

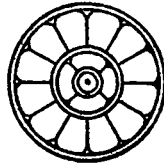
MOTHER INDIA

FEBRUARY 21, 1962: THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

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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. XIV

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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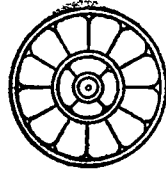
AS SHE PASSES BY

SHE passes by,
Her footfalls soft on the flowered carpet,
The gentle tread concealing her world-shaking might,
Echoing in hearts hungry for the touch of her feet,
She passes by
Trailing our hearts behind her.

She passes by—
Eyes of grey-blue flecked with gold, crystalline
Pools of delight, wells of compassion,
Looking long into longing, waiting eyes,
She passes by,
Jewelled chalice of love.

She passes by,
Silken hair aglitter, golden waves brushed smooth,
Or loose in a shimmering halo, over a marble brow
Carved majestic to hold the transforming Light,
She passes by
Housing the splendour of God.

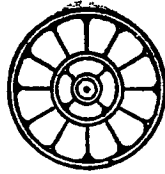
VATSA



19-10-41

The only way to a true
and lasting happiness is a
complete and exclusive
reliance on the Divine's
Grace.

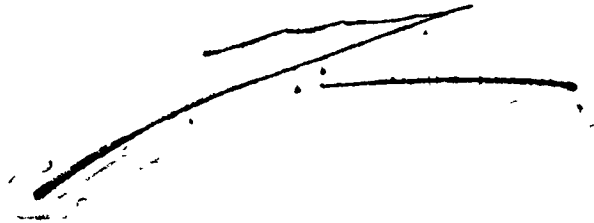
A stylized signature or flourish consisting of a long horizontal line with a curved underline and a small mark above it.



25-11-61

Il faut souvent renoncer
à comprendre pour pouvoir
s'approcher de la Vérité.

avec mes bénédictions



To come closer to the
Truth, you must often
accept not to understand.



WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Q. Many people have the habit of sitting with their backs against cupboards and doors and partitions and even with their heads touching them. If you are not particular I won't interfere and stop them. But if you are particular about things remaining clean, I will speak to these people.

THE MOTHER : I am always particular. Sri Aurobindo has written something on the way to deal with material objects. If people have read it, they will know what to do.

Q. Reading does not help much. It is not useless, but something else must come to bring about a change.

THE MOTHER :- I can see that. If people don't do certain things because they feel within themselves that these things should not be done, then it is of some use. But if they don't do them, saying, "The Mother doesn't like it," then it is worthless and idiotic. It is all a question of inner feeling. If there is a feeling for beauty, they will naturally avoid creating any ugliness or untidiness. I know of people travelling and arriving at hotels and finding things very untidy and ugly there; but when they leave after a few days, everything is so beautifully arranged and clean and tidy. These people have no personal interest and yet they can't help putting things right. It is all due to a sense of beauty which they have in themselves. If one doesn't have it, then all the rules in the world are worth nothing.

14-1-1962

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

JANUARY 5, 1939

TODAY again we had our usual discussion with Dr. Rao on removal of splints and on growth of bone, its shadow in the X-ray picture, etc. After he had gone, the Mother asked N : "Up to what age can the skull-bone grow ?" She said that she had seen cases where even at the age of 55 the skull had not completely ossified. "In such cases," she remarked, "the brain goes on developing." Then she departed for Meditation.

There was very little prospect of conversation afterwards, for every time after Dr. Rao's visit we would keep revolving the same problem, the disagreement among doctors, and cut jokes about it. But a question by S, following a piece of information given by P, started the general ball rolling.

P : X has been arrested.

SRI AUROBINDO (*surprised*) : Really ?

P : He has been a leader from a very young age.

S (*addressing Sri Aurobindo*) : Sir, you must have been very young too when you started the Nationalist movement.

SRI AUROBINDO : About 33, though we were doing Swadeshi long before.

S : Did you begin your Yoga with the experience of Nirvana at Baroda ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. It was somewhere about 1905. But I did have some other experiences before it. I felt an immense calm as soon as I landed in Bombay. Then there was the experience of the Self, the Purusha. I had these experiences when I had not begun Yoga and knew nothing about it. I was more or less an agnostic. Then I had two experiences of contact with the Infinite—one at Poona on the Parvati hills and the other on the Shankaracharya hills in Kashmir. Again, at Karnali, where there are many temples, I saw in Kali's image in one of them the Living Presence. After that, I came to believe in God.

N : What led you to Yoga ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What led me to Yoga ? God knows what. It was while at Baroda that Deshpande and others tried to convert me to Yoga. My idea about Yoga was that one had to retire into mountains and caves. I was not prepared to do that, for I was interested in the work for the freedom of my country.

Then I began to practise Pranayama—in 1905. A Baroda Engineer who was a disciple of Brahmananda showed me how to do it and I started on my own. Some remarkable results came with it. First, I felt a sort of electricity all around me. Secondly, there were some visions of a minor kind. Thirdly, I began to have a very rapid flow of poetry. Formerly I used to write with difficulty. For a time the flow would increase; then again it would dry up. Now it revived with astonishing vigour and I could write both prose and poetry at tremendous speed. This flow has never ceased up to now. If I have not written much afterwards, it was because I had something else to do. But the moment I want to write, it is there. Fourthly, it was at the time of the Pranayama-practice that I began to put on flesh. Earlier I was very thin. My skin also began to be smooth and fair and there was a peculiar new substance in the saliva, owing to which these changes were probably taking place. Another curious thing I noticed was that whenever I used to sit for Pranayama, not a single mosquito would bite me, though plenty of mosquitoes were humming around. I took more and more to Pranayama; but there were no further results.

It was during this time that I adopted a vegetarian diet. That gave lightness and some purification.

N : What about meat diet ? Vivekananda advocated it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Meat is rajasic and gives a certain force and energy to the physical. That's why the Kshatriyas did not give up meat. Vivekananda advocated it to lift out people from Tamas, inertia, to Rajas, dynamism. He was not quite wrong.

Then I came into contact with a Naga Sannyasi. I told him I wanted to get power for revolutionary activities. He gave me a violent Mantra of Kali, with "Jahi, Jahi" etc. to repeat. I did so, but, as I had expected, it came to nothing.

Barin at that time was trying some automatic writing. Once a spirit pur-

porting to be that of my father came and made some prophecies. He said that he had once given a golden watch to Barin. Barin tried hard to remember and at last found that it was true. The spirit prophesied that Lord Curzon would shortly leave India : he saw him looking across a blue sea. At that time there was no chance at all of Curzon's going back. But the prophecy came true. Curzon had a row with Lord Kitchener and had very shortly to leave India. The spirit also said that there was a picture of Hanuman on the wall of the house of Deodhar who was present at the sitting. Deodhar also tried to remember and said there was no such picture. When he went back, he asked his mother about it. She replied that there used to be the picture but it had been plastered over. Lastly the spirit prophesied that when everybody had deserted us a man who was present there—meaning Tilak—would stand by us. This also came true.

On another occasion a spirit purporting to be that of Ramakrishna came and simply said, "Build a temple." At that time we were planning to build a temple for political Sannyasis and call it Bhavani Mandir. We thought he meant that, but later I understood it as "Make a temple within."

This gave me the final push to Yoga. I thought : great men could not have been after a chimera, and if there was such a more-than-human power why not get it and use it for action ?

I had been to Bengal twice or thrice for political work. I found the workers quarrelling among themselves and got a little disappointed.

While I was residing at Baroda a Bengali Sannyasi came to see me and asked me to help him financially. I did so. But I found that the man was extremely rajasic, jealous and boastful and could not tolerate any one greater than himself. He used to curse everybody who was greater than he. Once he went to see Brahmananda. He began to curse him because he was so great. Shortly after, Brahmananda died of the prick of a nail. The Sannyasi took all the credit to himself ! What might have happened was that Brahmananda's death was near and this man got the suggestion of it from the subtle planes.

When I went to Bengal for political work, my Pranayama became very irregular. As a result I had a serious illness which nearly carried me off. Now I was at my wits' end. I did not know how to proceed farther and was searching for some guidance. Then I met Lele in the top room of Sardar Majumdar's house.

After my separation from Lele, I had to rely on my inner guide. The inner guide led me through many mistakes. For days and days together I would follow wrong lines and come to know only at the end that it was all a mistake. At that time, I was making all sorts of experiments in order to see what truth there was in various methods.

I fasted twice—once in Alipore Jail and once here. The Alipore fasting gave more results than the second one. Though the fast lasted only ten days

I lost ten pounds, whereas here the fast lasted twenty-three days but the loss of weight was less. At Alipore I was having tremendous visions which were all experiences on the vital plane. But as a part of my mind was critical I took them all with reservations. At Pondicherry I was walking eight hours a day while fasting.

N : We have seen in the Guest House the floor marked by your walking at that time.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Guest House ? Which room ?

N : Amal's room.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, no, no ! I fasted in Shanker Chetty's house. Experiences on the vital plane are most exalting and exhilarating at the same time that they are most dangerous and terrible. There are many pitfalls and no reality.

Yogis living in the vital plane can't bring down those experiences into the physical. One can have some power, of course. But the forces of the vital plane take up a man like Hitler and make him do things. The man opens himself to the constant suggestions and believes they are the Truth. NB used to hear such suggestions which he called intuitions coming from the Mother. And when the Mother told him that it was not true he got angry and would not believe her. At last he had to leave the Ashram.

B was another case. He used to say that myself and the Mother were there deep in his psychic being and these were the true Sri Aurobindo and the true Mother, while the physical Mother and Sri Aurobindo were false ! The Mother repeatedly warned him about these illusions but he was so headstrong that he would not listen and had to go. We heard that he was making disciples in our name outside.

N : How did he die so suddenly ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why suddenly ? He was suffering from stomach-ache here, in spite of which he used to stuff himself with food. As long as he was here, somehow the protection kept him up. The Mother told him many times that if he left Pondi he would die. So when he went he passed the death-sentence on himself.

JANUARY 6, 1939

Today till 7 p.m. there was complete silence. Nobody was in a mood to talk or at least to begin the talk. Seeing this, Sri Aurobindo remarked, "You seem disposed to meditative silence." P had gone out and, on just returning, heard the remark. Sri Aurobindo, addressing him, said : "I was wondering where you had suddenly vanished."

P : I went to see the Mother. I was asking her if Liquorice root could be tried for your cough. It is very good for it.

After one or two questions from Sri Aurobindo about Liquorice the talk got really started with a question by P.

P : Is there any difference between the two methods of effacement of Ego : realisation of the Spirit above and its nature of purity, knowledge etc, and realisation of humility in the heart ? Isn't it possible to get rid of egoism by the second method too ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Egoism may go—(then after a short silence) yes, egoism may go...

We caught the significance of the unfinished sentence and said, "Oh, you mean ego may remain?"

SRI AUROBINDO : Ego remains but becomes harmless. It may help one spiritually. Complete removal of ego is possible when one identifies oneself with the Atman and realises the same Spirit in all. Also when the mental, vital and physical nature is known to be a derivation from the universal mental, vital and physical. The individual must realise also his identity with the transcendental or cosmic or divine, whatever you may call it.

From the mental plane, when one rises and realises the Spirit, it is generally the mental sense of ego that goes, not the entire ego-sense. The dynamic nature retains ego, especially the vital ego. When the psychic attitude of humility comes in and joins with it, then it helps in getting rid of the vital ego.

The complete abolition of ego is not an easy thing. Even when you think that it is entirely gone, it suddenly comes into your actions and movements. Especially important is the removal of the mental and vital ego; the others, the physical and subconscious, don't matter very much : they can be dealt with at leisure, for they are not so absorbing.

By humility it is not the outward humility that is meant. There are many people who profess and show the utmost outward humility, as if they were nothing, but in their hearts they think, "I am the man." People are mostly impressed and guided by outward conduct.

M. Desai complained that I had lost the old charm of modesty. I did not profess like others that I was nothing. How can I say I am nothing when I know that I am not nothing ?

N : Were you "modest" in your early life ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I used to practise what you may call voluntary self-effacement or self-denial and I liked to keep myself behind. Perhaps Desai meant that by modesty. But I can't say that I was more modest within than others.

P : Gandhi also seems to express modesty. When he differs from Malaviya or somebody else, he says, "He is my superior but I differ."

SRI AUROBINDO : But does he really believe that ? When I differed in anything, I used to say very few words and remain stiff, simply saying, "I don't agree."

Once Surendranath Banerji wanted to annex the Extremist Party and invited us to the U. P. Moderate Conference to fight against Sir Pherozshah Mehta. But there was a clause that no association that was not of two or three years' standing could send delegates to the Conference. Ours was a new party. So we could not go. But Banerji said, "We will elect you as delegates." J.L. Banerji and others agreed to it, but I just said, "No." I spoke at most twenty or thirty words and the whole thing failed. How can you call a man modest when he stands against his own party ?

Tilak used to do the same thing. He used to hear all the speeches and resolutions of the delegates but at the end pass his own resolution. They said, "What a democratic leader he is ! He listens to and considers all our opinions and resolutions."

Then at the Hooghli Provincial Conference we met again to consider the Morley-Minto reforms. The Moderates urged in favour of accepting the reforms. We were against. We were in the majority in the Subjects Committee, while in the Conference they were so. S.N.Banerji was very angry with us and threatened that he and his party would break away from the Conference if their resolution was not accepted. I didn't want them to break away at that time, for our party was still weak. So I said to him, "We will agree to your proposal on condition I am allowed to speak in the Conference." In the Conference there was a great row and confusion. In the midst of it Aswini Dutt began jumping and saying, "This is life, this is life !" Banerji tried hard to control the people but failed and became furious. Then I stood up and told them to be silent and to walk out silently. I said that whatever agreement we came to, we would inform them. Everybody became silent at once and walked out. This made Banerji still more furious. He said, "While we old leaders can't control them, this young man of hardly thirty commands them by just lifting a finger !"

He could not understand the power of a man standing for some principles and the people following the leader in obedience to those principles. The influence of the Moderates was mainly on the upper middle class, the moneyed people.

It was at that time that people began to get the sense of discipline and order and of obeying the leader from within. They were violent but at the command of the leader they obeyed. That paved the way for Gandhi.

The Conference at that time was a very tame affair. There was nothing to do but pass already framed resolutions. Nobody put in even an amendment.

Banerji had personal magnetism, was sweet-spoken and could get round anybody. He also tried to get round me by flattering, patting and caressing. His idea was to use the Extremists as the sword and use the Moderates for the

public face. In private he would go up to Revolution. He wanted a Provincial Board of Control of Revolution. Barin once took a bomb to him. The name of S.N.Banerji was found in the Bomb Case. But as soon as Norton pronounced the name there was a "Hush, hush" and he shut up.

Barin was preparing bombs at my place at Baroda, but I didn't know it. He got the formula from N.Dutt who was a very good chemist. He, Upen and Devabrata were very good writers too. They wrote in the *Yugantar*.

Here P brought in the topic of the Oundh State and described the reforms the Chief of the State was introducing. They seemed to be something like Sri Aurobindo's own idea.

SRI AUROBINDO : What provision is there for autonomous government in villages ?

P : The village panchayets have considerable power.

SRI AUROBINDO : But suppose the people want Socialism or Communism ?

P : The Chief is introducing co-operative farming.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is an excellent thing. But Dictatorship of the Proletariat is different. On paper, of course, it sounds nice but it is quite a different matter in practice. Everyone is made to think alike. That is all very good in a church or religion, but a church or religion is voluntary : you can choose there but you can't choose your country. If you think alike, there can't be any progress. If you dare to differ from Stalin, you are liquidated. I don't understand how humanity can progress under such conditions.

Look at Hitler. After all what do all his ideas come to except that the Germans are the best nation in the whole world and Hitler should be their leader; all Jews are wicked persons; all people on earth should become Nazis; and France must be crushed. That's all !

Then there was a little further talk and then somebody spoke of certain Governments acting like robbers.

SRI AUROBINDO : Are not all governments robbers? Some do the robbing with legislation and some without. In some countries you have to pay 50% of your income as taxes and you manage with the rest as best you can. Customs is another robbery. What an amount of money they collect in this way and yet I don't understand what they do with such a huge income unless they use it for personal interests as in Pondi. France was complaining that the Government produces only 250 aeroplanes as compared to the 1000 of Germany. England produces 500 and yet England has a sufficiently honest administration. There was a question the other day in the House of Commons as to what they were doing with the money and how it was they were still unready for war.

P : I heard a story from a Customs Officer that even Princes join in smuggling. Recently a Prince was caught along with a jeweller.

SRI AUROBINDO : With such Customs rules smuggling seems almost a virtue ! It looks like robbing a robber. You must have heard that the Maharajah of Darbhanga had to pay Rs. 50,000 as duty on the necklace of Marie Antoinette which he had bought for one lakh.

P then brought in the question of Congress Ministry, saying that Nariman had been elected again as Congress member by Vallabhai Patel. He had been punished for betrayal of Congress in the election campaign.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not betrayal but indiscipline. Dr. Kher, the Bombay Premier, seems to be a solid man.

P : Congress Ministry appears to be fairly successful everywhere except in C.P.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, that is the weak point. Yet Nagpur was a very good centre for Extremists in our time.

P : They are thinking of separating C.P. Hindustani from C.P. Marathi.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, that is the obvious step to take. I wonder why they did not take it before.

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters)

FACING THE PHYSICAL RESISTANCE

SRI AUROBINDO : It is only by a more constant dynamic force descending into an unalterable equality and peace that the physical nature's normal tendency can be eradicated.

The normal tendency of the physical nature is to be inert and in its inertia to respond only to the ordinary vital forces, not to the higher forces. If one has a perfect equality and peace then one can be unaffected by the spreading of the inertia and bring down into it gradually or quickly the same peace with a force of the higher consciousness which can alter it. When that is there there can be no longer the difficulty and fluctuations with a preponderance of inertia such as now you are having.

3-9-1935

Q. Something prevents the ascension in spite of the fact that the lower nature can best be dealt with from above.

SRI AUROBINDO : It happened in the same way with myself. I had to come down into the physical to deal with it instead of keeping the station always above. Of course if you can keep the station above so much the better, but as almost everybody is down in the physical, it is a little difficult perhaps.

