peace, the silence, the joy that filled the air before the forties !"—these were the feelings of some and are unhappily still so, though much less.

Well, if the Ashram was only for those who were given to meditation and a solitary life how could there be an integral yoga ? Recluses there are in the Himalayas in their hundreds. If the Ashramites were to be carbon copies of those recluses, how would many-faceted life have a chance of transmutation, how could the Grace find a wider scope for its action ?

Closely seen, is not the Ashram now a vaster laboratory than before ?

The following words of the Mother on the special concentration that formerly occurred only on Darshan days will give pleasant food for thought :

"This special concentration now occurs at other moments, not particularly on the days of Darshan. It occurs more often on other occasions, in other circumstances. The movement has been much more speeded up; the forward march, the steps of the march succeeded each other much more quickly. And it is perhaps more difficult to follow or, in any case, if one does not take care to follow, one is left behind much more quickly than before; you get the impression that you are belated, or you are abandoned. Things are changing rapidly...

"The use of these days is a little different; it is specially for going farther, to have a vaster field, to reach more distant points."<sup>2</sup>

One meditates in the hurly-burly of London, another in a cave; which is the more capable ?

Once in 1947, when after her class the meditation was about to start on the ground floor, a good number of workmen on the terrace of the house started their work with repeated strokes of their mallets. R asked the Mother if he should stop the work for a time.

"Why ? You should be able to meditate even under the booming of guns," said the Mother.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series), p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of Centre of Education*, February 61, p. 59.

In the course of a talk a regular visitor from the Tagore family staying in the special Ashram guest-house, Golconde, remarked : "The peace I enjoy in Golconde makes me feel as if I were sitting in a cave. You don't know what charm is there in the Ashram atmosphere, simply because you are used to it. When one enters a room in which there is a heap of jasmin flowers, one at once feels the impact of its fragrance. But when one gets accustomed to it one does not feel anything unusual."

By allowing boys and girls to meet in a natural commonalty at school, on the playground and at work what risk and responsibility the Mother took upon herself ! That she has been able to maintain the sanctity of the atmosphere is due only to her superhuman power.

It is like letting loose a roaring lion but with the prohibition that it must not thirst for blood ! It must suffer itself to be tamed and guided by its unseen master, the Soul.

Neither ritual nor initiation, neither text nor sermon, nor even an order imposed by convention : still there is a discipline not easy to break.

Some months back a well-educated lady from the Punjab said that her daughter wanted to stay here and learn French. She added, "If she goes anywhere for a day or two I have to accompany her. I cannot let alone a youthful girl. But here in the atmosphere of the Ashram there's no fear."

Unhappily there are people in the world born only to see the dark side of things. A boy and girl, both good-looking, were running about, playing and making merry within the Ashram courtyard (before 1940). A visitor whispered in the ear of a sadhak :

"Is it good to give such liberty to a boy and girl within the Ashram ?"

Giving no direct reply, the sadhak took the visitor to the place where they were playing and asked the girl, "How many brothers have you ?"

"Five," was her smiling answer.

"Where are they ?"

"Four in Calcutta," and pointing to the boy, "one here always making mischief."

The visitor looked abashed.

As to how the Ashram appears to those who are in the know of things let us quote the observations of Mr. B. Sanjiva Rao, I.E.S. (Retd.), one of the foremost educationists of the country. For long he was associated with Dr. Annie Besant both in the Home Rule Movement and her educational activities in Benaras. At present he is guiding the development of the Rajghat School and the Vasanta College in the same city.

"...I went to Pondicherry to discover what was being attempted there and how the Mother was organising the educational work. That was my intention and my method of approach...."



“Naturally the people whom I met would be a small section of the younger population. But there is no doubt that they are the hope of the future....

“In every Institution where boys and girls meet and work together there is the sex problem. So naturally I was deeply interested in the way in which the Mother is tackling this problem. In our existing schools, work is boredom. Boredom is the natural result of the non-exercise of the creative faculties in man. To create something with one’s hands, express on the material plane some conception of the human mind is a joy. Mental creation results in the joy of a higher order. The highest joy comes into being when the individual becomes the intelligent instrument of the Divine—when a human being is creatively working, the sex problem finds its natural place in the scheme of Nature. The creative energies in man are intended to build up the physical, the vital, the intellectual in man—when a boy or girl is deeply interested in the multitudinous variety of manifestations of the Spirit, then their interest in the opposite sex, their purely biological urges assume a subordinate position.

“In modern life, the cinema, the advertisements, the pictures in the periodicals have made sex an enormous problem—also the suppression of all creative urges makes sex the only escape from dullness and boredom. It is the giving to the boys and girls of the Ashram a wide variety of interests that has enabled the Mother to reduce the difficulties of adolescence to a minimum. Great care is given to the development of the physical body—Games, Physical Culture, Swimming, Drill and a variety of exercises maintain the harmony of the human being on the physical plane. A rich intellectual pabulum feeds the mind—and on the level of the spirit, the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother herself is a continual uplifting force.”

As already stated above, *The Life Divine* had its origin in the pages of the *Arya* (August 1914 to January 1919) almost with the beginning of World War I and stopped with its end.

Volume I appeared in book-form for the first time in November 1939 and Volume II in July 1940 from Arya Publishing House, Calcutta—during World War II. The coincidence in both cases (*i.e.* the origin in 1914 and publication in book-form in 1939-40) is significant. It was as if the benign hand of God held out to a world in flames the message of a new creation, the hope of a higher life and a better world.

Before taking book-form *The Life Divine* underwent several alterations and additions. Sri Aurobindo took up the revision of Part I early in 1939, shortly after his accident on 23rd November 1938. The revision went on, with minor changes in between, till the completion of Chapter XXVII. Meanwhile a long note on the psychic being was added to Chapter XXIII, “The Double Soul of Man.” Chapter XXVIII, “Supermind, Mind and Overmind Maya”—now the last in Part I—was in its entirety a new addition. Here the term Overmind comes in

for the first time, except for two new footnotes added to Chapter XXIV, "Matter".

Although almost all of Part II in the final version is revised or rewritten, and much new matter has been added, leading to a considerable rearrangement of the scheme of the chapters, the actual number of Chapters in the whole of *The Life Divine* in book-form exceeds that of the Chapters in the *Arya* version by only three.

The last Chapter of Part I and the whole of Part II which add up to 1123<sup>1</sup> printed pages were all written by Sri Aurobindo with his own hand while in a half-reclining position.

All this voluminous writing he did in great haste; naturally therefore some words were indecipherable, which, with the help of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Prithwi Singh typed out aright. It is to his credit that Prithwi Singh did the typing of the whole manuscript single-handed.

At times, though very rarely, it so happened that a word or two in a Chapter proved quite indecipherable even to Nolini. The corresponding space in the type copy was left blank for Sri Aurobindo himself to fill up.

When the first typescript received considerable additions from Sri Aurobindo, the second typing was done partly by Prithwi Singh and partly by Nistha, President Woodrow Wilson's daughter, who was here at the time, and by Kapali Sastri. When this second copy got further changes the third and the final one was prepared afresh for the press.

On proofs being submitted to Sri Aurobindo with suggestions mostly for punctuation, he would write his reply, sometimes putting "Yes" or "No", sometimes inserting some other expressions.

On completion of *The Life Divine* he took up *The Synthesis of Yoga* but found time to revise and enlarge at great length only thirteen chapters; the rest are as they were, except for several in the section concerned with the Yoga of Knowledge.

*The Life Divine*, the major part of which was written at a stretch and with tremendous speed, was acclaimed by *The Times Literary Supplement* (January 17, 1942) with the following words about its author and his work: "He is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge....The importance of the book lies neither in its beauty of tone nor in its beauty of inspiration—both of which are there—but in its power of creating round us wide circles of peace."

Otto Wolff, the German Protestant theologian, says about Sri Aurobindo: "It is not only Indians who see in him the last arch of a bridge of human thought and endeavour which leads from the Vedic beginnings to the present, and

<sup>1</sup> First Edition.

transcends the ordinary limits of human consciousness.” And Charles A. Moore writes of *The Life Divine* : “It includes the insights of the East and the insights of the West. It combines their respective unique emphases. It provides from the point of view of idealism and the significance of spirituality what might be the inevitable synthesis of what is called the wisdom of the East and the knowledge of the West.

