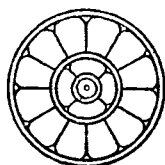


MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY 1962

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



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIII

No. 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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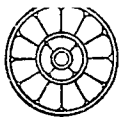
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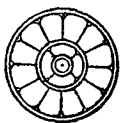
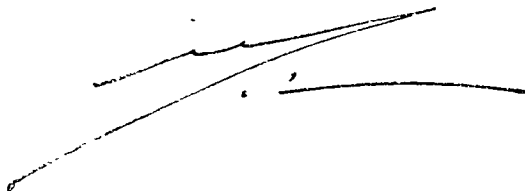
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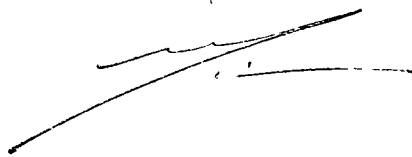
We thirst for perfection.
Not this human perfection which is
a perfection of the ego and bars the
way to the Divine perfection.

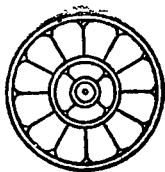
But that one perfection which
has the power to manifest upon earth
the Eternal Truth



1962

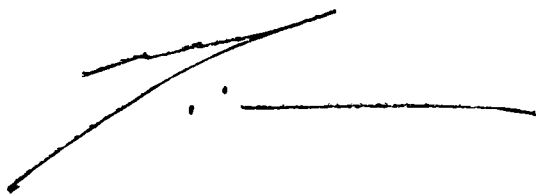
Notre être a soif de perfection
Non pas cette perfection humaine qui
est une perfection de l'ego et barre
le chemin à la perfection Divine
Mais une perfection qui puisse
manifester sur terre la Vérité Eternelle

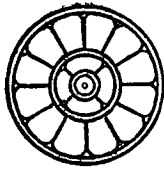




Ne prenez pas mes paroles
pour un enseignement.

Mes paroles sont toujours
une force en action; elles
sont prononcées sans un
but défini, et perdent leur
pouvoir véritable quand elles
sont séparées de la circons-
tance qui les avait
motivées.





Do not take my words
for a teaching. Always
they are a force in action,
uttered with a definite
purpose, and they lose
their true power when
separated from that
purpose.

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Whatever is new will always meet an opposition from conservative people. If we yield to this opposition, the world will never advance one step.

7.11.1961

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 twelfth 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 Moher India in 1952. We are now picking up where we then stopped and shall continue systematically.)

JANUARY 4, 1939

SRI Aurobindo himself started the talk. After inquiring about X's health from S, he related what A had written about his health. When, after his heart-trouble, A had got back on his feet, he went to watch the international wrestling tournaments going on at that time in Bombay. He got so caught up in the bouts that his heart began beating faster and faster and when the foreign wrestlers started playing foul his excitement was at such a pitch that he felt as if his heart would give way and he would faint. He realised that this kind of excitement was very harmful, but he would not give up going to see the tournaments. He decided that what was to be got rid of was his taking sides and wanting the Indian wrestlers to win. By refraining from any partisanship he felt he would cut out the extreme excitement.

This interesting report set us off on the subject of fainting. N enumerated a few instances of fainting even while slight finger-cuts were being dressed. He said that D too had fainted.

SRI AUROBINDO : Even D did it ?

N : Yes. He came boldly in, but as soon as we started he went off ! Curious !

SRI AUROBINDO : Perhaps these people are being Yogicised ! Or is it a

reaction of the subconscious ? Or maybe they are trying to go into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi ! It is said that in such Samadhi one is not conscious of even burning red-hot iron. Well, I remember a Yogi who was tested with red-hot iron; and when he had no sensation of it the experimenters thought he had really got into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. But I think that a deep trance is quite sufficient for this kind of unawareness.

N : In hypnotism too one doesn't feel when, for instance, a pin is stuck into the flesh.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. I saw a case of hypnotism in which the raised arm of a patient could not be pulled down even by four or five men.

N : How can this be explained ?

SRI AUROBONDO : These are things of a supraphysical state, and the ordinary physical laws bringing about the ordinary reactions are not valid then. We have cases in which people under the influence of hypnotism find sugar tasting bitter. Now the question is whether sugar itself is bitter or the subject feels it to be so. In other words, does the quality of a thing depend on the object or on the subject ? Take, for instance, beauty. When we call someone or something beautiful, is it because the object itself is beautiful or the subject sees it as such—that is, does beauty depend on the psychological state of the subject and have nothing to do with the object ?

N : In the case of beauty one can say that tastes differ. What one calls beautiful another may not. But sugar is sweet to everybody under normal conditions. Since sweetness is a common human reaction, there must be something in the object.

SRI AUROBINDO : But is this reaction confined to humanity or is it a common reaction of all living beings ?

S : What is your conclusion, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know.

At this point the Mother came in and asked, "What is the subject of your talk today ?" S reported the conversation and said, "Sri Aurobindo has no opinion. Have you any, Mother ?"

MOTHER : I don't approve of hypnotism. I have seen many cases of so-called hypnotism in which the forces remain behind and the subjects lend themselves to be used by the forces. What is hypnotism ? Doesn't it mean that the subject's will-power is replaced by somebody else's ? I know a case of exteriorisation where the operator was able to exteriorise the vital being of the subject in an almost material form and replace it by another's and not by the operator's own. If one replaced it by one's own, there could be no operation. But these operations are extremely dangerous, for there are so many forces round about that may easily take possession of the body, or else death may fol-

low. One shouldn't do these things except under guidance or in the presence of a Master.

After some more talk the Mother departed for Meditation.

SRI AUROBINDO (*resuming*): When the subtle body goes out, there is a thin thread that maintains the connection with the physical body. If that thread is snapped somehow, the man dies.

N : I have heard that the Mother had such an accident in Algeria.

SRI AUROBINDO (*surprised*): How do you know that ? She went to Algeria to study with Théon who was a great occultist ; his wife was still more so. From there once the Mother visited Paris and was among her friends and wrote something on a paper with a pencil. That paper was here even the other day.

Then there began a talk about miracles.

SRI AUROBINDO : Bejoy Goswami's life by one of his disciples is full of miracles. When P. Mitter was asked how Goswami could fly, he said, "He could glide like that" ! (*Sri Aurobindo showed this by a movement of his hand.*) Of course all those things were done in the subtle body.

S : What about the miracles in the life of Haranath ? Once on his way back from Kashmir, it is said, he fell seriously ill and was unconscious for two or three hours. When he regained consciousness, it was found that his body had changed to a golden colour. Is such a change possible, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. If he was unconscious, something must have come down. I know of a case where the stature of the man increased !

N : Your colour also has changed, they say.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some silence*): H said that the change was due to my remaining in the shade. But even an ordinary man, not a Yogi, can have a change of colour. I know a dark lower-middle-class Bengali named Hesh who returned from Europe after some years. He looked almost like a European. He came to see me at Baroda but I couldn't recognise him. Then he said, "Don't you recognise me ?"

When I was doing Pranayama I used to feel the breath concentrated in the head. My skin began to be smooth and fair. The women of our family noticed it first, as they have a sharp eye for such things. And it was at that time I began to put on flesh. Formerly I was frail and thin. Then I noticed something unusual in the flow of my saliva. It was that substance perhaps that gave the change of colour and the other things. The Yogis say some sort of *Amrita*, it is nectar, flows down from the top of the brain that can make one immortal.

An American at darshan time looked very closely and minutely at me, for

he saw some light around me. He wanted to make sure whether it was any physical light. When he found that it was not, he began to think me some kind of Mahatma.

P : I know of a sadhu cutting again and again the membrane under his tongue to enable the tongue to reach inside and get that flow of *Amrita*. He turned insane afterwards.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, that is Khechari Mudra. He perhaps got the wrong flow. Barin was approached by some of these sadhus and promised all sorts of things if he did that practice by cutting the membrane under the tongue. He said, "I am not going to do it." They coaxed and coaxed him but failed to persuade him. Then they sneered at him, "Bengali coward !" He replied, "Bengali or no Bengali, I am not going to do it !" (*Laughter*)

Then the conversation went back to Tibetan occultism and how Europeans are taken up by such things and not by spirituality.

SRI AUROBINDO : These Europeans either believe everything or believe nothing. If you tell them there are Yogis in Tibet and Mahabhutan who are 2000 years old and that crores of Mahatmas are living there, they may go to visit the place. You must have heard of wonderful Yogic novels written by someone dealing with Tibet and its occult things. I read one of them but found nothing of Yoga there.

N : Yes, I have read two by A. Beck.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is that a woman ?

N : Yes. She has written a novel about Japan also, where she gives to Japanese Jiu-jitsu some mystic power and makes it a symbol of it.

SRI AUROBINDO : I thought that Japanese spirituality is in the Japanese religion which is called Zen Buddhism. There the disciples have to bear blows from the Guru as a test of discipleship. (*Smiling*) I suppose many would find it inconvenient here.

Q : Have you ever written any stories ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have, but they are all lost. When there was the rumour our house would be searched by the police, my trunk was sent off to David's place. After some time when they brought the trunk back it was found that all my stories had been eaten away by white ants. So my future fame as a story-writer perished. (*Laughter*)

But it is a pity that I lost two translations of poems. One of them was a translation of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* in terza rima. It was rather well done.

N : Yes, indeed a pity.

SRI AUROBINDO : But the stories were nothing to speak of—except one. I can say something of this one because I have still two pages left of it. All my stories were occult.

Has any of you read Jules Romains ? He is at once a doctor, an occultist, a novelist and a dramatist. The Mother speaks very highly of him. She says that he doesn't depict the outer circumstances as they are but goes within and writes from there. He is a Unanimist and believes that there is one soul in all.

P : In a novel of his, he describes a wife meeting in her subtle body her husband sitting in a chair on a ship. As soon as he saw the impressions left on the chair he got frightened and thought he was going too much against God's laws.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the European mentality. It can't go far.

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

PEACE—THE INNER BEING—WORK—TRUE LOVE

SRI AUROBINDO : How can you have peace and quiet when you are always thinking of “lower forces” and “attacks” and “possessions” etc. ? If you can look at things naturally and quietly, then only you can have quiet and peace.

8-3-1935

Peace is a necessary basis but peace is not sufficient. Peace if it is strong and permanent can liberate the inner being which can become a calm and unmoved witness of the external movements. That is the liberation of the Sannyasin. In some cases it can liberate the external also, throwing the old nature out into the environmental consciousness, but even this is liberation, not transformation.

24-10-1935

Q. You wrote the other day : “It was simply that what was not done before during the first descent of Peace and Knowledge has to be done now.” May I know what was not done and what was to be done during the first descent ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Peace and silence full and lasting in the whole consciousness including the physical,—permanent separateness of the inner being so that the suggestions of the lower nature cannot cover up or invade or get a response,—establishment of the psychic basis so that ego, sex, etc. may be eliminated.

26-11-1935

The outer being is a means of expression only, not one’s self. One must not identify with it, for what it expresses is a personality formed by the old ignorant nature. If not identified one can change it so as to express the true inner personality of the Light.

12-12-1935

Q. I am told that all difficulties like ego, sex, etc. must vanish if one says : “I am Brahman, peace, light, knowledge, power. How can anything rise against me ?”

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the Advaita attitude corresponding to the attitude of being with the Mother above in the self.

I don’t know whether it will bring about the transformation of the lower nature. It may help you to detach yourself from it.

26-12-1935

Q. The higher consciousness keeps contact only through the passive self and if one does more work some part in one feels disturbed.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is always so with everybody unless one feels the Mother's Force working through one in the actions. 13-3-1935

It is possible to work through the passive state even, provided one feels that one is not doing the work but it is being done through one. 13-3-1935

It is a stage of detachment and separation which is necessary in the Yoga. It is only so that freedom in the work can come. 19-3-1935

There are some who cannot meditate and progress through work only. Each has his own nature. But to extend one method to all is always an error. 16-5-1935

Q. We depend very much on finding in the Mother's ways a manifestation of her love for us. We feel we can progress when we get it.

SRI AUROBINDO : This demand for physical manifestation of love must go. It is a dangerous stumbling block on the way of sadhana. A progress made by indulgence of this demand is an insecure progress which may any moment be thrown down by the same force that produced it. 8-10-1935

Q. I have heard that many sadhikas love the Mother so much that they are ready to die for her. But if there is no physical expression of the Mother's love for them, they can't love her and some go so far as to revolt, weep or fast.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is self-love that makes them do it. It is just the same kind of vital love that people have outside (loving someone for one's own sake, not for the sake of the beloved). What is the use of that in the sadhana here ? It can only be an obstacle. 15-10-1935

The outer being has to learn to love in the psychic way without ego. If it is love in the egoistic vital way, then it only creates difficulties for itself and for the sadhana and for the Mother. 11-11-1935

SOUNDS AND VISIONS

Q. What are the sounds that one inwardly hears ? Have they any connection with sadhana ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the nature of the sounds. Some have a connection, others are merely the sounds of the other planes. 28-10-1935

Q. Will you please explain this further ? And what is meant by "other planes" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Supraphysical planes. When the inner senses open, or any of them, one sees or hears things belonging to the other planes automatically. What one sees or hears of the other planes depends on the

development of the inner sense. It depends on what you hear whether these are the symbol sounds only which have a connection with the sadhana or simply other plane sounds of an ordinary character. 28-10-1935

Q. When a subtle sound like a peal of bells is heard constantly and loudly, what is happening?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is considered to be a sound closely connected with the sadhana. 4-11-1935

Q. In what way are such sounds connected with the sadhana?

SRI AUROBINDO : They are the signs of a working going on to prepare something—but as that is a general thing it cannot be said from the sounds themselves what the preparation is. 6-11-1935

Q. Along with the bells, there are at times sounds of a hammer striking on the Brahmic centre on the top of the head. Have they also a significance?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. The same, but here a working to remove some obstacle which prevents the higher consciousness from coming down into the physical. 6-11-1935

Q. The consciousness feels a sweet juice in the mouth and the feeling goes so far that one is not aware any more of teeth or tongue or any flesh in the mouth.

SRI AUROBINDO : It happens sometimes when the force is flowing down from the Brahmarandhra. 10-12-1935

Q. Here is a dream : a silver vase before the Mother's photo with four or five red lotuses and a few flowers meaning "Tenderness of the Mother".

SRI AUROBINDO : It was a symbolic vision of the psychic—indicating the spiritual self-offering and psychic relation. 23-1-1935

Q. Here is a vision during meditation : the flower meaning "Consciousness turned towards the Light" is supporting an enormous weight which is trying to press it down but which it yet bears.

SRI AUROBINDO : It signifies, I suppose, the pressure of the work for the transformation which the consciousness is able to bear because it is turned to the Light. 4-2-1935

Q. After the darshan, while standing before your photo, the flower meaning "Peace in the Cells" presented itself to the sight. Why are so many flowers being seen these days?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is usually when the psychic is active that this seeing of flowers becomes abundant. 23-3-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY*

THE PRECEDENCE OF POLITICAL REFORM'

(In our last issue, we printed an article from Bandemataram which exposed the fallacy of postponing all thoughts of gaining political freedom until the country's regeneration had been effected in other directions. The present article, though separated in date by three months, is actually a continuation of the same theme. This time it is Anglo-India, that is, the British opinion on India, which comes in for a slashing criticism. The paragraphs on social reform and education might throw some new light on current problems.)

It would be difficult to imagine anything more ridiculous than the Pharisaical cant of Anglo-Indians about the impossibility of Indians becoming fit for political advancement on democratic lines prior to the complete renovation of their industries and social institutions. "Feed and clothe your countrymen first," says one wiseacre, "before you think of imitating the healthy countries of Europe." "Democratise your society," says another, "before attempting to establish political democracy." All those countries that possess popular Government, possess wealth and social equality as well, and must not India also have those before she can aspire to democracy? So runs the infallible Anglo-Indian logic, provokingly amusing by its confusion of cause and effect, by its utter lack of the sense of sequence.