5-9-1935

Q. How is it that the mind believes that the will-force can't be used freely and easily ? It is said there is no stage when the use of one's will is barred. Why then this experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is due to the influence of the physical consciousness. The physical consciousness or at least the more external parts of it are, as I have told you, in their nature inert—obeying whatever force they are habituated to obey, but not acting on their own initiative. When there is a strong influence of the physical inertia or when one is down in this part of the consciousness the mind feels like the material Nature that action of will is impossible. Mind and vital nature are on the contrary all for will and initiative and so when one is in mind or vital or acting under their influence will feels itself always ready to be active.

8-9-1935

If the inner being keeps separate then it is all right. The inertia will be worked out of the external being.

9-9-1935

A great part of the body consciousness is subconscious and the body-consciousness and the subconscious are closely bound together.

The body and the physical do not coincide—the body consciousness is only part of the whole physical consciousness. 9-9-1935

Q. When will all our difficulties be over ?

That cannot be said. The difficulties are not likely to cease until the material resistance has been entirely conquered in principle. 11-9-1935

...I meant that the difficulties in the physical (generally speaking, not in a particular case) could not be entirely absent so long as the material resistance to the supramental descent had [not] been overcome in principle. In principle means in essence, not in every detail of the wrong development. 12-9-1935

Q. 'A time comes when one can't read, write or think anything intellectual but gets either confined to the physical consciousness' or lives in the higher spiritual level.

SRI AUROBINDO : It happens like that usually at this stage. The illumination of the physical consciousness is probably needed before that alternation can stop. 22-9-1935

Q. Once you wrote : "The physical did not surrender so easily. A long process was going on. Now the same process is put in the subconscious." If the present difficulty is of the physical, has the physical withdrawn its surrender ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The subconscious rises into the physical and sustains the physical inertia. Besides the surrender of the physical cannot be complete without its enlightenment and a certain penetration of the material which is relatively subconscious. 23-9-1935

Q. The dullness, heaviness, darkness are unspeakable now.

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose the most material has come up or you have gone into it. 24-9-1935

Q. Is it one's own material being's resistance that comes up or the resistance of the whole material nature ?

SRI AUROBINDO : One's own material being responding to the material Nature. It is the inability to react that you must get rid of. 24-9-1935

Q. There is an entire cessation of any kind of activity of the mental, vital and physical consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO : That happens. All depends on how you take it. If you get discouraged, simply thinking, "Things are getting worse and worse", it will remain a long time. 24-9-1935

Q. You once said about the physical : "It was at that time something quite below. Since then you have come down much deeper into the physical and the inertia rises accordingly." Was this coming down necessary or could it have been avoided ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It has to be done at one time or another. 24-9-1935

It is, I suppose, the full Inertia that has come upon you. Now you have to get the true Energy down into it.

The whole nature when one reaches material bedrock becomes quiescent. One has to bring down the Force from above into the physical consciousness down to the material.

It is not a "step towards perfection" but it is a thing that comes on the way. When it comes, one has to pass through with faith, patience and courage.

1-10-1935

Q. There is somewhere in the being a strong neutrality which annuls all efforts.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the neutrality of the physical consciousness which says, "I move only when I am moved. Move me who can." 5-10-1935

Q. Will not parts, like the material and the subconscious, ever change ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Until they aspire or at least assent fully to the aspiration and will of the higher being, there can be no lasting change in them. 19-10-1935

Q. Once you used the expression : "allowing the revolt to come through the physical consciousness." How was the revolt allowed ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is through the physical consciousness and its inertia and its nature of "I can't, I can't, I can't" that it is able to come in.

When the physical mind acquiesces and says "I can't will, I can't do anything against the inertia, I can't prevent the revolt", that is allowing it to come through the physical consciousness. 30-10-1935

Q. Force or strength is not enough under the present circumstances. Even a quiet aspiration is often obstructed.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nothing can obstruct a quiet aspiration except one's own acquiescence in the inertia. 30-10-1935

The physical obstacle in itself is obstinate—the physical consciousness moves slowly and with great difficulty and much resistance. One has to be very persevering and quietly persistent to overcome it. 11-11-1935

Q. How is it that now the lower vital is able to surge up after it had once stopped troubling ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Formerly the mental will and the higher vital and the psychic were active, so their consent was sufficient for the lower vital to be

kept down or to be ineffective. But now it is the physical mind that is active in you and the physical mind gives a value and therefore a power to the lower vital which it did not have before.

19-11-1935

Q. Sexual thoughts and imaginations are now becoming active. When they harass one, is there no immediate way out?

SRI AUROBINDO : What immediate way ? The way is dissociation and a quiet but firm rejection. Also to turn the mind away to other things if these thoughts try to occupy it. If they are indulged or taken pleasure in, they increase.

22-11-1935

It is a suggestion of the tamasic forces that insist on the difficulty and create it and the physical consciousness accepts it. Aspiration is never really difficult. Rejection may not be immediately effective, but to maintain the will of rejection and refusal is always possible.

This is not enough by itself—there must also be the steady will for transformation.

1-12-1935

Q. When the physical is enlightened, one may expect it to take the lead and liberate even the mind and vital.

SRI AUROBINDO : The physical cannot do that—it is not meant to be the leader. It can by its own regeneration become the fit instrument of the higher powers.

23-12-1935

SCIATICA AND THE PHYSICAL INERTIA

The inertia is there because there was always in your outer being a great force of tamas and it is this that is being used by the resistance. There was also a deficiency of steady will power in the outer mind which makes it more difficult for the Force to come down than for the Knowledge. When you are entirely open the Force can act on the sciatica and it lessens or disappears, but with the consciousness blocked by the Inertia these difficulties come in the way.

23-7-1935

Q. Is there no outer means to cure Sciatica?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no outer means. Sciatica is a thing which yields only to inner concentrated force or else it goes away of itself and comes of itself. Outer means at best can only be palliatives.

26-7-1935

If you cannot get rid of the sciatica by inner means, the medical remedy (not for curing it, but for keeping free as long as possible) is not to fatigue yourself. It comes for periods which may last for weeks, then suddenly goes. If you remain quiet physically and are not too active, it may not come for a long time. But that of course means an inactive life, physically incapable. It is what I mean by eternising the sciatica—and the inertia also.

26-7-1935

If you can cure by withdrawing so much the better. The sciatica has often tried to fall on the Mother and myself—we have always found that it cannot resist the force quietly and persistently applied. Other illnesses can resist, but sciatica being entirely tamasic cannot. The application of Force does not yet, probably, come natural to you, so it brings a sense of struggle not of quiet domination, hence the restlessness etc. 26-7-1935

GETTING RID OF INERTIA

If the calm and silence are perfectly established in the physical, then if inertia comes it is itself something quiet and unaggressive, not bringing active disturbances. But to get rid of inertia altogether a strong dynamic calm is needed. 26-7-1935

It (inertia) is in everybody—but less in some, more in others according to temperament. There are some who only feel it accidentally because of the great activity of mind or vital. 26-7-1935

Q. My capacity of taking food is being reduced more and more. Is it an accompaniment of the inertia?

SRI AUROBINDO : You must not let that movement go too far. It is one of the dangers of the sadhana, because of the ascetic turn of Yoga in the past that as experiences come the suggestion comes that food or sleep etc. are not necessary and also there may come an inclination in the body not to eat or not to sleep. But if that is accepted the results are often disastrous. It is no more to be accepted than the inertia itself. 30-8-1935

Q. I heard a voice : "In spite of your efforts you find no fruit. The inertia will either disappear or change only when your whole body consciousness not only rejects it but also remains unaffected."

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the truth. 29-8-1935

Q. The voice also said : "The more you make efforts the sooner the physical will be capable of controlling the whole subconscious."

SRI AUROBINDO : That is also extremely true. 29-8-1935

Q. The last thing the voice said was : "Be happy and joyous even in the heaviness and tediousness of the inert period. That indeed is the true nature of a hero and a true lover of the Mother."

SRI AUROBINDO : Right. 29-8-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

REMINISCENCES

III

(In this instalment, the author tells us about his first plunge into the political movement, how he joined the Terrorist organisation, and finally, how he had his first opportunity to meet Sri Aurobindo and talk to him. Some of the details of the organisation and activities of the Terrorist group at the inception of the Swadeshi movement will be of great historical interest.)

AT last I made up my mind finally to take the plunge, that I must now join the Manicktolla Gardens in Muraripukur. That meant goodbye to College, goodbye to the ordinary life.

A little while ago, Prafulla Chakravarti had come and joined. Both of us belonged to Rungpore, both were of nearly the same age, and intimate friends. This too pushed me to my decision.

I had already taken a vow about a year ago, in front of a picture of Kali at a secret ceremony at dead of night, a vow written out in blood drawn from the chest, that I should dedicate my life to the whole-hearted service of the Motherland. With me there was a companion, and also a local leader who had read out the oath. This leader became a Sannyasin later on and rose to be the head of a *Math*; he has since given up his body, so I have heard. My companion of that day is still alive; he did not give up the world and in fact became a very successful man; at present he is enjoying his rest in retirement.

I lived in a students' Mess, one that had acquired quite a name. Among the inmates were Atul Gupta, Charu Bhattacharya (late of the Visvabharati), and a little before my time there was Naresh Chandra Sengupta. In my first year of College, Atul Gupta was in his fourth year, Charu Bhattacharya in his fifth and Naresh Sengupta had just passed out. I happened once to set foot in the room he used to occupy and there I found scattered about the floor a few pages torn out of a note-book which read very much like love letters. This seemed to me a little strange, but later I realised these were some pages from the manuscript of one of his novels.

This decision to choose my path came while I was in my Fourth Year. That I would definitely join the Gardens was conveyed to Barin by Prafulla. He had already told him about my antecedents, so one day I received a call—Barin would see me, as if at an interview for a post. Escorted by Prafulla, I arrived at his residence in Gopimohan Dutt Lane at Goabagan. This place acquired some renown during the Alipore case as a den of the terrorists. Next

to the house there was a gymnasium for the young men of the neighbourhood where wrestling and boxing and all kinds of dangerous martial exercises were practised.

This happened to be my first meeting with Barin. He received me with great kindness and had me seated next to him. I cannot now recall the details of the conversation we had, but perhaps there was nothing much to remember. One thing however I distinctly remember. He asked me if I had read the Gita. I said I had read it in parts. He handed me a copy and asked me to read aloud. I began reciting "Dharmakshetre Kuruskhetre..." in a pure and undiluted Bengali style. He stopped me and cried out, "That won't do. One doesn't read Sanskrit here in the Bengali style. Listen, read like this." He gave a recital in the Hindi style, that is, with the pronunciation current in the other parts of India.

That was my first lesson in Sanskrit pronounced in the Sanskrit way. Later I have heard the correct Sanskrit accent so often from Sri Aurobindo himself. I have heard him recite from the Veda, from the Upanishads, from the Gita. Today, I too do not read from Sanskrit in the Bengali way, even when reading from an article in Bengali.

It was settled that I would join the Gardens and stay there. But I did not give up my rooms at the Mess. My books and papers and furniture—a bedstead and the table-lamp, for there was no electric light in those days—were all left in charge of my room-mate, and I paid only an occasional visit. I attended College as well, but at infrequent intervals. College studies could no longer interest me.

It was about this time that I hovered around the newly founded National College in Calcutta for a short while. My aims were a little "dubious". At the Gardens, there used to be discussions about the bomb, so an idea came to my head: could not the National College offer an opportunity to study the subject? I thought of reading Chemistry and by joining the Chemistry practicals learn the principles of explosives. At that time the Superintendent (or perhaps Principal) was Satish Chandra Mukerji, Founder-President of the Dawn Society. I had met him several years ago in the rooms of the Society.

Let me then narrate this earlier story in the present connection. I had just come to Calcutta and joined the First Year. Atul Gupta took me to a meeting of the Dawn Society. Benoy Sarkar was there, Radha Kumud Mukerji too was there, I think—not his younger brother Radha Kamal who became one of my class-fellows in the Third Year after he had passed the F.A. examination from Berhampore. Here is a sketch of one of the Society's meetings. Satish Mukerji took the chair. We were about twenty or thirty young men in all. He read out a verse from the Gita: *yad yad vibhūtimat sattvam, śrīmad-ūrjītam-eva vā*, and gave a short explanation in a few words. Then we formed ourselves into small groups of four or five. We were to discuss what is meant by "śrīmān" and "vibhūtimān", where is the difference between the two, what do we under-

stand by “*ūrjita*” ? Each group was to discuss separately, each member was to say what he had to say, and finally all of us were to write out in the form of an essay our respective viewpoints. The essays would then be submitted to the chairman for his consideration and judgment. I sat absolutely dumb in that first session, an ignoramus among the learned, like a goose in the midst of swans. (I must have been about fourteen at that time). But I did not feel quite at ease in that atmosphere, I had an impression it was all fine talk and dry debate, purely academic, one would say. Satish Chandra had no doubt wanted to use this as a means of forming the character and not merely as an intellectual training, a way of moulding the life, something that had been missing in our college education. I do not know to what extent he succeeded in actual fact.

This was about the middle of 1904. It was three years later, about the middle of 1907, that I met Satish Chandra again. He could not have remembered about me, nor did I remind him. He asked me, “You are a student of literature and philosophy. Why do you want to read Science ? I have read physics and chemistry for my F.A. (that is, Intermediate). I have a special attraction for those subjects, that is why.” However, the matter did not proceed very far, for I was getting more and more engrossed in the life at the Gardens.

Almost about the same period, I had thought of another childish plan, again in connection with the making of a bomb : the thing had so got into my head. I was a student of the Calcutta Presidency College where the great Jagadish Chandra was professor at the time. Here was the idea and it was approved by my leaders—could I not join his laboratory, as some kind of an assistant ? Then one could carry on research and experiments on bombs. But how to get hold of him ? I thought of Sister Nivedita. She was a great friend of Jagadish Bose and it was easy to catch hold of Nivedita, for she was one among our circle of acquaintances. But the occasion did not arise for this line of advance, for things had been moving fast at the Gardens.

Let me say a few words about our life there. But may I preface it with an amusing incident ? I have said that my attendance at College had been getting more and more irregular. This attracted the notice of some of my class-fellows. One day, I found one of their representatives arriving “on deputation” to meet me at the Mess. He began questioning me as an intimate friend and well-wisher with a show of great kindness and affection. “Tell me,” he said, “what has been the matter with you ? What makes you keep away from College ? Has there been a mishap somewhere ? You have been such a good student and so regular in your attendance, what could have come over you all on a sudden ?” I could guess what he must have been suspecting : surely it had something to do with my morals—*chercher la femme* ! Was that the case here ? Complaints and entreaties having failed, he finally sought to console and encourage me with these words, “Don’t you worry. If Calcutta does not suit you, let us leave the place and go somewhere else. The two of us could stay together, and if we

worked hard for, say, three or four months, we would get ready for the examination without fail. Our absence from College would make no difference." To this I replied in a grave tone, "Very well, I shall think it over." Lest there should be similar attacks in the future, I practically gave up the Mess.

One would not say that life at the Gardens had settled down to a definite routine yet, for we had just begun. There were about a dozen or fourteen of us in all. There were occasional visitors from outside who would come for a short stay and then go back to their work. Naren Goswami had come like that for a couple of days, so had Bhavabhushan who later became a Sannyasin. We began with readings from the Gita and this became almost a fixed routine where everybody took part. Even the local Inspector of Police expressed a desire to join in these readings with us Brahmacharins. But he had to pay dearly for that. He did not realise that these were no ordinary lessons in the Gita but served as a façade for our preparations for the bomb. For this he was, as we heard, later dismissed from the service. The poor fellow had wanted to acquire a bit of spiritual merit which seemed to turn against him.

A beginning however was made to introduce some kind of discipline and organisation. It was decided that the entire group should be formed into two sections, one "civil", the other "military". The "military" section was to include the active members and the others were to serve as auxiliaries. The idea originally was to build up an armed force, a regular army in fact, with its full complement of weapons and equipment and trained by regular drills. The "civil" side was to deal with external work like journalism, propaganda and recruitment. The *Yugantar*, and later the *Navashakti*, became our publicity organs. I was not much attracted by this "civil" side; I wanted to become one of the "military" men. Prafulla who was one of those dreamy, "introvert", intellectual types and a good writer and speaker took up the "civil" work. They used to say with a touch of humour, no doubt, that he was the Mazzini and I was his Garibaldi. But no provision had yet been made to give this Garibaldi the necessary training in military drill or the use of weapons. So, I had to begin with the science of warfare rather than its art. Barin was at that time writing his series on *The Principles of Modern Warfare* for the *Yugantar*. I too began my study of the subject. I started going to the Imperial Library (now the National Library) in Calcutta for my studies and research. Where could I begin? Well, it was a book called *The Art of War* by the German military expert, Clausewitz, a book where the very first sentence ran like this, "The object of warfare is to destroy the enemy and finish with him." I am not sure how this helped me add to my knowledge of warfare or my skill in the art of fighting.

During my last days in College, I used to study Mazzini in place of *King John* or *The Faerie Queene*. One day I suddenly discovered that they had removed my Mazzini from the shelves of the library, and even the *Life and Death*

of *Socrates* by Plato had disappeared. These books were no doubt supposed to turn the heads of our Indian students.!

About this time, I had been several times to my home town of Rungpore. There at the local Library, I discovered a fine book on the history of Secret Societies. The book gave the story of how subject nations aspiring for freedom began their work in secret. In it the story of Ireland and Russia had been given a good deal of space. The secret societies in Russia had a system which was rather distinctive. It should have been taken over by us, so I have heard Sri Aurobindo say. They would divide the underground workers into little groups of not more than five. No group could know the others, only those belonging to a particular group would know its own members. Each group had a leader, who alone would know his immediate superior placed in charge of only four or five of such little groups. Similarly, the leader of the higher group would have dealings with the one next higher in rank who would be in charge of the bigger groups, and so on, right to the topmost man. Such a system was necessary, for in case someone got caught, that could not implicate the entire organisation but only a handful of his acquaintances. One of the main instruments in the hands of the police or the government for detecting a conspiracy is the confession extracted from the persons caught, whether by torture, through temptations, from sheer bravado, or by whatever other means. Under that system, no one could know anybody except the few members of his own group with whom he came into immediate contact through his work, nor could he know anything about the general plan of work; he had to carry out only the part assigned to him.