An erudite scholar with a brilliant academic career, at home in Sanskrit as in Bengali and English, a Yogi, silent yet affable, Anirvan speaks only when something is asked him, in terms terse and to the point.

As to how he could render *The Life Divine* into such superb Bengali, he said that he had read the whole book at one stretch and everything had gone home to him and, along with it, at places the Bengali version had come floating before his mind’s eye and made him feel that translation would be practicable.

Then he started dictating without a stop even at a single sentence or for consulting a dictionary. When the whole book was done, in the beautiful calligraphy of a disciple of his who wrote to his dictation, it was sent to Sri Aurobindo for approval.

After just a few pages had been read out, the Master liked it so much that he directed it to be sent to the Ashram Press. It was published on April 4, 1948.

Be it noted that Anirvan’s has been the pioneer work in an Indian language, written long before he paid a flying visit to the Ashram in January, 1961. Now *The Life Divine* is being rendered into Hindi and Marathi. Among other Asian languages, there has been a translation into Chinese by a Chinese disciple staying in the Ashram. A portion has been translated into French by the Mother herself. Some chapters have been rendered into German and permission has been granted for a rendering into Spanish.

On being asked whether he was now doing *Savitri* into Bengali, Anirvan’s answer was that he had made a beginning but after proceeding a little he had found that nothing was coming from above. He added that he might attempt it again when expression would flow from above.

1948-50

We are living in what they call the Atomic Age. Sri Aurobindo is the Rishi of this Age. Just as across the long passage of time our memory of the Rishis of the land is not fading out, the Rishi of this Age—the Epic poet of *Savitri*—will ever remain enshrined in the heart of India.

If there was anything that demanded Sri Aurobindo’s exclusive concentration after the Allied Victory in the war, it was *Savitri*.

None had the occasion to see him ever in a hurry. A majestic calm was his natural poise. When he expressed his intention to finish *Savitri* “soon”,

no one could make out its meaning—until we discovered the supreme self-sacrifice that he made on December 5, 1950.

*Savitri* was so closely guarded a secret that not even a line of it saw the light of day for nearly forty years. Sri Aurobindo did not like to bring it out till it had reached its acme of perfection. K. D. Sethna was the first to be favoured with the two written lines :

Piercing the limitless unknowable,  
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.

And Sethna's reaction was :

“I was struck by the profound word-reverberations which reinforce the mystical word suggestions with a tremendous immediacy of spiritual fact. I asked where the lines came from. The reply was : *Savitri*.”

Sethna's next request was for at least eight lines of sheer mantra—“all pure gold which could be treasured for ever.”

Sri Aurobindo replied that he could not vouch for mantric quality but suggested that he might send some lines from the first canto of *Savitri*. Soon after, he sent sixteen lines of the opening, as it stood then, of this canto :

It was the hour before the Gods awake.  
Across the path of the divine Event  
The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone  
In the unlit temple of immensity  
Lay stretched immobile upon silence' merge,  
Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.  
The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.  
Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.  
A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,  
The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch  
Persuaded the inert black quietude  
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.  
A wandering hand of pale enchanted Light  
That glowed along the moment's fading brink  
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge  
A gate of dreams ajar on Mystery's verge.

Below the quotation were the words : “There ! Promise fulfilled for a wonder.”

Comparing these lines with their final version one can see what alterations have taken place. Sethna calls the day when he received these 16 lines “the day of days.” It was in October, 1936. From that day forth Sri Aurobindo kept on sending him passages which Sethna typed out and sent back. Sri

Aurobindo touched them up again or expanded them. At last arrived the moment when the first glimpse of *Savitri* was given to the world. It was in the form of quotations in the last section entitled "Sri Aurobindo and a New Age of Mystical Poetry" in Sethna's book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*. Then the whole First Canto of *Savitri* was published. Afterwards, now one Canto now another, but not always in a successive order, came out of the press.

The First Canto proved a stumbling-block to many of us by the vast and massive sweep of its mysticism; we could not easily share with the poets and critics their delight but it did not damp our enthusiasm. We rushed upon the other Cantos as they came out whether in form of proof or type-script. And when Volume I came out in complete form (1950) it electrified the atmosphere. It dropped like nectar into thirsty souls.

*Savitri's* appeal to cultured minds can be illustrated by some stray instances.

Raymond Piper, professor of Philosophy, Syracuse University (U.S.A.), who "during extensive travels in twenty countries had studied and photographed some of the greatest art monuments of East and West and observed thirteen of the world's religions in practice", says in his book *The Hungry Eye* :

"...fortunately a tremendous new body of metaphysical and mystical poetry has already inaugurated the new Age of Illumination. This poetry radiates from the master metaphysician, mystic and poet, Sri Aurobindo, and his Ashram in Pondicherry, India. During a period of nearly fifty years before his passing in 1950, he created what is probably the greatest epic in the English language and the longest poem (23,831 lines of iambic blank verse) in any language of the modern world. I venture the judgement that it is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful, and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of Supramental Spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled massiveness, magnificence, and metaphorical brilliance...*Savitri* is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute."

In a recent article, *Sri Aurobindo—Last of the Great Yogis*, Rusi Daruvala, an Indian writer, occurs the following.

"Sri Aurobindo is on his way to becoming a classic in the Wildean sense; everyone speaks of him but scarcely anyone reads him..."

"Aurobindo in Bengali means 'lotus' and the lotus of his soul opened out fully its thousandfold petals under the influence of the Greater Light.

"*Savitri* (a legend of the past and a symbol of the future) is partly autobiographical, being a record of his own inner development. Since his philo-

sophical ideas form the warp and woof of Sri Aurobindo's poetry, it would be fruitless reading *Savitri* without a knowledge of his prose works...

"His influence on men like Tagore, Romain Rolland, Aldous Huxley, and Dr. Radhakrishnan has been considerable.

"By what ultimate standards can we judge Sri Aurobindo's three major works, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Savitri* ? It is recorded that when Bethoven showed some of the last Quartets to a violinist-friend the latter said, 'You don't call this music, do you ?'

"Bethoven replied, 'This music is not for you. It is for the future.'

*(to be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

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

(Classified Excerpts)

*(Continued)*

(iii) SUPERCONSCIENCE AND THE SUPERCONSCIENT

.....if we plunge by a trance of exclusive concentration into a mystic sleep state or pass abruptly in waking Mind into a state belonging to the Superconscient, then the mind can be seized in the passage by a sense of the unreality of the cosmic force and its creations; it passes by a subjective abolition of them into the supreme superconscience. This sense of unreality and this sublimating passage are the spiritual justification for the idea of a world created by Maya; but this consequence is not conclusive, since a larger and more complete conclusion superseding it is possible to spiritual experience.<sup>1</sup>

.....to know the real truth of the world, its reality, it must be seen from the suprarational awareness, from the view of the Superconscience that maintains and surpasses and by surpassing knows it in its truth, and no longer from the view of the consciousness that is maintained by it and surpassed by it and therefore does not know it or knows it only by its appearance. It cannot be that to that self-creative supreme consciousness the world is an incomprehensible mystery or that it is to it an illusion, a reality that is yet unreal. The mystery of the universe must have a divine sense to the Divine; it must have a significance or a truth of cosmic being that is luminous to the Reality that upholds it with its transcending and immanent superconscience.

We become aware, in a certain experience, of a range of being superconscient to all these three (subconscient, subliminal and waking consciousness), aware too of something, a supreme highest Reality sustaining and exceeding them all; which humanity speaks of vaguely as Spirit, God, the Oversoul : from these superconscient ranges we have visitations and in our highest being we tend towards them and to that supreme Spirit.