The only unfortunate part of it is that a considerable number of our own countrymen have been deluded into a belief in this fiction of the sequential order of a country's social, industrial and political development, among whom we regret having to count even Mr. Gokhale. India, paralysed by poverty, plague-stricken, in the clutches of a perennial famine, India, the battle-ground of jarring faiths and rival races, divided against herself by her minute castes and soul-killing superstitions—is it not heartless, they cry, to speak of her political improvement before you have lifted her out of the dead level of this unbearable existence? In the terrible presence of the obvious and the visible, in their generous impatience of the effects that appear on the surface, they are unable to think of the producing cause that lies underneath hidden from their immediate gaze. A little expenditure of thought unconditioned by any implicit faith

* *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 8.7.07.

in the axiomatic truth of whatever Englishmen may choose to write and say, will however soon reveal to these victims of Anglo-Indian hypocrisy the utter unsoundness that underlies this insistence on the necessary priority of social and industrial to political reforms. It is opposed to reason and to the positive testimony of history.

It is easy enough to dwell glibly on the need for social reforms. But what, pray, is the precondition of such reforms? We are all of us alive to the existence of undoubted defects in our society, and of the cumulative character of the harm they have been causing, but we also know that in order to remove them and uplift our society to a higher view of life, we must first provide our people with a sound, healthy and extensive system of education, the impartiality of whose culture will not be disturbed by the necessity of creating an ideal of loyalty to an alien despotism, and of reconciliation to its eternal continuation. A free and unfettered informing of the people's mind with the best thought of the age is the only means of bringing into being a spontaneous desire for social reform—and until this social aspiration has been created, until men's minds have been moulded by education into the receptive attitude, the seeker after the renewal of society will only be baulked of his generous intention.

And as a fact, the real prophet or the Saviour, the Krishna, the Buddha or the Christ who is to remould and renew society, unclot the human soul and reinvest it with the luminous garment of Divinity, can never descend to the earth till she is in spiritual preparedness for his advent. He only comes when the mind of man has already been filled with longings and aspirings, ideas and ideals—he then comes and gathers them all up into his single being, a complete epitome of his age, the living demonstration of a realised ideal, bringing to society the saving conviction of the possibility of every man being able to live the social ideal. Filled by the vivid sense of his purifying presence, men are moved to striving after betterment, the relieving of sorrow and suffering, the regeneration of society and race.

The preparatory penetration of the human heart by an idea or ideal that calls into life this incarnation, was brought about in olden days by the invasion of an alien religion, or by an overpowering conviction of sin, but follows in our times in the wake of an education that has been imparted impartially to one and all. The education that the Government has been giving us falls miserably short of this great requirement. It extends to a limited few and fails to inspire even them with any divine wonderment, the curiosity to know or the passion to leave the world better than they have found it by a single act or thought. Imparted with the predetermined purpose of reconciling the mind of its recipient with the order of things as they are, it has necessarily culminated in the production of a monstrous species whose object in acquiring knowledge cannot reach beyond the vision of mere luxurious animal life, who have been content with merely thinking of and describing the incident of their political slavery in the

language of freedom learned from the noble literature of England, and then imagining themselves free; who have been content with the mere explanations their text-books give of their country's economic condition, content furthermore with their life of mere external conformity to ancient customs which they have ceased to have faith in, with the daily lies of their life, with the thousand and one defects, evils and insincerities of the disorganised society around them which they have not the moral force to reorganise. This passive life of acquiescence in things that be, lived by the average English-educated Indian, is the most effective piece of destructive criticism on the education given by the Indian Government.

The Indian and his society cannot be reformed till you have thoroughly purged and purified his thoughts and aspirations by giving him free and impartial education in the place of the present loyalty-ridden instruction with the motto of *status quo* fastened round its neck. The present political animation of the educated Indian has been, in spite of his education, due to the general Asiatic awakening, and to the emergence of his common sense—thanks to Lord Curzon—out of the debris of his ruined faith in the constitutional character of his country's alien government. The education that the social reformer wants the Bureaucracy cannot and will not give. The opponent will no doubt retort, "Why do you not then have the education that you really want, instead of merely cursing the Government for the education it has chosen to give you?" — certainly a fair and just retort. But the people have given it its proper answer by founding the National Council of Education and the different National schools and colleges that are springing to life all over the land. Even these however cannot bring about the desideratum of the aspirant to social reorganisation; for that would require the extension of education to every man and every woman, and such education cannot be organised except with the aid of State finance. A glance at the system of free education that is being given to the people of the independent countries will at once convince us of this. The enormous sums of money that have to be spent on such national education could not possibly be got together by any private enterprise however persistent and gigantic. The National Universities that we are starting will produce men who will be invaluable assets for the future of the country, but unless they are supported by the financial resources of the State, they can never extend their scope and operation so as to be able to reach every Indian, man, woman and child. Consequently they can never bring about that necessary preparation of the popular mind on which depends, as we have tried to indicate above, the chance of a successful social resuscitation. Let the Indian social reformer, therefore, if he is true to the cause he advocates, first secure the control of his country's finance without which his ideal cannot be brought to fruition.

The enthusiast for the priority of India's industrial revivification will find himself faced with the same necessity of acquiring control over the guidance

of his country's affairs. India's poverty is mainly due to the destruction of her industries in an unequal struggle for existence by the competition of those of England and other foreign countries. All the men flourishing under a diversified employment have been driven to agriculture as the sole source of subsistence left open, and the remedy obviously is the re-creation of her industries which will drain off into remunerative employment the surplus labour under whose overweight her agriculture has ever since groaned. But the creation of fresh industries in India must necessarily result in the exclusion of her present foreign imports the main bulk of which happens to come from England. And it is certain that the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy whose primary duty in India is to safeguard the interests of their own countrymen will never allow us to do anything that will tell so directly against those very interests. Our Government cannot therefore for a moment entertain the idea of granting us protection without which India must remain as the other countries of the world remained, powerless to build up new industries in the face of the terrible competition of England. Even the partial and ineffectual protection which we have christened "Boycott", the Government is trying to stamp out.

The seeker after social progress and the zealot for industrial development, if they are sincere in their profession and really feel the stirrings of an abiding love for the country, will both find themselves confronted in the ultimate resort with the fact of foreign Government as an insuperable obstacle to the actualisation of their respective ideals.

The political salvation of our country is thus the prime necessity, not only because it is worth having in itself, but also because it is the one precondition of our national progress in the different walks of life. It is needless however to comment any further on the heartless hypocrisy, the intolerable sanctimony of our Anglo-Indian advisers who first make sure that only such education is imparted to our people as would effectually cripple their mental and moral faculties for the assimilation and execution of progressive ideas, and also that all the necessary steps are taken for the perpetuation of our economic serfdom, and then turn round to us and tell us we must renovate our decaying society and industries before we can have even the right to cherish political ideals.

Let us for a moment call their attention to their own history. What was the condition of English society in the eighteenth or the first part of the nineteenth century? Here is an illustration. During the Napoleonic war the Parliament inspired by the highly patriotic intention of encouraging the growth of population, enacted that every mother would receive weekly from the State the sum of six pence for every legitimate child and two shillings six pence for every illegitimate child that she may have brought into the world to add to the fighting strength of England. The student of English Economic History is well aware of this enactment which throws a flood of light on the kind of morality that then obtained in England. The encouragement of illegitimate births was

then obviously in harmony with the highest moral consciousness of the country. Otherwise it could not have been proposed and sanctioned by Parliament. And what was the industrial condition of the country during this same period ? The people—men, women and children—were mercilessly exploited and worked to death by the captains of industry who were fully equipped against their victims with all the weapons of tyranny and coercion that it was in the power of Parliament to give them. It was only after the terrible shock of the French Revolution that shook the English plutocracy to its foundation had culminated in the popular upheaval of 1832, that social and industrial reform became possible in England. The people possessed of political power could and did then secure all the reforms they needed—free trade, the prevention of the inhuman treatment of the labourer, the revision of law and justice, free and universal education. The state of France before and after the Revolution, and of the other countries of Europe before and after their political emancipation brings us face to face with the same law of historic progression. It is the political salvation of all these countries that has now opened to their people infinite vistas of progress in the different directions of human development, religious, social, industrial and others. We want to secure to our people the same infinite possibility of advancement, and must we not in order to do that follow the path that the others have trodden ? No, says Anglo-India. She would not have us venture on the way to glory and greatness pointed out by logic and light and by history; she calls us to the impossible task of inverting the law of historic growth which has its roots deep down in human psychology.

We will put one question which should test Anglo-Indian sincerity, if indeed such a thing ever existed. If the Anglo-Indians would like to see us progress socially and industrially, will they persuade their Government to give us the power of direction over their educational and industrial departments, provided we undertake loyally to leave them in peace to carry on to their heart's content the administrative and all the other work of the country ? Supposing we took Anglo-India at her word and asked her to make it good—well, we can anticipate the answer !

(Compiled by SAÑAT K. BANERJI)

REMINISCENCES

II

(In this, the second instalment of the series we began in the last issue of Mother India, the author takes us back to his first year in College, and gives us a glimpse of the atmosphere surcharged with passion and excitement that prevailed among the students in those Swadeshi days in Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo does not appear on the scene in this particular narrative. But one feels his occult presence behind all that the students do and feel.)

THE Subhash-Oaten encounter has attained some notoreity, as a number of people have on several occasions given an account of how Subhash Chandra once gave a thrashing with his shoes to one of his British professors, Oaten. But it seems to have almost been forgotten by the general public that this incident was a mere replica or imitation of an earlier and identical performance. Subhash did not institute anything new; he was simply following in the footsteps of eminent and heroic predecessors. Today I propose to give an account of that original performance.

It was in the year 1905. The Swadeshi movement was in full tide, flooding the land with its enthusiasm, particularly the student community. But how about the Calcutta Presidency College ? That was an institution meant for the "good" boys and for the sons of the rich, that is, for those who, in the parlance of the time, "had a stake in the country," those who, in other words, had something to lose. How far were they touched by that flood ? Those that were touched might be described as something of a phenomenon.

In 1905, I was in my Second Year class. Among my class-mates were Narendra Nath Law, a well-known name in later years, and perhaps also Bhupati Mohan Sen, who subsequently came to be known as Principal B. M. Sen.¹ Sitapati Banerji too was there; he won the Ishan Scholarship in his B.A. examination and was ultimately given the name of Swami Raghavananda or Sitapati Maharaj at the Ramakrishna Mission. These more or less made up the list of the "good" boys. Among the "bad" ones was Indranath Nandi, a son of Colonel Nandi of the Indian Medical Service. Let me recount some of his exploits.

¹ I cannot now exactly recall if Bhupati Mohan had been at the Presidency College right from the First Year class, or whether he joined the Third Year from the Scottish Churches College, known at the time as the General Assembly's Institution.

He had been a colleague of Barin Ghose of Manicktolla Gardens fame, and also a member of the Atmonnati Samiti, an "Association for Self-improvement". This Samiti was really a centre for the recruitment and training of revolutionaries. I too had been one of the junior members of the Samiti. Bepin Behari Ganguli was among its organisers. We had just given up football as being a non-Indian sport and had taken up lathi and dagger play. I had already attained such proficiency in these games that I was once asked to give a demonstration of lathi play before Mrs. Sarala Devi Chowdhurani on the occasion of one of her visits. But Indra Nandi was engaged in something much more serious; he was trying to make bombs. And he ended by blowing up his fingers in an explosion during a test. Caught in this maimed condition, he was sent up for trial in the Alipore Bomb case, although he could not be convicted. Our counsel managed to prove that the state of his hands was due to their being crushed under an iron chest.¹

Let me in this connection announce one of the feats of my college life. It was in that same year, 1905. Loud protests had arisen on account of the Bengal Partition and there was going to be observed a Day of Fasting or Rakhi-day or something like that. In what manner did I register my protest? I went to college dressed as if there had been a death in my family, that is to say, without shoes or shirt and with only a *chuddar* on. As I entered class, everybody seemed a little stunned. The professor cast an occasional furtive glance at me but said not a word. My action must have appeared as rather unconventional, perhaps even incorrect to many, but I felt at the same time there were quite a few who gave me an admiring look.

At that time, in the class just above mine was Charu Biswas. Next above him was Rajendraprasad, and a year senior to Rajendraprasad there were Benoy Sarkar and Atul Gupta. Ramesh Majumdar was perhaps a year junior to me.

Now let me come back to what I was going to say—*revenons à nos moutons*, as they say in French.

At a time like this, when the sky was getting red and the air was hot, with so much agitation in the minds of men and the young hearts, one of the Englishmen in our college, Russell, our professor of Logic and Philosophy, got it into his head to come out with something tactless against the Bengalis. It was like a spark in a powder dump. There was much excitement and agitation among the students. Could this not be avenged? Should the white man be allowed to escape scot-free, just like that? The day of reckoning came at last, like a bolt from the blue. How did it all happen? One of our classes had just been over and we were going to the next class along the corridor, when all on a sudden there rang out all over the place from a hundred lusty throats shouts

¹ But there was a rumour that Colonel Nandi had compounded with the Government on condition that his son would thenceforward behave like a thoroughly good boy.

of "Bande Mataram" that tore the air with its mighty cry. Everybody ran helter skelter. "What is the matter? What happened?" "Russell has been thrashed with shoes!" "Who thrashed him? Who?"

The Principal came—it was Dr. P. K. Roy, the first Bengali to have become Principal of the Presidency College, though in a temporary capacity. We all got into our classes. He entered our class first as it was nearest to the scene of the incident. Russell was with him, his face red with shame and indignation. He glanced around those present in the class and said that he could spot no one. After the class was over, we went into the Physics Theatre for the Physics class. There too the Principal came in and broke out in a deep thundering tone, "I see, 'Bande Mataram' has become a war-cry." But the whole class was utterly quiet, there was not a sign of movement. All that high excitement and agitation of an hour ago was now hushed in dumb motionless silence. We were all a bunch of innocent lambs!

But who was the culprit? It was Ullaskar Datta, one of our class-fellows. He was a boarder at the Eden Hindu Hostel. He had come to college with a slipper wrapped up in a newspaper sheet and had made good use of it as soon as he got a chance....

The life-story of this Ullaskar is a real drama, although its last stage is rather tragic. Soon after this incident he joined the Manicktolla Gardens with Barin Ghose and gave all his thought and energy to the making of a bomb. He did not know even the a b c of bombs. He read up by himself books on Chemistry, pieced out information from all kinds of books and finally mastered all alone the principles of explosives—nobody ever taught him. His father, Dwijadas Datta, was a professor at the Sibpur Engineering College. He had something like a small laboratory at his residence. It was here that Ullaskar took his training in secret. To what extent he had finally succeeded in his efforts was proved one day when to the first of his bombs one of our own men had to fall a martyr—Prafulla Chakravarti.

I too had been an associate of his in this enterprise.

Ullaskar—"one who abounds in energy"—fully lived up to his name: he was indeed an inexhaustible fount of energy and enthusiasm. When they used to escort us in a prison van from the jail to the court room (during the trial of the Alipore Bomb case), we rent the air all the way with our shouts and songs as we drove along. It was Ullaskar's idea; he led the chorus and the rest of us followed. Some of the old refrains still ring in my ears, I can still recall the words—of songs like "Deep from the heart of Bengal today", "The soil, the rivers of Bengal", "My golden Hindusthan".

I have heard that Ullas is still alive, though almost half-dead, they say. Ten or twelve years of jail in the Andamans deranged him in body and mind. But this after all was part of the ritual of sacrifice. As Barin used to say, "Such indeed was the vow in this kind of marriage."

For, the enthusiasm of that day, that reawakening to new life, took no account whatever of the gains and the losses. It forged ahead by itself, it drew its secret support from its own momentum. That was why people gazed wide-eyed in wonder, that was why they all joined in a mighty chorus :

“A day indeed has dawned,
When a million hearts
Have known not to fear
And leave no debts unpaid.
Life and death are
Bondslaves at our feet;
Our hearts have forgotten to care.”