At the Rungpore Library I came across another book, namely, Gibbon's famous *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. I ran through the lengthy volumes from end to end with tremendous enthusiasm and added a great deal to my learning and knowledge. I had a hope that the book might throw some light as to how to bring about the "decline and fall" of the British rule in India. I regret much help did not come that way.

Now, to come back to the Gardens and our organisational system. Nothing could be arranged by way of an armed force, for our work itself took another turn. A military organisation was now to give place to a terrorist organisation. In the earlier stages, we did not have much faith in terrorist methods, for, as we had seen about Russia, this path led only to mutual assassinations, murder and revenge seemed to follow in an endless succession, leading to no final issue. That is why we had decided on the military solution. To that end, our efforts had been directed towards forming a new military force on the one hand and on the other towards sowing the seeds of revolt among the British Indian troops. I remember about a military police force stationed at Rungpore where the commandant had been won over to a large extent, although I could not say how it would have turned out at the end.

In the event, it was none of these methods that brought us independence.

Indian independence has come in another way, the inscrutable way of Providence.

As I was saying, we gave up militarism and turned towards the terrorist methods. There had awakened in the country a keen demand and aspiration: must we bear in silence and give no answer to this tyranny and oppression that seemed to go on increasing day by day? So, we started getting ready for a fitting reply. It brought in the first place a greater courage to the general public, though it remained doubtful if it helped relieve the oppression. And secondly, it gave some satisfaction to men. Thus we directed our efforts to shooting at the Lieutenant Governor, derailing his train, and assassinating tyrants in the official ranks. Governor Andrew Fraser, the District Magistrates Allen and Kingsford, Mayor Tardivel of Chandernagore, these became the targets of the terrorists. The members of the Manicktolla Garden group were directly connected with these activities. But there is one thing to be noticed about these attempts that at least in the earlier stages almost all of them failed, with only one or two exceptions.

One of the activities of the Gardens, apart from the attempts to manufacture bombs, had been to procure and distribute guns and rifles and pistols. Purchase, theft and loot were the three methods of procurement. In this manner one might gather materials for terrorist purposes, but it could hardly meet the needs of an armed force. At the Gardens there was some shooting practice too, with pistols. The trunk of a mango tree had been riddled with bullets—the police could very easily find that out later. This reminds me of Prafulla Chaki. He used to say taking a revolver in his hand, "I for one am not going to live on if they get hold of me. I shall neither be tortured by the police nor will I let their offers of confession tempt me. Look, this is the way I am going to finish myself." He would then open wide his mouth, push in the revolver muzzle and press the trigger with his fingers, adding, "This is the one sure way. In the other methods, one merely wounds oneself, very often with no serious danger to life. But it is much more risky to live on after getting wounded, isn't it?" Prafulla committed suicide after the Muzzaffarpur bomb affair in exactly the way he had rehearsed—I should not say "suicide", for it was really an act of martyrdom.

Now let me come out with some of my own exploits. I did not, as I have said, want to be one of the law-abiding "civilians"; my aim was to be a "military" man with his law of the bomb. But first I must prove my mettle in that line. So, they set me a test. I was to carry a pistol and deliver it to a gentleman in Jalpaiguri. You seem to laugh at this instance of my "military" ability. But perhaps you cannot now imagine what it meant in those days to carry a real pistol. The police had its secret agents all over the place always on the look-out for victims. If you happened to be a young man, if you dressed in a manner even slightly out of the ordinary, if there was anything the least suspicious about

your movements that might attract attention, it was enough. If the police came and gave you a search and found a lethal weapon like a revolver in your possession, you would get at least seven years—of that you might rest assured. Nevertheless, I managed to carry the weapon in a perfectly easy and natural manner all the way to North Bengal and reached it to the address given. This was the way in which they used to distribute weapons for future use to the different centres at various places.

Now that I had passed the first test almost without effort, there came a second hurdle to cross. Will you be shocked to hear that I was to join a gang of dacoits and take part in a real dacoity? “Very well,” I said to myself, for everything is fair in love and war—although I did feel somewhat uncomfortable even without my knowing it, for there was something about the whole affair that was not palatable to me. But this had been decided upon as one of our methods of collecting funds, for the moneys that came from gifts were not sufficient, and people rather shied of making gifts for the work of such secret societies. So we had to fix on loot. The mail runner was to be waylaid and his bags looted, somewhat far away in a place in the Khulna district. We left in a body and put up with a friend. There we had to spend a couple of days arranging to stitch up the bags, for the money had to be carried back in bags, you see. But for some reason or other, the plan fell through and I for one heaved a sigh of relief. However there was one thing I had gained out of all this. It was a glimpse I could have of the river Kapotakshi, no longer limpid like the “pigeon’s eye” though, for it was all cluttered up with weeds—on whose banks stood the birthplace of Michael Madhusudan and the mango grove where he used to play about as a child. I did feel as if the breath of his poetry still lingered about the atmosphere.

The household arrangements at our Gardens were of the most simple, natural and unpretentious sort, the aim being to avoid all unnecessary complications and save our time and labour. The cooking was done perhaps only once a day and almost every day it was *Khuchri*. For the second meal, something ready-made bought from the market was found enough. We did the cooking ourselves and washed the dishes. The dishes and utensils were not of brass, they were all earthenware vessels, I believe. And the washing was done in the waters of the pond. What kind of pond it was could only be described by a Kalidasa, but perhaps some idea could be had from Bankimchandra’s description of the Bhima tank: “The dark shades of the palms dancing to the rhythms of the dark waters” and so on... That is to say, it had more of weeds and mud than water, not to speak of the fish and the frogs and other animal species, including a fair complement of serpents and things. But to us it seemed good enough and we used to take our dips there with great glee. In fact I had my first lessons in swimming in that very pool. There were actually two of them and not one, and it would be difficult to decide which was the more “untouchable” of the two.

The gardens around were in an equally poor condition. They were no gardens at all, for all was primitive jungle, a tangle of shrubs and trees and creepers, with all sorts of insects and reptiles roaming within. And the house where we were supposed to live was in ruins.¹

But in spite of all, the place was absolutely quiet and silent, a reason being that it was practically outside the city limits. The life we lived in such surroundings could be compared with that of nomads. The strange thing is that despite such irregular habits, or rather the habitual irregularities of our life there, we never fell ill. The abundance of vitality and the enthusiasm and joy kept at bay all attacks of disease. It was very similar to the kind of life we lived here in Pondicherry during the first few years. Motilal when he saw us then exclaimed in utter surprise, "What ! Is this the way you live ? And you keep him (Sri Aurobindo) too like this ?" Perhaps some day I may give you a picture of that life of ours, that life of utter freedom which looked so rustic in the eyes of "civilised" people.

Let me end this story today with something nice and sweet. It was during my stay at the Gardens that I had my first meeting and interview with Sri Aurobindo. Barin had asked me to go and see him, saying that Sri Aurobindo would be coming to see the Gardens and that I should fetch him. Manicktolla was in those days at the far end of North Calcutta and Sri Aurobindo lived with Raja Subodh Mullick near Wellington Square in the South Calcutta area. I went by tram and it was about four in the afternoon when I reached there. I asked the doorman at the gate to send word to Mr. Ghose—this was how he used to be called in those days at the place—saying that I had come from Barin of the Manicktolla Gardens. As I sat waiting in one of the rooms downstairs, Sri Aurobindo came down, stood near me and gave me an inquiring look. I said, in Bengali, "Barin has sent me. Would it be possible for you to come to the Gardens with me now ?" He answered very slowly, pausing on each syllable separately—it seemed he had not yet got used to speaking Bengali—and said, "Go and tell Barin, I have not yet had my lunch. It will not be possible to go today." So, that was that. I did not say a word, did my *namaskāra* and came away. This was my first happy meeting with him, my first *darshan* and interview.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

¹ I have been there once later. It was no longer the old Gardens but a ploughed field. There was no trace of the jungle left, it had all been dug up. The pools too had been drained and filled and the house razed to the ground. The British authorities had dug up every inch of the area to see if any weapons might have been kept hidden anywhere. I have found in the case of the *Yugantar* office also which stood next to the Medical College that it too had been pulled down and there was only a little plot of open ground left in its place.

SRI AUROBINDO AND HUMAN UNITY

THE Mother has said, in a recent Message, "The world is a unity—it has always been and is always so...Only the world is not conscious of its unity..." Unity is the ultimate truth of existence according to all the sages, beginning with our own Veda and Upanishads, a unity that underlies the enormous diversities that we see around us. That means that this unity is something occult, to which we have no access ordinarily, which we have to discover by a process of effort. Sri Aurobindo says that the whole course of history has been a record of this effort, an attempt to get back to the true unity that underlies all apparent diversities and discords.

On the surface, it is this aspect of disunity and discord that is most apparent in history and even stressed by historians as the sole truth of history. But this is born of a misunderstanding, a failure to see below the surface.

On the surface what we see is that individuals and groups of individuals—castes and religions and linguistic areas and nations and empires—trying to live their own life without much regard for the rest, often clashing with one another in furtherance of their own interests, sometimes trying to make friends, somehow managing to live a life that does not lead to mutual destruction.

But behind it all, there has been shaping, unknown to the common man and even perhaps to the politicians and statesmen and generals who think they have been shaping the destiny of man, a perceptible growth towards unity—from the clan to the tribe and city-state and regional kingdom and nation—an attempt at a wider sympathy and sense of oneness.

The nation is the largest unit so far evolved where the sense of unity is genuine, almost indestructible. As such it fulfils an indispensable need.

But it is this very sense of close unity that conceals in itself the greatest danger to human unity. So long as the nations consider themselves as separate and wholly distinct from the rest of humanity, so long as they live only to satisfy their own self-interest and are ready to kill others for their own benefit, human unity remains a chimera.

It is this aspect of our international life that has brought the ideal of human unity to the forefront of thought today and makes it almost inevitable that it should be realised by some means or other. For the alternative is, as is clear to even the man in the street, a slow or sudden suicide of the race.

But the question is, how is the unity to be effected? If effected by outer mechanical means, by the creation perhaps of a world-state with the UNO, shall we say, as the nucleus of a world parliament and world executive, the result may

be not unity but uniformity. For, the state does not normally to function unless it establishes a uniform pattern of government, of economic life, a uniform system of education, a uniform culture, a single language, that must be accepted by all. But uniformity is death, and a unity bought at the price of free variation may prove to be worse than useless.

The solution Sri Aurobindo proposes is that even if the world-state comes into being, let it be a federation of *free* nations, somewhat like that federation of free states which went to make the U.S.A. Let the world-state act the part once played in ancient India by the Chakravarti Raja, who was suzerain over all the kings who dared not tie up the wandering horse of Asvamedha sacrifice and yet were left almost complete autonomy in their internal life. We may have to study more at close quarters the early Indian polity,—the pre-Mauryan type—in order to get a clearer blue-print of world unity.

But whatever the form of this external unity, it will not last, it may not even satisfy, unless the sense of unity is within man himself. This cannot be achieved by any amount of external manipulation. True unity is of the soul, and unless man learns to look for his soul, to live according to its dictates, to live in the soul, unless again the nations too find their souls and follow their souls rather than their mental and vital idiosyncracies, there is no secure future for world unity.

In other words, we have to get back to where we started, recover something of the old Vedic discipline and make it applicable to the problems of modern living. Then only can human unity become a real thing.

That is what we are trying to do here, at this growing International Centre which is Sri Aurobindo's Ashram.

SANAT KUMAR BANERJI

(A paper read at the First Annual Conference of the Sri Aurobindo Society, held in Pondicherry on the 29th December, 1961, under the Presidentship of Sri Hare Krishna Mahatab.)

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

III

WHAT is then the proper way to be followed for the right understanding of the Vedas ? We have, in this respect, to adopt the same principle, which forms the key to all ancient literatures. We needs must be acquainted with the texts of the Vedas proper with an unbiased mind empty of all preconceived notions. The commentators, the annotators, the grammarians, the rhetoricians join, as it were, to create a world of confusion. Far from getting an access to the sanctum we get lost in wandering mazes. That is why we have been deprived of getting a first-hand knowledge of the Vedas. The commentators may be at most helpers. But if we attach too much importance to their commentaries, it will inevitably turn them into an obstacle. First, it is of paramount importance to know the central idea of the Vedas, the viewpoint of the Rishis. The help of the commentators and the annotators may be necessary later on when we go into details. Needless to say that if we get into the bitter controversies of commentators, we are sure to be deadly confused. So at the very outset we have to be acquainted with the bare texts of the Vedas. This method is applicable to all literatures. We must read poetry in the original in order to appreciate its true spirit, leaving aside all criticisms on it. It is an undeniable fact that men endowed with the power of true appreciation of poetry are rarely found in the present generation. We are more familiar with the commentaries on the works of Shakespeare and Kalidasa than with their originals.

However, to be at home in the central theme of the Vedas the method that we should follow is : to proceed from the known to the unknown. In the Vedic texts we often come across some important words that admit of no ambiguity. With the help of the obvious meanings of these words we have to find out the implications of the words partly obscure or totally obscure. In the Vedas there are such mantras (incantations), sentences and words in abundance which reflect modern ideas and appear quite familiar to the present-day intellect. It is at once advisable and reasonable to accept such self-evident meanings. It is of no avail to leave aside such clear meanings and seek out roundabout abstruse meanings on the ground that what we are dealing with are the Vedas, the writings of hoary antiquity. "The one truth is expressed differently by the men of knowledge." Or, "That is the supreme Status of Vishnu, as if an Eye wide open in the heavens." Or, "Brihashpati being born first as a great Light in the supreme Heaven." The meanings of these words are by no means obscure or ambiguous. The meanings as well as the ideas with which these words are infused are quite plain and clear enough. These expressions convey no indication

of the lisping of the babe or an aborigine or an uncultured mind or even a ritualistic mind. Here we find expressions of a mature mind enlightened with knowledge flowing from a profound realisation of Truth. Neither the befitting rhythm nor rhyme is missing. Further,

*Codayitrī sūṛtānām, cetantī sumatīnām;
yajñam dadhe sarasvatī.
Maho arṇaḥ sarasvatī, pra cetayati ketunā;
dhiya viśvā vi rājati.*

“She (Saraswati) upholds the sacrifice by impelling the consciousness of man to the rise of truths and awakening in it right movements of thought.

“Saraswati, the great river, awakens us to knowledge by the perception and shines in all our thoughts.” (*Translated by Sri Aurobindo*)

In this instance too the fundamental idea is not something very abstruse. It is commonsense that the theme is related to the experience of Truth, the spiritual realisation and psychological concept. Acharya Sayana was at sea to interpret these few slokas in the light of natural phenomena and sacrificial ceremonies, so much so that it provokes our laughter as well as a sense of pity. We know Saraswati as the Deity of knowledge. So the words *dhīyāvāsu* (one whose wealth consists of pure intellect), *dhīyoviśvā* (universal intellect), *ṛta* (truth) and *amṛta* (immortality) are not quite unfamiliar to us. It is natural that words like *sumati* (right movements of thought) should be applicable to Saraswati. The word *dhī* (pure intellect) is well-known. But such an obvious meaning does not serve Sayana’s purpose. So he used *karma* (action), *i.e.* the action of showering as a synonym for *dhī*. In another place concerning Mitra and Varuna it has been said that these two gods made up such *dhī*, as is *ghṛtācīm*, literally “besmeared with *ghṛta*” (*dhīyam ghṛtācīm sādhanā*—1-2-7). But according to the interpreter Sayana, the phrase *dhīyam ghṛtācīm* means the rain that pours water! In some other context (1-14-6) Sayana himself says that the root *ghṛ* may also mean “to make something shine”; so the plain meaning of *dhīyam ghṛtācīm* is the “enlightened intellect.” But Sayana preferred to interpret the word *ghṛta* (lit. clarified butter) as water and rains. If we refer to the context where Sayana explains *ghṛta* as “effulgence” it will be clearer to us that this effulgence is not even the physical external light; it refers to the inner illumination. There Agni (fire) has been called ‘fire-backed’; along with this adjective another adjective, namely *manojuja* has also been used; it means that Agni has to be brought under control with the help of the mind. This very truth has been expressed elsewhere by the sage Vishwamitra : “Kindling the Vaishwanara fire with the aid of the mind.” Agni is *Kavi-kratu*. Sayana himself has explained the word *kratu* as making or action. We would like to call it the power, the power of action—the Greek *kratos*. So *Kavi-kratu* would mean one endowed with the power of action, the creative genius. It is

well known that the Kavi, the poet, is a creator. The Veda has applied the epithet *Kavi* to all the gods as well as to a man who has attained or realised the divine knowledge. *Agni : Kavi-kratu* means the dynamic power of vision. But this plain meaning amounts to a profound spiritual concept and ceases to be the fire with which we are familiar; that is why Sayana explains 'Kavi' as 'Krantā'—and 'Kavi-kratu' as the one who performs the action of sacrifice. We cite another instance. It is known to us all—I speak of the Gayatri Mantra. "Let our intelligence dwell on the beloved light of that creative godhead, the Sun who is the Creator, so that he may endow us with the right intelligence."