If the subliminal and subconscient may be compared to a sea which throws up the waves of our surface mental existence, the superconscience may be compared to an ether which constitutes, contains, overroofs, inhabits and determines the movements of the sea and its waves. It is there in this higher ether

that we are inherently and intrinsically conscious of our self and spirit, not as here below by a reflection in silent mind or by acquisition of the knowledge of a hidden Being within us; it is through it, through that ether of superconscience, that we can pass to a supreme status, knowledge, experience. Of this superconscient experience through which we can arrive at the higher status of our real, our supreme Self, we are normally even more ignorant than of the rest of our being; yet is it into the knowledge of it that our being emerging out of the involution in Inconscience is struggling to evolve.<sup>2</sup>

In the superconscience beyond our present level of awareness are included the higher planes of mental being as well as the native heights of supramental and pure spiritual being. The first indispensable step in an upward evolution would be to elevate our force of consciousness into these higher parts of Mind from which we already receive, but without knowing the source, much of our larger mental movements, those, especially, that come with a greater power and light, the revelatory, the inspirational, the intuitive. On these mental heights, in these largenesses, if the consciousness could succeed in reaching them or maintain and centre itself there, something of the direct presence and power of the spirit, something even—however secondary or indirect—of the supermind could receive a first expression, could make itself initially manifest, could intervene in the government of our lower being and help to remould it. Afterwards, by the force of that remoulded consciousness, the course of our evolution could rise by a sublimer ascent and get beyond the mental into the supramental and the supreme spiritual nature. It is possible without an actual ascent into these at present superconscient mental planes or without a constant and permanent living in them, by openness to them, by reception of their knowledge and influences, to get rid to a certain extent of our constitutional and psychological ignorance; it is possible to be aware of ourselves as spiritual beings and to spiritualise, though imperfectly, our normal human life and consciousness. There could be a conscious communication and guidance from this greater more luminous mentality and reception of its enlightening and transforming forces. That is within the reach of the highly developed or the spiritually awakened human being; but it would not be more than a preliminary stage. To reach an integral self-knowledge, an entire consciousness and power of being, there is necessary an ascent beyond the plane of our normal mind. Such an ascent is at present possible in an absorbed superconscience; but that could lead only to an entry into the higher levels in a state of immobile or ecstatic trance. If the control of that higher spiritual being is to be brought into our waking life, there must be a conscious heightening and widening into immense ranges of new being, new consciousness, new potentialities of action, a taking up—as integral as possible—of our present being, consciousness, activities and a transmutation of them into divine values which



would effect a transfiguration of our human existence. For wherever a radical transition has to be made, there is always this triple movement—*ascent, widening of field and base, integration*—in Nature's method of self-transcendence.<sup>3</sup>

But when this (superconscient) power begins to awake and act, when mind becomes by degrees conscious in what was to it superconscient, then there begins a knowledge and experience of superior planes of existence. The experience is in accord with that which is brought to us by the first opening of vision: the mind rises into a higher plane of pure self, silent, tranquil, illimitable; or it rises into regions of light or of felicity, or into planes where it feels an infinite Power or a divine Presence or experiences the contact of a divine Love or Beauty or the atmosphere of a wider and greater and luminous Knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

#### (iv) THE DIVINE NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURE

Imperfection becomes then a necessary term of the manifestation: for, since all the divine nature is concealed but present in the Inconscient, it must be gradually delivered out of it; this graduation necessitates a partial unfolding, and this partial character or incompleteness of the unfolding necessitates imperfection. An evolutionary manifestation demands a mid-stage with gradations above and under it,—precisely such a stage as the mental consciousness of man, part knowledge, part ignorance, a middle power of being still leaning on the Inconscient but slowly rising towards the all-conscious Divine Nature.<sup>5</sup>

But the last division to be removed is the scission between this Nature and the Super-Nature which is the Self-Power of the Divine Existence. Even before the dynamic Knowledge-Ignorance is removed, while it still remains as an inadequate instrumentation of the spirit, the supreme Shakti or Supernature can work through us and we can be aware of her workings; but it is then by a modification of her light and power so that it can be received and assimilated by the inferior nature of the mind, life and body. But this is not enough; there is needed an entire remoulding of what we are into a way and power of the divine Supernature. The integration of our being cannot be complete unless there is this transformation of the dynamic action; there must be an uplifting and change of the whole mode of Nature itself and not only some illumination and transmutation of the inner ways of the being. An eternal Truth-Consciousness must possess us and sublimate all our natural modes into its own modes of being, knowledge and action; a spontaneous truth-awareness, truth-will, truth-feeling, truth-movement, truth-action can then become the integral law of our nature.<sup>6</sup>

A first opening towards this participation in an action of Supernature is a condition of the turn towards the last, the supramental transformation, for this

transformation is the completion of a passage from the obscure harmony of a blind automatism with which Nature sets out to the luminous authentic spontaneity, the infallible motion of the self-existent truth of the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

He (the gnostic individual) would feel the presence of the Divine in every centre of his consciousness, in every vibration of his life-force, in every cell of his body. In all the workings of his force of Nature he would be aware of the workings of the supreme World-Mother, the Supernature; he would see his natural being as the becoming and manifestation of the power of the World-Mother. In this consciousness he would live and act in an entire transcendent freedom, a complete joy of the spirit, an entire identity with the cosmic self and a spontaneous sympathy with all in the universe.<sup>8</sup>

A gnostic Supernature transcends all the values of our normal ignorant Nature; our standards and values are created by ignorance and therefore cannot determine the life of Supernature. At the same time our present nature is a derivation from Supernature and not a pure ignorance but a half-knowledge; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that whatever spiritual truth there is in or behind its standards and values will reappear in the higher life, not as standards, but as elements transformed, uplifted out of the ignorance and raised into the true harmony of a more luminous existence.<sup>9</sup>

*Compiled by* NATHANIEL PEARSON

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## A PRAYER

O MY mind, put aside your imaginative fancies, expressive similes and all the illusive enjoyments of word-making. If you go on with your own constructive line, how can the Mother Divine begin Her work of transforming you ? How can the Mother make you a fit receptacle for Herself if you are filled up with your own self ? Clear out everything from within you and wait patiently and calmly for Her advent. As soon as everything is ready, She will appear. She is eagerly counting time for the opportune moment. If you observe silently in a perfectly tranquil manner, you yourself will notice the signs of Her coming. In your restless activity you overlook everything which She sends to you, informing you about Her divine approach. It is She who wants you more than you want Her. If you could even conceive the slightest portion of the endless troubles She is undergoing for you, you would be dumbfounded. Whole-heartedly and intensely pray to Her to be Hers in every possible way, rejecting every other thing. Then you will realise the miracle of Her Divine Love in you.

June 7, 1932

JYOTIN

### SRI AUROBINDO'S REMARK :

Very good. Written in a sincere and straightforward style. When you write like that the true thought and its true expression seem to come to you.

## TWO POEMS

### UNITE MY MIND

UNITE my mind and flesh with God,  
Empty all pools of their moons,  
Then savagely cut the shadows away  
From this imperfection,  
For so it will be,  
With leaves of crimson spiralling  
Through the purpled corridors  
That lead to the dim-hazed hills  
Of my destiny.  
But it will form above those hills,  
For titan suns won't scorn the skies,  
And hide their still unvisioned orbs,  
When they may rise unkarma'd, high,  
To much more God-filled air :  
So now complete all thoughts  
Of Earth's imagined urge,  
And wait with clarity for Grace.

### GRACE

Chambers of grass, green depths of calm,  
My soul had known so long before,  
And knew all Grace, will know again  
So soon—for it has found Her love,  
Has pulled the crusts of earth away  
From spoons of emptinesses which,  
Passed away from lips of steel,  
Could never know the hungered throat  
That gulps for Grace yet gulps in vain  
Without those words of humbleness  
Which we must give and give again.

TONY SCOTT

## SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS

### “VINGT-ET-UNS”

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

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

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

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

17

AY, throw the thing in fire ! So long hath it passed  
For trustful currency of sovereign-gold,  
Nor raised a hint of the base-alloy it hid :  
But the time hath come, perchance, for some crucial test  
To prove the thing for once to the gaze of all !

Our gaze, not Thine, O Super-craftsman sure,  
Who knowest Thine own from very first to last,  
And growest Thy craft through all the intricate maze  
Of the granted middle, where Thy substance feeds  
Thy joy insatiate of playing hide-and-seek  
And staging playlets within e'er-widening plays !