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

2

Now let us turn our attention to the Indian view of the Veda. Acharya Sayana is the foremost scholar to whom this current Indian view owes its origin. He made a commentary on the whole of the Rig Veda. But for his commentary it is doubtful if the European scholars would have succeeded in deriving any meaning from the abstruse, old and unfamiliar language of this scripture. As a matter of fact, the commentaries made by the Western scholars are principally based on his commentary. However, he did not consider the Vedic seers to be mere children or men at their primitive stage. Nor did he lay any stress on the explanation based on the sights and scenes of physical Nature. He observed and understood the Veda from the standpoint of sacrificial rites. He endeavoured to discover from the Veda the nature of sacrifice and a full account of the ceremonies to be performed in a sacrifice. The performance of sacrifice is a part of the spiritual life and its aim is to bring about soul-progress and welfare here and hereafter. The gods dwell in a world known as Heaven. The forces of Nature are backed by their powers. A particular god presides over a particular force of Nature. All the gods are combined in the Universal God, and all the gods are only the different manifestations of the same Universal God. It is the power of the gods which endows men with power, and men too on their part propitiate the gods through their sacrifices offered to them. The gods are satisfied with and nourished by men's humble obeisance and their offering of Soma Rasa, while men in their turn attain to prosperity in this world and secure a better status in the other world.

We, who have received modern education, have been trying to synthesise the commentaries of the Western and Eastern scholars on the Veda. Our object here is to portray the picture of a society not quite primitive but somewhat primary by uniting the interpretations based on natural phenomena and sacrificial rites.

If this view were considered as giving the real nature of the Veda, the question would arise : how could the Veda be regarded as the foundation of the Aryan genius and the fount of the civilisation and culture of Hindu India? If the Veda were nothing save nursery rhymes and the like, then how could it exert a lasting influence on our minds and life through centuries ? The Bible and the Koran contain some eternal truths beneficial to the life and conduct of men for all time. But according to the naturalistic interpretation of the Western scholars and the sacrificial explanation offered by our orthodox scholars there is no such ele-

vating or lasting truth in the Veda. Are we then to suppose that our reverence for the Veda owes its origin merely to a blind acceptance of a tradition down the sweep of centuries? Our present culture and civilisation differs widely from that of our forefathers. How is it that we have still a profound admiration for the Veda? Is it precisely because the Veda serves as the root of our cultural tree adorned with a myriad branches, with foliage, flowers and fruits? No, the supreme authority of the Veda has not been recognised out of mere courtesy. The Shruti has been the sheet-anchor of our guidance at every step and in every activity of our day-to-day life.

Here arises the second question. The Western and modern scholars are prone to make a difference between the Veda and the Shruti. According to them the term Shruti is synonymous with the Upanishad and not with the Veda proper. But what is it that we actually find in the Upanishad that is considered by all scholars, oriental and occidental, as the repository of knowledge of the highest order? The Upanishad has been studied much more than the Veda in India and abroad. The reason is this that the ideas and language of the Upanishad are simpler than those of the Veda, and also more familiar to modern thought. The Upanishad is free from all the intricacies of sacrificial rites, ceremonies and obscure mantras, etc. It deals precisely with the clear realised truths that form the basis of the philosophical doctrines. That is why the Europeans hold that the Upanishad comes in as a reaction and protest against the Veda. Towards the end of the Vedic era the Aryan Hindus bade farewell to their cult of Nature-worship and sacrifices and turned towards the quest of God and metaphysical truths and thus a new era was ushered. Now, on what ground do the European scholars make such an assertion to establish the aforesaid historical developments? As a matter of fact, we do notice that every teacher of Philosophy whenever he has cited anything from the Upanishad has also tried to corroborate it with a similar quotation from the Veda for its justification. There is no iota of proof that the Upanishad held any view contrary to that of the Veda or ever contradicted it. The Upanishad is the culmination of or a complement to the Veda. Since the advent of the dialectic philosopher Hegel it has become a fashion among Western scholars to find an antithesis in every field of historical truth. From their own history they come to learn that Christianity arose as a revolt against the idolatry of the Romans, again Martin Luther and Protestantism stood over against the Roman Catholic Church. Likewise they are, as it were, eager to discover a revolt in the religious history of India. It is not that such a spirit of antithesis is altogether absent in the history of Indian religions, but it is utterly meaningless to say that this antithesis exists as between the Veda and the Upanishad as well. In fact, the Upanishad has always approached the Veda most reverentially and hardly failed to mention: "Thus we heard from the ancient sages who had explained it to us."

Besides, in the commentaries on the Veda we come across explanations which are at places self-contradictory, inconsistent, lacking in clarity, fanciful and arbitrary. The same word has been used at different places to convey different meanings without any justification, and also at times the commentators have been constrained to keep silent or to confess that they could make neither head nor tail of a passage, a sentence or a word. For instance, the word *ghee* (clarified butter) has been explained as *jal* (water) and the word water has been used for *antaarikṣa* (ether) and the word ether has been interpreted as *prthivī* (earth). That is why in the interpretations of Sayana or Ramesh Dutta, in spite of their supplying synonyms of words, a passage taken as a whole appears to be quite odd, confusing and utterly meaningless. One is at a loss to know whether one should indulge in laughter or shed tears over such a performance. It may be argued that the Veda was written in a remote antiquity, hence much of its archaic language is not likely to be understood by men of the present age. It is enough on our part to be able to form a general idea of it. But when one has to resort to a makeshift hocus-pocus even for gathering this general idea, then it becomes quite clear that there must have been some serious blunder somewhere. If it were possible to get the general idea of the Veda quite easily, then all the interpreters would necessarily have pursued it. But unfortunately in the present age we find that besides the sacrificial and naturalistic interpretations there are historical (by Abinash Chandra Das), geographical (by Umesh Chandra Vidya-ratna), astronomical (by Tilak), scientific (by Parama Shiva Iyer) and even an interpretation based on Chemistry (by Narayan Gaur) and so on and so forth. Many minds, many ways. Nowhere else may this oft-quoted adage be so aptly applied as in the case of the multifarious interpretations of the Veda. A few portions of the Veda that had appealed to an interpreter most in accordance with his own bent of mind gave him the impetus to endeavour to interpret the whole of the Veda in that light. The result has been that the same sloka has been interpreted in ever so many ways. But none of these interpreters has even attempted interpreting the whole or the major portion of the Veda. From this we can dare conclude that the key to the proper interpretation of the Vedic mysteries has not hitherto been found. All are but groping in the dark.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE DEEPER RETIREMENT*

(4)

AT the instance of Dr. Sanyal the Ashram photographers were called and permitted by the Mother to take the last pictures of Sri Aurobindo on December 5, 1950 and on the four days following it.

Till November 1950, Sri Aurobindo's photo in only four poses taken in 1919 was available. According to Dinendranath Roy who was with Sri Aurobindo at Baroda his complexion was dark. So too says Rassendren who used to visit Sri Aurobindo during his pre-siddhi days : "He looked exactly as seen in his old photos." Hence a surprise awaited a visitor when he came for Darshan and found his complexion golden and his figure majestic in contrast to his earlier pictures.

G.V.Subbarao in his reminiscences says :

"It was in October, 1923, that I first saw Sri Aurobindo....He was dazzling bright in colour—it was said that, in his earlier years, he was more dark than brown—and had a long, rather thin beard which was well dressed, with streaks of white strewn here and there. The figure was slender...but a bit more fleshy. The eyes¹ were big and elongated...and their looks were keen and piercing....His voice was low, but quite audible, quick and musical.... He was fast in his flow, clear like a crystal and analytical....In a fifteen-minute talk, he gave me his philosophy in a nutshell. He was simple and courteous, outspoken and free in his interrogations. It seemed as though he could know a man by a sweep of his eyes and read men's minds from a survey of their photographs."²

In those days no one could take Ashram pictures or of any Ashram activities without permission. Several times an attempt was made to take a photo

¹ How he impressed those who came into contact with him can be inferred from what the English Principal of the Baroda College said to C.R.Reddy : "So you met Aurobindo Ghose. Did you notice his eyes ? There is mystic fire and light in them. They penetrate into the beyond." And he added, "If Joan of Arc heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo probably sees heavenly visions." (Quoted in Sisir Kumar Mitra's *The Liberator*, p. 44)

Four decades after in 1950, K.M.Munshi of the Indian Union Cabinet saw Sri Aurobindo and observed : "A deep light of knowledge and wisdom shone in his eyes. The wide calm of the spirit appeared to have converted the whole personality into the radiant Presence of one who shone with the light of Consciousness...."

² Quoted in *Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A.B.Purani, p. 184.

of the Mother and of Sri Aurobindo but none could succeed. As a rule the Mother would not let anybody take a photo of her. Whatever photos are seen in the old albums were taken by unauthorised persons. C took two photos of the Mother when she started going to the Tennis Ground, but very few knew about them. The only photos available of the Mother were those taken in Algeria, Japan or earlier.

There is in the Rabindra Sadan collection at Santiniketan a group photograph including the Mother and the Poet taken in Kyoto.¹

It was in April 1950 that a world-famous photo-journalist, Henri Cartier Bresson, of Magnum Photos, came with his wife to Pondicherry in the course of his Indian tour. On his desiring to take the photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, he had the permission.

He photographed Sri Aurobindo in as many poses as he chose and the Mother as well. Before him none from outside could have free access to Sri Aurobindo's room for such purposes.²

It is also a significant fact that but for this photographer the world would have had no picture of Sri Aurobindo or of the Darshan Day after the Siddhi and before the Samadhi.

One can now understand why the taking of photos, consistently refused for 30 years, was at last allowed only in the year 1950.

But this photographer kept all the negatives in his possession and they were received by the Ashram after long negotiations and with great difficulty—a thing not expected. Besides, without the approval of the Ashram some photos were published in a European magazine.

Consequently none of these pictures were available immediately after Sri Aurobindo's passing. We could have only those that had been taken by the Ashram photographers just after that event.

To us the photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are no mere pictures of the physical form. They enshrine their living Presence. Hundreds of instances can be quoted of how people feel not only their Presence but also their touch in them.

A visitor from Kanpur saw an autographed photo of the Master in a small local shop, just kept there for decoration. Again and again he requested the shopkeeper to part with it to him for payment. The owner went on increasing the price every time it was asked till it was raised to Rs. 100/. The only cause of the Kanpur man's eagerness for this particular photo was that it

¹ *The Liberator* by S.K.Mitra.

² In 1946 Sri Aurobindo's room underwent thorough repairs. At that time, 20 years after the Siddhi, some masons and labourers were allowed in. We all entered it on December 5, 1950, when he passed away. To-day (1962), nearly 12 years later, the room remains as fresh, neat and tidy as at that time.

bore the autograph of the Master—the autograph in which he saw his Presence.

To quote the Mother :

“Every book, because of the words contained in it, is like a little battery of forces. People do not know it, because they do not know how to make use of it, and yet it is like that. In the same way, in every image, in every photograph, there is an accumulation of forces, a little accumulation representing the force of him whose image it is, his nature and his powers, if he has any. And if you are sincere and have an aspiration, you emanate a certain vibration and the vibration of your aspiration goes and meets the corresponding force in the book or in the photo and it is a higher consciousness that gives you the answer....

“Each book of his (Sri Aurobindo’s) contains symbolically, potentially what is there in him.”¹

Several albums were prepared from the negatives bought from Cartier-Bresson. Those, who had these albums from the hands of the Mother, received the following words from her pen addressed to them in their individual names :

“Let this album be for you the sign of His constant Presence.”

To a few of the Ashramites she gave gold rings with the Master’s emblem engraved on them. Since then this emblem has been in growing use.

(5)

After the observance of 12 days’ silent abstention from normal activities, the Mother resumed her work on December 17 and everything went on as usual. Even the Darshan days were observed without any change and the atmosphere that they brought remained charged with the indefinable something that was the attendant circumstance. The benignity of the Mother’s Presence giving Darshan and blessings appeared to be of the Two in One. She brought, as she continues to bring, the living reality of Sri Aurobindo’s Presence in herself. Sri Aurobindo’s physical absence is in fact his Omnipresence. So complete is her oneness with the Lord that once we heard that Sri Aurobindo himself gave the Darshan Blessings through the Mother’s hands.

A year after the Master’s withdrawal the Ashram activities began to expand beyond expectations. It was quite evident the forces that were released were at work in every corner. The whole block of the Education Centre buildings, the Library buildings, the Exhibition Hall, a big plot on which stands the Theatre Hall of the Education Centre, a Swimming Pool on the international pattern, the purchase of Le Faucheur Gardens, the Lake Estate, the expanded

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1960, p. 59.

Transport Service, the installation of the Power House, to name a few, are some notable signs of the forces released in the most external field.

The flowering of the creative impulse of the Ashram is also not negligible. There has been a new tone, a new voice in every sphere—no harping on the glories of the past¹ that was India. Life is being seen in a new aspect from a new angle.

Today, sitting at the feet of the Mother, we feel we are in the shelter of a *kalpataru* (a wish-yielding tree). All our needs are met by unseen hands, our troubles and problems are solved by an unseen power. The Peace and Protection we enjoy are incomparable. The Zephyr that blows here makes us sense an ever-present Spring. The flowers that bloom here are not just the concrete expression of the *tapasyā* of trees and plants. They are free gifts of the Mother of an Eternal Springtide.²

What Sri Aurobindo has done for his disciples in the spiritual sphere is very little known. Even in the Vedic age one had to practise great *tapasyā*; only then one could be deemed fit for yoga. But Sri Aurobindo did, as it were, our yoga for us ! Like a father distributing his hard-earned riches among his ignorant children, this Prince of givers brought down his wealth only to give it away to us.

For full eight years, every night, when the whole world and we his disciples passed into happy sleep, he read our letters, answered our questions, turned over the pages of numerous reports,³ corrected poems of the Ashram poets. Once a boy fell ill. The Doctor was asked to send a full report. The Master gave directions even as to what food the boy should take and what he should avoid.

And in return for his gifts, what could we give him ? What have we but the dirt and refuse of our nature ? He never tested us, never judged us. But however vast the ocean from which it draws, the pitcher can take only in the measure of its capacity.

Sri Aurobindo's compassion was as limitless as his consciousness. Even cats and dogs of the Ashram had their share in it. A puppy called by the Mother "Goldie" was given to a sadhika at her request and, when grown up, it carried in its mouth a basket of flowers every day from her garden into the Mother's room and then would pass into Sri Aurobindo's Presence to receive pats and

¹ "The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go further. In the spiritual development of consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future."—Sri Aurobindo.

² "The Divine does the sadhana for the world and then gives what is brought down to others. Naturally, the Mother does the sadhana in each sadhak—only it is conditioned by their zeal and their receptivity."—Sri Aurobindo

³ Once D sent a report of 40 pages. In those days he used to send his reports twice a day. For a few days he did not send them. The Mother said that Sri Aurobindo inquired why he had not sent his report book.

caresses—and this for days, months and years. Often it would lie down under the Master's bed.

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We have it from the Mother, as reported by Nolini Kanta Gupta, that “in the whole creation the earth has a place of distinction, because unlike any other planet it is evolutionary with a psychic entity at its centre. In it India, in particular, is a divinely chosen country”, a *Devabhūmi* (seat of God). And what about Pondicherry ?

When Sri Aurobindo came here “it was absolutely dead”¹ and now it is reckoned by the Mother as “a place of Realisation”.² Its glory is that it is not only Sri Aurobindo's *Sāadhanabhūmi* (seat of sadhana), *siddhibhūmi* (seat of victory) but also the centre of the Supramental Manifestation. If the Ashram is the world-shrine of worship, the spot selected for Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi is its centre, the *Sanctum Sanctorum*.

(6)

To understand the magnitude of Sri Aurobindo's work and his self-giving some elaboration is called for.

Sri Aurobindo's life story is an epic of superhuman suffering and sacrifice.³ It was he who ushered in an era of Tyaga (renunciation) and Tapasya (asceticism) for the country. He was the first to inspire the youths of his time to sacrifice themselves for the motherland.⁴

When Sri Aurobindo was 21 there was hardly an example before his eyes in the history of British rule in India, of voluntary rejection of the Heaven-born

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 331.

² *The Bulletin of the Centre of Education*, February 60.