It is clearly stated in the Upanishad : "*Savitre Satyaprasavāya* (the Sun is the origin of truth). Further, the sun of knowledge and the light of knowledge are not expressions unfamiliar to us. We always make use of such comparisons and allegories. If ever the Vedic ages made use of such a comparison, then has it to be regarded as something describing mere natural phenomena ? Finally we cannot resist the temptation of quoting another is "instance". This will serve as a typical example as to what extent quite a simple idea can be twisted. And it will enable us to appreciate what a terrible injustice the Veda has to suffer at the hands of the commentators. The phrase *Amṛtasya Vāni* that is found in the Veda should convey to all the essence of the Veda. But do you know what meaning Sayana has ascribed to it ? He has translated *Amṛtasya Vāni* (the message of immortality) as the current of water. Can we be at one with him ? In fact, what we want to say is that the Veda is the expression of Yogic realisations, spiritual experiences, the knowledge of the ultimate Truth. It is here that we can discover the fundamental concept and the esoteric mystery of the Veda. If we follow this course we shall find how easily and consistently the meaning of the whole Veda unfolds itself and becomes crystal-clear. No doubt, at places if we want to delve into the minutest detail, there will be occasions for uncertainty and confusion. But it will not prove an obstacle to the apprehension of the fundamental truths of the Veda provided we can rightly focus the attention of our intelligence on it. Can we not have any access to the Mahabharata because of Vyasakutas¹ (the knotty expressions devised by Vyasa) ? Besides, if we admit the esoteric basis of the Veda, we will get a reasonable clue to the fact as to why the Veda is held in such high esteem in the culture and education of the Hindus.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the original Bengali in "*Madhucchandar Mantramala*")

¹ When the sage Vyasa made a request to Ganesh to record his version of the Mahabharata, the latter agreed to do so on condition that he must not be made to stop his writing. The sage agreed provided Ganesh would not only write but understand his words. It is said that in order to gain time for composition the sage would use some knotty expressions so that Ganesh might take time to understand them.

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

GROWTH OF WORLD CULTURE

(I)

THOUGH we shall close this series with the present chapter the history of the Ashram cannot end with it. Where is the pen with enough vision, power and devotion to give even a faint idea of the whole significance of Sri Aurobindo's life, to portray the various aspects of the Mother's work that covers so many inner and higher planes ?

In the spiritual world the rule is : the less one speaks about oneself the better. So how can we know what is going on in the inner life of even a sadhak and the way the Mother is evolving his sadhana ? His experiences are his hard-earned treasures; why should he care to lay them out before the public ?

Here the main sadhana is through works. One can see in the lives of at least a few a picture of dedicated service. In all their working hours, their one concern is service to the Mother. None can hear any one speak about personal salvation. The only object is to serve, with a constant Yogic consciousness, and earn the Mother's Grace. And on this their whole energy is centred. There is a faith, nay, a conviction that their future is in safe hands.

Nothing personal, nothing to claim as their own. X spends lakhs in purchases for the Ashram but we have not heard about his buying anything worth a pice for his own use.

The scrupulous attitude in connection with service may be illustrated by the case of a sadhak who used to be asked to make purchases for the Ashram from the cash which in the old days was kept with the Manager. In order to strike the best bargain he would set the shopkeepers in competition. For this he would at times make false statements. The thought that he was doing all for the sake of the Divine justified him in his own eyes. There was no trace of personal gain. If he pocketed anything he could feel guilty. For years not a shadow of doubt crossed his mind. He would exclaim that Arjuna had to kill even his kith and kin for the sake of the Divine. What did it matter to him if he had to tell a lie for the sake of the Divine ? Such things could not bind a disinterested worker. This state of things continued for years. But one day the Ashram Manager made an incidental remark that one should not tell a lie even in a divine cause.

The sadhak wrote the whole story of his work to Sri Aurobindo in the strong hope of having his support. The reply came :

“Bargain cannot be avoided as the shopkeepers overcharge, but it should be done without making any untrue statement.”

He got dumbfounded. For years he had practised falsehood in the name of the Truth. Now he realised why Sri Krishna had said,

गहना कमणो गति :

“Mysterious are the ways of the work.”

He vowed that not a single word of untruth should now escape his lips. But the force of habit was too strong for an immediate check. On his writing to the Mother about his inability the Mother wrote back : “It is a weakness and you must conquer it.”

This shows what lies hidden within those two lines of Sri Aurobindo’s letter; there are hundreds of such letters to show how the true life-structure of a sadhak is built up, brick by brick, by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

*

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Now something may be said about the sadhikas, their place in the life of the Ashram, the freedom they enjoy under the Mother’s care and the initiative they can take in various matters.

When the idea to start a journal in Bombay was about to take concrete shape it was a Parsi lady in touch with the Ashram, and now a resident sadhika, who felt the journal should be named in such a way that the word “Mother” as well as “India” should find a place. She suggested the name “Mother India”. When it was put before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, they at once approved her inspiration.

In the Ashram a woman is looked upon not as the wife, daughter or sister of some particular sadhak but as a soul with an independent status and a direct approach to the Mother. And some of the women have already proved their worth. They hardly stop work even when taken ill. One of them, for instance, is known to have had fever for months; but it was her experience that no sooner did she start her work than she forgot all about her body.

The Ashram women are seen engaged in various departments : for example, in electricity, library, typewriting, monotyping, proof-reading, book-binding, draughtmanship. Some are conducting departments as responsible heads. Most of the Ashram Boarding Houses are under their care. And a sadhika is also one of the chief organisers of studies at the highest level of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

Nor is it only Indian sadhikas who play a responsible part in the Ashram life. When we are talking of Growth of World Culture in connection with the Ashram we may note here a few instances of non-Indian sadhikas : some more

we shall give in a later section. Almost from the very beginning, "Golconde" has been in the charge of an English lady from London. The Ashram Nursing Home is under the supervision of a Polish lady. One of the Boarding Houses is supervised by a French lady who is also a qualified nurse. On the teaching staff of our School there have been sadhikas from England, France, Switzerland, U.S.A. and Canada.

In the artistic sphere too of the Ashram life, sadhikas, foreign no less than Indian, have distinguished themselves. Thus the play, *Periple d'or*, which was staged in 1960 and had a very high appreciation from the Mother, was written and directed by a French sadhika who designed also the décor and the costumes. Some other dramatic performances have had the benefit of advice in acting, from a Russian-born lady from France, with experience in the modern theatre of the West. And, of course, in the realm of art as elsewhere in the Ashram life, service by both sadhikas and sadhaks of all nationalities becomes the most useful by being guided inwardly and outwardly by the Mother's ever-present Light.

But the value of the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has to be assessed not only by the immediate profit we make out of it but also by what they have sown far and wide in the earth's soul and soil, by the universal possibilities they have quickened, the beginnings they have made of a new evolution on a world scale.

Sri Aurobindo's sphere of work was never confined to India nor even to Asia.¹ His help came also to many persons, known or unknown, in distant countries of the West. We may give a recent example of a very striking order.

(2)

A Roumanian anti-communist leader, Doctor Silviu Craciunas, was unable to bear any more the excruciating tortures in a communist prison in Budapest; when he was on the point of making an end of his life he had a vision:

"...the wall in front of me rolled back and a chain of snowy mountains gleamed in the rising sun. In the foreground was a little Indian temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. A tall tree shaded it. At its foot an old man sat with his legs tucked under him and his hands resting on his knees in Brahmin fashion. He had a long and very thin white beard. His ascetic face had the same serenity as the blue sky stretching over the dazzling peaks. As I gazed at him he bowed his head slightly, smiled and said : 'I can see you have forgotten me. Don't you remember Aurobin Dogos, the Brahmin ?' "

¹ One can see that what he said in 1947 is coming true more and more :

"Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or at this moment are being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done to-day or to-morrow...."

It should be noted that in his political days Sri Aurobindo was known by the name Aurobindo Ghose.¹

What we have quoted is an extract from the book *The Lost Footsteps* published by Collins and Harvill Press, London, in 1961. The author and the publishers have been kind enough to permit us to quote not only this extract but the whole account of the "transformation" that came to the author, with the ideas inspired by "Aurobin Dogos".

Let us now cite, with grateful acknowledgements, all the passages relevant to our theme and coming after the mention of the strange "hermit" 's appearance :

"I heard myself replying : 'You have no idea how long I have been looking for you and calling you...'

' I had to make a long journey to get here,' he said.

"For months after this I lived in the company of the Brahmin whom I believed at the time to be a real person other than myself. But these visions were different in character from the nightmare hallucinations I had before. It seemed that, somehow, I had reached a deeper level of my being and these new experiences, instead of helping my enemies, marked the beginning of a period of spiritual integration.

"I held long conversations with the 'hermit' and it was 'he' who argued me out of committing suicide, persuading me that life was sacred and must be lived to the last breath.

"I complained to him that, locked inside these walls and thinking ceaselessly night and day without a moment's respite, I had reached the limits of my captive, endurance.

¹ It will not be out of place to mention here the changes that occurred in Sri Aurobindo's name from his childhood onward.

His father used to spell it "Ara" When he died, this name was on his lips. Sri Aurobindo's niece and others addressed him as "Arada" out of love.

While in England, his name at the school and university was Arvinda Acroyd Ghose. According to Dinendranath Roy his letters were addressed by the State "A.A. Ghose." ("Acroyd" was in deference to an English God-father).

By the members of Subodh Mullick's family he was called, when he stayed at Calcutta, "Ghose Saheb" or "Mr. Ghose".

To his political fellow workers he was "Babu". C.C. Dutt's group addressed him as "Chief". His revolutionary letters used to bear the name "Kali".

His first book from Pondicherry (*Yogic Sadhan*) bore the name "Uttara Yogi". "The Yogi from the North (Uttara Yogi) was my own name given to me because of a prediction made long ago by a famous Tamil Yogi." (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 338)

Before Siddhi he was known by the name of "A.G." to those around him. The earlier articles he wrote in his monthly magazine *Arya* used to be signed "A.G."

By the local people of Pondicherry he was addressed as "Babu". (While giving a message to Rassendren in 1920 Nolini said, "Babu has said he will do the needful.") In some of his his earlier publications (before Siddhi) the spelling of his name is given : "Arvind Ghose", "Arubindo Ghose". After Siddhi "Ghose" was dropped, the spelling was fixed and he came to be known to the world as "Sri Aurobindo".

“‘Tell me’, I begged him, ‘am I the victim of these men who hold me or at the mercy of some harsh, blind laws of nature?’

“‘He explained to me his view of suffering. ‘Some people it destroys,’ he said, ‘others are challenged by it to resist some evil or to undertake some positive, creative act; some are corrupted, lose control over themselves and become cruel and vengeful, others grow in strength and grace.’

“‘But what can a man do alone, armed with nothing but his free will against an overwhelming evil?’ I asked him.

“‘In answer, he told me a story.

“‘Two swallows nested under the caves of a fisherman’s hut near the seashore, teaching their young to fly. They took them out over the sea, gradually training them to cross long distances and to face the hardships they would have to undergo during their migration. The fledgelings shot into the air, exulting in the joy of flight and freedom but a gust of wind caught one of them and flung it down upon the surface of the waves. The small bird kept its wings outstretched so that it did not sink, but neither could it rise : floating like a leaf, it called piteously to its parents as they circled over it. The parent swallows did their best to calm and encourage it, then they flew back to the shore and made innumerable journeys to the water’s edge, each time carrying a drop of water in their beaks and pouring it into the sand. Thus they hoped to empty the ocean and to save their young.

“‘Their heroic effort is a lesson to us,’ the ‘Brahmin’ went on. ‘The human will and spirit must also not be resigned at moments of crisis; it must go on looking for a solution, however overwhelming the odds. You must not accept defeat, you must not believe your efforts to be in vain. If you have the blind courage to continue to endure and to struggle, you will find a new beginning in your life.’

“‘My conversation with the hermit living in solitude near the temple of the goddess Kali had lasted several months. Outside spring was appearing; the strength of the light and a suspicion of warmth in the air were the first signs. Who was this ‘Brahmin’? Why was he trying to give me precious support? Understanding my perplexity, he gently held out a pale, skeleton-like hand and stroked my forehead with his cold fingers. Somehow transfixed, he said to me with emotion :

“‘You want to know who I am? I am your spirit : your reason ! You appealed to me in a moment of abject despair. In your isolation and helplessness, only I am capable of encouraging you to bolster your morale and strengthen your will; apart from me there is no one who is able to come to your aid. Put your trust in my strength and you will never regret it.’

“‘This encounter was indeed a turning point in my existence. Gradually my nightmares left me and I discovered an inner calm and balance and achieved control over my mind and body.

“After days and weeks of practice I found that I could sit motionless on my chair for hours, my head leaning gently against the wall and my eyes open. I breathed deeply and quietly, my will controlling my heartbeats and keeping them steady. Hunger and fatigue took less toll of my strength than when I had dissipated it in pacing up and down my cell, fighting against drowsiness. My small ration of food and the two or three hours’ sleep I was allowed out of the twenty-four were now sufficient for my bodily needs.

“To detach my mind totally from my surroundings took more time and effort. At first I told myself that I was a spectator in a darkened room : my prison life was nothing but a film projected on a screen, which I trained myself to interrupt at will. At a later stage I succeeded in looking upon my body, sitting motionless in the chair, as though it were a photograph. Still later I felt my spirit able to escape the prison walls and undertake long journeys.

“The warders were puzzled by the transformation which had taken place before their eyes : a man who had been frantic, driven to the verge of madness by lack of sleep, now sat calm and as still as a statue. From time to time they knocked on the door and ordered me to move my head or blink my eyes, to make sure that I was still alive and lucid. Inwardly I had reached a peace and a serenity which I had never known before.

“Time no longer dragged; solitude was not a hardship, it was the opportunity for ceaseless contemplation. Freed from its anxieties, my mind devoted itself passionately to pure thought. I now longed to survive—even, if need be, in prison—for I was enchanted by the happiness of my new spiritual freedom. I longed to encompass the universe, to search its mysteries, as inexhaustible as infinity. At the same time this transformation made available to me a source of energy which enormously increased my power of resistance to my adversaries. This triumph of reason over madness radically changed my whole life. I believe now that, through the discipline of contemplation, I did in fact arrive at a new philosophy based on the values of humanism and the laws of concord. Freeing myself from theories and beliefs, I became conversant with the laws of the universe and developed a new understanding of suffering, freedom, discord and harmony, revolution and evolution.

“In this book of factual events there is no place for a philosophical treatise. I mention it only because it was the development of these ideas which gave me the will to stay alive in order to pass them on to the West.”

(3)

To-day Sri Aurobindo is not only India’s own but the entire world’s. His dream, his voice, his sadhana, his experiences, and his achievements are the richest treasures of humanity as a whole. His Ashram is itself the meeting-place of East and West.

“From the East must come the Dawn and this time from India who will take her rightful place of leadership in the new age, the age of mankind’s spiritual civilisation,” wrote W.W.Pearson, a co-worker of poet Tagore, in his book *The Dawn of a New Age* after his return from Pondicherry.¹

In the world of to-day we find no trace of the 19th-century bigotry. To anything good all are ready to extend their recognition. Any book of new facts or new discoveries or new truths at once reaches every corner of the world. A piece of scientific research, successful anywhere, commands immediate acceptance, Major Yuri Gagarin—the first Space-Man has been greeted as a “World-hero”.² With or without our co-operation, we are being led to the growth of one world, one culture, one race.

A Muslim, M. Hafiz Syed, Ph. D. D. Litt., after his visit to the Ashram remarks : “I have never been a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. My visit was meant to see how far this unique Ashram has been carrying on its activities after the passing away of its author and founder. Nowhere in India, where I have travelled considerably have I seen such a well-knit, perfectly harmonious and completely integrated organisation like the one that has been in existence for more than forty years in this capital of French India.

“As I have a great faith in evolution and development of human social organisation, I have been drawn to this place to study and observe the working of the inmates of the Ashram.

“I claim no competence to say anything about the inner life of the inmates. But as a tree is judged by its fruits, this Ashram may rightly be judged by the results it has produced during these twenty-six years. It is not quite accurate to call it a mere Ashram. It is truer to say that it is more like a colony of culture than an Ashram.”

It is worth noting that the Ashram is not based exclusively on Indian culture nor does it strictly follow India’s traditional ways of Ashram life. The atmosphere is such that the moment one takes up the life here one forgets whether one was a Brahmin or a Non-Brahmin, a Jew or a Christian, a Frenchman or a German.

All have access to all its festivals and functions. The Dining room is open to all. Each can sit by the side of anyone he likes and have his meal. No one ever objects to whoever may be the person next to him. In the beginning a separate hall was reserved, for the opposite sex. For a pretty long time this distinction has been done away with.

Sri Aurobindo says in one of his letters :

“We are not working for a race or a people or a continent or for a realisation of which only Indians or only Orientals are capable. Our aim is not, either, to

¹ Adapted from *The Liberator* by Sisir Kumar Mitra.

² *The Hindu*, July 16, 1961.

found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga, but to create a ground and a way of spiritual growth and experience and a way which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West.”

Dorothy M. Richardson, the writer, once asked Dr. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar :

“Has there ever existed a more synthetic Consciousness than that of Sri Aurobindo ?”

In this respect the Mother too is a living synthesis. Even the most analytical mind cannot say with certainty whether she is more of the East than of the West or *vice-versa*. In her message to America on August 4, 1949 she said : “Stop thinking that you are of the West and others of the East !” The mingling of the two is what we see in practice in the Ashram. For instance, it is difficult to say about P whether he is of the occident or of the orient. His nature is so loving that none of us even for a minute can think that he is foreign to us. I do not mean that he has gone back upon everything Western and assimilated everything Eastern. Neither does Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga demand this. Let us listen to Sri Aurobindo when, correcting the mistaken notion of a sadhak, he says :

“Your explanation of the ability of many Westerners to practise Indian Yoga seems to be that they have a Hindu temperament in a European or American body. As Gandhiji is inwardly a moralistic Westerner and Christian, as you say, so the other non-oriental members of the Ashram are essentially Hindus in outlook. But what exactly is this Hindu outlook ? I have not myself seen anything in them that can be so described nor has the Mother. My own experience contradicts entirely your explanation. I knew very well Sister Nivedita (she was for many years a friend and a comrade in the political field) and met sister Christine,—the two closest European disciples of Vivekananda. Both were Westerners to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook; although Sister Nivedita, an Irishwoman, had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-oriental to the end. Yet she found no difficulty in arriving at realisation on the lines of Vedanta. Here in this Ashram I have found the members of it who came from the West (I include especially those who have been here longest) typically occidental with all the quality and also all the difficulties of the Western mind and temperament and they have had to cope with their difficulties, just as the Indian members have been obliged to struggle with the limitations and obstacles created by their temperament and training. No doubt, they have accepted in principle the conditions of the Yoga. But they had no Hindu outlook when they came and I do not think they have tried to acquire one. Why should they do so ? It is not the Hindu outlook or the Western that fundamentally matters in Yoga, but the psychic turn and the spiritual urge, and these are the same everywhere.”

When none of us knew who the Mother was, there was one who gave her whole life to her even from when she was very young. She had met the Mother in France, travelled with her to Japan, and then on to Pondicherry in 1920. She was Miss Dorothy Hodgson, an Englishwoman.

Her spirit of dedication was matchless and above all bargaining. It is said of her that she was prepared even for sweeping work if she was so directed.

She was so simple, so free from taint of racial ego that during the pre-Ashram days she used to wear pieces of old clothes (dhoties) of sadhaks at night, herself darning the torn clothes.

With the birth of the Ashram she used the ochre garb and adhered to it till the last. Sri Aurobindo had given her the name "Vasavadatta", shortened in use to "Datta" ("One who has given herself"), and her whole life was a living illustration of her self-giving. So fresh is she even to-day in the memory of a sadhak that he folded his hands again and again in reverence to her as he narrated the story.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

WHENCE TO THE SINGER

Is it your poem ? they ask; and to keep the conversation from becoming complicated one answers, Yes.

But is it ? What is ours and what is not ours of all the things our lives touch ? Do we call the wind ours because we set our sails to catch it ? Or the sun because we open windows to let it in ? The silver that lines our pockets today, the dreams that fill our sleep, the thoughts and feelings that invade us even as the air we breathe—how is one to say this is, or this is not, mine ? Even the child who comes into life from the unknown through us—whose is he, or who ? The music that falls on a sensitive ear like a luminous shadow of silence, the elusive mood, the shifting forms and colours we try to catch with pen or brush—does the measure of our success make them “ours” ?

We may stand beneath the “Imagination” tree and say like the wistful child: “Golden petals falling all around, but none fall into my hands.” But when the world of wonder spills its golden rain into our days, if it does not always overflow our cupped hands we may yet feel on our upturned faces its touch of delight.

MAUDE

CLIMAX AND...

RED, fantastically glutinous, ripe,
Multiplying worms of awareness
Trailing behind the eagle claws of Fate.

Two hearts vacuumed together
And dangling...
Wide, fleshed fingers pushing
Through velvet, yellow mud and searching
For carnation petals.

Spinning ropes, cut, cut and spinning,
Spin, spun, spinning, spinning,
Ropes cut, cut, ropes, ropes, spinning,
Cut, spinning, spinning, spinning,
Cut, cut, cut and spinning,
Spinning, ropes, cut...

Blood,
Mud.

A petal flutters out of Time
And into timelessness.

ANURAKTA (TONY SCOTT)

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(43)

VIII. THE HOUR OF GRACE AND FULFILMENT

74. WHO CALLS ME FROM THE SKY-LINE SILVERY ?

A MENDICANT I live on heaven's crumbs
And roam in search of love through infinity,
Patient I wait till openly it comes
To bless my deep-drunk moments of ecstasy.

Who calls me from the sky-line silvery ?
Who pulls my heart from the far floating hue ?
An intimate link, serene, enticing, free
Spans silent space to the utter end of my view.

Again I hear a sweet melodious tone,
Music divine now strikes the strings of my heart,
High on the iris blue fragrances float,
A halo rends the hovering veils apart,
A chariot of light from spheres remote
Appears through the skey foam in aureate dawn.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

21 FEBRUARY : AN ADORATION

IN the air redolent with Thy breath
I see a charming sight :
The shadows of the vanquished Death
Melt in Thy mighty Light.

Thou art there in Thy diamond shrine,
Reigning over the worlds;
Thy radiant eyes with glory shine
Through the darkest folds.

Thy joy abiding secretly
In matter's silent self,
To all it brings the touch of Thee,
And Thy never failing help.

I see Thy face a-glow with mirth;
I travel along with Thee;
My ever present Friend on Earth !—
Immensely loved by me !

In every toil are hands of Thine;
Thou bearest the burden of all;
O Emblem of the Grace Divine !
Our hearts have heard Thy call.

SAILEN

THOUGHTS

THE atmosphere of this place is of one kind, the atmosphere of Mount Everest is of another kind and that at the bottom of the Pacific is still of a third kind.

Hence one desiring to encamp on Mount Everest or to stay at the bottom of the Pacific should equip himself with the necessary amount of oxygen. Or else he should master the art of keeping himself alive in such depths and altitudes.

If Yogis intent on contemplation choose the Himalayas, Sri Krishna constructs a city of gold even at the bottom of the ocean.

How different is the air there—on the Himalayas and in Sri Krishna's city—from the one we breathe here !

To go there unequipped is to enter into the jaws of Death. One should bear this in mind.

*

*

What I have gained through the friendship of an ant is not a whit less than what I have gained through the friendship of an elephant.

Could it be like that ?

It can be like that, because what I sought for in their friendships was not their bodies—whether of the ant or of the elephant. The object of my friendship was Sachchidananda, the inspirer of all the movements of both, the ant and the elephant.

Shall we attribute smallness to an ant and greatness to an elephant ? No. Shall we attribute smallness to a grain of sand on the sea-shore and greatness to the sun in heaven ? No.

The ant, the elephant, the grain of sand, the sun, all are great because all derive from Him.

GIRDHARLAL

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

CHITTA RANJAN DAS

How to hail Chitta Ranjan ? To honour him as a Vaishnava to the marrow, a highly literary figure, a politician of the front rank, a man endowed with oratorical gifts, an unrivalled Bar-at-Law, a potential leader, a hero who knew what fighting means, is in no way adequate. The most befitting epithet for this unique personage would be Deshabandhu (the friend of the country) for his unstinted sacrifice for his country and countrymen.

Rare is the man whose life far exceeds his great achievements. Also rare is the man whose message to the world is his life itself. But in the life of Deshabandhu we find a rare combination of both the high qualities.

Chitta Ranjan had been to England to sit for the I.C.S. Unfortunately, nay, fortunately he headed the list of the unsuccessful. Had he won the "Heaven-Born Service" he would have certainly become a Civilian. And who could guarantee that he would not have exerted his unusual power to climb up the highest rung of the ladder ? And if he had done so how could opportunity have knocked at his door and asked him to mix with and work for his countrymen whom he so sincerely loved ? So what Providence wished in Chitta Ranjan was a great service to his Motherland. The devoted son was ever confident of his Motherland's brightest future. His deep patriotism gave a significant meaning and purpose to the exalted glory of India all over the world. It happened that during his stay in that foreign land a meeting was once held at Oldham under the Presidentship of Gladstone. In a speech on "Indian Agitation" Chitta Ranjan's tone and expression left no doubt that he was a citadel of strength :

"Gentlemen, I was sorry to find it given expression to in Parliamentary speeches on more than one occasion that England conquered India by the sword and by the sword she must keep it ! (*Shame*) England, gentlemen, did no such thing, it was not her sword and bayonet that won this vast and glorious empire; it was not her military valour that achieved this triumph. (*Cheers*) England might well be proud of it. But to attribute all this to the sword and then to argue that the policy of the sword is the only policy that ought to be pursued is to my mind absolutely base and quite unworthy of an Englishman." (*Hear, hear*)

The years 1907 and 1908 shall shine perpetually in the history of Bengal. The current of true patriotism simply inundated the four frontiers of the province. On the 4th of May 1908 in the small hours of morning Sri Aurobindo was arrested, and soon he was considered to be the supreme leader of the fire-

brand revolutionaries. The two significant features of the Alipore Bomb Case have been : the unexpected acquittal of Sri Aurobindo and C.R. Das's swift flare-up into fame. Das was then a junior Counsel. Bhupal Bose, the father-in-law of Sri Aurobindo, appointed Byomkesh Chakravarti to defend his son-in-law. The old man, as it were, poo-pooed Das as a child. His remark about Das is as follows .

"I should not commit the charge of the case of my son-in-law to a younger counsel."

But somehow Das felt an inner urge to participate in the defence of Sri Aurobindo, his dear friend whom he had first met in England. In those days he used to communicate with the spirit-world with the help of a planchet. One day a particular message was received by him repeatedly.

"You must defend Arabinda." To the query who he was, the reply came, "Upadhyaya." Requested to be more explicit the "spirit" replied : "Brahma Bandhava Upadhyaya."¹ From that day on it became quite clear to Chitta Ranjan that he would have to conduct the Alipore Bomb Case.

Meanwhile for some reason or other the counsel Byomkesh Chakravarti was dispensed with and C. R. Das was called in.

On this occasion Sri Aurobindo's sister Sarojini Ghosh played a significant role to save her brother. She raised subscription and even begged from door to door, appealing to the very the rickshaw-drawers and the coolies who too on their part never failed to respond to her throbbing appeal. At last on the 18th August, 1908 in the *Bande Mataram* she issued the following appeal :

"I am sincerely grateful to my ccountrymen and countrywomen of different provinces, creeds and grades of society for their kind response to my appeal for funds for the defence of my brother, Srijut Aurobindo Ghosh. The time has now come to engage a Counsel to defend him in the Court of Sessions.

"Perhaps the public have not hitherto had any accurate idea of the probable expenses of my brother's defence. My legal and other advisers tell me that the amount required would not fall short of sixty-thousand rupees. But only twenty-three thousand rupees have been received up to date.

"May I not hope that the balance will be received shortly ?..."

Deshabandhu's love and affection for Sri Aurobindo will be evident from the following incident.

When some of the friends of Sri Aurobindo made a fervent request to him to conduct the case to the best of his ability he was deeply pained :

"Am I less anxious than any of you to get Aurobindo released ?"

On another occasion he said that while defending Aurobindo he felt that he himself was the accused and he was arguing his own case. What a sense of identification he developed with his intimate friend !

¹ A fire-soul of patriotism

While closing the Alipore Bomb Case he made a short and eloquent speech. His prophetic voice will be ringing in the ears of posterity for all time:

"...My appeal to you is this that long after this turmoil, this agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India but across distant seas and lands..."

Let us here leave Sri Aurobindo to speak about the loving sacrifice of C. R. Das and the divine mystery involved in the matter.

"He came unexpectedly,—a friend of mine, but I did not know he was coming. You have all heard the name of the man who put away from him all other thoughts and abandoned all his practice, who sat up half the night day after day for months and broke his health to save me,—Srijut Chittaranjan Das. When I saw him, I was satisfied, but I still thought it necessary to write instructions. Then all that was put away from me and I had the message from within, 'This is the man who will save you from the snares put around your feet. Put aside those papers. It is not you who will instruct him. I will instruct him.' From that time I did not of myself speak a word to my Counsel about the case or give a single instruction, and if ever I was asked a question, I always found that my answer did not help the case. I had left it to him and he took it entirely into his hands, with what result you know."

Sister Nivedita was one among those who highly appreciated the rare sacrifice made by Chitta Ranjan in the interests of Aurobindo. She said, "I knew you to be great, but did not know that you are so great." She then pinned a dark red rose into the button hole of Chitta Ranjan's coat.

"A politician thinks of the next election, a statesman, of the next generation."

James Freeman Clarke

This pleasant-sounding statement cannot be applied to patriot-politicians like C. R. Das. "With me," says he, "Work for my country is no imitation of European politics. It is a part of my religion. It is a part and parcel of all the idealism of my life."

When his only son Chira Ranjan was eagerly prepared to go to jail for the country, his relatives and friends advised Chitta Ranjan to dissuade him from doing so. At this Chitta Ranjan was more than angry with them. "When will you understand this simple truth that I must send my own son to jail first and then only I am entitled to invite the Bengali youths to launch into the service of the Motherland?" More surprise awaits us. A deep and tranquil smile played upon his eyes the moment he heard that his wife Basanti Devi and his sister Urmila Devi were asked by the police to step into the thana. For he realised that the hour of victory was fast approaching.

His sense of duty. Father Bhuvan Mohan Das had declared insolvency. So nobody could lay any claim on his debt. And according to the British Law he

was exempted from being charged. But the deepest sense of duty in the devoted son Chitta enjoined on him to free his father. When a sum of Rs. 75,000 was made over to clear off the father's debt Justice Fletcher with a heart full of admiration for Chitta Ranjan's unprecedented deed declared : "An act of the kind is not to be seen even in Europe." And soon after this momentous event took place his aged father died.

Chitta Ranjan had a helping hand even in social reform. The deplorable condition of the widows cut him to the quick. He made bold to say that it is mere stupidity on our part either to force the widows to marry once again, or make them practise celibacy the rest of their lives. According to him, it is to the widows that the chance should be given to choose their future state and not to the so-called social reformers.

Untouchability was altogether foreign to his nature. He failed to put up with the haughtiness of the higher-class people. He utterly disdained their merciless conduct towards the low. His sympathetic heart voiced forth : "Next time, how I wish to take birth among the untouchables and devote myself to their service !"

I am now tempted to relate an interesting as well as arresting incident which will display Chitta Ranjan's love and reverence for Sri Aurobindo. Deshabandhu was then the Editor of a popular periodical, *Narayan*. Nolini Gupta had sent a contribution entitled *Arter Adhyatmikata* (Spirituality in Art)¹ from Pondicherry for publication in 1917. Chitta Ranjan was enamoured of the article and was cocksure that the actual writer could be nobody else save Sri Aurobindo, covering himself with a pseudonym. For the word "Nolini" also means lotus, just as "Aurobindo" means lotus. "Gupta" means hidden and was taken to be the indication of Sri Aurobindo's living incognito. Considering that it was no longer necessary for Sri Aurobindo to remain hidden from public view, he published the said article under the name of Aurobindo Ghosh instead of Nolini Gupta. Soon after, Sri Aurobindo wrote to his dear friend Chitta that he was not the writer of that article but there was actually one among his associates in flesh and blood bearing the name Nolini Gupta. Of course, at present Nolini Gupta needs no introduction.

1925. Deshabandhu left the earth. The Master-Seer of the Age from his silence-hushed Ashram telegraphed a message to a daily journal that had wired for a comment. "Chitta Ranjan's death is a supreme loss. Consummately endowed with political intelligence, constructive imagination, magnetism, a driving force combining a strong will and uncommon plasticity of mind for vision and tact of the hour, he was the one man after Tilak who could have led India to Swaraj."

Tagore's glorious tribute to the mighty departed soul runs :

Spirituality in Art was published in the *Mother India* of April, 1959.

With thee came down the immortal¹ breath
This thou booned us with thy body's death.¹

“Time,” says Gandhi, “cannot efface the memory of a man so great and good as Deshabandhu. At this time of trial for the nation there is no Indian who does not feel the void created by his death.”

Bengal suffered a tremendous blow. Deshabandhu was a man of fifty-five when Death snatched him away. His life was short, but a very full and busy one. Even those who did not know him at close range felt his death as a personal loss.

CHINMOY

¹ Translated by Romen from the original Bengali.

IN MEMORIAM : DR. SISIR KUMAR MAITRA

DR. Sisir Kumar Maitra, who passed away at Benares on December 29, 1961 at the age of 75, had been an expositor and devotee of Sri Aurobindo for many years. He was born at Calcutta and received his early education at Cuttack, in Orissa, where his father was Headmaster of the Puri Zilla School. He took his College education both at Cuttack and at Calcutta and received his Ph. D. in 1919 on the thesis "The Neo-romantic Movement in Contemporary Philosophy".

He joined the Benares Hindu University as Assistant Professor in the Philosophical Department in 1924 and subsequently was the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy. He was not only a master of English and Sanskrit but also a keen scholar of several European languages, particularly German.

He was greatly impressed by Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* and wrote *An Introduction to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*—a book that has proved a great help to many students who find Sri Aurobindo's own masterpiece too massive. One of his finest as well as most popular works is *The Meeting of East and West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*.

He contributed learned articles to various magazines in India and outside. He read many papers in the Philosophical Congress of which he was Sectional President. In 1948 he was elected President of the General Session and gave a masterly exposition of contemporary dynamic Indian thought in his Address.

He was a well-known Rotarian and visited the U.S.A as a Delegate from India. A member of Study Committees in several universities in North India, he tried his best to introduce Sri Aurobindo's work in the academic programmes of higher philosophical studies in those institutions.

He came to Pondicherry twice to pay his respects to Sri Aurobindo and started the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle at Benares which he conducted till his death. Every year he celebrated the 15th of August, the 24th of November and the 21st of February publicly by inviting prominent persons to participate in the celebrations.

I had a very happy and long-extending friendship with him and was his guest several times at Benares where I enjoyed both his intellectual brilliance and his personal generosity. His death leaves a gap which, among Sri Aurobindo's devotees in North India, is hard to fill.

A. B. PURANI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Aurobindo: Prophet of Human Unity by *Sidney Kartus*. Published by Cultural Integration Fellowship, 3494 Twenty-first Street, San Francisco 10, California, U.S.A. Pp.37.

This short but valuable pamphlet devotes two chapters to an appraisal of Sri Aurobindo as Prophet of Human Unity, the third and concluding chapter being given to a discussion on the future of the United Nations Organisation in the light of that momentous session when the Russian Premier presented himself in person at that international forum; this last chapter appears on the surface to be only indirectly connected with the main theme, but, as we shall see presently, it too has a close link with the teaching of Sri Aurobindo on the problem of world unity.

“The western world,” says the author, “knows far more of Marx’s call to the workingmen of the world to unite than it does of Aurobindo’s message to humanity to unite. Yet it is a message such as that of Aurobindo with which humanity must become familiar and which it must heed in order to attain human unity.” Here in a nutshell is the author’s approach to the problem. He rightly suggests that the world has been obsessed too long with the Marxist approach to the meaning of history and has missed thereby the heart of the problem. It is time that another approach, the spiritual and psychological, be given its proper place from which to take a global view of the whole question including the materialist formula. He rightly suggests that herein lies the importance of studying Sri Aurobindo’s *The Ideal of Human Unity*, which he considers to be a complete refutation of Marx’s theory.

It is remarkable that in spite of a strong Christian bias, the author feels that the Divine Life which Sri Aurobindo offers as the solution of man’s problems is akin to the Christian concept of the Kingdom of Heaven. The tone of sincere appreciation pervading this little pamphlet over and above its presentation will serve as a fine introduction to students of Sri Aurobindo taking up this particular subject for the first time.

The 1960 session of the UNO, says the author, brought to the forefront the crucial question “of whether an international community of government for the unity and peace of the human race can exist, and if so what its nature and functions must be”. He gives a short account of the viewpoints then presented by the various nations, including the United States and Russia, the two nations in whose keeping the safety of the world seems to be lying at the present moment. It might be relevant in this connection to remind ourselves

of the words of Sri Aurobindo in the last and postscript chapter of *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Apropos of the creation of the UNO in replacement of the earlier League, he says, "This is the capital event, the crucial and decisive outcome of the world-wide tendencies which Nature has set in motion for her destined purpose. In spite of the constant shortcomings of human effort and its stumbling mentality, in spite of adverse possibilities that may baulk or delay for a time the success of this great adventure, it is in this event that lies the determination of what must be....The ultimate result must be the formation of a World-State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status...."

This World-State, in the vision of Sri Aurobindo, is a historical necessity. It must come if the world is to survive its present precarious trend towards self-destruction. But, whatever the form it takes, it will not save man from the ennui born of uniformity, unless along with an external unification he learns to feel united with the rest of his fellow-beings in a deeper unity born of the soul, a unity which no social or political institution can give him. It must come from an inner psychological development, from "the realisation of human unity through the awakening in all and manifestation by all of the inner divinity which is one".

At this moment when under the stress of mounting crisis the compelling need of world peace and human unity is weighing heavily on leading minds everywhere, when moral, religious, humanitarian safeguards have gone by the board and the truth stands out, stark and clear, that peace and unity are much too great heavenly forces for human makeshifts to bear up, the author has rightly chosen to give the world a glimpse of what the Seer of the age points it to. The author and his publishers must be congratulated on this useful and timely publication.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Students' Section

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Ego

SRI AUROBINDO : Tamas and tamasic ego are implied in each other. When one yields to tamas one indulges the tamasic ego. 14-10-1935

It is now that the tamasic ego has been manifest, it showed itself in the time of what you write about your illness, helplessness, also the recent suggestions of hopelessness and dying etc. 14-10-1935

Q. Once when the Mother was showing love, the vital being felt it should surrender even the time she was allowing it at pranam. Now it keeps hankering for a bit of the same thing.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the ego that is showing itself in its true character. Formerly, it was associating with the sadhana because it either got something of what it desired or had great expectations. Now that these things are held back and the demand for the true attitude is made on it, it resists or non-cooperates, saying "No value in such a sadhana". In all the sadhaks here, the ego (in its physical or vital physical roots) is proving to be the stumbling-block. No transformation is possible unless it changes. 23-10-1935

The fight with the ego is part of the fight with the physical nature, for it is the superficial ego in the physical consciousness irrational and instinctive, that refuses to go. 24-10-1935

Q. The ego or the vital being seems to rise up on its own and not because of outer reasons.

SRI AUROBINDO : It rises because it is its nature to do so; it wants to take hold of the being which it considers its property and field of experience. 29-10-1935

X's ego is small and not gigantic—not tall and vehement and aggressive like Y's, but squat and inertly obstinate—not fat completely, nor thin but short and roundish and grey in colour. 3-11-1935

Squat = short in stature but broad and substantial, so difficult to get rid of.
Not tall and pre-eminent or flourishingly settled in self-fullness—

roundish = plenty of it all the same.

Grey = tamasic in tendency, therefore not aggressive, but obstinate in persistence. But these are not symbols, they are the temperamental figure of the ego.

5-11-1935

Q. Is it not possible to rub out the ego completely by a continued application of the Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is possible if your consciousness associates itself with the action; then at least one can get rid of its major action and leave only minor traces. To get rid of the ego altogether however comes usually only by the descent of Consciousness from above and its occupation of the whole being aided of course by the rule of the psychic in the nature.

7-11-1935

Q. If the ego determines its revolt according to the Mother's failing to smile or to put her hand on our head, how is it that at times it can remain quiescent in spite of her failing to do so ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The ego acts according to these things when it dominates; when it does not dominate or is not present then these motives can have no effect. The whole question is whether the ego leads or something else leads. If the higher consciousness leads, then even if the Mother does not smile or put her hand at all, there will be no egoistic reaction. Once the Mother did that with a sadhika, being herself in trance—the result was that the sadhika got a greater force and Ananda than she had ever got when the Mother put her hand fully.

11-11-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

TALKS ON POETRY

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

TALK THIRTY-THREE

YOUR brains must have fairly reeled in an attempt to get into some sort of focus the "lustre" of the "Reality" Sri Aurobindo has shown in the lines I discussed in our last talk :

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.

Perhaps a reeling brain is the best help towards knowing such a Reality from within. What I mean is a condition of the sort the Zen Buddhists of Japan seek to impart or undergo. I don't mean the whack on the head which at times the Zen Master, in order to bring about *Satori* or flash of insight, gives to a disciple at the proper psychological moment, saying to himself, "Now for my stick to make a mystic of him !" I mean not the physical but the mental shock-system employing the method of what is called a *Koan*. A *Koan* is the statement of a problem insoluble by the intellect and pushing the intellect beyond itself when the intellect sincerely and perseveringly broods on the problem in order to solve the insoluble. The statement takes usually a somewhat flippant form which yet is not devoid of a sense of crisis. Thus the Master may tell his disciple : "A man with two children holding on to his two hands slips over a precipice. His teeth get clenched in the branch of a tree hanging over the edge. He is too far from the precipice-face to get a foot-hold. His hands are still grasping the kids. A friend leans over the edge from above and asks him, 'What is Zen ?' What answer would you make if you were asked ?"

And now that we are on the topics of ultimate truth and the stunning of thought I may appropriately close my talk on Logopoeia by asking ourselves a few questions about a passage from Keats's famous *Ode on a Grecian Urn* where both these topics are involved. The passage has posed a textual problem too and critics have debated the reading ever since the time of Keats. We shall deal with all the difficulties.

Let me first outline to you the complex theme of the Ode. The poet takes the scenes and figures carved on a Grecian Urn and imaginatively reconstructs the life of ancient Greece through them—a life which is full of a surging activity in contrast to the stillness and immobility of the Urn itself. The first vision of that life is in the excited lines :

What gods or men are these ? What maidens loth ?
 What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
 What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?

But the carved state in which this life comes to the poet for reconstruction is an arrestment for ever of the surge of movement and music. Thus the theme is not only a contrast between the Urn and the life portrayed upon it: the theme is also the contrast between that life in itself and its state in the portrayal on the Urn. An ancient actuality, a varied pattern of vitality in times past has been taken up into sculpture : it has been caught into the stilled perpetuation which sculpture effects of what is transient by representing it in marble. The theme thus develops into sculpture's upliftment of an aspect of life into a posture of beauty above the changes of time—time which leads all human passion to sorrow and surfeit, and all human living to degeneration and death. This posture of beauty, at once expressive and immobile, acquires a definition in terms of inwardness in the lines where Keats dwells on the musicians carved as playing their pipes. Theirs is a music that is silent because the playing is depicted in silent stone. Yet this music is felt to be far superior to any that can actually be played; for, it is free from the limited and the temporary which all played music is—it is part of an infinite possibility, a limitless ideality. And the feeling of its magic and mystery is embodied in the quietly challenging and equably modulating lines which are some of Keats's best :

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on :
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone...

It is in the last line that the sculpted posture of beauty gets an inward definition. The silent music provided by sculpture is realised by the "spirit" to which the

“ditties of no tone” are said to be played. Spirit now is contrasted to sense, “the sensual ear”. The power of sculpture is suggested as belonging to the depth of spirit, a domain beyond the surface-sensations of life.

Such, to my mind, is the shape of the complex theme of the poem as it proceeds towards its close. The equation of the art of sculpture to the spirit’s depth is hinted as early as the second stanza out of the five that make up the poem. It is carried towards a final illumination through the penultimate stanza. The vitality represented so far is of pleasure and desire : now it is concentrated in the worship-motif. Festivity and love that figure in detail at the end of the second stanza and at the beginning of the third are replaced by the ritual of religion. The stanza opens—

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?

The procession is described—first the “mysterious priest” leading towards the “green altar” the garlanded “heifer lowing at the skies”. Behind the sacramental victim is the rest of the crowd, the “folk” of the “little town” emptied for the ritual “this pious morn”. William Walsh, a modern critic, has characterised the stanza as associating the natural and the numinous: that is to say, the familiar and the religiously solemn, the human and the superhuman, the material world and the mystery beyond. And, contemplating the blend of the natural and the numinous, the poet says :

And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e’er return.

After these lines the poet reaches the *grand finale*. The reintroduced motifs of “evermore” and of silence together with the worship-motif render the transition spontaneous to the stanza which culminates in the logopoeia with which our discussion shall end, an example combining the finely reflective and the powerfully epigrammatic and constituting a problem of several sorts which is worth our examination. The stanza is :

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The stanza begins iconopoeically : from the fourth line onwards it is logopoeic. Let us go over it slowly. “O Attic shape !”—the Urn is of course addressed and it is called by the adjective referring to Attica, ancient Athens. In being called Attic its artistic perfection is suggested : the adjective in phrases like “Attic salt” and “Attic wit” connotes exquisite refinement. Robert Bridges introduces a rather irreverent note by saying that Keats here stumbles upon a pun : the word “attic” in English means also the highest storey of a house, usually a room at the top where all sorts of odds and ends, old furniture, clothes, vases are stocked. The Grecian Urn may be regarded as an object of that sort. Well, this notion was never in Keats’s mind, I am sure; though double shades in general cannot be ruled out in his verse. What Keats intended is made clear by the second phrase : “Fair attitude !” A thing of poised yet expressive beauty is what he sets before us. Over the surface of this Urn the sculptor has wrought a fringe of human figures and natural objects in marble. “Brede” is archaic English for “braid” which, among other things, signifies border-decoration as in embroidery. Now we reach the logopoeic lines. Keats says that the Urn which is a silent form puts us in the frame of mind in which we would be if we contemplated the fact of Eternity—it creates a mystic mood in which we are carried beyond all thinkable things, all things that we can describe in intelligible speech : we are borne off towards an experience of the inconceivable, the ineffable. Here the theme of melodies unheard which led us to sculpture’s essence of Spirit—essence later connected to religious mystery—finds intense though brief illumination. Then the Urn is again apostrophised. It is called “Cold Pastoral !” The meaning of the noun is : “a play, poem or picture portraying country life.” Here there is a marble picture, as it were—a picture that is cold because marble is cold and also because there is no agitation of life-activity. The coldness, however, is not of death : it is not of life lost but of life transcended. And the portrayal coldly done is such that it shall survive the generation to which Keats belongs. The expression is somewhat similar to the line in the *Ode to a Nightingale* :

No hungry generations tread thee down...

When old age will take Keats’s contemporaries to death, the Urn will stay unchanged. Free from precarious and frustrating life, it is free from all woe. Amidst the woe of Keats’s time it stands as a reminder of the Eternal : after this time, when there will be other woe, it will yet be the same reminder. It will be a friend to man and give man a message of supreme significance.

Now we reach two puzzles discussed again and again by critics. One is :
To whom or what are we to ascribe the words :

...that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

At first look Keats seems suddenly addressing his reading public and giving his own commendation of the phrase which the Urn is imagined as uttering to man : "Beauty is truth, truth beauty." Some critics opine that the entire two lines are the utterance of the Urn. A third alternative was proposed—for the first time, I believe, in the history of criticism—by one of you when I happened to mention the puzzle in private. It is that Keats is addressing not his reading public but the Urn itself after its message to man has been stated. What is the correct interpretation ? The other puzzle is the sense of the philosophical epigram : "Beauty is truth, truth beauty."

The argument of those who make the Urn's message consist only of five words is that only these words are in inverted commas. Against the conclusion drawn from this limited use of the quotation marks, we may point to the poem as originally written. There is Keats's own autograph and there are the transcripts made by his friends Brown, Woodhouse and Dilke. Nowhere in these versions which are the earliest, the most foundational, are there any inverted commas. The whole statement after "say'st" is one piece, evidently the Urn's deliverance. Also, when in January 1820 the poem appeared in *Annals of the Fine Arts* XV, they are absent : the only difference from the unprinted text is that a new sentence begins with "That is all..." The difference cannot prevent the new sentence from being part of the Urn's message. The sole intention seems to be to separate with greater clearness two sections of a single pronouncement. If we keep this point in mind we shall be better equipped to face the fact which the five word-wallahs flaunt before us—namely, that in the volume of poems Keats published in June of the same year he put those five words within inverted commas. We are told : "Here is Keats's definitive version." But let us ask : "Has he still kept the words apart by a full stop as in *Annals of the Fine Arts* ? Or has he joined them up to the remainder as in the original version, with just a comma and a dash ? He has effected no radical distinction. Whatever separation was required has evidently been effected by the inverted commas. It would seem that the same distinction as intended by starting a new sentence after the first five words without putting the latter in inverted commas has been brought about by employing these marks and what has thus been brought about renders it unnecessary to use a full stop. The full stop did not introduce a new speaker : analogically, in view of the removal of the full stop, the inverted commas also do not introduce Keats in *persona propria* as distinguished from

the Urn. So far as the speaker is concerned, the inverted commas are equivalent in function to the full stop.

Further, the word "ye" in Keats's own mouth in an address to his reading public would be at variance with the form of speech adopted in the phrases of the same stanza!

.....tease us out of thought.....

and

.....in midst of other woe

Than ours.....

Keats and his reading public are taken together by him as one group in the first-personal plural pronouns "us" and "ours": he does not stand over against it as "ye" would make him do. If he were directly speaking in his own person he would say :

that is all

We know on earth, and all we need to know.

"We" would be in accord with "us" and "ours" and at the same time serve for the poet's commendation of "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" if such commendation were intended. The absence of this natural "we" should indicate that Keats is not personally underlining anything addressed to his reading public and that "ye" is spoken by the Urn.

It may be asked : "Why should the Urn say 'Ye' instead of 'thou' when, as Keats tells us in line 8, it is addressing 'man'?" A convincing answer can be made in several steps. Keats has already used "thou" in reference to the Urn itself two lines earlier—

...a friend to man, to whom thou say'st...

The Urn employing "thou" again would constitute an artistic blemish, an awkwardness of language, even a confusion in meaning. It must employ either "you" or "ye". In general, "ye" was considered in the old days to have more poetic associations than "you". In the lines about unheard melodies "ye" is used—"therefore, ye soft pipes, play on"—where "you" could have done duty as well. Of course, "ye" there is in the plural number, but that is not the reason for rejecting "you" which too is legitimate for the plural : the reason is the better poetic effect to Keats's ear which more than the ear of other Romantic poets was influenced by Spenser. To justify "ye" in the poem's last line all we require to do is to ask whether "ye" may replace "thou" which is in the singular

number. Surely it is known that "you" can replace "thou". I can give a very apt quotation in this matter—some lines of Otway in his drama *Venice Preserved* :

O woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man : we had been brutes without you.

Here "woman" is generically addressed just as "man" is generically mentioned in Keats's line (as well as here) : the only difference is that Otway says "you" for woman and Keats "ye" for man. In Otway's lighter context "you" is quite appropriate. The more exalted speech that is the close of Keats's Ode calls for "ye" : this form brings poetically the right tone. The only doubt possible is whether "ye" can be in the singular just as "you" can. Its equivalence to it in the plural should itself tend to assure us here. And actually, among its uses, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* of 1936 (p.2465, col. 1) lists one in which it takes the place of "thou" in addressing a single person (originally as a sign of respect or deference). Today it is most frequent in familiar phrases like "How d'ye do ?", "What d'ye think ?", "Thank ye", "I tell ye". But poetry too is not devoid of instances which leave no doubt. When we read Scott's

Hush ye, hush ye, little pet ye !

or Tennyson's

'Damsel,' he said, 'ye be not all to blame',

the singular number is apparent.

At this place we may glance at the highly original proposition that Keats is addressing the Urn. Since he has been often addressing it in the course of the Ode and has started the poem with an address to it, there is no inherent implausibility in the proposition. Further, we have established that "ye" can stand for "thou". So, when we find Otway and some others using "you" for "thou", why could not Keats make "ye" do the same job ? Linguistically, we cannot rule out the possibility that the poet is speaking to the Urn. However, we may question the occasion for the sudden shift from "thou" to "ye"—and not only one "ye" but two. Of course, if the shift is made once, we may expect it to be made twice for consistency's sake. But the very consistency here reminds us of Keats's sense of harmony. We feel that he would not change over from "thou" to "ye" in a capricious manner : he would do it only if the interests of significance or of style demanded it. Poets can be capricious, but Keats of the Ode-period especially was a scrupulous and controlled craftsman with a clear head. And there is no imaginative reason here why he should break into a repeated "ye" when "thou" would be the smoothest and most harmonious

term. Besides, to say to the Urn that all it knows and all it needs to know is "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" does not add very much to the power of the poem : it sounds almost like a truism, a superfluous assertion : the words following those within quotation marks would be a meaningful and momentous endorsement if they are directed by the Urn to man or by Keats to his reading public which also is human. Again, the connection which the comma and the dash institute between these words and the five preceding them is not exactly favourable to the alternative my student has put forth. Appreciative though I am of its originality, I do not think we should go outside the two that have generally been discussed.

Now we may proceed from the points already considered for taking as the Urn's own utterance all that succeeds the first five words. Those points being settled, we may touch on some others. If the Urn's message ends with the first five words, we get Keats doing here what he usually does not : he seldom directly addresses his reader or readers. Also, we make him forget his keen artistic sense : a personal intrusion in favour of the reading public breaks the thematic unity of the poem by bringing in a jarring didactic note from outside : whatever lesson there may be should arise organically from the treatment of the subject and be, as it were, in character and not stick out by superimposition : the Urn itself expressing a message would be in tune with the treatment whereas the poet coming forward with a homily would be an inartistic jolt such as Keats would avoid. Some might even say, as Bowra does, that if he himself is talking, we get a statement from him which makes him a "ruthless aesthete" going against all that he has said elsewhere about the importance of human activities and relations : according to Bowra, what would be emphasised is the exclusive importance of Art and it would be natural for the Urn to lay stress on this importance but for Keats to say that nothing beyond Art matters would be something at odds with his general outlook at this period of his life as known from his letters as well as other poems.