Our gaze, not Thine, O All-compassionate One,  
Who helpst our hearts to sift out True from False  
And liftest the siege of our beleagured souls,  
And unsealest our eyes to Thy wise cosmic ends,  
And anointest our foreheads with thy cool balsam touch !

So let the thing be there ! The crackling tongues  
Will only lick it into Thy likeness sure,  
And flaming steeds that mount up to Thy Throne  
Will help but to hasten and chariot Thy passage down  
Dark Heart of Things, and set Thy aureate impress there !

18

Oh, this is Magic Rare of Grace Divine !  
 But a while ago, gross sinful selves of mine  
 O'erwhelmed me with their unregenerate weight;  
 And haunting consciousness of Primal Fault,  
 Dreading to be visited by fateful doom,  
 Vaulted me o'er with layers of thick despair :  
 But lo ! a shaft of Light hath tracked its way  
 And tapped the flinty core, and lit the spark,  
 And re-installed the Heart in its starry niche !

And now the layers dark but serve to feed  
 That Pristine Spark, fire-glowing more and more :  
 And endless empires of prehistoric selves  
 Are delved and done with, are kened and confiscate;  
 And regions desecrate by elves erstwhile  
 Turn into goodly, neatly, mapped-out shapes :  
 And the City Foursquare, glimmering faint on high,  
 Is slowly imaged, chiselled, modelled here—  
 Here in this heart of Night, this clayey Death,—  
 And the Light that floods the spaces, all unfelt,  
 Finds earthly mediums not too gross or base  
 To rest on and reflect an infinitesimal of its Grace !

CHIMANBHAI

## JOIN THE FARANDOLE

SLEEPLESS motion  
Cradle of the earth  
Unbounded branches  
Of infinite energy

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

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

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

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

Unknown wonder  
Ethereal beauty  
Music unbounded  
Join the farandole.

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

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

RANAJIT

## THUS SANG MY SOUL

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

*(Continued from the last issue)*

#### 70. THY SWEET LOVE THUS WITHDRAWN...

Thy Love of burning sweetness thus withdrawn,  
My heart is barren all and bare,  
No flutter of flame, no warmth is ware,  
No break of beauty's self-revealing dawn.

Where is Thy soul-possessing passion gone ?  
Those piercing smiles that danger pare ?  
Eyes irresistible that spare  
No twists of heart, no hidden mists of moan ?

Abandon Thy imposing God-high throne,  
Descend to dust, O Sweet, and share  
My burning grief and ignorant care,  
Remove my separation woe-begone.

O break Thy calm sublime, my yearning own,  
Free me from weaknesses and flare  
Once more in me the heart of prayer  
That melts the flintiest core of idoled stone.

*(To be continued)*

HAR KRISHAN SINGH



## THOUGHTS

THE moment I pointed out to her some error she would sneer at me. But by-and-by she made some amends in herself and would hang down her head abashed on my bringing to her notice some misdemeanour. But to my utter joy now she has completely abjured herself from all wrong-doing, she has consecrated all her powers to a single-minded worship of God.

Who ?

My lower nature.

★

★

Had I come to Thee seeking justice I would have been pulverised to dust. But as I came seeking Thy Grace, though broken once, I am erect today.

Whether a lion and a goat can drink water from the same stream is doubtful. But that Thou, a Lion, hast allowed me, a goat, to approach Thee assuring me perfect security and further beckoned me to partake of the dish made ready for Thee are concrete facts even though very subtle.

★

★

The sum-total of all that I had earned, before I knew the Grace of God, is zero. And the amount that remains after defraying all the expenses from what I have earned after experiencing the Grace of God is infinity.

★

★

When I do not crave for anything then the Lord of the Universe comes Himself to put the whole universe with all its wealth at my disposal.

But when I beg even a penny, I have to cringe low and fawn.

There was no time in the history of the earth when it was not bountiful. Nor is its plenitude less by a whit even today, nor shall it suffer any diminution tomorrow.

The jaundice of "I want this, I want that" makes us see winter desolation where the spring is in full blossom. Even when the earth's fields are overgrown with plenty, we because of this malady continue to be like semi-starved rickety children.

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

(31)

### HOW I LEFT OFF SMOKING

I HAD been a smoker for more than twenty years. When I became a Police Sub-Inspector I began to smoke heavily—nearly fifty cigarettes a day. Even after I was discharged from the Police Department, smoking clung to me in all its fury. Later my entry into the noble profession of education was of no avail in giving up smoking.

In 1952 I came in contact with Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Year by year I was more and more seized by it. Towards the end of 1954 the Mother had stated that the year 1955 was to be a year of grim struggle. She had given a period of fourteen months, *i.e.*, up to the end of February 1956, as the period of individual and collective difficulties. So I decided to give up smoking for that period of 14 months, *i.e.*, from 1.1.1955 to 29.2.1956.

On the night of 31st December 1954, a friend and I kept awake the whole night and smoked. Early in the morning on the 1st January 1955, we prayed before the photograph of the Mother to give us strength to carry out our decision. It was a solemn vow. It is extraordinary that I kept my vow for 14 months in spite of great temptation on some occasions. On 1st March 1956 I was beaming with joy at my triumph. My friends congratulated me and remarked that I had a strong will. Ironically enough they offered me a strange reward—a cigarette. I smoked the first cigarette to celebrate the victory of my vow. I thought, "Surely smoking is under my control." And lo ! I began to smoke again and the suppressed habit rebounded with greater force. Several attempts were made again but in vain. The insulted subconscious was mocking at me and was apparently stronger than my will. I wrote to the Mother to help me. But alas ! I was incapable of receiving her Force.

In 1958 I went to the Ashram with four others. I was given lodging at Swami Villa, which is on the road that leads straight to the Mother's balcony. We were there for 12 days. At that time I was under the impression that smoking was not allowed in the main building of the Ashram and at the Golconde.

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

So I was smoking at Swami Villa. The Mother has asked us not to use tobacco in any form in her book, *The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations*. How shameful on my part to smoke in her atmosphere, I thought. "One does not become a Siddha overnight, Sri Aurobindo also smoked even after going to Pondicherry. Carry on. There is no shame in it," thus prompted my lower nature. I smoked quietly for two days. But on the third an inmate of the Villa told me that smoking was prohibited in all the buildings of the Ashram. I was a bit unnerved. I took it as the Mother's warning. During our stay we used to visit local hotels. So I decided to smoke in the hotels after taking tea. But they objected to my smoking in the hotel, as it was prohibited there. Alas ! I thought the time was ripe for my smoking to go. But the subconscious did not accept defeat so easily. I, then, began to smoke on the roads, with a guilty conscience of course.

On 11.11.58 we were to leave Pondicherry, at about 8 a.m. or so. At 6.30 a.m., I was meditating at the Samadhi. Something whispered, "You will give up smoking from 24.11.1958 onwards." I felt a thrill of pleasure. I felt waves of joy descending down my head, neck, cheeks and spine. Later when I opened my eyes, I felt calm and happy. What I had heard was a clear sentence in a low tone, almost a whisper, in my head and not in my ears. Since 24.11.58 I have not smoked, nor have I felt any temptation to do so. What I feel at present is not the pride of triumph for having left off smoking but gratitude to the Mother for her grace which has kept me away from a wrong movement.

*Compiled by* HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## FILMS TO HELP SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF MANKIND

THE future role of films will be to awaken the human soul towards spirituality. The Advent of Motion Pictures has proved to be a dynamic scientific discovery. It is like atomic energy—if put to noble use it can make the world better—if misused it can destroy the world. When the moral fibre of a nation is destroyed mere physical existence will not count. The majority of motion pictures so far have been produced to cater to the baser instincts of human beings, thus retarding the process of spiritual evolution. The majority of such film-makers live miserable and unhappy lives with divorced marriages and broken homes. The Law of Karma thus proves its inevitability. These are the people who, by their deeds, their works, helped destroy millions of homes, dishing out rubbish to the customers. They have to pay back in the same coin. Motion Pictures create a terrific impact on the minds of people—specially so on those of juveniles; one's sense of values is greatly influenced by this greatest medium of Audio-Visual Education.