³ “But what strange ideas again! That I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities ! Good God ! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities, from hardships, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties continually cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle from its early years and is still a battle : the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character. But of course as we have not been shouting about these things, it is natural, I suppose, for others to think that I am living in an glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or Nature present themselves. But what an illusion all the same !” (*Letters of Sri Aurobindo* 2nd series, p. 77)

⁴ “To this movement Indian Nationalism owes the emerging into prominence of a quiet, unostentatious, young Hindu, who was till then comparatively obscure, holding his soul in patience and waiting for opportunities to send currents of the greatest strength into the nation's system. He was gathering energy. His name was Arabinda Ghose.” (Lajpatrai, *Young India*)

service, as the I.C.S. was then called, for the sake of the country. How the lives of the would-be leaders of those days were influenced by Sri Aurobindo's self-sacrifice and flaming love of freedom stands exemplified in at least two great instances.

It took seven months for Subhas Chandra Bose to decide whether the course he was going to adopt in his life was right. In a letter to his brother Sarat he wrote in 1920 :

"Ever since the results of the I.C.S. were declared, I have been asking myself whether I shall be more useful to my country if I am in the service than if I am not. I am fully convinced now that I shall be able to serve my country better than if I am a member of the bureaucracy. One can do some amount of good when one is in the service but it can't be compared with the amount of good that one can do when his hands are not tied by bureaucratic chains. The illustrious example of Arabindo Ghose looms large before my vision. I feel I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me. My circumstances are also favourable.

"It is clear from the above that I was still under the influence of Arabindo Ghose."

In his letter of 16th February 1921 he further writes—

"...The very principle of serving under an alien bureaucracy was intensely repugnant to me. The path of Arabindo Ghose is to me more noble, more inspiring, more lofty, more unselfish, though more thorny than the path of Ramesh Dutta."¹

Nehru, then in England for studies, writes :

"From 1907 onwards for several years India was seething with unrest and trouble. For the first time since the revolt of 1857 India was showing fight and not submitting tamely to foreign rule. News of Tilak's activities and his conviction, of Arabindo Ghose and the way the masses of Bengal were taking the Swadeshi and boycott pledge stirred all of us Indians in England."

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Dr. C. R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, hailed Sri Aurobindo as one of the "Saviours of humanity, who belong to all ages and all nations, the Sanatanas who leaven our existence with their eternal presence..."

For forty long years Sri Aurobindo did not step out of Pondicherry, yet he is hailed as a lover of humanity. Why ? By isolating oneself from society can one serve humanity ?

Sri Aurobindo's way of work was quite out of the common. He believed more in the power of silence than in that of speech. The world is already

¹ *Autobiography of Netaji.*

“deafened by words”; its one and only need is action. All his life we see Sri Aurobindo engaged in ceaseless action, beyond human eyes, through his spiritual force for the salvation of mankind.

From the outset he was a revolutionary of the first order. He was for all-round and total revolution. Even in the spiritual field he has made new departures, broken age-long conventions and struck out a new path of sadhana. He wanted to free humanity from its old rut and infuse into it a new consciousness.

“I carry the sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.” (*More Poems*)

Man is generally confronted with two kinds of problems, outer and inner. To meet his outer problems he needs bread, money and all that the earth can give. But having amassed all that, he sees his hunger on the increase. Further, nothing can help him to free himself from disease and death and he is subject to all kinds of ills.

So he thinks the problem is inner and not outer. Hence we find the rise of religions. Then comes science with all its marvels. Marvellous are man’s achievements. But what a pity that when he should walk the earth like the gods, so very helpless he is today !

The present world is not void of power or destitute of means. 14 million dollars are spent per hour on armaments.¹ But our lives have become a tangle. All are eager to get out of the tangle but an utter helplessness has seized humanity.

Let us see what solution Sri Aurobindo offers. A Rishi is he who sees hundreds of years ahead. The Ramayana is said to have been written long before Rama was born. Sri Aurobindo saw that darkness cannot be removed by darkness. Service to humanity, change of Government, etc., are temporary adjustments. Even world organisations cannot deliver the goods. They are only patchwork on an old garment.

Sri Aurobindo is not against science but it must serve a higher purpose. He wants a new way of living, a new order of things. Man must learn to submit to the rule of God.

This change cannot come by human effort, however great. Some power must intervene from a higher source. Herein lies Sri Aurobindo’s contribution to the solution of world problems.

At present before one problem is solved a hundred and one others take its place. Sri Aurobindo did so much during the Second World War to lead humanity to a higher destiny but instead of a new dawn it stands on the brink

¹ On December 14, 1961 NATO announced that 67892 million dollars were spent on defence in 1961. (*The Hindu*, December 16, 1961)

of total annihilation. Why ? Wherefrom arise such obstacles on the path of human progress ? Must the world remain doomed to suffering for eternity ? Is there no purpose in creation ?

Volumes have been written as answers but still the questions remain quivering. Sri Aurobindo's speciality lies not only in explaining the position but also in acting out what he has said. He came not merely to teach but to act, to achieve, to fulfil and hew out a new path for others to follow.

We have the Mother's assertion :

"What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."¹

We have Sri Aurobindo's own words on why there was no radical change in the world situation after the Second World War :

"My present effort is not to stand up on a high and distant Supermind level and change the world from there, but to bring something of it down here and stand on that and act by that; but at the present stage the progressive supramentalisation of the Overmind is the first immediate preoccupation and a second is the lightening of the heavy resistance of the inconscient and the support it gives to human ignorance which is always the main obstacle in any attempt to change the world or even to change oneself.

"I have always said that the spiritual force I have been putting on human affairs such as the War is not the Supramental one but the Overmental force, and that when it acts in the material world it is so inextricably mixed up in the tangle of the lower world forces that its results, however strong or however adequate to the immediate object, must necessarily be partial."

This letter was written to the Editor of *Mother India* a few weeks before the independence of India. The letter continues :

"That is why I am getting a birthday present of a free India on August 15, but...in two packets as two free Indias..."

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When D.K.Roy asked in an interview whether there was no way of release from the underworlds of pain and misery, the Master said softly :

"I too wanted at one time to transform through my yoga the face of the world. My aim was to change the fundamental nature and movements of humanity, to exile all the evils which afflict helpless mortality...

"...I did not realise then that in order to help humanity out it was not enough for an individual, however great, to achieve an ultimate solution individually : humanity has to be ripe for it too. For the crux of the difficulty is

¹ *The Bulletin of the Centre of Education*, April 1961, p. 69.

that even when the light is ready to descend it cannot come to stay until the lower plane is also ready to bear the pressure of the Descent.”

This explains in his own words why Sri Aurobindo wanted to dig up the roots of evil and ignorance and flood the depths with the supernal Light. It was to this that all his energies were directed. No sacrifice he considered too great for it and he actually paid the price with his life.

Before 1926, in his evening talks Sri Aurobindo spoke to a visiting sadhak that if the inconscient refused to change he would leave the body.

“Would you then reappear in another body ?”

“Yes.”

“In India ?”

“Why talk of India, Bengal, Pondicherry ? It is for the Divine to choose time and place.”¹

By his sacrifice Christ had given birth to a new humanity, a new civilization. How Sri Aurobindo’s sacrifice is going to help a new creation, a new Heaven on a new Earth, time will show.

The task of the world-redeemer is hard because “this world is in love with its own ignorance.”

He must call light into the dark abysms,
He must enter the eternity of Night.
Then shall be ended here the Law of Pain...

He dies that the world may be new born and live.
(*Savitri*)

No greater sacrifice could be conceived by the human mind than the sacrifice which the Master made to hasten the reaching of its goal by the collectivity. On his work he concentrated his whole energy for 24 years, shutting himself up in his room, denying himself even fresh air, sunlight and moonlight ; and when on the point of achieving the final success, he sacrificed himself.

In this context let us listen to the Mother :

“Sri Aurobindo has given up his body in an act of supreme unselfishness, renouncing the realisation in his body to hasten the hour of the collective realisation. Surely if the earth were more responsive, this would not have been necessary.”

(12-6-1953)

His body remaining intact for ninety hours under the action of the supramental light symbolised the secret victory of his work. Having drunk up the poison, Shiva-like, of the inconscient, he awakened the possibilities of the kingdom of Heaven on earth. The highest aim of his life was to bring light

¹ *Sabyasachin*. Siris Chandra Goswami in the Bengali monthly.

down into matter. This he has done. That was no doubt the first phase of his victory. Its further manifestation and expansion is left to the domain of the Mother. "The decisive action direct from the Supreme is at present working in the subtle physical." When that is complete, even "the most blind will not deny it."

In 1961 the Mother declared: "This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call, to come down upon earth."

Sri Aurobindo was once asked : "In a review article on your book *The Riddle of this World*, a Swami has remarked that you have the boldness to say that you have done what the Vedic Rishis could not do. What is the truth in this criticism?" Sri Aurobindo commented :

"It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of the spiritual experience?"

But there are some who can dive into the mysteries : let us hear the reading of Sri Anirvan, himself a Yogi :

... "Disease, decay and death might be attacked as perhaps had been done by the Buddha, with the spiritual forces. One cures the diseased mind and thus cures the diseased body : modern therapeutics knows something of the trick. The conquest of decay and death on the same lines might be looked upon as a case of extension of what has already been achieved. At least the adventure is worth while.

"But the conquest of death is a problem that can be solved on a cosmic level alone. There must be a complete reversal of the present plan of life-evolution on earth before this can be achieved. Sri Aurobindo saw this and launched into the bold adventure of tackling the cosmic forces. He has been ridiculed and abused for this and often branded as a heretic. 'It is against God's plan,'¹ said they. 'No, it is just making way for the inevitable and fulfilling His plan,' was his reply to the charge.

"There is no denying the fact that Sri Aurobindo is the first sacrifice in a noble cause. His death very forcefully reminds one of the saying of the Rishi of the *Purusa-Suktam* :—"The gods, as they spread the whole of sacrifice, tied the Purusha Himself to the post as the victim." And if death, as the Upanishadic seers speak of it, is the concentrating of a final illumination of the Heart, Sri Aurobindo's death has been like an explosion illuminating the horizon of the distant future and its impact on the living has been and will be far-reaching in its results."

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Now one question remains to be discussed. But before discussing it let us turn to the vision, a sadhak had in 1951. He saw a golden statue of Sri Aurobindo seated in a huge chariot, made all of gold, pulled by people in a procession. Each of them had a flag made of gold. At the same time he heard a voice, "He will be recognised as an Avatar who came to free humanity from disease, decay and death."

Surely this story belongs to the realm of visions and dreams? However one may assess its objective value, none can dispute its subjective import. But a question may arise: how is one to believe that the work in which Sri Aurobindo spent all his life was the work of the Avatar? Here it is necessary to have clear ideas about an Avatar.

The popular idea is queer. If one cannot exhibit superhuman powers and perform miracles, one is nothing of the kind.

The Avatar's function, in Sri Aurobindo view, is to quicken or push forward the pace of evolution and to fulfil a set purpose. Otherwise an Avatar would be reduced to a miracle-monger. To quote the Mother: "To go up and down and join the top to the bottom is the whole secret of realisation and that is the work of the Avatar."

According to Sri Aurobindo, man is not bound to remain where he is to-day in his evolutionary stage. As he has progressed from the Stone Age to the Iron Age so will he advance towards the Age of Gold. Could even the wildest optimist have imagined the progress man has made within the last 10 or 15 years?

The sky that is overcast with war clouds at the moment will have to clear before the growing light of the new consciousness now overtaking manhood. It is a question of time. God is never in a hurry to satisfy human impatience.

Sri Aurobindo's lifelong *tapasyā* and his sacrifice give us the assurance that the day is not far off.

The then Home minister Sardar Patel's death in 1950 plunged the country headlong into grief and the general feeling was that India's backbone had broken. Nobody disbelieved the news of his death, nobody mistook it. But Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal could hardly be believed. With their eyes and ears open, people spoke to one another, "Is it true? Is it ever possible? No, it can never be..."¹

Sri Aurobindo's works had created a conviction, the fire-sparks of his thoughts had kindled a hope in the world, that he would live as long as he willed or till his work was done. Even in the minds of those who did not understand him, these thoughts had gained the upper hand. In the world of thought, is

¹ "In December 1950, he died. I was the first to be told about it in Delhi on the telephone by our Consul General. For two hours my mind went blank. I did not know why.

"There was only a vague sense of being stunned. I did not feel like this even when Gandhiji who was certainly very near to me, died; and I saw him dying..."—K.M.Munshi.

this not Sri Aurobindo's initial victory ? If by the power of thought alone, he could bring about such a change in the human mind, how much more would be possible with the manifestation of Supermind ?

The rise of a new humanity, a new civilisation, a new literature, a new order of things, a new age—can all these pass for common events of life ? The answer may not rest with the present generation but with the generations that follow. Theirs will be the privilege of recognising whether the one who heralded this era will be called an Avatar and his age will be named after him or not.

Time was when India had achieved a conquest of the world. It was a conquest not by the sword but by thought. A day will come when Sri Aurobindo's revelation will revolutionise the world and change the whole structure of mental civilisation.

The Ashram where Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and visions are realising themselves will one day be hailed as unique¹ in the history of mankind and people from all over the globe will long to visit it as a place of pilgrimage.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ Posing the question, "And what for did our Rishis desire acquisition of Illumination and of Power ?" C.R.Reddy himself gives the answer :

"Not for looking at themselves as in a mirror and sitting brooding on their own beauty like a silly girl; and not to let power remain a bare possession without fruitful application. It was for helping the world and for using them as stages in their yet further progress to the rank and region of the Devas, that they sought Light and sought Power, sought Omniscience and Omnipotence.

"And now we can in some small measure understand the nature of this extraordinary Ashram in which life and the joy of life are mingled in happy union with spirituality and spiritual progress. It is dug out of the Vedas and planted in Pondicherry."

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

CLASSIFIED EXCERPTS

SECTION IV (*Continued*)

(VIII) THE COMPREHENDING CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE APPREHENDING CONSCIOUSNESS

...A DISTINCTION seems to be made (in the Vedas) in the operations of the Supermind between knowledge by a comprehending and pervading consciousness which is very near to subjective knowledge by identity and knowledge by a projecting, confronting, apprehending consciousness which is the beginning of objective cognition.¹

...the whole process of differentiation by the Real-Idea creative of the universe is a putting forward of principles, forces, forms which contain for the comprehending consciousness all the rest of existence within them and front the apprehending consciousness with all the rest of existence implicit behind them. Therefore all is in each as well as each in all.²

There is a practical distinction in consciousness, but there is no essential difference of consciousness or true division in its vision of itself. The Truth-consciousness has arrived at a position which prepares our mentality, but is not yet that of our mentality. And it is this that we must study in order to seize Mind at its origin, at the point where it makes its great lapse from the high and vast wideness of the Truth-consciousness into the division and the ignorance. Fortunately, this apprehending Truth-consciousness (*Prajñāna*) is much more facile to our grasp by its nearness to us.³

(The primary poise of the Supermind) is an equal self-extension of Sachchidananda all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting. But this all is one, not many ; there is no individualisation....In the second poise of the Supermind the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, realising it by a sort of apprehending consciousness, following it, occupying and inhabiting its works, seeming to distribute itself in its forms. In each name and form it would realise itself as the stable Conscious-Self the same in all ; but also it would realise itself as a concentration of Conscious-Self following and supporting the individual play of movement and upholding its differentiation from the other play of movement,—the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form.⁴

That apprehending consciousness, the Prajnana, places, as we have seen, the working of the indivisible All, active and formative, as a process and object of creative knowledge before the consciousness of the same All, originative and cognisant as the possessor and witness of its own working,—somewhat as a poet views the creations of his own consciousness placed before him in it as if they were things other than the creator and his creative force, yet all the time they are really no more than the play of self-formation of his own being in itself and are indivisible there from their creator. Thus Prajnana makes the fundamental division which leads to all the rest, the division of the Purusha, the conscious soul who knows and sees and by his vision creates and ordains, and the Prakriti, the Force-Soul or Nature-Soul which is his knowledge and his vision, his creation and his all-ordaining power.⁵

(ix) GNOSIS (GNOSTIC BEING) AND SUPERMANHOOD

The Supermind is the divine Gnosis which creates, governs and upholds the world : it is the secret Wisdom which upholds both our Knowledge and our Ignorance.⁶