Bowra's contention might hold if "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" had *only* an Art-connotation. But all the rest of the considerations we have advanced are enough to prove that the inverted commas are not meant to cut short the Urn's speech. What they do is to divide clearly the speech into two sections, the first presenting a sort of motto, an aphorism or piece of doctrine, a general and impersonal and universal text, and the second the Urn's own comment on it. The opening five words are as if a quotation, and the quotation marks serve to mark it off as such. Whether they have only an Art-connotation or no, they certainly do bear on Art in a momentous mode and thus it is natural that the Urn, as itself a piece of Art, should add its own endorsement.

Now we have to attempt an interpretation of the formula emphasised as all-important by the Urn. One interpretation is that beauty alone matters. But this ignores the double statement and the balance set up between beauty

and truth. Another interpretation is that in Art there should be nothing merely true and nothing merely beautiful. On the one hand, gross realism is to be avoided; on the other, ornament for ornament's sake must be eschewed. Realism without beauty cannot be Art : decorativeness without a basis of reality can also not be Art. Representation of brute fact is ugly whereas Art has to do with beauty : colour and image and sound without any touch on things felt and known is sheer fancy whereas Art deals with truth. Beauty and truth are both essential to Art and they do not exist apart from each other and outside of each other : nothing can be true unless it is beautiful and nothing can be beautiful unless it is true. This is taken by many critics as the significance of those five words. The words are regarded as a precept for Art-creators and a definition of artistic work for Art-appreciators.

No doubt, Art has neither to rest satisfied with brute fact nor to stay content with colour and image and sound for their own sake. But surely Keats shows the Grecian Urn to be doing more than avoiding gross realism or ornament for ornament's sake ? And does not all Art bring a revealing vision, go beyond the surface of things, the mere existence of things as well as beyond the play of fancy and hence beyond the surface of the curious constructive mind ? In doing this, what exactly does it achieve ? Let us recapitulate our findings on sculpture from the poem before us. According to Keats, the Grecian Urn has brought a sense of something above the precariousness and frustration of ordinary life and this something is a wonderfully expressive stillness, an infinitely suggestive silence whose sweet plenitude goes deeper than the world of sense and is realised by the spirit : what the Urn brings is a revelation of the supra-sensuous to the depths of the spirit : it communicates a spiritual reality to the spiritual consciousness through a representation of beautiful form in which the changes of time are transcended. After saying this in effect, Keats reconstructs a scene of religious ritual from the Urn's figures and touches again on the motifs of perpetuation and silence. Then he introduces the word "eternity". The Grecian Urn with a perplexing exquisiteness bears us above the perceptive and conceptive powers and activities of thought as though towards a divine reality, a divine consciousness that is ineffably eternal. The statement—"beauty is truth, truth beauty"—comes on top of all that the Urn has already been said to do and gathers up and completes the significance communicated so far of the little masterpiece from Attica : it "caps, crowns and clinches all". If it did not perform that function, it would be an anti-climax or pompous irrelevance. It may include the doctrine of eschewing both gross realism and ornament for ornament's sake; but it must contain a wider and deeper substance vibrant with the metaphysical and the mystical. And unless it did this, even the Urn's commendation of it as a message of paramount importance age after age to "man" in his state of "woe" would sound false.

To understand the beauty-truth equation in a metaphysical and mystical

sense relevant to the Urn we must look for a mediating term between them provided by the poem itself. This term is "eternity". The general meaning of "eternity" we have set forth. But there is a particular shade which we must now note. The Urn teases us out of thought by not only its time-transcending and spirit-packed silence : it does so by also its perfect form. It is the "silent form" that is said to "tease us out of thought / As doth eternity". Eternity is seen as manifesting somehow through the silent form shown by the Urn. It is thus a Reality in which a divine archetype of the Urn's silent form exists. We may say that it is the original Divine Form in which all that has a changing shape on earth is poised in a permanence of perfection : time with its mutability of contour and colour has a stop there and its essence is held immortally before the Supreme Sight of an Intelligence higher than discursive thought. The immutable truth of the world of phenomena, the basic and unmarred reality behind them, is held in that beatific vision; and this truth, by being the essential Form of earth's contour and colour, is necessarily and fundamentally Beauty. Eternity is essential Beauty that is essential Truth and it is both these by a perfect permanence from which the shortcomings due to change in a universe of finite objects have been exceeded and transfigured. Only to this understanding of beauty and truth can we be led through what Keats has visioned in relation to the Grecian Urn and its marble mouldings. It is the Platonic idea. And that the idea should be Platonic is but fitting in the context of an Urn which is Grecian.

Of course, this Keatsian Platonism emerges from the contemplation of a piece of Art, but it has not *only* an Art-connotation. It is not confined to what is usually taken as "aesthetic" : it implies that Art is a medium of the Divine Reality and that this Divine Reality which Art reveals is the dispeller of human woe.

Hence, when the rest of the Urn's message endorses the Platonic aphorism, Art as such is not boosted as of sovereign importance. Sovereign importance is given to the bliss-breathing Divine Reality revealed by Art. Knowledge of its dual unity is declared to be the sole knowledge worth the name : every other kind of knowledge is trivial. The words—"that is all"—signify, as Walsh suggests, "that is the finally important thing". And this knowledge is not only the sole knowledge worth the name : it is also the sole knowledge necessary. The one sure and indispensable knowledge is of the Divine Reality which is the goal at once of our pursuit of the beautiful and our pursuit of the true and whose presence is suggested to us in the thought-hushed profundity of happy vision that is ours *vis-à-vis* the multi-carved perfection of the Grecian Urn.

This knowledge is akin to the *jnāna* for which a mighty ardour runs through the Indian Upanishads. "I would know That which being known, everything is known"—"What shall I do with the knowledge which will not bring me

Immortality ?”—such pronouncements carry the same rare atmosphere within which glow those five words of Keats in the context of his Ode.

All the seven lines beginning from “Thou, silent form” we have distinguished as Logopoeia. In their bringing to a culmination the metaphysical and mystical sense hinted in the rest of the poem they may be characterised as conveying the sense of what Greek philosophers called Logos in a special connotation. Logos literally means “thought-word”, but the Greek philosophers came to define it as the Word of the Divine Reason, God as the Creative Idea-Expression. The Keatsian passage is therefore Logopoeia in a double manner : its inmost subject is the Logos and its turn of speech has the thought-element in predominance.

Perhaps I have talked a little above your heads. Now that we are about to close the talk and go our own ways I may part from you no less than from Logopoeia with a logopoeic passage which nobody can accuse of being “high-brow”. I shall recite it to you with the Indian gesture of salaam which serves for parting as well as for meeting and I shall ask you to bear in mind the thought which its words convey. The lines were written by an uncommonly thoughtful I.C.S. Englishman for his fellow-officers in India and refer to a gesture connected with all kinds of brows and not only the high ones :

To passerby who makes salaam
 Don't raise a finger meagrely,
 With air of contumelious calm;
 But with entire uplifted palm
 Reciprocate it eagerly.

AMAL KIRAN (K.D.SETHNA)

THE RENAISSANCE SPIRIT

(Concluded from the January issue)

IN the field of painting for example, Giotto did what Dante had done in literature. He was followed by the painters of Quattrocento among whom were Fra Lippo Lippi and Botticelli. In all their work we find a deep delight in the life of the flesh, and even when they paint religious themes, the models are their own contemporaries slightly sublimated. They also frankly enjoy depicting scenes from the lives of the prosperous bourgeois and rich lords. For other themes they hark back to pagan myths, as in the famous "Birth of Venus."

In England we find two freethinkers in Sir Thomas More and Francis Bacon. More's *Utopia* depicts a society which had no restraining government but where men were automatically orderly and lawful because they lived by intellectual ideals and by virtue of the good that is inherent in all men. These ideas very much resemble Plato's. Francis Bacon was a man of wide learning, and he was perhaps one of the first who may be said to have a modern mind. He held that man should not take anything on blind faith; he should examine all. Nature should be his reference book and from Nature alone he should glean his knowledge, by a process of induction. Bacon's *Novum Organum* is one of the landmarks in the history of modern man.

Montaigne in France too advocated similar ideas. He discarded blind faith as misleading. He even asked what guarantee was there that Christianity was the greatest of all religions. The sanest attitude to take was one of doubt and questioning. Also, it was no use being other-worldly, since however much we might try we never could lose contact with our earth.

In all these new attitudes, we get a glimpse of how the Renaissance also proved to be a seed-time. The modern sceptical mentality had come. Individualism, which became the hall-mark of the succeeding centuries and which reached its peak in the Enlightenment of the 18th century was everywhere—in religion, in art, in thought, even in social and political life where the old domination of the individual by the guild, by the class (feudalism) and by the Church was disappearing. Each had to make his own way; egoism therefore had its day and we find several usurpations of power, especially in the small Italian city-states. In the other countries, particularly in England, France and Spain, monarchy became absolute and the era of nationalism began.

The greatest among the individualists of the Renaissance era was perhaps Leonardo da Vinci, who stands apart as a class by himself. History has rarely if ever produced such a versatile genius. Science, Art (in all its branches), Philosophy—for his art had a philosophy,—all were embraced by this giant personality in his scope. His art was not for art's sake alone, it had a purpose. Therefore he studied his models scientifically. What he had envisaged in the realm of science—acoplanes, armoured cars, steam engines,—were actually invented later. He sowed the seeds for the future.

Other great scientists there were too who were similarly pioneers in their fields. Copernicus the Polish astronomer discovered that we live in a heliocentric world. It was heresy to say so in his time, but he spoke of things that were not there in the Christian scriptures; thereby he widened the area of knowledge. The Italian Galileo supported the new theory and spent most of his time trying to persuade his age to discard Aristotelian science and begin afresh on the basis of experience. Johannes Kepler the German astronomer found that the orbits of the planets around the sun were elliptical and not round. René Descartes reduced the universe to mechanical and mathematical formulæ which had great influence on later thought. Though his dictum “Cogito ergo sum” may be debated, his intuition that the universe is basically one substance is of considerable importance to later speculation.

The man most representative of his age perhaps was Erasmus—a man of vast learning and wide experience. He travelled much and most of the humanists of the time were his personal friends. He was called, owing to the depth of his culture and his varied interests, the most civilised man of the age. He believed in the inherent goodness of man and advocated a gradual change in the prevailing institutions, through a process of enlightenment and education, rather than by revolution as suggested by Luther and Calvin. He forms a bridge between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

This age of revolt which saw the rebirth of Europe in thought and art and religion was bound to affect the life of the people. A new joy of life was found, or rather the suppressed life-instincts of the Middle Ages suddenly bubbled forth openly. Greek Epicureanism and not Greek Stoicism reigned. Life became exuberant and at times even licentious. Life became extravagant too, both in customs and costumes. Women came into their own; they now began to be educated.

In polity also there was a slow but steady change. Machiavelli formulated in his *Prince* the principles of this change. He said there that the State should be supreme and answerable to none. Its moral behaviour was not to be judged and all means could be justified if they helped in the growth of its power. Jean Bodin of France said almost the same thing. He however made a concession to medieval thought when he posited the doctrine of Divine Right and admitted a “law of God”. But that law did not apply to ordinary mortals; it was

a question between the ruler and his God. The rise of monarchical nationalism can thus be traced to the Renaissance age.

It was thus the seed-time for both individualism and the domination of the individual by the State—two parallel movements begin here and find their fulfilment in the later centuries. It was also the beginning of both Rationalism and Irrationalism, the one culminating in the Classicism and Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries, the other blossoming forth in the Naturalism of Rousseau and the Romanticism of the early 19th century, through the work begun by Rabelais and Cervantes, by Marlowe and Shakespeare. Even that modern trend towards Realism and the attempt to base our knowledge on direct experience had their beginnings in the inductive method of Francis Bacon and the close fidelity to nature in the work of Leonardo.

This Renaissance age was thus both a seed-time and an age of revolt against all that stood in the way of progress. It was the foundation of the modern age.

JHUMUR

WE FIVE

A Short Story

HE stood at the street corner and watched the children returning home from the school. "How I wish I too could go to school and learn to read and write," he thought. "Doesn't matter, let me at least follow these four friends to hear the wonderful things they learn in that big two-storeyed building." And so day after day Vijay followed these four children when they went to and from school. After a few days, blue-eyed Ratan noticed him and remarked to his friends, "I wonder why he follows us daily."

"Let us ask him what he wants," inquisitive Usha proposed. They went up to the boy who now felt ashamed and afraid to face these neatly dressed four bright youngsters. Vinu, the eldest of the four, asked, "Why do you come after us like this?"

Vijay replied, "I meant no harm, I just wanted to hear all the interesting talk about your school and wanted to know how and what you lucky boys and girls learn there."

Usha said, "Then why don't you yourself come to the school instead of loitering in the streets like this?"

Vijay's face fell, he could not reply. Raju, who had not spoken at all till, then, came forward, put his thin pale hand on Vijay's shoulder and asked "Tell us, why are you so sad?"

Vijay looked up at Raju and slowly related his story. He had a step-mother who did not allow him to go to school. She was cruel and wanted only her own son to learn and wanted Vijay to be a dullard. But Vijay who had learnt a bit of reading with his father had fallen in love with books and school; so when he could not go to school, he satisfied himself by listening to these children's happy chat. He also said that formerly he used to get up in the nights and secretly read his step-brother's books but once he was caught doing this and was beaten heavily for cheating his mother. "Since then I have never had a book to read," Vijay finished his tale painfully.

Usha, Ratan, Vinu and Raju felt very sorry and Raju asked his friends, "Can't we give some books to Vijay?"

"Yes, but our books belong to the school, how can we give them? Instead of that why not we collect some money and buy some books for him?" suggested Usha. They all took up the proposal readily and Vinu told Vijay, "We'll do something; till then you can come with us to listen to our talk about the school."

And before Vijay could thank him, he turned to the others and said, "Come let's be off and think of what can be done."

They thought hard. It wasn't possible to provide Vijay from their pocket money as the books were expensive and they had to use their pocket money for the Red-cross fund and the cricket club and the new balls. So they had to earn some money. What could they do to earn money? Usha came out with a dew-fresh suggestion. "We can buy some lemons and sugar with just a few annas. I'll bring the glasses and the jug. Ratan's house is at the street corner and he has a big garden too. We can make fresh lemonade on Saturday afternoons and ask the hot, thirsty passers-by to have a cold drink."

All of them admitted that it certainly was a fine idea. But Raju was sad, he would not be able to help. He was always so ill that all the time out of the school he had to spend in taking rest. Still he said, "I shall pray for all of you, I shall ask God to help you earn a good lot of money and shall pray to Him to help Vijay read and write."

Usha said softly, "Yes, certainly your prayers will help us and that way you too will be helping us. Don't you think so?"

So on every Saturday they prepared lemonade and served it to people. Saturday being a half holiday, many people came in for a drink because they were free and had time to spare. They liked having a drink here because there was a beautiful garden to have a pause in, and they had lovely, smiling earnest faces serving them. Soon the children made money enough to buy good books for Vijay who was very very grateful to them.

But soon Raju fell seriously ill. He had typhoid and his already weak body could not resist the illness. He was bed-ridden and in a short time was taken to a hospital. In the beginning his friends could go to see him, but when he became too ill even to speak, they were not allowed to go to him. They were very unhappy.

Raju now thought it useless to have such a frail body and health. In his bed he could not see his friends, could not play, could not eat or even speak. His mother and his father sat by his side but could do nothing. When he lost all interest the doctors were afraid. They knew that no medicine could help. They told Raju's mother, "Do something to arouse interest in him to live. He must have a will and a wish to live. He is giving in helplessly. If he goes on like this we shall have to be very sorry."

The poor mother tried to tell him all the good stories that he used to love. But he listened to them lifelessly. For hours he remained motionless in his bed. His mother told his friends about this. They were so eager for him, but what could they do?

One day Raju's mother found a small note on Raju's bed. It was addressed to Raju. It was simple and short: "There are lots and lots of things on this beautiful earth of God, for you to see. Get well soon to see them."

It was written in an extremely clear and beautiful hand. Raju's mother did not know from where it had come but she felt it was a very good note. So she read it out to Raju and said, "I don't know who has sent it." Raju listened but turned his head away as if not interested.

The next day Raju's mother saw a small dog loitering in the room. She was about to chase him away when she saw a note in his mouth. He dropped the note on Raju's bed and ran out of the room, out of the hospital into the street. The note had the same handwriting as the previous note. Raju's mother read it out : "Get well soon, little friend, to read all the fine things hidden in all the books which you have not yet read."

A flash of brightness passed over Raju's face. His mother felt it to be the grace of the note. She prayed silently to the unknown writer of the notes to write more notes to her son. For seven more days these notes came in. No one knew from where they came but everyone knew that they did wonders with Raju.

On the seventh day there was a note for Raju's mother. She read the note, went out of the room and came back after a time with a lovingly arranged flower-vase with lots of buds in it. The note had asked her to keep the flowers near Raju. Then came another note for Raju: "See how the flowers want to talk to you. See these buds; they have a secret. Watch how slowly they open and speak. Just imagine! Outside there are gardens full of these lovely colourful flowers and buds. Get well soon to see them dancing and learn their language."

Raju gazed at the flowers in the vase. After a few hours he saw the delicate petals of the buds opening and felt as though the flowers were talking to him. He did not understand them.

Raju's mother told his friends of these notes and how they helped him. They were very glad and wondered who could have done this.

The next day the dog brought a small cage with two birds. The note with it ran : "Listen to the birds' talks and songs. They sing of the beautiful world of God." Raju's mother put the cage on the window-sill where he could watch them constantly. He heard the birds twittering to each other, nodding their heads this way and that—as Usha's younger sister used to do when she explained her drawings to them—and for the first time he felt the urge to know what they said to each other.

The notes stopped coming in. But the cage occupied Raju's attention. One morning, when his mother was cleaning the cage, one of the birds escaped. Everyone was unhappy, even the bird in the cage became silent. But that evening the bird that had flown away came to the window and chirruped something to the bird in the cage. Raju saw that the cage-bird wanted to run away too. He opened the cage. Both the birds inclined their heads first to the left, then to the right, as if taking leave and cheerfully flew out of the window. When his mother asked him in alarm to explain why he had done this, he smiled

and replied, "The bird who ran away this morning came and told his friend about the colourful things he had seen. So this bird also wanted to go out. I have let it fly. Now I will get well and then go to the woods to listen to them there. I shall also see the things they see and learn their language."

That day Raju looked so much better that the doctor allowed his friends to visit him. Usha, Vinu and Ratan called Vijay and came to the hospital. A dog followed them. When Raju's mother saw the dog, she said in a happy voice, "This is the wonderful dog who brought those sweet notes for Raju. He brought the cage that saved Raju."

Usha, Ratan, Vinu all at once shouted, "But he is Vijay's dog!"

Vijay lowered his head humbly while all of them thanked him heartily. Raju's mother was overjoyed. When Vijay went up to Raju each looked into the other's eyes and read therein that theirs was a friendship tied by prayers to God. Raju turned to his other friends and said, "Till now we called ourselves 'We Four', but now with Vijay among us we shall call ourselves 'We Five'."

SUNANDA

RESPECT FOR ONE'S TEACHER

Act I

Scene I

(A well-decorated chamber in the Palace of Aurangzeb. The Emperor and his minister are seated.)

AURANGZEB—Well, minister, does the Maulavi¹ come regularly to teach my son ?

MINISTER—Yes, Your Majesty, he is regular.

AURANGZEB—I should like to see for myself the method of his teaching. Come, let us go to my son's study room.

MINISTER—Your Majesty, I am ever at your command.

Emperor and minister go out.

Scene 2

(The teacher and the prince)

TEACHER—My child, one more jug of water....

PRINCE—As you please, Sir, I am ever at your service. *(The prince starts pouring a jug of water on the teacher's feet. He then enters into another room to bring a towel for the teacher. In the meantime the teacher sees something and gets terribly frightened.)*

TEACHER—Alas, I am ruined. Woe to me! to-morrow my head will be chopped off.

Enter the prince. He offers a towel to his teacher to wipe his feet.

PRINCE—Sir, you seem to be so sad ! Why, but why ? Sir, I pray, anything wrong with you ? How I wish to share your overflowing sorrow ! Let me begin my lesson.

TEACHER *(while wiping his feet)*—My child, I am out of sorts. To-day you may enjoy leave.

Exit the prince. Soon after, the teacher returns home.

¹ Mohammedan Pundit

Scene 3

(The teacher is lying on his cot. His eyes are full of fear and tears.)

TEACHER—What an audacity! I...I.. an insignificant creature, have commanded the prince to pour water on my feet! *(Suddenly he hears a whisper within him. And now he is full of delight.)*

After all, I am a teacher. And I am expected to be greater than anybody else. No, I must not fear. Never. A teacher's prestige has no equal. To-morrow if I am asked by the Emperor to justify my to-day's conduct I will tell him the teaching of our scripture : a student must respect and obey his teacher as a disciple respects and obeys his Guru.¹ The prince is my student. So it is his highest duty and greatest lesson to respect and obey me.

Scene 4

(A messenger comes to the Maulavi.)

MESSENGER—Revered teacher, His majesty commands your presence.

MAULAVI—I knew it.

MESSENGER—Make haste, please make haste. His majesty needs you immediately.

MAULAVI—I am fully prepared. Let us be off...

Scene 5

(Palace. Emperor Aurangzeb. He is all alone in his inner chamber.)

MESSENGER—Your Majesty, the Maulavi is come.

EMPEROR—Well, you may go now.

Exit the messenger.

Maulavi Sahib, I know, you have been teaching my son for the last two years. I am really sorry that he has not learnt anything worth appreciating. On the contrary, I believe he has perfectly learnt how to ignore his teacher, whom he ought to worship. Had he learnt anything good, then I would have seen something else in his conduct yesterday.

(The Maulavi is terribly frightened.)

¹ Preceptor

TEACHER—Be pleased to make me understand what you actually mean.

EMPEROR—From a distance yesterday I saw my son was simply pouring water on your feet. Alas, never did he ask you if he could wash or rub your feet. And now what shall I do with such a useless son who has no devotion for his teacher ?

TEACHER (*astonished*)—O Emperor, you have raised the prestige of a teacher more than anybody else on earth. Mankind shall never forget your unique greatness. Truly you are the Emperor of Emperors !

ABHIJIT GUPTA

(A student of E.6, aged 14)

(*Dramatised from a famous Bengali Poem*)

THE EGOS GATHER

(I am accused of Preaching)

HE said, "You're a preacher !
Said me, "I beseech 'yer'.
Accuse me of all except this.
But if you feel terse
When you read my queer verse,
Then in 'you' there is something amiss"!

He said, "Who are you,
To take a poor view
Of things that we do or do not.
And if it's not preaching,
Then maybe you're teaching,
And what can we learn from a Scot ?"

Said I, "Fiddle-dee-dee,
Between you and me,
I'm having high-fun and you know it.
And we the united
Must never feel slighted,
Or, supposing we do, will not show it.

Now do stop and think,
For you're on the brink
Of misunderstanding each word.
If I write about you,
Why that is me too !
For am I not one of the herd ?

When I write these odd odes,
And somehow it goads
A few members to hold a communion,
As much as you try,
You cannot deny
It's started up some kind of union.

THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

THE BACKGROUND

WHEN Sri Aurobindo secretly left Calcutta early in 1910 the whole country was mystified. There was a great speculation as to where he might have gone and for what purpose. Even in those days when very little was known about his Sadhana and whatever little was known was confined to a few people, small groups formed here and there to study and practise his teachings and philosophy. As, with the progress of time, his views and vision reached more and more people, individuals and groups became interested, even in the remote corners of the earth, and the necessity was felt of having an organisation which could bring them together for taking part in giving a practical shape to the ideals.

In this connection we may be permitted to refer to a letter from Sri Aurobindo to his younger brother Barinda years back. The relevant portion of it runs thus—"If we remain individually everywhere something will be done indeed, but if we remain everywhere as part of a 'Sangha' a hundred times more will be done". Something like this was at the back of our minds when we conceived the idea of starting the Society whose first object was drafted as follows : "To make known to the members and the people in general the aims and ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and their system of Integral Yoga and to work for its fulfilment in all possible ways and for the attainment of a spiritualised Society as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo." Our Society came into being on the 19th of September, 1960, and was incorporated under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 with The Mother as its Supreme Executive Head and Permanent President. People from all over the world spontaneously enlisted themselves as members, most of the important Centres sought approval to convert themselves into Branches, and others applied for affiliation.

THE CONFERENCE

By the time of the Pujas sufficient progress had been made to impress upon the sponsors the necessity of convening a conference—the First Annual Conference—of members, representatives of Centres and of friends and well-wishers for taking stock of the progress so far made, for receiving suggestions, and for considering the future programme. The idea was placed before The Mother towards the end of November and received Her approval

and Blessings. A Reception Committee was formed with Sri Laljibhai D. Hindocha as Chairman. In view of the very short time at their disposal the Committee set to work energetically with the active co-operation of the various departments of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The venue of the Conference was the Theatre Hall which Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education had very kindly lent for the purpose. The Conference was spread over three days—the 29th, 30th and 31st of December.

The Mother graciously gave a special message for the occasion which was tape-recorded in Her own voice. It read :

“The true fortune is to spend in the right way.

You become truly rich when you dispose of your wealth in the best possible way.”

THE PROCEEDINGS

29th : The proceedings started with an invocation in Hindi—“Andhakar se kampf Dharani, Jhalak urhi kaun aya”—followed by a short meditation with The Mother’s tape-recorded music. Thereafter The Mother’s Message was announced and Mr. Richard Eggenberger, an American musician, gave readings from Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri*.

Welcoming the delegates, members and visitors, Sri Laljibhai said : “Humanity stands at the cross-roads and it has to make a distinct choice between self-destruction and self-transformation. At such a juncture it is but natural that we should turn with hope to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother who previsioned the present impasse and showed us the true way out.”

Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, the Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, wishing the Conference all success said : “I say to the children of The Mother—reminding them—they are to be true to Her, true to Her teachings, for that is the only way to success.”

Sri S. K. Datta, Chief Commissioner of Pondicherry, in welcoming the guests to the State, hoped that the Society in its significant role would spread Sri Aurobindo’s message throughout the world.

In his presidential address which followed, Dr. Mahatab declared that it was destined that Sri Aurobindo should guide us at this crucial moment as promised by the Lord in Srimat Bhagavat Gita. According to Dr. Mahatab : “Dharma is human effort motivated by Divine Consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has shown us the way to achieve it. It is the spiritual realisation by more and more individuals that will enable humanity to attain Divine Consciousness. Thousands in the world are now trying to know what Yoga is and they look upon India as the seat of the Divine Knowledge. This is the right time for an organisation like Sri Aurobindo Society, which is international in its character, to come into being to take up the work of fulfilling what Sri Aurobindo stands

for.” Dr. Mahatab reminded the gathering that it is The Mother who wants to translate into practice the highest consciousness and knowledge attained in meditation and that the work the Ashram is doing is important not only for India but for the whole world.

Sri Navajata, the General Secretary of the Society, said in the course of his Annual Report that sincerity and selflessness should inspire all who would work for Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. “We should know that only a Force higher than mind could solve the problems of the modern world. This force or consciousness called Supermind by Sri Aurobindo and by The Mother has descended on Earth and it is for more and more individuals to offer their instrumentality to it for their own good and the good of the world.” He further stated that Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is not one of running away from life but embraces all our day-to-day activities.

Sri S. K. Banerji, Professor of History at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, began his talk on “Sri Aurobindo and Human Unity” with The Mother’s saying : “The world is a unity.” The time has come, he stressed, to make this real to us. According to all the sages unity is the ultimate truth and a perceptible growth towards unity has already taken place, unknown to the common man.

The proceedings ended with an announcement of the programme for the following day, followed by ‘Vande Mataram’ presented by the Ashram Students’ Choir.

The Mother sent her Blessings to the Conference every day through flowers. 30th. On this day the first session commenced at 3 p.m. with Sri Surendra Mohan Ghose in the Chair. Statewise reports were read and suggestions made by the following :

Srimati Usha Bhattacharji (Assam); Sri H. K. Niyogi (West Bengal); Sri M. L. Himatsingka (Behar); Sri M. P. Nagarseth (Delhi and Punjab); Sri Ishwar Bhai Bhatt (Gujerat); Sri K. Krishnan Nambiar (Kerala); Sri S. Sharma (Madhya Pradesh); Sri Balkrishna Poddar (Maharashtra and Bombay); Professor S. S. Malwad (Mysore); Sri Gourgopal Das (Orissa); Sri Rajeshwar Ojha (Rajasthan); Sri K. D. Acharya (U.P.) and Sri Navajata.

The report from Africa was taken as read as the member who was to read it could not come to the Session.

Sri S. S. Jhunjunwala related his experiences of the interest evinced in Sri Aurobindo’s ideals in the different countries of Europe which he had toured on behalf of the Society. The delegates and members offered many suggestions for future work. Some of the more important of which are :

A Centre for the training of teachers in the Intégral System of Education should be started at Pondicherry.

The State Education Departments and Institutions should be approached to give facilities such as duty leave, expenses for training period etc. to teachers

and physical instructors willing to come for training to Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

Attention of the Directors of Public Instruction and Teachers' Training Institutes in different states should be drawn to the book *Education* published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The Society should undertake the production of the right type of films and documentaries.

The members and branches of the Society should participate actively in helping or serving Sri Aurobindo Ashram in giving to the world an example of spiritualised life by studying what was the work to be done and how they could take part in it.

A Teachers' Conference should be organised as a part of the next Annual Conference.

Regional Conferences should be held at district and state levels before the next Annual Conference.

The members should live according to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and thus set an example to others.

Branches and Centres should, if convenient and possible, observe 21st February and 15th August as days for sending offerings to The Mother.

The Society should collect and circulate amongst all centres information about important activities of major centres and of new items of work successfully executed by any centre.

The Society, centres and members should encourage Industrial and Agricultural Co-operatives through technical and other assistance, and help the aspirants to work with a new consciousness and to implement ideals. The Mother should be requested to permit senior members of the Ashram to visit various centres.

Centres should establish Meditation Halls.

Slide shows and exhibitions of Ashram products, arts and crafts, children's work, photographs, paintings, books, etc. should be organised at various places to give a clear idea of the life in the Ashram and the way the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are being translated into practice.

Books specially useful for schools, colleges, women and children should be published and book-sales organised more widely.

A reference guide to important subjects, indicating books (and pages) where they are referred to in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, should be published.

Universities desirous of establishing chairs for the study of the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and schools and colleges trying to include them in their curricula, should be given all co-operation.

Institutions or persons interested in the study of the Gita and the Vedas should receive special facilities by way of answers to their queries. Moreover,

translations of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* and *On the Veda* should be published in different languages.

At the next Conference separate talks should also be arranged in vernaculars for those who cannot understand English.

Questions should be printed at the end of each story of *The Mother's Tales of All Times*.

The Conference adjourned for an "At home" given to all present by the Society.

The balance of the work of the 1st sitting was completed after the reception.

At the second sitting Sri Surendra Mohan Ghose, M.P., said : "Today I remember Sri Aurobindo asking everyone who joined His inner political circle this question : 'Why do you want India to be free ?' and Sri Aurobindo's own answer to this was, 'Because India will then be able to help the world.' Thus even then Sri Aurobindo was aware of India's spiritual destiny; and I am happy that Sri Aurobindo's ideals are being actualised by The Mother."

Initiating discussions at the second sitting Dr. Mahatab remarked : "I have watched the Ashram with a critical eye. One wonders how it maintains itself and, more, how it keeps growing and expanding without any visible source of income or organised fund-collecting effort. This is a place where, under the guidance of The Mother, spirituality is lived and not merely discussed.

"Here is lived not the life of an ascetic who runs away from life but a life of Integral Yoga which aims at divinising the life on earth. I have no doubt that even a short stay here does good to one's soul, for here one can breathe spirituality in the atmosphere. The system of education introduced here is not merely better than any I have seen elsewhere but something others cannot do. It needs to be adopted everywhere; but many trained teachers will be needed, and also large finances which must be found, to train them. This Ashram has thus become a source of Light and Truth to which all must turn and whose roots we must carefully nourish."

Sri K. N. Mukherjee, an Industrialist from Calcutta, said that every circle needed a centre and so each one of us should try to become a living centre, if the Circles of Life Divine were to develop. He also emphasised that we should serve the Ashram in every possible way.

It was suggested that the next World Conference should be held in 1964 or thereafter and that guidance should be sought from The Mother and details planned.

It was also suggested that the next Annual Conference should be organised during the same period, *i.e.*, from 29th to 31st December 1962. The following resolution sponsored by Sri Gourgopal Das and seconded by Sri Rajeshwar Ojha was passed : "This Conference of Sri Aurobindo Society resolves that The Mother be approached to permit State and District Conferences to be

held wherever possible, before the next Annual Conference, in order to advance the purposes of the Society."

Mr. K.C. Reddy, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Government of India, also attended this session of the Conference.

Mr. Kirit Joshi gave a lucid discourse on "Education at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education". Explaining the details of the organisation he said : "This system aims at developing the integrated personality of a student by helping him to discover his true being, his Psyche, to maintain constant contact with it and to strengthen this contact."

In the evening the visitors and the Ashramites were shown three Japanese films brought in by a Japanese delegate.

31st. The session started at 8-15 in the morning with hymns from the Vedas and meditation. The well-known poets of Gujerat and Karnatak, Sri Sundaram and Sri Bendreji, enchanted the audience with their recitations.

Sri A. B. Patel speaking at the Conference pointed out that to do the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother one should try to become a true instrument of the New Light Sri Aurobindo and the Mother represented. "Your way of work must be deeper than the mental, for old methods cannot do this new work; not only a new consciousness must be finally established but also a new process must be found before anything truly effective can be done."

Reverend Bhiksu Dhammadhira Mahathera of Cambodia said : "When I asked The Mother,—'Mother, tell me how best I can serve you and Sri Aurobindo,' The Mother replied : 'You are a Buddhist, follow your own path, for roads to spirituality are manifold and none should therefore force his way on any other person.' "

In his concluding remarks Dr. Mahatab stated : "I have been aware of a New Force and a new discipline guiding our deliberations and I therefore did not use old methods in the conduct of our proceedings." He also mentioned that our Conferences would be of a new type and not of the usual formal nature.

Mr. Purushottam Thakkar thanked the delegates, members and Ashram departments on behalf of the Reception Committee.

Apart from the regular business of the Conference arrangements were made to take the visiting delegates and members round the Ashram Departments, the International Centre of Education and the Lake Estate. They witnessed Physical Culture Activities, attended Physical Culture Exercises, the Evening Meditation and the Balcony Darshan. Those who preferred to stay till the New Year's Day attended the Mother's New Year's Music at 10 in the morning, and had Her New Year's Blessings, given individually to all, at the monthly "Prosperity" distribution.

An exhibition of books of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother in different languages, and photographs of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and the Ashram and its activities, was also arranged at the Theatre Hall.

On this occasion a brochure (with pictures) was published by the Society which briefly explained the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the working of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and the objects, rules and regulations of Sri Aurobindo Society.

The visitors met the General Secretary of the Society both statewise and individually, and discussed with him, besides the matters decided at the Conference, the work to be done in their area and for serving the Ashram.

Those who did not know English had ample opportunity to meet people in the Ashram, who could explain to them in their own languages the vision of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo Centres and Branches of the Society also sent in advance their written reports and suggestions in the form approved by The Mother.

In spite of all our shortcomings and the very short time at our disposal the Conference has succeeded beyond our expectations, and our thanks are due to The Mother whose grace made it possible, and to all who co-operated to make it a success.

The delegates and members parted looking forward to the pleasure of actively fulfilling the decisions taken and of meeting again.

BIRENDRA CHANDRA SEN

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