Good and bad films can completely change people's lives for better or for worse. Today a medium of such strong power is being mishandled by persons without the necessary qualifications to play with celluloid. Like the celluloid which catches fire and destroys itself, the exposed celluloid when projected on the silver screen can set fire to many homes and pollute the minds of the younger generation.

Today all that a person needs is notes to become a Film Producer and votes to become a Power Politician. When the Politician and the Producer have the votes and notes respectively in plenty—imagine the power at their command, which can be well utilised or misused recklessly. More often, it is the reckless misuse that has a mushroom growth. Queer are the ways of the world. Both the Politician and the Producer need specialised training before they can create and legislate.

The Divine call has come to the Enlightened Ones all over the world. This great medium must now be used for Spiritual Renaissance in the world.

Inspiring themes must be taken up not merely to entertain but also to elevate the minds of the masses and cure their souls' homesickness. An ennobling theme viewed under the hypnotic conditions of screening can lead the mind straight to its correct path—the path of righteousness—to lead a divine life. The ills of the world will be cured when the people of the world are reformed.

The spiritual factory of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has already produced a new set of men and women. These are being moulded into super-beings, super-men. They are a great combination of Art-Science and Spirit. And if they seriously venture into the field of Motion Pictures, with the help of the Sattvic Personnel of the Film Industry of India, I am confident a spiritual revolution will take place. The Moral Re-armament people have already experimented with this medium and achieved great success all over the world. There are a few institutions without much financial backing endeavouring to use this medium for better purposes. Plenty of hindrances have come in their way—they have suffered handicaps, still they wish to carry on their mission dictated by God. If the forces of virtue amalgamate and make a real effort, spiritual rockets in the shape of films could be manufactured and sent to the countries facing spiritual starvation. These rockets could be remote-controlled from Pondicherry—Bombay is not ready yet. Spiritual bombardment of the world is the need of the day. This can be possible only by the Motion Picture Missiles. The Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has the vision and the capacity to do it.

PREM NATH

# Students' Section

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## RÉPONSES — ANSWERS

*Q. Douce Mère, il y a certaines activités dans notre programme d'éducation physique qui sont d'une nature plus sérieuse que d'autres et qui demandent plus de concentration; celles-là tendent à devenir ennuyeuses pour les enfants. Les capitaines, doivent-ils organiser leur groupe de façon que tout ce qu'ils enseignent soit intéressant et amusant, ou est-ce que les enfant doivent essayer de créer l'intérêt en eux-mêmes?*

*Q. Sweet Mother, there are certain activities in our programme of physical education which are of a more serious nature than the others and call for more concentration; these tend to become boring for the children. Ought the captains to organise their groups in such a way that all they teach may be interesting and amusing, or is it that the children should try to create the interest in themselves?*

R. Les deux sont indispensables et doivent, autant que possible, être toujours présents.

Avec un peu d'imagination et de souplesse inventive, les instructeurs doivent donner de l'attrait et de l'imprévu à ce qu'ils enseignent.

De leur côté, les enfants, en cultivant en eux-mêmes la volonté de progrès et le goût du progrès, doivent créer un intérêt constant pour ce qu'ils font.

En attendant que cela soit fait, les capitaines peuvent confier aux enfants, partiellement, le soin d'organiser leurs propres exercices, en utilisant autant que possible les idées qui leur viennent si elles sont ingénieuses.

Si le sens de collaboration et de responsabilité est éveillé chez les enfants, du même coup ils s'intéresseront à ce qu'ils font et les feront avec plaisir.

*La Mère*

27-7-1961

A. Both are indispensable and ought, as much as possible, to be always present.

With a little imagination and inventive suppleness, the instructors ought to give charm and novelty to what they teach.

On their part, the children, by cultivating in themselves the will for progress and the taste for progress, should create a constant interest in what they do.

In the meanwhile, the captains can partly entrust to the children the care of organising their own exercises, by using as much as possible whatever ingenious ideas may occur to them.

If the sense of collaboration and of responsibility is awakened in the children, they will at the same time get interested in what they do, and will do it with pleasure.

THE MOTHER

21-7-1961

*Q. Douce Mère, nous avons une minute de concentration avant et après le groupe chaque jour. Que doit-on essayer de faire pendant cette concentration?*

*Q. Sweet Mother, we have a minute of concentration before and after the group every day. What should one try to do during this concentration?*

R. Avant, faire l'offrande au Divin, de ce que l'on va faire pour que cela soit fait dans un esprit de consécration.

Après, demander au Divin d'augmenter en nous la volonté de progrès, pour devenir des instruments de plus en plus aptes à Le servir.

On peut aussi, avant de commencer, se donner au Divin en silence.

Et, à la fin, remercier le Divin en silence.

Je veux dire un geste du *cœur* sans parole dans la tête.

24-7-1961

LA MÈRE

A. Before, make an offering to the Divine of what you are going to do, so that it may be done in a spirit of consecration.

After, ask the Divine to increase in us the will for progress, for becoming instruments more and more apt to serve Him.

You may also, before starting, give yourselves to the Divine in silence.

And, at the end, thank the Divine in silence.

I mean a gesture of the *heart* without words in the head.

24-7-1961

THE MOTHER

## AUX ENFANTS

Les jours passent...

Les semaines passent...

Les mois passent...

Les années passent...

Et le temps s'évanouit dans le passé.

Et plus tard, quand ils sont devenus grands, ceux qui n'ont plus l'immense avantage d'être des enfants, regrettent tout le temps qu'ils ont perdu et qu'ils auraient pu utiliser à apprendre toutes les choses qui sont nécessaires pour savoir vivre.

## TO THE CHILDREN

The days pass...

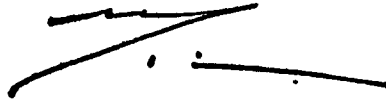
The weeks pass...

The months pass...

The years pass...

And time vanishes into the past.

And later, when they have grown up, those who have no longer the immense advantage of being children, regret all the time which they have lost and which they could have used for learning all the things that are needed in order to know how to live.





## LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

*Q. There is a revolt in the being. Why has it come about?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is because of the struggle in the physical and because there is still something in you that feels the struggle and so the lower Forces want to press till you revolt. 15-9-1935

But how is it that any part of you gives any value to the suggestions ? If no part gives any value then surely they must seem to you too laughable and contemptible to have any effect or power to make you revolt.

If you attach no value to the suggestions then there may be the inertia but not this. 15-9-1935

*Q. All the long and laborious sadhana done by you in my lower nature seems now dispersed.*

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it is waiting for the solution of the physical difficulty. Nothing has been lost.

Everybody has his full share of difficulties, except those who do not mind what difficulties they have. 5-10-1935

*Q. Even aspiration seems impossible now.*

SRI AUROBINDO : Perhaps your aspiration was associated with some mental push—a quiet aspiration or will is always possible even in the worst inertia. 5-10-1935

There generally is a mental push from the beginning of the sadhana. 6-10-1935

So long as there is not a constant action of the Force from above or else of a deeper will from within, the mental will is necessary. 6-10-1935

*Q. Will you not teach me how to aspire so that there may be no mental push and the inert condition may also diminish?*

SRI AUROBINDO : A quiet prayer or remembrance of the object of aspiration without a pull for results is the way for doing that. If along with that, there is a faith that it is sure to come, it is the best for this condition. 27-10-1935

*Q. Once when I asked whether I should draw the Force as much as I could, your answer was : "Let it come in." Should one let the Force enter by its own choice ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : I mean that you need not pull it down, but you should aid its entry by your full aspiration and assent. 27-II-1935

*Q. Why does the resistance become sometimes active and sometimes quiescent ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : When the struggle is there, it always does like that. There is a fluctuation according as the inner consciousness reacts or not, but that reaction is not always on the surface. 30-10-1935

*Q. I feel the struggle, but I don't know of what kind it is and between what two parties.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is between the old lower nature supported by the hostile forces and the new consciousness that began to descend—the struggle is always that. 31-10-1935

*Q. Does not the struggle last all through the sadhana ? Whether it is active or passive, strong or weak is a different matter.*

SRI AUROBINDO : That makes all the difference. Besides everybody does not have the struggle, though most pass through it. 1-II-1935

It is when one identifies oneself with the exterior consciousness (so that one can say, "There is no hope for me, I can't do anything") that the trouble comes.