If there is to be an entire transformation, it can only be by the full emergence of the law of the spirit; its power of supermind or gnosis must have entered into Matter and it must evolve in Matter. It must change the mental into the supramental being, make the inconscient in us conscious, spiritualise our material substance, erect its law of gnostic consciousness in our whole evolutionary being and nature. This must be the culminating emergence or, at least, that stage in the emergence which first decisively changes the nature of the evolution by transforming its action of Ignorance and its basis of Inconscience.⁷

It will not be a sudden revelation and effectuation of the absolute Supermind and the supramental being as they are in their own plane, the swift apocalypse of a truth-conscious existence ever self-fulfilled and complete in self-knowledge; it will be the phenomenon of the supramental being descending into a world of evolutionary becoming and forming itself there, unfolding the powers of the gnosis within the terrestrial nature. This is indeed the principle of all terrestrial being...⁸

The gnosis is the effective principle of the Spirit, a highest dynamis of the spiritual existence. The gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living, acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality. All the trinities of the Spirit would be real to his self-awareness and realised in his inner life. All his existence would be fused into oneness with the transcendent and universal

Self and Spirit ; all his action would originate from and obey the supreme Self and Spirit's divine governance of Nature.⁹

A supramental gnostic individual will be a spiritual Person, but not a personality in the sense of a pattern of being marked out by a settled combination of fixed qualities, a determined character; he cannot be that since he is a conscious expression of the universal and the transcendent. But neither can his being be a capricious impersonal flux throwing up at random waves of various form, waves of personality as it pours through Time.¹⁰

In the gnostic person the truth-knowledge would lead and determine and all the other forces of the being concur in the action: there would be no place for disharmony or conflict between the powers of the nature.¹¹

In the gnostic consciousness difference would not lead to discord but to a spontaneous natural adaptation, a sense of complementary plenitude, a rich many-sided execution of the thing to be collectively known, done, worked out in life. For the difficulty in mind and life is created by ego, by separation of integers into component parts which figure as contraries, opposites, dispartes...¹²

For the greater knowledge of the gnostic being would not be in the main an outwardly acquired or learned knowledge, but the result of an evolution of consciousness and of the force of consciousness, a new dynamisation of the being. As a consequence, he would awake to and possess many things, a clear and complete knowledge of self, a direct knowledge of others, a direct knowledge of hidden forces, a direct knowledge of the occult mechanism of mind and life and matter, which are beyond our present attainment. This new knowledge and action of knowledge would be based on an immediate intuitive consciousness of things and an immediate intuitive control of things; an operative insight, now supernormal to us, would be the normal functioning of this consciousness, and an integral assured effectivity both in the mass of action and in its detail could be the outcome of the change.¹³

In the light of gnosis the many mental idols, constructed principles and systems, conflicting ideals which man has created in all domains of his mind and life, could command no acceptance or reverence; only the truth, if any, which these specious images conceal, could have a chance of entry as elements of a harmony founded on a much wider basis.¹⁴

But this (spiritual and supramental supermanhood) must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood; for supermanhood in the mental idea consists of an overtopping of the normal human level, not in kind but in

degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or dense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human Ignorance; it carries also, commonly implied in it, the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by the superman. That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type.¹⁵

But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realised being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty,—not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature.¹⁶

(To be continued)

Compiled by NATHANIEL PEARSON

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LIGHT

LIGHT from the sun comes to us through many veils. Even the little which penetrates the earth's atmosphere, we see only partially or as a reflection or distortion. Sunlight filters onto the forest floor, or blossoms in a stained-glass window; it dazzles us from the desert sand or is reflected from the cool face of the moon. All, we say, is the sun.

Most of us are content to see sunlight in these varied aspects, these filtered, reflected impressions. We do not care to look at its source, go to its heart, or know its essence. If we could walk into the sun we could know the ecstasy of selflessness, the liberation of being light. But even if a way were found, we would not approach too closely. We dare not fly into its white-hot core, that we may know light by becoming light, by letting every part of our being flame in incandescence until, dissolved in intensity, it is no longer itself, but light.

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Truth is light. There is some part of our inner being which cannot live without it, just as the body cannot live in darkness. This light also comes to us through veils and reflections, making an infinite variety of patterns on our understanding and our life. Like the sun, truth is near to us, both within and without. Yet we try to hide from it. We are grateful for a little truth, but we cannot bear too much. We prefer it in veiled, filtered, reflected images, in minute bits.

As light cannot be known by our imperfect seeing, so we cannot know truth except by becoming truth. And it offers a direct approach to those who are not afraid, who do not cling to their limitations as security against its vastness, its intensity.

We can know truth by becoming it, by entering into it and letting it penetrate every chamber, every wall of our being and transform our darkness into radiance. But no barrier of self must remain to distort, no framework of ignorance to delude, no shadow of form or expression to veil it. All that is ourself must burn away if we are to know truth.

Do we dare to walk into the flame—to open our doors to the light that is everywhere around us? Do we want to know the truth if it means becoming truth—shedding our littleness, our separate self-ness, leaving behind the play of light and shadow that is so familiar and walking into the blinding, burning ecstasy of whiteness that is the One?

MAUD

THE INNER RICHES

A FANE peeps out in a desert land
 Where mystery's murmurs float at night,
 Or rarely seen is a phantom land
 That vanishes in the rude daylight.

A solitary hill afar
 Caverns the spring of golden wine
 Whose magic drops can melt the bar
 Of sense and make all hearts combine.

The sea that sings its monotone
 Beside a sleepy village gate
 Hides in its bosom deep and lone
 The Sword that cuts the bonds of fate.

Here Nature's riches hidden lie
 Beneath the gaze of a thousand men,
 But who will dare or who defy
 The riddle of a clear-eyed ken ?

PRITHWI SINGH

 SCENE THROUGH GOLD

THE mellow float of scarves,
 Like mimosa paths,
 Dream winding round a throat
 And gentle hair—unbound :
 Wind-gold falls
 About a double slenderness
 And a twist of arms,
 Bliss-sculptured—
 Eyes explore the other's depths
 Compelled by joy's light ecstasy,
 And the long return of soul to soul,
 Across Eternity.

ANURAKTA (TONY SCOTT)

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(43)

VIII. THE HOUR OF GRACE AND FULFILMENT

73. THE CALL OF GRACE

SOMEONE calls me from a far beyond—
 A heliotropic pull from spheres unknown;
 An enticement grips me in its tender bond
 To lift me up to its exclusive zone.

Vibrations sweet towards my being float,
 My desolate atmosphere is charged with love,
 A solemn intimacy, divine, remote
 Grips me, my sins and sorrows to remove.

Loosely I give way, dumb, a helpless tool,
 Unto its serenity of soft embrace;
 Angelic touch of the clasp invisible
 Messages me the eternal call of Grace.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THOUGHTS

JUST as to a man viewing from the top of a high mountain shrubs only a few inches high and trees a few feet high appear to be on pretty level ground and small riverlets and big rivers shrink to almost equal width, likewise for a gazer from the low lands the summits far different in altitudes appear as equal to one another and to an observer from the earth Jupiter and Mars appear to be identical in size.

Similarly, our point of view and God's point of view are so far apart that towering personalities and a puny corporal or a business magnate and a huckster may appear as tweedledum and tweedledee.

Hence it is absurd to be awed by someone or to be bloated with an ephemeral greatness.

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O Man, who is more important, you or your safe ? For guarding your safe you appoint a watchman to protect day and night.

Lest any evil desire, dark thought, sloth and lethargy pounce upon your spiritual wealth, your askesis, you should stand the sentry of purity with the bayonet of firm resolution.

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If your agitation for winning freedom is going to be a mere change of government, then after winning freedom you will have again to clamour for freedom.

Not a mere change of administration but the manifestation of the Truth alone can bring about your salvation.

GIRDHARLAL

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

TRANSFIGURATION

(The author of this story, Suresh Chandra Chakravarti, known in the Ashram as Moni, from his early youth a follower of Sri Aurobindo in his revolutionary activities, then his follower as a sadhak of his Integral Yoga, was a writer of outstanding merit in Bengali prose and poetry. His trenchant criticism, powerful logic, force and beauty of expression, originality of thinking, breadth of outlook, all quickened by contact with the Master-Spirit of the Age, won the admiration of the literary luminaries of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterji, Pramatha Chowdhury, to name only a few.

Before Sri Aurobindo's retirement in 1926 Moni would read out to him his stories and after his approval and in some cases, acting on his suggestions, he would put them in shape and then send them to the press.

Before his arrival at Pondicherry by sea on April 4, 1910, Sri Aurobindo had entrusted Moni with a note on a slip of paper addressed to Srinivasachari in the town requesting him to arrange for his stay. Moni arrived at Pondicherry on March 31 1910.

In the "Life of Sri Aurobindo" by A. B. Purani we come across a significant anecdote :

"August 15, 1913 was celebrated in the Mission Street house. Sri Aurobindo was not well on that day, he had fever. But he came out and sat in the verandah and all those who had come passed before him. Moni had composed a Bengali poem which he read out. Sri Aurobindo liked it and gave him a garland.")

I

A BEGGAR-MAN and a beggar-woman. The woman was ugliness itself, the man stone blind from his very birth. One day they chanced to meet each other on the outskirts of the town.

"Oh, you are a blind beggar, and I have none to call my own. I shall clasp your hand and lead you from door to door. And thus both of us shall be benefited." She could not give vent to her actual feeling.

"No doubt," said the beggar-man, "I shall derive much benefit from your kindness, but what about your good self ? I shall be nothing but a burden to you."

"A human being cannot live without having such a burden."

From that day on they would go out begging together. She held him by the hand. The blind man felt obliged and prayed to God to shower blessings on her.

2

One day they went out far beyond the town and returned home very late. The sun had been very hot. Their feet had been almost scorched. While proceeding on their way home the blind beggar said to his comrade : "Am I not a trouble to you ?"

"My life became unbearable simply because I had no such trouble."

The blind beggar found no alternative save to remain hushed.

One day it began to rain cats and dogs while they were on their way to begging. The heavy downpour was accompanied with tremendous thunderbolts. They went and took shelter under a huge banyan tree hard by. Even there the ruthless shower made its way down through the space between one leaf and another, and thus made them wet to the skin. The fury of the wind and the irresistible splash set them shivering in their scanty clothes. Suddenly in a voice choked with emotion the blind beggar said: "Ah! what suffering you are put to ! But for me you could have been free."

"Suffering ! No doubt, it is suffering. But suffering of this kind alone has made my life worth living."

Silence reigned upon the lips of the blind beggar.

In this wise, days ran into weeks and weeks into months.

3

The intimacy of the blind man grew deeper through touch than through words. She held him by the hand and led him from village to village. Her touch was to him no less than a garland of fragrant flowers spread about the neck. That touch, day by day, penetrated his nerves and blood and assuaged a deep-rooted pang of his heart. An utmost inseparable intimacy grew between them.

One day the blind man failed to control himself. "I am consumed with the desire to see you. How I wish to be blessed with sight even for a day !" At this the woman was simply stunned. For the ugly woman knew it well that she had got him so intimate precisely because he had no sight. The beggar in no time interrogated : "What has come over you ? What makes you so upset ?"

Once again the beggar-woman caught hold of his hand and gave him a gentle shake. "Who ? Why ? Nothing is the matter."

The eyes of the beggar-woman were now reddened with tears.

The beggar felt a little sore. He enquired of her why she had begun to weep such bitter tears.

“Are you a magician ? You have no sight. How do you know that my eyes are swimming in tears ?”

Silence held the tongue of the man. After some time he said, “Well, I myself do not know how I have known it.”

Silence fell upon the two souls.

One day the woman confided : “You know, I shall lose you the moment your eyes start functioning.”

“Why, Why ? How do you mean ?”

“Why, you know, I...I...I am the most ugly-looking woman upon earth.”

A subtle smile played upon his lips. “You are ugly ? Don’t lie to me. To your eyes you are ugly because you have not been able to see your true self. But my blind eyes have seen it. You are a paragon of beauty. Full of compassion are your eyes. A lucid affection courses across your lips. A full-bloomed lotus is in your hand. The blush of a red lotus shines upon your cheeks.”

A silent smile hung upon her quivering mouth. That smile was, as it were, laden with the sorrow of the entire world.

Then a brief suspense.

“Yet, I pine to see you with my eyes open,” said the blind beggar-man.

4

For two days a storm had been blowing in all its fury within the beggar-woman. She had had a dream that the beggar would gain the power of sight. If it so happened, then ? The Goddess of Beauty had been hostile to her all along. There was no shadow of a doubt in her that the beggar would desert her. Again she would have to go on her solitary way. And who could fall desperately in love with her, ugliness incarnate ?

At long last the self-lessness of the woman came out successful.

“Do you know something ?” said she.

“What is it ?”

“Soon your eyes will obey your command. You will be able to see at your will.”

An overwhelming delight stilled the power of his speech.

“You will be blessed with the power of sight when you stand chest-deep in the Devi Lake and the blessing-flower of the Mahalakshmi temple is made to touch your eyes at the very moment of sunrise.”

“Is it so ?” His heart gave a jump and thump in ecstasy.

“Mahalakshmi herself has promised me so in my dream.”

Light and delight captured the beggar’s face.

There was a minute’s silence.

A few drops of tears stole into her eyes.
Impatience tortured him. "But when, my dear, when?"
"On the coming day of the sun's entrance into Capricorn."

5

On the appointed day both beggar-man and beggar-woman stood chest-deep in the Devi lake. A redolent blessing-flower was in the hand of the beggar-man. The beggar-woman was on the tip-toe of expectation to see the sunrise. The golden disk was now seen on the horizon. The beggar-woman touched his blind eyes with that blessing-flower. Lo, the stroke of miracle! The man was blind no more. His bright eyes were flooded with delight, and they reflected devotion welling from the depths of his heart. He seized her by the hand and darted his glance into her face and in a voice full of gratitude cried out, "You... you...you wonderful beggar-woman!"

The face of the beggar-woman blushed. Her heart gave a throb of ecstasy. She cast a glance at her own reflection in the water. It was indeed the image of a goddess bathed in the silvery freshness of the dawn.

SURESH CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY

(Translated by "fishnoo" from the original Bengali in "Oindrajalik")

SOME QUESTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND YOGA

A Letter

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1961)

HAVING dealt with the Modern Schools of Empirical Psychology, I shall now take a bird's-eye view of the ancient Indian school of psychology though it must be first made clear that psychology was never with the ancient Indians a subject separated from metaphysics and religion. There are no separate treatises on psychology. And the ancients did not belong to what the moderns call the Empirical School of Psychology. But if experience based on experiment is the sign of a science then ancient India did have a science of psychology.

The oldest book of humanity, the Rigveda, does speak of the mind and some of its powers. It speaks of knowledge. It speaks of will. They knew in Vedic times that thinking was the characteristic which distinguishes man from the animal. But as the Rigveda is written in a symbolical language in an age which was not intellectual, it should be difficult to convey its contents to the realm of psychology.

Suffice it to say that the Rigveda speaks of several levels of consciousness, each a world, through a complicated system of spiritual symbolism.

When we come to the Upanishads we are on firmer ground. The aim of these cryptic writings was to solve the problem of Being, to indicate the ultimate solution of the problem and path of reaching that soul. Unfortunately for the Modern mind these intuitive and inspired writings have not been garbed in terms of the intellect. They are the utterances of the mystics whose meaning can be caught only when expounded by people who have the experience and who have trodden the path. It would not be here out of place to suggest that these writings have a similarity to the Dionysian, Eleusinian, Orphic or even Hermetic School of mysticism which flourished in the middle East before the present era. It would be a great mistake to reject the very sound psychological basis contained in these writings because they happen to have been written in a style other than intellectual. In fact the Upanishads have dealt with the different levels of consciousness, with the problem of Sleep and Dream, with the survival of human personality after death, with levels of consciousness above the intellect. They do not neglect to consider sensation, perception and other modes of apprehension. Let it be clearly understood here that all these are incorporated as parts of a much wider subject.

It was the Upanishads that supported the various schools of philosophical thought that arose in India, each of which had its own background of psychological experiment and experience.

The Sankhyas, for instance, based their whole outlook on a very fundamental psychological experience, *viz.*, the separation of the perceiving self from nature which formed the object of perception. That is to say, it affirms the great psychological truth that there is in the human being a self which is quite independent of his nature and which can stand apart, observing as a witness unaffected by all the movements of his nature. This truth based on experience has been utilized by many schools of self-culture for self-mastery and self-exceeding.

Among the various schools of Yoga, leaving aside those that depend on the physical and nervous systems, there are others that fall chiefly into three main divisions depending upon three chief powers of the human consciousness : (1) The intellect or the thinking mind, (2) the will—the effective power of the consciousness, (3) emotions.

Each of these start with the aim of attaining freedom—freedom from the limitations of human nature, from duality, from suffering, from ignorance which is the cause of suffering.

This it proposes to do and succeeds in doing by various psychological processes. The positive side of liberation consists in attaining to a higher than normal human consciousness which is spontaneously free from the above-mentioned limitations of human nature. The processes resorted to take many forms such as maintaining a constant aspiration which might include exercise of constant will-power, detachment from that part of nature which is subject to ignorance, and identification with the watching and witnessing self which is free from the limitation of nature. It includes concentration of the entire consciousness on the main purpose of the effort. This concentration is supposed to yield results that might be considered extraordinary and even abnormal—but, as Sri Aurobindo has put it, it is like a concentrated action of steam or electricity which when dispersed is unable to produce those results that follow its organised action through a machine.

The Buddhists succeeded in developing a psychological system of self-discipline which chiefly aimed at freeing the human individual from suffering, whereas the Vedantic and Upanishadic thought aims at a state of positive fulfilment of knowledge, power and delight. The Buddhistic school is more pragmatic and less metaphysical in its aim. The assumptions of the non-Buddhistic psychological disciplines are the existence of self independent of nature and an existence of infinite being or consciousness above the present level of human consciousness and its attainability by human effort. Buddhism comes nearest to the present Empirical schools of psychology, inasmuch as it aims at the release of the human being from suffering but it does not assume the existence of a soul

nor the existence of an infinite being originating life. Its chief aim is to get rid of suffering by rising to a state of consciousness in which all existence practically ceases. It does not even try to define that state except by saying that it is a void or zero or self-extinction. Its great stress was on the doctrine of 'Karma' which interpreted psychologically would mean that the energy released in action has a tendency to return to the individual from whom it originates. This doctrine serves also to explain the existence of tendencies, aptitudes, capacities and incapacities inherent in the individual. It was because they could not explain the action and reaction of Karma in a single span of human life that the Buddhists accepted the doctrine of reincarnation as a necessary machinery for the observation of the law of Karma. In their practical self-discipline they insisted on the acquirement of cardinal qualities. It consisted in rejection of the aim of satisfying desires because Buddha traced the origin of all suffering to this desire. All acquisitive tendencies had to be set aside. The gradual exercise of generosity, charity, good-will and compassion, etc., led to what the Buddhists called the correct attitude toward life-values and ultimately to Nirvana, the state of self-extinction in which the ego entirely ceases to function. According to some Buddhists, this egoless state is capable of universal compassion and sympathy and its dynamic outflow, so that the ultimate Nirvana could include the freedom of all human beings from suffering.

(Concluded)

A. B. PURANI

MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

“The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.”

SRI AUROBINDO

MADHUSUDAN was born with rock-like determination. He proved himself to be a student of exceptional gifts and his teachers and professors with almost no difficulty recognised in him a fast-blossoming intellectual figure. When his boyhood was just commencing to bud into adolescence countless coloured images rocketed in the sky of his imagination for a swift flare-up into fame.

Right from his adolescence he was consumed with the desire to be out-and-out an Englishman. There was no shadow of a doubt in him that the moment his feet would touch the foreign shores he would become a world figure. According to him, Bengal, nay, the whole of India was sadly wanting in the capacity of appreciating a genius, whereas the free thinking of foreigners could evaluate real merit. Let us leave him to speak :

Where man in all his truest glory lives,
And nature's face is exquisitely sweet;
For those fair climes I heave the impatient sigh,
There let me live and there let me die.

At last the fated day dawned. On February 9, 1843 Madhusudan embraced Christianity in spite of his parents' and relatives' thundering and wailing in chorus. On that red-letter day Madhusudan in Michael's heart sang :

Long sunk in superstition's night,
By Sin and Satan driven,—
I saw not,—cared not for the light
That leads the blind to Heaven.

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But now, at length thy grace, O Lord !
Bids all around me shine;
I drink thy sweet,—thy precious word,
I kneel before thy shrine !

Again let us not miss Michael's song in Madhu in after years on the eve of his departure to England.

Forget me not, O Mother,
Should I fail to return
To thy hallowed bosom
Make not the lotus of thy memory
Void of its nectar—Madhu.¹

Neither Shakespeare nor Milton but Byron was Madhusudan's hero. It is really worth noticing how the lives of Lord Byron and Michael Madhusudan were fashioned completely in a similar mould. The characters of the two can be summed up in one word : audacity. These two mighty poets at once remind us of Danton the French revolutionist: "L'audace, encore l'audace, toujours l'audace !"

With *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* Byron won the world. To cite the poet himself :

"I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

With *Meghnad-Badh* the Indian poet distinguished himself. However, it took a few years for this Epic to win recognition all over the country.

Bankim, the creator of Bengali literature, pays a glowing tribute to the poet of *Meghnad-Badh* thus :

"...to Homer and Milton, as well as to Valmiki, he is largely indebted, and his poem is on the whole the most valuable work in modern Bengali literature."

"The Epic *Meghnad-Badh*," says Tagore, "is really a rare treasure in Bengali literature. Through his writings the richness of Bengali literature has been proclaimed to the wide world."

Vidyasagar's lofty praise runs :

"*Meghnad-Badh* is a supreme poem."

Nolini Kanta Gupta, who ranks high among the great literary figures of Bengal, writes :

"The day Bankim produced his artistic beauty, *Kapalkundala*, and Madhusudan penned—

In a battle face to face,
When Birbahu,² the hero sovereign,
Kissed the dust and departed to the land of Death—³

¹ Translated from the original Bengali.

² The son of Ravana.

³ Quoted from *Meghnad-Badh*.

the day Rabindranath could declare—

Not mother, not daughter, not bride art thou, O Beauty incarnate,

O Urvashi, denizen of Paradise !—

was a momentous day for Bengali literature to proclaim the message of the universal muse and not exclusively its own parochial note. The genius of Bengal secured a place in the wide world overpassing the length and breadth of Bengal. And Bengali poetry reached the highest status.”

Let me deal a little more with Byron and Madhusudan. “Self-worshipper”: such was the comment made by Keats on Byron. Macaulay goes one step ahead: “He (Byron) was himself the beginning, the middle and the end, of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape.” But who can dare to accuse the Indian poet of the same crime? Not even a single criticism of the kind can be levelled against him. Be that as it may, I should like to draw the attention of my readers to a strangely significant matter. In Byron’s *Manfred* what the Abbot of St. Maurice spoke of Manfred can equally be applied to the life of Madhusudan :

“This should have been a noble creature : he
Hath all the energy which should have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled, as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passion and pure thoughts
Mixed and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive...”

A wonderful linguist was Madhusudan. His reading is almost unbelievable. Besides Bengali, Sanskrit and Tamil, he studied Greek, Latin, Italian and French and could read and write the last two with perfect grace not to speak of ease.

His heart gave a throb of joy after he had made his first attempt at the Bengali sonnet. He presented the poem to his dear friend Rajnarayan (Rishi Rajnarayan Bose), along with a letter which runs :

“What say you to this, my good friend? In my humble opinion, if cultivated by men of genius, our sonnet in time would rival the Italian.”

We are at once reminded of Italy’s high appreciation of Madhusudan.

It happened that when Madhusudan was staying at Versailles in France the third centenary of Dante was celebrated all over the West. Madhusudan wrote a poem in memory of the immortal poet and translated it into French and Italian and finally sent it to Italy. Victor Immanuel, the then ruling monarch of Italy, was enamoured of the poem and wrote to the poet : “It will be a ring which will connect the orient with the occident.”

Madhusudan's life was at once a stupendous boon and an enormous sorrow. Loss of self-control was in the main responsible for this sorrow and his overflowing poetic originality for this boon.

As *Tamburlaine* was Marlowe's first attempt at blank verse in Elizabethan England, even so *Sharmistha* was Madhusudan's first attempt at blank verse in Bengali literature.

The Bengal Tiger, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, while paying a glowing tribute to Madhusudan's blank verse, said, "As long as the Bengali race and Bengali literature would exist, the sweet lyre of Madhusudan would never cease playing." He further added: "Ordinarily, reading of poetry causes a soporific effect, but the intoxicating vigour of Madhusudan's poems makes even a sick man sit up on his bed."

In France poor Madhusudan suffered tremendous blows from within and without. His Indian friends who had inspired him to cross the seven seas and thirteen rivers had by now managed to forget the beggar Madhusudan altogether. Except for a very few well-wishers the poet's life had to remain satisfied with many a fair-weather friend. But the Goddess of poetry had not deserted him even for a while from the day he began to worship her. The poet's boat was plying, as it were, between the Scylla of stark poverty and the Charybdis of innumerable loans. He was simply over head and ears in debt. As he was not in a position to clear off his debts, he was very often threatened by the four walls of a prison.

The tenebrous night was over. The sun had at last dawned. Respectful thanks to the munificent generosity of Vidyasagar, equally known as Dayar Sagar (the ocean of kindness). The matchless Pundit of the country had sent to the poet a large sum of money. The son of Mother Bengal returned to her "Elysian lap." To our joy Madhusudan realised his mistake. He wrote to his friend Gour from France: "If there be any one among us anxious to leave a name behind him, and not pass away into oblivion like a brute, let him devote himself to his mother-tongue. That is his legitimate sphere—his proper element."

Just three days prior to his death Madhusudan with the help of Shakespeare expressed his deepest conviction of life to his dear friend Gour:

...out, out, brief candle !
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. — (*Macbeth*)

Gour too could have easily taken the help of Longfellow:

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream.

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Life is real ! Life is earnest !
And the grave is not its goal.

Madhusudan died. We are as much ashamed as pained to confess that the gloomy veil of ungratefulness, which had lain across the eyes of the Bengalees, was rent asunder not before fifteen years from the day of his passing when we, his countrymen, erected a tomb on his grave. No doubt, some of his countrymen did understand that such an act was essentially a duty on their part to perpetuate the memory of the mighty poet whose very life was to their gain, but there the matter ended. It is no good lamenting the past. The golden future is at our disposal. Now, we are proud to see that the all-inviting epitaph which shines there came out from the poet himself :

Stop a while, traveller !
Should Mother Bengal claim thee for her son.
As a child takes repose on his mother's elysian lap,
Even so here in this Long Home,
On the bosom of the earth,
Enjoys the sweet eternal sleep
Poet Madhusudan of the Duttas.¹

As at the outset of this humble attempt of mine Madhusudan came under the lofty praise of Sri Aurobindo's immortal pen, even so at the close Madhusudan comes under the equally high praise of the Master Seer of the Age :

"All the stormiest passions of man's soul he (Madhusudan) expressed in gigantic language."

CHINMOY

¹ Translated from the original Bengali.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo (Three Essays) by *V. Chandrasekharam*. Published by Personal Bookshop, 111 Mount Road, Madras 6.

Among the large number of books that are multiplying on Sri Aurobindo, the latest, *Sri Aurobindo* by Sri Chandrasekharam easily stands apart in its classic purity of style and eminence of thought. Slender in volume, this work from the pen of one of the oldest scholar-disciples of the Master of the Integral Yoga gives an authentic account of the role of Sri Aurobindo as the great Reconciler of warring systems of Religion and Philosophy and his mission to reveal and work out the Way for man to break out of his present bonds of imperfection and be born anew in the freedom of the Spirit for the rightful Glory of the Earth. Says the author :

“The gods, according to a Vedic myth, seek out Agni who had gone into hiding, fleeing in fear from the toil of invocation and the eternal tramping between gods and men ; and they tell him, so goes the story, ‘Come forth out of the darkness ! Man, desirous of the gods, hankers after worship and sacrifice and is waiting all ready. We shall make your life youthful and unaging, so that when yoked to the work of the sacrifice you shall not stumble and come to harm.’ And even like these gods unto Agni, Sri Aurobindo says to the Soul of India : ‘Awake from your death-in-sleep and arise ! Humanity is desirous of Godhead. I shall make for you a basis of ever fresh and unaging life, so that, however high you may soar—whether it be into that azure sky of the vast unbounded consciousness where it is ever in mystic meditation, or into its charged fields of golden lightnings wherefrom issue the cosmic energies, or into the very centre of the blazing Sun of the Supreme Spirit, you shall not fall down to the earth exhausted.’ ”

The next article focusses our attention on the signal service done by Sri Aurobindo in resuscitating the treasure of the Veda—the ancient bequest of the sempiternal fathers—from the indigenous debris of ritualism covered with the extraneous moss of much misleading scholarship from the West. Himself a Vedic scholar of standing, Sri Chandrasekharam marshals such an enormous pile of evidence from the hymns themselves testifying to the ubiquitous content of Mystic Knowledge and Discipline in the Mantras, that one begins to wonder how at all could such a self-evident fact have missed the

attention of so many scholars. This chapter is scintillating in scholarship and the deep insight of the author.

The last section on the Taittiriya Upanishad comes as the crown of the hundred pages of vigorous writing. Here it is not the devotion and the heart of the author that speak as in the first essay, neither is it the brilliance of mind as in the second, but it is the spiritual maturity of the soul that finds expression in the exposition of the message of the Taittiriya, the message which, he points out, provides a stable base for the world-embracing philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Chandrasekharam is superb in his treatment of the term *Vijnana* in this Upanishad, underlining the error committed by commentators like Shankara and the grave consequences that flowed therefrom.

M.P.PANDIT

Students' Section

TALKS ON POETRY

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

WE have remarked that Iconopoeia tends generally to be less a failure than Logopoeia. We may now glance at a case in which the latter surpasses the former. It is a case in which the technical device called Aposiopesis has play, though the actual determinant of the poetic quality is not this device. Aposiopesis means a sudden breaking off in speech. In *Christabel* Coleridge has written of a half-human half-demon creature, the outwardly fair Lady Geraldine. When describing the undressing of this woman before Christabel, he originally had the lines :

Behold ! her bosom and half her side
Are lean and old and foul of hue.

This is not exactly open Iconopoeia, but its appeal is to the sight. It is an effectively repellent visual touch, the direct description of a preternatural horror. In *The Ancient Mariner* Coleridge has used this method very successfully—you may remember the glittering eye and the skinny hand of the old salt himself. Coleridge felt that *Christabel* was a more eerie poem and everything in it should be suggested rather than depicted. So he redid the lines with a break in the speech. Instead of finishing the sentence he took a new turn cutting out all direct description. The rewritten lines run :

MOTHER INDIA

Behold ! her bosom and half her side—
A thing to dream of, not to tell.

This is pretty abstract as far as details go, but the removal of the state of Lady Geraldine's body from any this-world possibility to the possibilities of a world of nightmare confers extra effectiveness. When Shelley read the passage he fainted !

This incident is one of the two on record in which lines of poetry produced a bodily effect more serious than the usual ones mentioned by Housman : the standing up of the hair on the skin, the watering of the eyes, the tingling of the spine, the piercing sensation in the solar plexus. Emily Dickinson speaks even of a feeling as if the top of the head were blown off. None of these effects, however marked, have caused any serious physical disturbance. What happened to Shelley is matched only by what happened to Blake. Once the passage was read out to him, in which Wordsworth claims that the theme he has chosen for his song is the profoundest—namely, the human mind itself. Compared to the human mind, Wordsworth says, all high and even supernatural realities are nothing. He lists all that the human mind exceeds and in the course of listing them he writes :

Jehovah—with his thunder and the choir
Of shouting Angels and the empyreal throne—
I pass them unalarmed...

Hearing these verses, Blake turned pale and asked his friend : "Does Mr. W. think he can surpass Jehovah ?" Then an acute colic set in, which went on increasing and almost threatened to kill Blake ! And here too the disturbing phrase—"I pass them unalarmed"—is rather on the side of Logopoeia.

Talking of illnesses I am reminded of a piece of Logopoeia in Shakespeare which will give me a chance to complete the roll of medicos I started during my discussion of Iconopoeia. Apropos of Eliot's simile of the etherised evening and Shakespeare's passage beginning "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased ?" I brought in a number of Ashram surgeons and physicians. The name of one doctor got left out. I shall do it honour now. Shakespeare, as you know, is a king of Iconopoeia, his very mind moves iconopoeically. Rarely is he markedly logopoeic. In one line he is logopoeic in perhaps the worst way in all poetic history. The correct description of the way is found in the very line, which reads :

In a most hideous and dreadful manner.

When Bernard Shaw once heard Ellen Terry say this line he could not believe Shakespeare could have perpetrated anything so bad. He accused her of having

improvised it to cover up a lapse of memory. Shakespeare is not such a terrible flop always. In fact, he has a few very successful logopoeias. Many of his great speeches would be logopoeic by their argumentative trend but for his visual sense. His imagination is all the time breaking in. For instance, Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be" is a series of self-questionings in which a number of semi-philosophical issues are touched on. From the very start, however, images are crowding into the language. Still, in a few passages Shakespeare keeps up the true logopoeic level. I shall give you two examples. The first is of a less serious kind but quite poetic with its dry humour. It is a short passage which calls up to our mind the Ashram-medico left out. Not the physicians nor the surgeons are our heroes on this occasion. Today we shall celebrate our dentist Dr. Patil and put him together with Shakespeare whom he resembles so far as his head is concerned. I am not referring to the inside of the head : I am referring to the smooth polished outside. Dr. Patil's job, as you must be aware, is to see that before we become supramental we do not become supradental ! We may be inclined not to give his job the importance it deserves. But Shakespeare has a dig at the *savants*, the wise men, who look down their noses at it—until something goes wrong with their wisdom-teeth :

For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently,
However they have writ the style of gods
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

In plain prose, philosophers may have high-falutingly made light of our mortal situation in which ill-luck and suffering have play, but let them get a cavity in their teeth and they will be jumping about with exclamations which, whether melopoeic or iconopoeic or logopoeic, would certainly not be philosophic.

Or course, all of you who are so very young cannot imagine the awful inferno that is toothache or the powerless purgatory that is toothlessness. Very few, out of the people who depend on false sets of teeth, cut heroic figures : evidently, artificial teeth do not do this kind of cutting very well. I have heard of one person only who, using such teeth, had yet the fiery spirit of a hundred-fanged dragon. It was an Arab chief, a Sheikh of the desert, who had joined hands with T.E. Lawrence when this Arabianised Englishman rallied the Beduins against the Germans and their allies the Turks in the First World War. That Arab chief was so angry with the Germans that, when he remembered that the false teeth which he had been wearing for years had come from a dental firm in Berlin, he pulled them out and, with a violent "Bismillah" from his gap of a mouth, smashed them on the ground. This was, I think, just before a battle. And not

only through one battle but through many he went with an unabated "Bismillah" and won fame as the Toothless Terror.

I knew another practically toothless man who was the exact opposite. His nerves were so shaky that he could never stand the sight of a drop of blood. Not only this : he even fought shy of red colour anywhere : it reminded him of blood and he would at once faint. Our Ashram Stores had to take care not to give him red hair oil. Green oil was always given. If by any chance red was handed to him he would be all ready to collapse in Pavitra's arms ! He even told me that to look at a red pencil was enough to make him giddy. I do not know for sure that this ultra-sensitiveness was due directly to his nearly toothless condition, but it seems he had lost a lot of blood when some of his last few stumps had been pulled out, and ever since that operation he could not bear redness. I am sure he could never have stood the reading of the newspapers of today. The mention of Red China everywhere would have made him look like the victim of a Communist purge.

I suppose you know that it was in connection with dentistry that one of the most thrilling moments of medical history occurred—the administration of a general anaesthetic. Nitrous oxide or "laughing gas" had already been discovered, but not applied to surgical cases before Dr. Riggs the dentist took Dr. Wells the physician in his hands. Dr. Wells had a bad tooth needing extraction. But it was a firmly rooted molar and it would have made the patient howl madly if pulled out in the old way. You must be aware what the old way was. The patient's chair was put against a wall and his hands strapped down to the arms of the chair. The dentist would stand before him with a huge forceps held in both hands. On grasping the tooth with the forceps the dentist would pin down the patient in the chair by planting his own right foot on the patient's chest. Then, with the foot pushing and the hands pulling, the tooth would be out of the patient's mouth accompanied by a hideous yell. All this was avoided by a few whiffs of laughing gas. Dr. Wells became a completely co-operative dummy. In front of hundreds of people the dentist extracted the physician's tooth and demonstrated the efficacy of general anaesthesia. Soon after the operation Dr. Wells opened his eyes and holding up from the tray on the table beside him the extracted molar shouted to the audience : "Here's a new era in tooth-pulling !" The next moment he took a look at the molar between his fingers. Dr. Wells went suddenly pale. It was a perfectly whole and healthy tooth. Dr. Riggs had extracted the wrong molar ! The perfect co-operation of the unconscious patient unable to know which tooth was being painlessly pulled out had indeed ushered in a new era in erroneously effective dentistry ! Luckily for our own day there has come the local anaesthetic—the injection of novocaine in the gums leaving the patient in full possession of his senses and even looking into a mirror to see that the dentist catches hold of the right tooth.

Dr. Patil and Shakespeare have led us into quite a digression. Let us return to Logopoeia, bidding adieu to our dentist but not to the poet. We have said that Shakespeare is constantly passing over from Logopoeia to Iconopoeia. But in a certain passage in *Macbeth* he keeps the true logopoeic level for several lines. There Macbeth is debating the murder of King Duncan who is a guest for the night at Macbeth's castle :

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly : if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success, that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come...

It is rather a complex passage. The first "done" means "ended", the second "completed", the third "performed". The sense is that if the murder can be regarded as a perfectly finished thing when it is carried out completely, then the best course is to commit it soon. This sense is elaborated in the next phrase. "Trammel up" means "arrest, bind up, entangle". Macbeth wishes that the murder would have no sequel, run no risk of later discovery and ultimate punishment : the fatal blow which would lead to the cessation of Duncan's life—his "surcease—should be in the moment of that cessation a total success for ever and constitute in itself the whole history of the crime—the full being and the entire ending of the dark deed here upon the earth. If there were no after-effects, no possible results dangerous to the criminal, then Macbeth would consider the success sufficiently tempting for him to ignore the next life and risk whatever might be the consequences after his own death, whatever the punishment doled out by God in the other world. The passage is very effective in expression and is regarded as high poetry by the critics. But, as they have noted, it has a sibilant hissing quality rather than the quality of melody. It can certainly not be called melopoeic. But its broken rhythms and its tendency to harshness of sound are themselves deemed by criticism the master-means of poetically bringing about the communication intended by Shakespeare—the communication of desperate haste and breathless excitement. As Cleanth Brooks and R.P. Warren tell us, the lines give with their lack of ordinary melodious effects the impression of a conspiratorial whisper. Not only Melopoeia but also Iconopoeia is absent through most of the passage. Though the language is extremely vivid and has a seeing power in words like "trammel" and "catch", explicit imagery is wanting except towards the close where we have "the bank and shoal of time" . A shoal is a place of shallow water in which there is a submerged sand-bank. It would seem that Shakespeare is imaging death as a strip of land

between two seas—the one being time, the other eternity. Personally I do not quite grasp the appositeness of the metaphor, but Shakespeare's language is vigorous enough to make the picture of the bank and shoal, upon which the act of "jumping" the next life is to be done, a telling one.

The passage as a whole is intense Logopoeia of what we may term the vital mind at work : the nerves are at play, the sensations are astir all through the thinking process. In contrast see the working of the mind proper, the true reflective being drawing up the living energy into its own uses : here is a speech made by Milton's Satan at sight of the infernal regions to which he has been condemned :

Hail, horrors, hail,
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell,
 Receive thy new possessor; one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than He
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
 We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
 Here for His envy, will not drive us hence :
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell :
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.

A Titanism is articulate in the lines, but, however misdirected, the sheer sense of the mind's independence is magnificent : this independence is celebrated in language hailing from the mental plane itself. It would be difficult to excel the poetic quality of this passage where thought and not sight or music is the main feature. But we may observe that nothing is abstract : we feel a movement of concrete thinking : the very ideas are as if objects which the mind arranges and juxtaposes, and the language too is what I may call eyeful thought, though the eyefulness is not as marked as in Shakespeare. This eyeful thought may be contrasted to the thoughtful eye that is the character of Iconopoeia. The eye of course has always to be at work in poetry; but it can be either adjectival or substantive. The difference in the position it occupies may perhaps be illustrated most interestingly by two passages from Sri Aurobindo.

There is the sestet of the mighty Nirvana-sonnet :

Only the illimitable Permanent
 Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
 Replaces all. What once was I, in It

A silent unnamed emptiness content
 Either to fade in the Unknowable
 Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

The last line is iconopoeic, all the others are logopoeic. But here too we have no touch of dry intellectuality. All the less here because Sri Aurobindo, though couching his expression in terms of thought, is really writing what he has called "Overhead Poetry"—poetry breaking from secret planes of consciousness above the mind. It is Thought with a capital T. Not the vital mind, nor the mind proper, but the spiritual mind is vibrant throughout, with its touch on spiritual realities that are known by subtle inner senses or by direct identity through an extension of one's sheer self. Eyeful Thought uttering an experience that goes beyond all earth and all hell and even all heaven into a pure infinitude where name and form are effaced has been set artistically working by the realisation Sri Aurobindo had at Baroda in 1908. A further vivification, as it were, of the Unknowable spoken of is given us in some lines in *Savitri* where also the Overhead planes function but through an Eye with a capital E. The Thoughtful Eye is now at work to show us that the Unknowable is not an impotent void or a divine darkness : even when there is a negation of all that we can conceive, even when there is an emptiness of all intelligible positives, what remains is yet a plenary light : only, that plenitude is lost in complete mystery for our conception. This mystery, however, must not be named either Being or Non-being : beyond Being, it passes into Non-being—yet even to say Non-being is to define it too much and also to confine it too much. Observe how Sri Aurobindo compasses the mystery :

If all existence could renounce to be,
 And Being take refuge in Non-being's arms
 And Non-being could strike out its ciphered round,
 Some lustre of that Reality might appear.

The terms are at once Yes and No. Existence is said to give itself up to non-existence, but the giving up is a refuge and what it gives itself up to waits as if with arms. The arms connect up with the ciphered round : the ciphered round is, of course, zero, but the circle is suggested to be formed by the joined arms of Non-being around Being. And when Non-being is said to strike out its own zero, what do we understand ? On the one hand, a deeper negation than Non-Being, as if the zero were too concrete as well as too limited to indicate the supreme vacuity which the Ultimate is to our experience. On the other hand, to strike out the zero is to cancel the negation brought by Non-being and suggest a new positive which yet is not Being. The last line supports this suggestion and, in the act of calling the Ultimate "that Reality", differen-

tiates the Ultimate from both "existence" and its opposite. Further, a nameless thrill is hinted by all the lines in the process of the ever profounder immergence. Being lets itself be absorbed as though into an indescribable Lover and Non-being has a dynamism of self-denial, and what results and remains breaks out like light : a flush and a warmth no less than a vividness are present. Finally, I may ask you to note that after all the enigmatic Yes and No have been practised the realisation is just "some lustre" : not the whole Presence of the final Absence but merely a bit of its all-swallowing glory comes into view. This stroke of "some-"ness is the crowning surprise : we think that everything that is possible in order to go from the deep to the deeper and to the deepest has been done and then we are told that the utmost we can do can bring no more than a moiety of the sovereign secrecy to our realisation !

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

The first annual conference of the members of Sri Aurobindo Society, representatives of Sri Aurobindo Centres and other friends was held successfully in Pondicherry from 29th to 31st December, 1961.

The details will appear in the *Mother India* of February 21, 1962.

THE RENAISSANCE SPIRIT

(This is an essay written during a recent periodical test by one of the students of the top class in the Higher Course in World History and Civilisation at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry. Except for slight omissions and an occasional verbal change, it is reproduced here as it was written under examination conditions.)

AFTER the many centuries of the Dark and the Later Middle Ages, when cultured Europe attacked by the invading barbarians of the North had taken refuge in the monasteries, Life and Free Thought again reasserted themselves by the middle of the 15th century. Europe had lived too long cramped by religious dogma and by a blind faith in Aristotelian science ; the joy of life was smothered by asceticism ; art was dictated by religion and found its expression mainly in the Cathedral architecture ; free enquiry was denounced and Scholasticism reigned, a mixture of logic and dogma. The feudal barony held sway over the very lives of the individual serfs. The Pope and the Emperor struggled for mastery over the individual States, which had not yet formed into nations.

But repression and limitation cannot last for ever; a reaction, a reassertion of intellect, of life and experience is bound to set in. It came in the middle of the 15th century, first among the more cultured and thinking élite before it could diffuse itself among the masses, still half-drugged with medieval sleep. Therefore we find that the Renaissance developed first in the realms of language and literature, spreading thence to thought and art, from there to the life of the nation and finally to its political organisation. The higher more evolved section of society, represented by the few refined individuals, always receives the new light first; then it spreads to the lower members of the social being.

Europe was thus preparing for a revolt and a new birth. But why has it been described as a re-birth ? Here we are faced with the primary contradiction of this age : though it broke away from the immediate past, it harked back to antiquity, to the rich heritage of ancient Greece and Rome. Perhaps the fundamental reason for this was that though the mind of Europe had become ripe enough for a revolt, it was not yet mature enough to be able to create a new age, a new culture for itself. Therefore it imitated, often servilely imitated, the classical ages of Greece and Rome, not only in its life and art, but also in its intellectual approach to the world.

A knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages became the test of education.

Plato and Plotinus replaced scholastic philosophy. Greek art became the standard to which one must constantly refer. The Epicurean way of life returned to the city. The Roman idea of the all-powerful State was revived and it helped oust the feudal lords and establish the unitary state. Over and above all, there reigned the Greek belief that reason and intellect must be the judge of all. Progress became the watchword, for reason thirsts for new knowledge and discovery.

These, and the corollary idea that life in the world is good and should be bettered, as opposed to the medieval view turned always to the other-world, have formed the European mentality up to the modern age. That is why it is said that the Renaissance created the Modern Man. Not that progress has always been in a straight line or that there were no reversals. Reason cannot always remain the sole judge of all; there are several human traits and activities which are inherently irrational—*e.g.*, Religion, or even great Art. Thus there arose contradictions and counter-movements, but the general trend was set.

Why did the Renaissance come to Italy first and thence spread to the different regions of Europe? Obviously, the classical background of Roman Italy was already there in the soil. Moreover, universities had begun to be founded which discussed Roman Law and Classical literature, thus encouraging an interest in that ancient culture. Also, the Latin temperament is difficult to subdue. It loves life and its pleasures too much to become a successful ascetic. But perhaps the most fruitful contacts were those of the East. The Italian ports of Genoa, Venice and Naples almost monopolised trade with the fabulously rich lands of Asia. Marco Polo had returned with his tales of high adventure, but there were many others who came back loaded with gold. Also there were Saracenic and Byzantine contacts, for scholars came over from Constantinople—long before the city fell to the infidel—and they brought with them the wealth of Byzantine culture, which was only a modified form of the ancient Graeco-Roman culture.

We find evidence of the New Birth already in Dante who lived into the 14th century. He had the courage to proclaim Virgil as his guide and also to put renowned popes in his Hell. He wrote in the Florentine dialect—the first man to do so. In fact, it was he who created literary Italian. He was followed by two writers, the poet Petrarch and the story-teller Boccaccio. Both wrote in the same Florentine dialect of Dante and thus helped to establish it firmly as the literary tongue. Neither of them wrote on religious themes; rather they encouraged the study of the pagan literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Soon, the scholars from Constantinople started bringing with them the forgotten texts of antiquity from their libraries. It became the fashion to study these texts and neglect the native Italian. Yet we find the busy Machiavelli had time to write his *Mandragola*, described as one of the ripest plays in the Italian language.