1-II-1935

*Q. You say "though most pass through it". This means that there are some who do not even need to pass through the struggle. How is it possible for them ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is something in their nature that is poised, calm, open, refusing to let the Nature forces disturb their settled inner attitudes, clear mind and will and strong balance. Also a prominent psychic with a quiet vital and a clear physical mind will ensure a calm progress. 2-II-1935

*Q. Can a sadness, that is not merely vital, help to cure one of dryness in the vital being ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : I do not know that sadness has the power to cure. I have myself followed the Gita's path of equanimity—but for some the psychic sadness may be necessary. But I think it is more an indication of a mistake than a cure. 18-II-1935

Tamasic indifference is one thing and the absence of sorrow is another. One has to observe what is wrong and do all that one can to set it right. Sadness

in itself has no power to cure what is wrong, a firm quiet persistent will has the power.

*Q. How could an ascent of consciousness take place when there is a lot of restlessness in the being? Was it not something surprising?*

SRI AUROBINDO : There was nothing surprising about it. It is not inevitable that the consciousness should be either all in the heights or all in the depths. It is often mixed.

19-12-1935

*Q. It is said that the consciousness ascends to the Brahmarandhra. What is the Brahmarandhra?*

SRI AUROBINDO : The place at the top of the head (called crown of the head) which is supposed to be the part at which things ordinarily come in from above and go out. E.G. It is through this that the being in the sukshma deha goes out at the time of death—and also it is the passage of connection (previous to opening) between the higher and the lower consciousness.

20-12-1935

*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 THIRTY-ONE

“ONE of the finest sonnets I have ever read,” wrote Sri Aurobindo about *Le Cygne* of Mallarmé. And when a critic’s notion that Mallarmé’s verse was acquired rather than inspired was quoted to him, Sri Aurobindo replied apropos of this and *Le Tombeau d’Edgar Poe* : “If these two magnificent sonnets are not inspired then there is no such thing as inspiration.”

*Le Cygne* is not only inspired : it is a poem about inspiration—or, to be more accurate, about inspiration and aspiration. It is Mallarmé talking about himself—himself the poet but not only the poet : Mallarmé the man and, through the idealist and aspirant that this man was, man the idealist and the aspirant is the theme of the poem when it starts with the quatrain which I consider the most memorable in French poetry. And this theme is worked out through the most Mallarméan symbol possible—the whitest living thing, the Swan. Let me give you the whole sonnet, with first an almost literal translation and then a more or less free poetic rendering.

#### *Le Cygne*

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd’hui  
Va-t-il déchirer avec un coup d’aile ivre  
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre  
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n’ont pas fui !

Un cygne d’autrefois se souvient que c’est lui  
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre  
Pour n’avoir pas chanté la région où vivre  
Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l’ennui.

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie  
 Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,  
 Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.

Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,  
 Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris  
 Que vêt parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.

*The Swan*

*(A literal translation)*

The virginal, the vivid, the beautiful today—  
 Does it come to tear with a stroke of drunken wing  
 This hard forgotten lake which, under the hoar frost, is haunted  
 By the transparent glacier of flights that have not flown ?

A swan of other times remembers that it is he  
 Who, magnificent but without hope, frees himself  
 For not having sung the region where one should live  
 When the boredom of sterile winter has shone forth.

All his neck will shake off the white agony  
 Inflicted by space on the bird which denies space,  
 But not the horror of the soil where his plumage is caught.

Phantom whom to this place his pure brightness assigns,  
 He is immobilised in the cold dream of contempt  
 That is worn, amid his useless exile, by the Swan.

*(A free poetic rendering)*

Virginal, vivid, beautiful Today—  
 Will it tear with a stroke of drunken wing this lone  
 Hard lake where haunts mid hoar-frost's overlay  
 The transparent glacier of flights unflown ?

A swan of the past remembers now his own  
 Splendour left hopeless even though flaming free,  
 Because he sang not life's dominion  
 Beyond dull winter's bright sterility.

His neck will shake off the white agony  
 Space-flung upon the bird denying space,  
 But the soil's horror grips his plumage down.

Phantom whose pure sheen fits him to this place,  
 He is stilled in the cold contemptuous reverie  
 That clothes the useless exile of the Swan.

The very first meaningful word sets the key: "vierge"—"virginal." It signifies the white dawn-moment when the life and loveliness of light, the vivid and beautiful day, are a silvery promise of an upward activity, of a shining soar into the sky on enchanted wings, wings drunk with the infinite. But the dawn-moment of the sonnet is not to be seen at some distant horizon. It is to be seen a-glimmer in an expanse of ice where it is all the more virginal. This expanse is a frozen lake. Within it is the silvery promise of an upward activity. But, though the day will run its usual course, there will be no such activity here. No wing will leap into life and break the hard surface. For the frozen lake holds the history of innumerable failures to fly upward, failures grown concrete by their earth-bound heaviness into an unmoving glacier which yet has a crystalline clearness by the ethereal quality of the very flights that might have flown.

All this gives the suggestion of a white bird. You have to imagine a white bird standing on the icy surface of a lake. There will be a reflection of it in that surface. Somehow the reality and the reflection have become one. The reality has sunk into the reflection and got imprisoned in the ice-block. The white of the bird has grown the white of the frozen lake. This imprisonment has happened because the bird did not or could not use its wings to fly away. And now those flights, instead of haunting the sky which would have been the home of the wings, haunt the frozen lake by not getting realised and by making the earth their wing-home. The lake is called forgotten as well as hard because there is a bleakness, an emptiness about it, the character of a forsaken place. All other birds are gone, leaving it a large loneliness uninhabited except by the bird that has got imprisoned. Even the grace of God seems to have deserted it.

The bird left behind is covered by two things. One is the hoar-frost, the congealed moisture of the air. The other is the glacier itself which belongs to the lake. We shall see later the different relations of the bird to these two coldnesses.

The fourth line has been picked out by Sri Aurobindo for special praise. He calls it "magnificent", and the idea of it is to him as powerful as it is violent. Its audacity is outstanding in French poetry. But it can command a place among the supreme creations in world-poetry also. In fact, the whole stanza

is gloriously original, and the opening line is in its own way as much a poetic triumph as the last : it is not splendidly audacious but it is extremely felicitous and gathers up in one brief phrase the entire essence of the dawn-moment charged with high hopes and exquisite aspirations. It has a finer quality than George Herbert's well-known

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright !

The other line joins up with the terrible phrase Dante puts into the mouth of Count Ugolino in the thirty-third Canto of *Inferno* :

Io non piangea, si dentro impetrai :  
piangevan elli.....

(I wept not, so of stone I'd grown within :  
They wept...)

But the inner petrification which Dante speaks of is related to a purely human situation of tragic feeling : the psychological glaciation that is in Mallarmé refers to a superhuman goal set for the idealistic urge—it has a profounder bearing and, though the poetry is not intenser, it has a more subtle, more surprising vision behind it.