In the realm of thought and religion, the medieval religious ideas and the Science based on Aristotle were thrown overboard. The broader humanistic ideals of Plato and Plotinus were revived. We find the real development of Renaissance thought in the more purely intellectual climate of the North. Wycliffe in England and Huss of Bohemia (both belonging to the 14th century) and Thomas à Kempis of Germany in the 15th century had already started a more individualistic approach to religion. The Bible, they had said, should be read in the original and one should interpret the sayings of Jesus for oneself. There had also been freethinkers like Roger Bacon and Abélard. Now, in the early 16th century, Reuchlin of Heidelberg University began to say that the Old Testament of the Jews was as necessary to Christianity as the New and he protested against the treatment meted out to the Jew. Like Huss he referred to the Bible in the original Greek and Hebrew.

But the real break with the past was effected by Martin Luther in the first and second quarters of the 16th century. He asserted in full the independent spirit of the Renaissance in the domain of religion. The Pope was no longer to be accepted as Vicar of God. The ceremonies and rituals of the old religion were to have no part in the true communion between oneself and God. As God himself chooses the recipient of His Grace, even prayer had to lose its importance. The modern attitude to religion was thus slowly established: a rational scrutiny, the disappearance of church ceremonial, and above all, religion becoming a matter of individual taste and tolerating no interference from Church or State. Luther was followed by the even more radical Calvin who founded puritanism in all its rigour and strict morality. But the Renaissance spirit flourished on, in spite of puritanism.

(To be continued)

Jhumur

THE STORY OF HARISHCHANDRA IN THE AITAREYA BRAHMANA

THERE is a story of Harischandra told in the Aitareya Brahmana which is a part of the Rig-Veda Samhita. It is quite different from the story of Harischandra in the Purana. It runs thus :

Harischandra was a king belonging to the Ikshwaku dynasty. Although he had a hundred wives he felt grieved for not having a son. Naradar and Pulwatar were living in his house then. The king turned to Naradar and asked him, "The wise and the non-wise alike are keen to have a son. What benefit or fortune do they get by getting a son ?" To this Naradar answered in ten anecdotes instead of in one. Said Naradar: "By getting a son one clears the debt incurred by being born. He gets the nectar and indestructibility. Food gives life to creatures, clothing gives protection to the body; gold will give beauty; cows are helpful to family life; the wife gets to be a constant companion, helper and coworker. There are many differences between bringing up a girl and giving her in marriage to someone. As for the son he functions as a lamp shedding light to pass into the higher worlds." Naradar added, "The husband is born again through his wife. Therefore the wife is known as the birth-giver. The sonless one has no right to get moksha. Knowing this, animals and birds whether with regularity or irregularity bring forth young ones. Therefore pray to Varuna to give you a son and tell him that if a son is born you will be ready to offer him in sacrifice to Varuna. Get a son by doing as I have said."

In spite of this hard injunction the king Harischandra prayed to Varuna for a son and said what Naradar had told him to say. Varuna appeared and blessed the king with the words, "So be it." The king got a son who was named Rohitan. Varuna asked for the son from the king immediately. The king replied, "Anything intended for sacrifice is not fit to be offered to you before the completion of ten days." After ten days Varuna again asked the king. The king said, "A toothless thing is not fit for sacrifice. Let him get his teeth erupted. Then I shall offer him to you." Varuna asked the king after the first eruption of the teeth. The king replied, "These are not permanent teeth. Let them fall and then he will be given." On the falling of the teeth it was said to Varuna, "He is toothless and let him get teeth again." On the second coming of the teeth it was said to Varuna, "A Kshatriya is fit to be offered only when he is fit to bear arms and use them." When the son was fit to carry and use arms, the king told his son the indebtedness to Varuna—the fact that he was to be offered to Varuna in sacrifice and that therefore he should get ready for it.

The son on hearing this took his arms and escaped into a forest. Varuna sent his forces of revenge against Harischandra and the king suffered from the disease Mahodara (in modern terms Ascites).

Rohitan wandered for one year in a forest, but when he heard that

his father was suffering from some illness he entered a village. Indra appeared before Rohitan in human form and told him, "One cannot reap good without travel. If one lives among people he becomes entangled in doing many a sinful act. Therefore wander about, move about." Rohitan thought that a Brahmin had commanded him to wander and accordingly he wandered a second year in the forest. At the end of it he again entered a village. Indra again appeared before him and told him, "The feet of one who moves about on the earth are like flowers. As he wanders about, his sins also disappear. Therefore, again wander about." Rohitan obeyed and spent a third year in wandering and at the end of it entered a village. Indra again appeared before him and said, "For one who sits, his riches also will tend to be at rest, without any movement or increase or growth. If he gets up, his good time also will get up and stand by him. If he moves about and wanders, his good time also will be on the move, will increase and grow. Therefore, move about and wander." Rohitan accordingly wandered for the fourth year. When he came to a village at the end of the fourth year the same Brahmin form appeared and said, "One who lies down becomes Kali. One who gets up from sleep becomes Dwapara. One who stands up erect becomes Treta. One who moves about and wanders becomes Krita. Therefore, move about and wander." Rohitan wandered accordingly for the fifth year also. At the end of it as he approached a village Indra appeared before him again and said, "One who wanders about obtains honey. Surya who wanders untiringly and unceasingly is worshipped by all. So wander about still more." The term Madhu meaning honey is also said to have the meaning of Brahma-jnana, knowledge of the Brahman—as well as lasting Riches. Accordingly Rohitan wandered for the sixth year in the forest.

He met in the forest a wandering Brahmin afflicted with hunger. His name was Ajikartar Sowyavasi. He had three sons. Rohitan narrated to the Brahmin his life. The Brahmin said that if Rohitan could give him one hundred cows he could offer in sacrifice one of his sons in place of Rohitan to Varuna. Rohitan at once agreed to this proposal. The wife of Ajikartar refused to part with the last son Sunovangkulan. Ajikarta wanted that Rohitan should be given his first son Sunapuchchan. Rohitan gave the hundred cows and took with him the middle son Sunashepa and came to his father Harishchandra. The king asked Varuna to accept Sunashepa in place of his son. Vauna agreed to it and said, "A Brahmin is truly superior to a Kshatriya for the sacrifice." Varuna then described the various ways and processes and rites that were to be got ready for doing a Rajasuya sacrifice. At the appointed day Sunashepa was taken to the altar and kept ready for the sacrifice in place of the cow for the sacrifice.

For the sacrifice Viswamitra was the Hota (one who does Homa),
Jamadagni was Adhvaryu (one who chants the Veda),

Vasishtha was Brahmana (one who accepts the sacrifice),
Ayasya was the Udgata (one who chants the mantras).

After the preliminary rites were over none came forward to tie up Sunashepa to the altar. Then Ajikartar the father said that if a hundred cows were given to him he would tie Sunashepa to the altar. A hundred cows were given to him and he tied Sunashepa to the altar. As the mantras were chanted Agni was made to come round Sunashepa. After this no one came forward to kill Sunashepa. Again Ajikartar said that if a hundred more cows were given to him he would himself do the act of killing him. The king gave a hundred cows for the third time. Ajikartar began to sharpen the knife for killing Sunashepa.

Sunashepa now realised that he was placed for sacrifice in place of an animal. He offered praises by chanting to Prajapati, the chief among the Devas, the Rik beginning, "Thou the foremost among the indestructible Devas". Prajapati asked Sunashepa to worship Agni who was nearest to him. He praised Agni with the Rik saying, "We belong to Agni the foremost among the indestructible Devas." Agni said to him, "Savita is the one who directs and impels to action all the creatures on the earth. Therefore, offer your worship to him." Sunashepa praised Savita by three Riks, offering him submission and prostrating to Savita. Savita said, "You were tied up for Varuna. Therefore, worship Varuna." Sunashepa then praised Varuna with thirty-one Riks. Varuna said, "Agni alone is the ordained word of the Devas. He is full of compassion. If you worship and bow down to him we shall liberate you." Sunashepa worshipped and bowed down to Agni with twenty-two Riks. Agni then ordered him to worship Viswadevas. Sunashepa turned to all the Devas : "I bow down to the elder and younger ones among you." Viswadevas said, "Indra alone is powerful, most valiant, he stands by lastingly; most truth-possessed. Besides, he is the one who knows how to bring anything to an auspicious end. Therefore, if you bow down to him we shall liberate you." Sunashepa praised Indra with the Rik which sang : "O true one, you who protect all those who partake of the soma juice." And he followed up this Rik with fifteen other Riks.

Indra was pleased with his praises and he gave a golden chariot. Sunashepa received it and sang victory to Indra. Indra asked him to worship the Agni Devas. They in their turn asked him to worship Usha. Accordingly he worshipped Usha with three Mantras. As he chanted the Mantras the ties began to unloosen themselves one by one. At the same time the fluid collected in the abdomen of Harischandra also went on decreasing. At the end of the final Rik all the ties fell down and Harischandra came back to health. After this all the sages felicitated Sunashepa and said to him : "Come to the front and conduct the rites that are to be done."

Accordingly, Sunashepa, without allowing the Soma to get fermented and

sour, prepared it in a new way. He got it into a special Drona Kulasa and made Harischandra touch it. He made Harischandra take the final bath at the end of the sacrifice called Avabritam and completed the Rajasuya sacrifice.

After this Sunashepa sat in the lap of Viswamitra. Then Ajikartar asked Viswamitra to give him his son. Viswamitra refused to give, and told him, "The Devas have given him to me; he is my son." Ajikartar asked Sunashepa directly. He replied, "You came to kill me with a knife in the hand and a cruel face. So I will not come to you." After this Viswamitra adopted him as his son and asked his hundred sons to accept him as the eldest among them. Fifty sons older than Sunashepa refused to accept this. Viswamitra cursed them to be among the Andhras who lived beyond the boundaries of the territory occupied by his sons and to be among the low tribes such as the Pulindas. The other fifty accepted Sunashepa as their eldest brother. Viswamitra blessed them, and gave to Sunashepa the name of Devaradhan and made him their chief. This story the Hota of a Rajasuya yajna has to relate to every king who takes the special ablutions—the Abisheka to do the Rajasuya yajna. The Hota sits in a golden seat and tells the story. If this story is told to the king who gets victory in a battle, he is freed from the sin of killing men in battle even though he does not do the yajna. The king should give a thousand cows to the one who narrates the story to him. Also when the Mantras are repeated, he should give a hundred cows to one who says 'Om Evam Tatha' from time to time. Besides this he should give embroidered golden seats to those who are seated. In addition, to the Hota he should give a silver decorated chariot drawn by mules. The story of Sunashepa ends here.

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Soma was a kind of creeper. Soma juice was prepared from it. The creeper was brought and offered to the deities in the usual rites. The juice was then taken out and mixed in pots containing other ingredients : ghee, goat's milk, cow's milk. These were added, boiled, filtered and then taken for drinking. Soma was stimulating to the body and mind. It was found in the hills and forests of Kandahar. When the Aryans migrated from the Sindhu River area to the lands on the banks of the Ganges they lost this creeper.

At the time of the Aitareya Brahmana, about B.C. 800 to 500., there was no enmity between Viswamitra and Vasishtha. Vasishtha worked with Viswamitra who was given the chief place in the sacrifice. At the time of the Brahmanas the gods Prajapati, Agni, Savita, Varuna, Indra, Usha and others were worshipped with Riks (Divine words of incantation, Mantras). The story in the Harischandra Purana that Viswamitra and Vasishtha met in the Indra Loka and discussed about Harischandra and, following that, Viswamitra came from the heavens to the earth and put Harischandra to severe tests was a story of a later date.

IMPRESSIONS

The students of Standard 8 were this year introduced to library research work. They were asked to choose a subject which interested them and to collect material on it from library sources, with a view to giving a fifteen-minute talk to their classmates. Most of them chose the lives of famous men. Available books, pamphlets and magazines were made accessible and they worked for one hour a week for one month, collecting data and planning their talks.

The talks provided considerable enjoyment to all. It was generally felt that though the results left much to be desired it was a very good first attempt and a valuable experience.

The students were asked on their Quarterly Test to give their personal impressions of these Class Talks or else to give any observations on the lives of great men as derived from the talks. A few excerpts from their comments (slightly corrected) are given here.

.....From these class talks, at least for my part, I have learned many new things which I did not know. Secondly I think that by giving talks like this, we not only improve our standard of English but also get courage and so when we grow up we shall not feel nervous, because by that time we shall have acquired the habit of giving talks and we may turn out to be great commentators. But all this can only be done when all the teachers of different subjects give opportunity to their students to give talks at least once a month.... It also makes a lazy student into a hard-working boy because before giving his talk he has to prepare at least for three weeks....For we had to go through so many books and had to spend so much time. So we see that the class talks are very interesting and we hope that the teachers will continue this method.

SUDHIR PATEL

My impression of these class talks is that they were quite unsatisfactory. Firstly nobody told us anything new about a great man. All the old hackneyed expressions and jokes were used. The talks on events or on some developments were much more interesting. Expressions like "great vision", "poet of the new dawn", "very emotional", "highly inspired", etc. could have easily been omitted, and some more solid material delivered. Nobody described the great works or the beauty of a person. All took to the same line by starting with the birth, saying the first wife died, he fell in love with another woman, the whole life was spent

in poverty and misery, and closing with the man's death. If at all they did describe the works it was to tell us on which date and year each book was published and the theme of the book. It does not interest me in the least whether a great man has one daughter and four sons or the contrary. They interest me only if they play some important role in the man's life, or were great themselves. What interests us is what inspired him to such great heights and his psychology, his character. The talks on developments or historical facts were such that they were bound to have variety unless they dealt with the same theme. By learning history and knowing what is going on around us we profit much. Also from a man's life by studying his ideals, visions, and conceptions to newer ways and not by his petty domestic affairs.

PRASHANT KHANNA

The first impression I got after our class talks on the lives of great men is that they were the chosen people of God. I feel this because it is said in the Bible, "He whom God chooseth, He chasteneth."

We were fourteen students in the class and so there were many men we heard of. And each of them underwent great pain, difficulty and grief. Sri Aurobindo also says in one of his poems that God has arranged pain, grief and difficulty so that "man may grow/King over pain and victor of o'erthrow."

This can be applied to each great man.

...People often think that if one could become a Mozart it would be so fine—before even sitting near the piano as though God would come to him with a cup filled with honey from the spring of music and feed him like a mother ! It is not so easy to be great; one has to work for it and not only just work but work hard for it. Difficulty always comes when we want to do something noble but one should face the difficulties as they come and always think that they are woven by God's own hands. Suppose we die by facing them, what is the harm ? There are so many thousands to take our place. We are just a spark of God in this wide universe. So why should we give so much importance to our existence ? On the contrary, we must face difficulty and become strong as a mountain which no storm can shake. Great men were like mountains; therefore they were never shaken by difficulty and overthrown by the storm of any danger.

The second impression that the talks have set in my mind is that it is in our hands to make our lives sublime or whatever we want; and God is only a divine power to help us in our work, sometimes testing and misleading us. Thus he makes us strong.

ANJUSRI CHATTERJEE

WE MUST START THE YEAR WITH A LAUGH

(An Unusual One)

When you hear a Banshee wailing,
The roaring of a thund'ring sea.
Do not be alarmed, dear Ben-Bhais,
'Tis just our own Ravindra-ji !
Starting with a gay crescendo,
He rises slowly to a shriek
(Sounding like the local mail train
That was due some time last week).
Soaring onwards in arpeggios
He ends up with a Dervish yell !
Reminding us of Dante's poem
Of the poor souls down in Hell.

Maybe with a little pressure,
He'll be the 'Silent Smile' from Cheshire.

LEENA

SRI AUROBINDO YOGA MANDIR JWALAPUR (HARDWAR) ANNOUNCEMENT

The 'Kumbh Mela' meeting once in 12 years comes off next 'Vaishakh' (April) in Hardwar and many persons from Sri Aurobindo Circles may be contemplating to come there at that time. For their joy and convenience, it is thought fit to announce that there exists a Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Jwalapur, two furlongs from the Jwalapur railway station and two miles from the Hardwar railway station and adjacent to the Banprastha Ashram. Additional arrangements are being made for extra guests. However, it will be mutually convenient if previous intimation and reservation of space is done.

MANAGER

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