The second stanza is less impressive than the first, yet it has a perfection of its own and we have both beauty and boldness in a shape less challenging but more puzzling. It does not hit our heads, so to speak, with a compact blow stunning it into a strange insight : it knocks at it from several sides and breaks it into small pieces, dispersing the reasoning faculty into many directions of curiosity and wonder. Now the imprisoned bird whose whiteness was suggested is stated to be a swan, and it is called a swan of other times because now it can hardly be described by the same name: it has ceased to fly and has become a denizen no longer of the free ether as a swan should be : it is a denizen of motionless earth. And this change is acutely felt by it in a remembrance of what it was and a realisation of what it is. The once swanlike bird recalls how splendid it was and looks at the ghost of that glory remaining with it. The phrase—“qui sans espoir se délivre”—is rather a peculiar one. Some critics think that Mallarmé has violated French and used “se délivre” in the sense of “se livrer”: “to give oneself up.” In English we can deliver ourselves into somebody's hands, meaning to give ourselves up; but in French “se délivrer” can only mean “to free oneself”. The critics who ascribe to Mallarmé an un-French turn are thinking in terms of the earth-bound condition of the bird : the bird, according to them, has surrendered itself to its prison in spite of its own past magnificence. What they say about the bird may be right, but that is no excuse

for understanding "se délivre" in the sense of "se livre". It is quite possible to make good meaning with the normal connotation of the phrase. The choice between the two expressions is a choice between Mallarmé's penchant for violating the French language and his penchant for making puzzling statements without that violence. The last line of the previous quatrain, for instance, is perfect French, but its vision and manner are most un-French. With regard to the line we are now studying, neither the vision nor the manner is as violently perfect as there; but with "se délivre" in its normal sense we can make the line a somewhat abnormal statement combining the idea of freedom and the idea of hopelessness. And what we have then to do is to justify the combination and prove it to be a tenable paradox rather than bewildering balderdash.

Well, what is the meaning of the swan freeing itself without hope? We can answer in two ways. Firstly, by stressing the word "chanté"—"sung"—in the next line. The swan, though able to free itself in some sense, is yet without hope because it has not performed the supreme function of singing of a region to which it really belongs and to which it should go for living. In the broadest terms, it has not put itself into tune with the experience of a divine mystery beyond our earth: the rhythms of its existence did not answer to the harmony of the spheres. That is why whatever freedom it can win for itself is still a hopeless one: the bird will ever stay a bird of the barren lifescape created by the spirit of winter. What exactly this lifescape stands for, we shall see in a minute. Just now let me complete my answer to our question.

I mentioned two ways of answering. One I have already followed. The other is with reference to the opening three lines of the sestet. We can take the paradox of the hopeless freedom as an anticipation of those lines. In them you will see that the bird is not completely a frozen prisoner. Its tragedy lies in its being alive in spite of the icy imprisonment and being able to shake off a bit of its load of earth-bound condition. It can free itself of the grip of the hoar-frost but cannot get rid of the grip on it by the lake's surface. That is why although it has a sense of freedom the freedom is without hope: its liberty is a fine torture.

Now we must understand how the two conditions—the white agony of the hoar-frost and the horror of the frozen lake—differ. The swan by failing to sing the ultimate divinity has denied the vastitudes through which that divinity is reached: it has insulted Space, the synonym of liberty, and out of this Space that has been insulted the hoar-frost has come to stiffen the bird, make it a prisoner of the lower realms which it has preferred. But the swan is not suppressed by this punishment; it has the desire to sing and as long as this desire is present the neck, the throat from which the singing should come, is able to assert itself by a great effort: the soul can show its aspiration, it can make its upward yearning active, prepare itself for the singing even if the song fails to arrive. The infliction of hoar-frost from the vastnesses can be overcome by an



exercise of Godward imagination : the song can be imagined. But, until the song is realised, there can be no genuine freedom. The throat can stir in the air as if in a movement of singing: but the song cannot come without the uplift of the wings. The wing-beats alone can set the rhythm of the song : they alone can carry the throat and the body high up and liberate in unison with the altitudes the song of the Supreme. Why are the wings unable to beat ? They are caught not by the air's hoar-frost but by the frozenness of the earth. And it is this frozenness that has paralysed the will although the imagination is not incapacitated.

Now we may return to the wintry lifescape. This lifescape consists of both air and ground. We may say that winter is a power that has two aspects : the aspect of chilled air and that of iced ground. Air represents the mental side of life, the ground the physical. When winter takes one into its power it catches the mental life into a fruitless movement and the physical life into a fruitless stability. The mental life becomes bleak yet stays aware. The physical life approaches the state of sleep and anticipates the state of death. These two states may be referred back to the two shades we have distinguished in Mallarmé's *Ennui*—*Ennui* which is mentioned in this poem itself. We said that *Ennui* means in the first place a boredom with the commonplaceness of existence as we actually find it, the idealist in us is disgusted with this too heavy and solid world. We said that *Ennui* means in the second place a boredom due to the inability of the artist to express the divine ideality, the divine mystery. The first kind of boredom hovers a little above the earth, trembles in the air, keeps conscious, for it moves away from heavy and solid Matter by the sheer power of disgust. The second kind is very strange : it wants to be in tune with what is non-Matter, but this non-Matter is in its final form an utter Silence, a white ineffable Secrecy, and when one fails to express this Silence and this Secrecy one stands in an attitude inversely accordant with them, for one stands silent, a picture of secrecy : only, that silence is as if the silence of sleep, that secrecy is as if the secrecy of death. Though the mental life goes on bleakly, the physical life seems to suffer a sort of lapse. But now comes the crowning paradox. The lapse, which is half-sleep half-death, is in its own fashion the same Ineffable that has not been sung. The boredom of sterile Winter is said to shine forth : it is itself a brightness, itself a whiteness. Also, you may recall the line,

*L'hiver, saison de l'art serein, l'hiver lucide.*  
(Winter, serene art's season, lucid winter.)

Winter is at once a power of making one barren and a power of inspiring one by its immaculate resplendence to sing of the supreme White. Thus "quand" ("when") used by Mallarmé in line 8 may be understood in a double way.

The swan has to wing off to its true country when the impact of sterile winter is upon it, the winter of life's boredom. But the very impulse to the heavenward flight is born when the fertilising impact of winter is upon the poet-soul, the winter which is the shining forth as it were of the white heaven the soul seeks. The frozen lake, therefore, has a double attraction—it stimulates Mallarmé to his few rare chantings and it simulates for him the Arcanum that he essays to chant. The whiteness-drunk swan, which is the poet in him, feels an affinity with the very thing that prevents it from attaining its goal : it feels even as though by yielding to the affinity the goal were attained. This perversely pleasurable perception is subtly conveyed in the line :

Fântôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne...

The swan whose true home is beyond and whose nature is white in harmony with that home seems yet to fit perfectly into the earth-scene when this scene is wintry and the bird's pure colour resembles the lake's colourless frozenness. Not that there is no difference : there is, and still a congruity. The congruity in the midst of the difference is perhaps hinted in the word "Fantôme". We arrive at this word through a series of changes starting with the first stanza, passing through the second and ending with the first half of the sestet. In the opening stanza there is a promise of movement. In the next the movement is stated to be limited. In the half-sestet the limitation is made clear and the ultimate imprisonment is driven home in its last line. The hopelessness touched on earlier becomes concrete and the swan seems to give up its struggle and get resigned to its fate. It is wrapt now in its ghostlike existence, its phantasmal fixity in a life that is a death. But the life that is a death is seen as a death that is a life—and what is imprisoned and rendered barren is a phantom in the sense in which an image in a mirror is a phantom, an unreality which is yet exactly like the reality. The swan sunk into the wintry white is a negative but faithful version of the very thing that the swan would be if it reached the transcendental earth-free mystery.

And there we leave the bird, no longer struggling, completely immobilised—immobilised in a dream that cannot wake, but a dream that is at the same time contemptuous. Why contemptuous ? I think there is a lot of meaning in this word "mépris". In it we have the irony of the situation. The bird whose whiteness was meant for the Highest is now merged in the lowest. The swan feels this tragi-comedy and scorns itself for failing. But, knowing the paradox of the death in life that is a life in death, it has a contempt for the apparent success of what has caused its failure. While appearing to sink into the opposite of its own goal it has in a strange manner touched that very goal in a negative form : it is scornful of the wintry lifescape which is a scene of exile for the skiey soul that this bird is. The cold dream of contempt in both the senses is

worn by it as a natural vesture of the phantomlike being it has grown here on earth. And the double sense confers on the adjective "useless" also a double meaning. The exile is useless because it does not serve the swan's life-mission, and it is useless too because it cannot fill the bird with an entire frustration. At the back of all this twofold play of perception we may discern the curious experience that Mallarmé had of getting into contact with the Superconscient through the Inconscient.

As if there were not subtlety enough in the picture of the glaciated bird, Mallarmé closes with a further stroke of hidden significance. Mark that in line 5 the swan, *cygne*, is written with a small initial letter but the word with which the sonnet ends is *Cygne*, Swan : the initial letter is a capital. This suggests an archetypal bird within the human. And the unity of the upper whiteness with the lower provides a hint that what seems caught below may also be mysteriously present high above. And, if there is an archetypal Swan high above, can we say that the bird is altogether caught in earth with just a negative self-fulfilment ? Such a question, provoked by Mallarmé's capitalisation of the initial letter, is, of course, philosophical and mystic; but Mallarmé is a Symbolist and we must look in him for more than mere philosophy or mysticism : an image must be sought after. And the word "Cygne" lifts our gaze upward not only by its philosophico-mystic pointer but by its astronomical implication as well. It has the same sound as "Signe", "Sign"—the term applied to a constellation : you must have heard of the Signs of the Zodiac. Straight to the heights of the heavens scanned by the astronomer our eyes are turned. But that is not all. In those heights one heavenly *Signe* is actually called *Cygne*, the Swan. In Greek mythology Cycnus was a hero whom Apollo converted into a constellation, and astronomy has adopted the name. So, far in the infinite distance hangs for ever free the Swan, *le Cygne*. Mallarmé tells us by the symbolism of this constellation that the being which is a phantom here is the reflex of that divine brilliance which nothing can touch. The white bird of his sonnet is at the same time hushful in heaven and hushed in earth.

With the puzzling but beautiful vision of the two hushes the poem itself comes to a hush reinforcing the vision. And there we are left so far as the vision is concerned. But vision is not the sole result intended by the vocable *Cygne* : Mallarmé has a sound-effect in mind, a sound-effect which, besides indicating by the vocable a sign, a constellation, of the sky, joins up with his whole aesthetic theory. *Signe*, sign, connotes a written mark conventionally used for word or phrase and it connotes too a thing used as a representation of something, a symbol. Words themselves are symbols in a special sense—they represent mental facts, the notions of objects, and through the notions they represent the very objects. Thus the swan, while being thought of in terms of a constellation, comes home forcibly with the suggestion of the verbal movement of poetry in general and the poetic process of Symbolism in particular.

The incantatory word that images mystery : that is Mallarméan Symbolism. And the constellated heavenly Swan-sign reflected in the Symbolist word—there we have the final sound-effect closing the sonnet with the appellation *Cygne*. The whole poetic pursuit of Mallarmé is shown by this terminal appellation to be the theme of the sonnet. But since to Mallarmé poetry was life itself and he wanted his being as well as his literary work to be poetry, what he calls the Word, the Symbol, is not only the poetic process : it is also the process of the poet's life, the life of one who is entranced with the Ineffable and strives to embody that supreme Mystery. Hence the entire play of suggestion in the sonnet is with three aspects : the swan stands for the aspiring soul, for the Perfection aloft which is the original essence of the soul, and for the self-expressive activity that is Poetry—Poetry which in a special sense is a literary movement and in a broad sense the movement of life's spiritual rhythm and in the ultimate sense the Ideality patterning forth in a world high above of perfect forms the Mystery that is a Sovereign Silence.

You must have got dizzy with Mallarméan subtleties. Let me relieve the strain by a few remarks about the technique rather than the wheel-within-wheel significance. You may remember that in a Symbolist poem what would usually be a metaphor stands without mention of the object for which the metaphor is found. We are not told here that this or that object is like a swan; we are not told that life is a swan or poetry is a swan. We are just given the swan and nothing else. Through it we have to feel the subject-matter : no expository intellectual element, no *rapportage*, is present and a strange figure is set living before us. This is Iconopoeia at its extreme, at its most independent.

Then let us mark the sound-system. As far as sound is concerned, what imposes itself most in a rhymed poem is the end-word of each line : the rhymes ring most prominently in any poem's sound-system. Here the rhymes—aujourd'hui-fui, ivre-givre, lui-ennui, délivre-vivre, agonie-nie, pris-mépris, assigne-Cygne—are of a special character. Charles Mauron has well spoken of "the almost obsessional persistence of a single alliteration, the short cold *r*'s of the rhymes shining through the whole sonnet like icicles." A tingling, chilling, piercing impression is created, and the various phases and nuances of the poem's mood are driven together and its manifold of pang and poise and profundity is crystallised into oneness.

A final thought. Mallarmé has sung of the soul's failure to fulfil itself and of only a paradoxical victory achieved and of a high-hung Platonic ideality. If the Soul-swan, the Soul-word were a success, what sort of iconopoeic poetry might we expect ? Sri Aurobindo has provided the answer. This poetry would express first the transcendence of the imperfect earth by the aspiring soul :

Into the Silence, into the Silence,  
Arise, O spirit immortal,

Away from the turning Wheel, breaking the magical Circle...  
 Ascend single and deathless :  
 Care no more for the whispers and the shoutings of the darkness,  
 Pass from the sphere of the grey and the little,.....  
 Higher than Heaven, wider than the universe,  
 In a pure glory of being,  
 In a bright stillness of self-seeing...

The last line here is almost in consonance, though in a higher key, with the vision and vibration of Mallarmé's sonnet. But the full realisation of the swan's destiny is not yet compassed. The Soul-bird has to outgrow even the attainment of the supracosmic, even the mute Alone, and penetrate to the Supreme that embraces both Time and Timelessness :

Out of the Silence, out of the Silence,...  
 Carrying with thee the splendour and wideness,  
 Ascend, O spirit immortal.  
 Assigning to Time its endless meaning,  
 Blissful enter into the clasp of the Timeless...  
 One with the Transcendent, calm, universal,  
 All in thyself and thyself in all dwelling,  
 Act in the world with thy being beyond it...  
 Outclimbing the summits of Nature,  
 Transcending and uplifting the soul of the finite,  
 Rise with the world in thy bosom,  
 O Word gathered into the heart of the Ineffable.  
 One with the Eternal, live in his infinity,  
 Drowned in the Absolute, found in the Godhead,  
 Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether wandering winged through  
 the universe,  
 Spirit immortal.

These lines of Sri Aurobindo give us in the world-wandering yet world-exceeding Swan the all-consummating counterpart to Mallarmé's ice-bound bird of flights unflown. And we have also the top reach of the mystic and spiritual rhythm towards which the Mallarméan Word was straining in its Symbolism, its self-sufficient extremity of Iconopœia.

AMAL KIRAN  
 (K. D. SETHNA)

## AUGUST 23 : TO ANDRÉ

“MAMMA, Mamma !” cried a heavenly child,  
Millions of cries seeking Grace were yet unborn,—  
Quenched was the sleepless thirst of his earthly morn  
By Her sweet smile, terror to Ignorance wild.

Empty of pride is he, humility’s flood,  
Our brother of the heights, yet sweetly near.  
On the Mother his was the first reliance untouched by fear.  
He was Her blessing-dawn in earth’s flesh and blood.

O brother thaumaturge, in silence you veil  
Your soul’s high deeds and luminous gifts.  
Therefore our love with more joy lifts  
Its folded hands and cries, “O dearest comrade, hail !”

CHINMOY

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## LEGEND AND SYMBOL

You cry for the Moon, O Child !  
You have her with you;  
You glow in her light  
And your eyes so bright  
Reveal her in you.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

## LINES TO THE ALL-HYPHEN STORM\*

RAIN on me  
All hyphen-drop !  
Rain-on.....rain-on  
Not non-stop,  
Just zop-zop ! or behop...  
Get hep ! be square  
I am a good-seed  
Born a tare.

As you wend  
Your spatial-way,  
All a-skiffle  
Toujours-gai !  
Beatniks just across-the-way  
Serve me with a devil's brew !  
Now look at me  
A kinkajou.

To-be or not ?  
To was as-it-were !  
When will I shed  
This coat of fur ?  
'Tis nobler now  
Than t'was before !  
Forget-us-not...  
The kelpies roar.

Enough ! my hyphen-  
Crystal-drop.  
You like time  
Must have-a-stop.  
Take your noise  
To Timbuctoo...  
If you know-what  
Is good-for-you...

LEENA

\* Kept awake by the All-Hyphen-Storm blowing through so many poems something in me had to be expressed.

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Published by P. Counouma  
Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry