

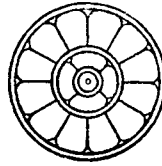
MOTHER INDIA

MARCH 1962

Price : Rs. 1-00

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

Publication Office : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIV

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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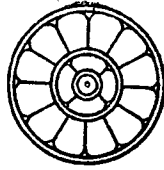
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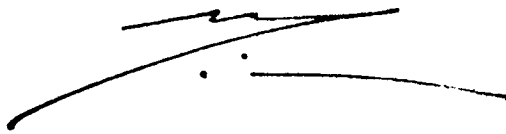
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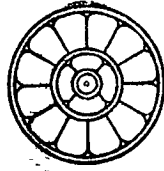
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What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme.





Si le Seigneur veut pour toi une calamité, pourquoi protesterais-tu ? Prends-la comme une bénédiction, et, en fait, elle le deviendra.

If the Lord wills for you a hardship, do not protest. Take it as a blessing and indeed, it will become so.

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 fourteenth 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 7, 1939

P TOLD N to lead and said that if N had nothing to ask, he would : he had a question ready. N told him he had one question to ask. So as soon as the Mother went down and Sri Aurobindo himself was ready to talk he began.

N : Did you mean, yesterday, that by the psychic realisation one can't get rid of ego ? I couldn't understand it.

SRI AUROBINDO : One can get rid of egoism but not of ego. For the psychic depends on the individual nature for its action. The lower nature has its hold on the individual and the psychic works through the individual. The psychic realisation is the realisation of the individual soul which feels as one in the many ; your individuality is not lost in the realisation. The individual soul works in the mind and heart and other parts and purifies them bringing in the realisation of devotion—Bhakti—love etc. But the ego remains—it is the saint ego, the Bhakta ego, the ego of the Sadhu or of a virtuous man : as Rama-krishna says, *bhakta āmi, dās āmi* ("Bhakta I, servant I") and Ram Prasad says, "I want to eat sugar, not be sugar." The psychic of course opens the way to the realisation of the Spiritual Self by which the ego can go. By the realisation of the Spirit, you feel one with the Divine and you see the One everywhere. The individual "I" is replaced by the Divine "I". The Spirit doesn't need the individual as the basis of action. Even so it may be the abolition of the

mental ego leaving the other parts to act in their own way. That is what is meant by allowing Prakriti to act in its own way till the death of the body takes place and, when the body drops, it also drops. There the psychic attitude has to come to remove the ego from the vital and by the combination of the psychic and the spiritual realisations the ego can go.

I don't know if you have understood anything.

N : Can both the realisations work together or must they be one after the other ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In some, it may be the psychic that leads in the beginning, in others the spiritual. If it is the spiritual opening, then after some time it has to stop to bring in the psychic element in the sadhana. Of course one can stop with the realisation in the mental plane, the psychic element not being necessary for it. But for complete transformation, both things are needed.

P : In case of weakening of the nervous envelope, can one replenish it by drawing Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Drawing from where ? From the Universal Vital or the Higher Force ?

P : The Universal Vital.

SRI AUROBINDO : Have you felt it ?

P : I mean drawing from the Universal Vital. That I had felt while I was in Guest House.

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean at the time when the sadhana was in the vital, that brilliant period ?

P : Yes ; but now either due to lack of capacity or lack of will or some fear that drawing from that source may not be safe, I don't try.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no harm in drawing from the Universal Vital. One can combine its action with that of the Higher Force.

If one is conscious of the nervous envelope and its weakening etc., one can put it right, replenish or increase its strength by any or both of the processes. But when you speak of lack of will, you must guard against any inertia of the being. At the time you speak of we were in the vital, the brilliant period of the Ashram. People were having brilliant experiences, big push, energy, etc. If our Yoga had taken that line, we could have ended by establishing a great religion, bringing about a big creation etc., but our real work is different, so we had to come down into the physical. And working on the physical is like digging the ground ; the physical is absolutely inert, dead like stone. When the work began there, all former energies disappeared, experiences stopped ; if they came they didn't last. The progress is exceedingly slow. One rises, falls ; rises again and falls again, constantly meeting with the suggestions of the Vedic Asuras, "You can't do anything, you are bound to fail."

You have to go on working and working year after year, point after point, till you come to a central point in the subconscious which has to be conquered

and it is the crux of the whole problem, hence exceedingly difficult. You know what Vivekananda said about the nature of man ? That it is like dog's tail. So long as you keep it straight, it is so; then as soon as you release it, it curves back. This point in the subconscious is the seed and it goes on sprouting and sprouting till you have cut out the seed.

N : We must thank the Creator for this gift!

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the ignorance and from this ignorance the Divine is working things out. If it were not so, what would be the meaning of the play? This yoga is like a path cut through a jungle and once the path is made, it will be easy for those who come afterwards. But before that it is a long-drawn-out battle. The more you gain in your strength, the more becomes the resistance of the hostile forces. I myself had suggestion after suggestion that it wouldn't succeed. But I always remember the vision the Mother had. It was like this, The Mother, Richard and I were going somewhere. We saw Richard going down to a place from which rising was impossible. Then we found ourselves sitting in a carriage the driver of which was taking it up and down a hill a number of times. At last he stopped on the highest peak. Its significance was quite clear to us.

S : Will people who are new-comers have to go slowly too ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Necessarily. The work being in the subconscious and the pressure on the physical, they will have to share the atmosphere—unless they isolate themselves from the atmosphere. There is a case of someone who made very good progress in the mental plane. He kept himself isolated—I mean inner isolation—from the atmosphere. But as soon as he came to the vital, he couldn't go on further, all his progress stopped.

S : The new-comers can't make any rapid progress in that case.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not? But rapid progress is only possible when one keeps the right attitude, keeps himself separate from all vital mixtures. He must be able to fulfil the demands made on him.

N : I suppose people who come after will be more lucky, for, by your victory over the subconscious, things will be easier.

SRI AUROBINDO : Maybe, in a way ; but the demands may be more exacting. As regards tapasya you can't deny that you had an easy time of it in the past.

S : But when one enters into the subconscious, does one who has had some contact with the Brahman lose that contact entirely ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it is only apparently lost. Everything remains behind. But if he doesn't want to go further, his yoga stops there. That's all. When this subconscious change has to come about, many will find it difficult. There may be some who will drop out, because they may not fulfil the demands made on them. For instance H. At the beginning he was swimming in poetry and kept some old movements going. But as soon as the Mother decided that that sort of thing couldn't go on and his vital must change, he could not bear

it and he dropped out. At one time, as I hinted to you, the Mother was putting great pressure for a big push, as you know it is her nature to do. But no one could stand it ; we thought the whole thing would break. There was a great row in the vital. We had to withdraw. Of course we can do our work quicker, but how many will go through the ordeal ?

If the sadhaks had kept the right attitude at the time when the sadhana was in the vital, there would not have been so much difficulty today even in working out the subconscious. For with the force and power gained at that time, the Mother could have come down into the physical and done the work with greater ease.

But the sadhaks resisted the attempt and continued to make demands on the Mother. Instead of allowing the Mother to raise them up, they tried to bring her down to their own level and for a time we had to consent. And that meant delay in the work. There are also people who have told the Mother that they understand the nature of their difficulty, see their mistakes but haven't the power to resist. There are other cases too who have thought that they have been able to get rid of plenty of things, that these things didn't exist any more in them, and were much surprised to see them again coming up in their nature.

That is all due to the subconscious ; you reject a thing from the mind, it goes into the vital, from there to the physical ; and when you drive it out from there, it lodges in the subconscious. Anger, sex, jealousy, attachment find refuge there. One has to throw them out, as the Yogis say, cut the seed out. That is why transformation is necessary. Without transformation of nature, the seed of these things remains there.

N : But I don't understand how they can rush up or remain after realisation of the Divine or complete union with Him. If you ask me what I mean by complete union, I won't be able to define it.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is precisely what I will ask you.

N : Take, for instance, Ramakrishna's case. We never heard of any sex impulse rising in him.

SRI AUROBINDO : You didn't hear of his praying to the Mother that the sex impulse must not come to him ? He told Her that if it did, he would take his life.

N : But that was at the beginning.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes ; but the Mother or Cosmic Force didn't send the *kāma* any more.

N : You mean it was in the subconscious.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, of course. If it had come up, he would have rejected it.

N : Then if rejection is possible, why bother so much about transformation and all that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Ramakrishna is Ramakrishna. I bother because everybody is not Ramakrishna. Haven't you heard of many Yogis and Rishis falling from the path owing to these impulses ?

I was suffering from some intermittent fever in the north for a long time. It continued here also. In the course of the fever someone above or something within me said, "No more fever." Something in my being accepted the suggestion and there was no fever ! But everybody can't do it.

Human nature is an extremely difficult business. I told you that my experience of calm and nirvana has never left me but I had to work and work to establish that calm and equanimity in every part of my being. You know what is equanimity ? It means that nothing stirs under any condition. Till last August I was successful. This accident was perhaps the last test to my equanimity. In that way one has to go on working things out till one reaches the central point in the subconscious which is the seed one has to cut out.

It is while working in this way that I came to notice many gaps that had not been filled up. It may be due to those gaps that the accident took place. When one has conquered that subconscious seed a force will be established in the world-action and those who embody it will be able to throw it around them like waves for the change.

Q. I hope you are making rapid progress now.

SRI AUROBINDO : It looked as if I was, till the moment of the accident. When one comes into contact with a big Force then the progress is very rapid but it is extremely difficult to get it. It is peculiar that in a lying position I can't draw down the maximum Force, can't exert the highest Force which never fails. That Force is sure in its action even though temporary. But lying down I can't use it, perhaps because this is a tamasic position, a position of relaxation or rest, and I have not been used to it. I get the highest Force walking or sitting. In this cough, for instance, I was feeling too lazy to apply any Force. Only when it was annoying, I had to do it.

Q : Is there any truth in the demand for an erect position in meditation ? People here assume all sorts of postures.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, the erect posture helps in the meditation. Whatever one receives in the subtle body is by that posture easy to transmit to the physical. There are so many asanas and if one can get the right position, then the body doesn't alter.

N : The Mother's body also stoops down in meditation.

SRI AUROBINDO : Her body is very plastic. It changes according to the nature of the meditation. You know formerly her appearance used to change.

N : X, we hear, is obliged to get up when the light comes down into his body.

SRI AUROBINDO : That means he can't hold the power when it comes.

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters)

MIND AND STUDY

SRI AUROBINDO: Intellectual activities are not part of the inner being—the intellect is the outer mind. 29-9-1935

The intellect can be as great an obstacle as the vital when it chooses to prefer its own constructions to the Truth. 7-6-1935

To have a developed intellect is always helpful if one can enlighten it from above and turn it to a divine use. 23-9-1935

What you can do is to read not for pastime but with the clear intention of furnishing your mind with knowledge. 22-9-1935

Yes, reading can be done for the improvement of the mental instrument as part of the sadhana. 17-10-1935

It is not so easy to do mental work and do sadhana at the same time, for it is with the mind that the sadhana is done. If one gets back from the mind as well as the body and lives in the inner Purusha consciousness then it is possible. 25-10-1935

Q. I am thinking of reading Vivekananda. What he has said in his lectures—is it all truth, something directly inspired?

SRI AUROBINDO : I cannot say that it is all truth—he had his own opinions about certain things (like everybody else) which can be questioned. But most of what he said was of great value. 25-9-1935

Q. I wish to read books. Will you please give me some names?

SRI AUROBINDO : I am not sure what books would interest you and am myself so far away from books that it is difficult to remember names. If you have not read V[ivekananda]'s things you can read them or any books that would give you an idea of Vedanta schools and Sankhya. There is Mahendra Sircar's "Eastern Lights". It is Indian philosophy you want, I suppose.

25-9-1935

Q. My memory is much weaker now than before. I can hardly remember what I read. What is the matter with it?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is very often a complaint of this kind made during the course of sadhana. I suppose that the usual action of memory is for a time suspended by the mental silence or else by the physical tamas. 20-11-1935

Q. Cannot a power of memory be brought down from above like peace, strength, etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, but by the change of consciousness there can be a more conscious and perfect functioning of the memory replacing the old mechanism. 19-11-1935

Q. I have been reading the philosophical writer AD. He writes of "unintelligent faith". Is it not a queer specimen of faith?

SRI AUROBINDO : Intelligent faith is I suppose "reasoned" faith ; unintelligent faith is faith that believes without reasoning.

(1) If you say "X is equal to Y, Y is equal to Z, therefore X is equal to Z", that is intelligent faith. If you simply see at once that X is equal to Z and believe, that is unintelligent faith.

(2) If you refuse to believe and doubt and challenge and argue till all your doubts and challenges and arguments are answered to your satisfaction, at least for the time being, then that is intelligent faith—otherwise it is unintelligent faith.

E.g. You see Nirod and believe he is Nirod,—that is unintelligent faith. If you doubt and say he might be Narbheram or Khirod or Hitler and discuss all the possible arguments for or against his being Nirod, Narbheram, Khirod and Hitler till the subject is exhausted until you come to the conclusion either that he is Nirod or that he is Hitler and believe in your conclusion, then that is intelligent faith.

(3) If you believe what AD believes, that is intelligent faith. If you believe what he does not believe, that is unintelligent faith.

I hope you understand now AD's statement.

26-10-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

REMINISCENCES

IV

(Here is the first act in the drama of Bengal Terrorists. The scene is laid in the little provincial town of Bihar, sacred Deoghar, rendered more holy by its associations with Sri Aurobindo and his family, made glorious to the patriots of an earlier day by what has been described here as the first casualty in the battle for India's freedom. Here also is the first recorded prophecy about the way India was to win her freedom, from a great Yogi who had been one of the few humans to have helped Sri Aurobindo in his Sadhana.)

THE scene was Deoghar, though not exactly the town itself. About five miles before you reach the town, there is the Jesidih Junction on the main railway line. Nearly a mile from there, close to the railway line there was a house with only a ground floor and quite neat and clean on the whole. All around were open fields—not the green meadows of Bengal but the barren red moorlands of Bihar. Not entirely unpleasant scenery though, for it breathed an atmosphere of purity and peace and silence. A little farther away there stood a larger two-storeyed mansion, perhaps the comfortable holiday retreat of some rich man.

The time was towards the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908. I was about seventeen or eighteen and had just finished with my college life.

The *dramatis personæ* were (1) Barindra Kumar Ghose, (2) Ullaskar Dutt, (3) Prafulla Kumar Chakravarti, (4) Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar, and (5) Nolini Kanta Gupta.

The plot was to manufacture bombs. Hitherto, there had been only preliminary investigations and initial experiments and efforts. Now Ullaskar came out with his Eureka. "All is ready," he said, "now there is going to be a real test. We have to demonstrate with a live bomb in action."

But here I must add that although we had made the preparation of bombs our first object when we chose this lonely and out of the way place, we were not entirely heartless men, that is, atheistic and given wholly to a materialistic philosophy. It had been part of our plan to devote some time to the cultivation of an inner life too in that solitude. I remember how we would get up an hour before sunrise and sitting down in that calm atmosphere in a meditative pose we would recite aloud with deep fervour and joy the *mantra* of the Upanishad :

*tilēṣu tailam dadhinīva sarṣir
āpaḥ srotāḥsu araṇīṣu cāgniḥ
evam ātmā ātmani gr̥hyate asau
satyena enam tapasā yo anupasyati.*

“As one gets oil out of oilseeds, as one gets butter out of curds, as one gets water out of the stream, as one gets fire out of wood, even so one seizes the self out of the self, one who pursues it in truth and *tapasyā*.”

Who could say at that hour that this was a place for the manufacture of bombs ? It would not have been far out to call it an Ashram, “the abode of quiet joy”, in the Kalidasian phrase, *śānta-ras-āspadam-āśramam-idam*.

And it was precisely because of this that Barin got Lele Maharaj down here for our initiation and training in *sādhanā*, the discipline of yoga, the same Lele who had been of particular help to Sri Aurobindo at a certain stage of his own *sādhanā*. But it was our bad luck that the whole thing misfired.

When Lele Maharaj came to know that we had accepted the cult of the bomb, he raised an objection. Sadhana and the bomb, he said, did not go well together and the kind of violent rajasic action we had in view was not at all conducive to the purification of the heart. Besides, he added, although the freedom of India was a desirable thing, was indeed desirable and necessary for all, it would come about by another method, it would come inevitably and in a peaceful way, there would be no need for bloodshed. We got disgusted and smiled at him with incredulity and even perhaps in derision. Englishmen would pack up their belongings and leave of their own accord without as much as a grumble, like thorough gentlemen,—this looked rather like a fairy tale if not “a tale told by an idiot”. We were no Vaishnava devotees. We were Tantriks, worshippers of Kali. Our chosen deity was the Goddess of Death incarnate, with her garland of skulls. Ours was the heroes’ worship of strength. We had long been singing the proud refrain :

Have the hero-sons, O men,
Adorned the Mother’s forehead
With the blood-red mark ?

There was also a time when we had been proclaiming loudly at meetings and shouting to the four quarters :

Counting the beads and doing austerities,
All your yoga and prayers and worship,
Oblations and sacrifice and honouring the images of gods,—
Nothing of this will now avail in the least.

Make of the arrow's sheath and the sword thy cult,
 For the olden days are no more.
 India will not be saved, it cannot,
 Through the worship of the gods.
 Unsheath now the sword,
 For these demons are not as of yore.

Lele Maharaj threatened us with another warning, "If you do not give up this, you will not only not succeed but are bound to meet with danger, if not catastrophe." How true his prophecy was we all know from the concrete evidence of what came to pass.

However, we did not confine our studies to religious books alone, we had with us some secular literature as well. It was precisely at this period that a collection of Matthew Arnold's poems came to my hands. The book belonged to Sri Aurobindo and must have been brought along by Barin. That Sri Aurobindo had studied it minutely was evident from the book itself, for he had marked in red the passages or lines which he had particularly liked. I still remember a couple of lines that had the good luck to get a red mark :

Strew on her roses, roses,
 And never a spray of yew!

The simplicity of feeling, the deep pathos, the fine felicity of rhythm in these lines had stirred my young heart too a great deal. That was my first introduction to Matthew Arnold. The greatness of the poet-laureate Tennyson had already reached the ears of even the ordinary student at college, but Matthew Arnold and Browning were still unknown.

All this is however quite beside the point. Let me come back to the story.

The bomb was ready, I said, a real live bomb. It was mainly Ullaskar's handiwork, we others had acted as assistants. It was now decided that the testing would be done on top of a hill known as Dighiriya—it was not much of a hill but only a low range of hillocks—across the railway line, beyond the level crossing. (There was an amusing incident in the Sessions Court in connection with the man at this level crossing about which I may say something another day.) Of an afternoon, the five of us made for the hill. It fell to my lot to carry the bomb. I carried it along with due care no doubt, but I had no idea of the risks I carried. We were quite ignorant and inexperienced at the time. It was nothing short of a miracle that we had no accident, the way I carried the thing; I realised that only a little later.

We broke through the thickets and chose a spot right on top of the hill. There we came across a huge boulder rising steep and straight on one side about breast-high and on the other sloping gradually to a distance of some ten

or twelve yards. The plan was that Prafulla would take his shelter behind the steep and abrupt side as he threw the bomb at the sloping rock and sit down behind the slab as soon as he made the throw, so that no splinters might hit him after the explosion, as the bomb was to explode only on the slope by friction of the impact. Ullas was to stand by Prafulla to see that everything got on well and both were to duck behind the slab right after the throw. I climbed up a tree a little farther away so as to have a clear view of the whole scene. Barin and Bibhuti took their positions around. As we lay in wait,—my eyes were glued to the boulder,—suddenly I saw a spark of fire flash out over there with a puff of smoke and such a terrific noise ! The whole sky seemed to be getting broken up into bits, and waves of sound went echoing forth from one end to the other as if in a hundred simultaneous claps of thunder. Never again have I heard a noise like that. I was of course beside myself with excitement and joy. With great glee I climbed down the tree and ran towards the boulder, shouting at the top of my voice, “Successful, successful !”

But how is this ? What is this ! What a gruesome spectacle ! Prafulla lay limp on Ullas’s chest, Ullas held him in his arms. Slowly the body was laid down. One side of the forehead was broken through and a portion of the brain coming out. It was an unbearable sight. We sat around and no one spoke a word. At last Barin said, “It’s all over, there is not a hope.” The body lay motionless, showed no signs of life. The eyes were closed, the face looked serene.

This is how it happened. We had thought that the explosive would catch fire only after the bomb touched the ground and rubbed against a hard surface. But instead of that, the explosive had been so powerful, that is, so easily inflammable that it caught fire as soon as it came into contact with air on being thrown up. I said I had been carrying it in my hands : it might have caught fire and exploded even by that slight swing. That it did not was my sheer good luck.

Now the problem was what to do next. What was to be done with the body ? Burn it ? or give it a burial ? To bury it was out of the question, for to dig a hole in that hard stone was impossible. Give it a cremation by lighting a fire in the bush ? But that might attract people and the news might spread in the neighbouring villages. Barin said, “We need not do anything, let us go away leaving it as it is. This is a field of battle. Our first soldier has given up his body in the battle field, this is our first casualty.”

So far, our eyes had all been riveted on the corpse. And now, suddenly, someone cried, “Ullas too has been wounded.” His clothing was riddled with holes and covered with marks of blood all over. We removed the clothing and examined him as far as we could. Barin said, “Our first task now is to look after him. Who is gone is gone. Now he must be saved. We must therefore hurry back. There is no time now to discuss what is to be done with the dead body. We have to return to Calcutta this very evening and consult the doctor.” There

was a special doctor, the renowned Indu Mallick, so far as I remember, who looked after us terrorists.

We started down the hill, with not a word on our lips, our throats all choked with emotion, our minds stunned. The picture of the English poet came to mind : "Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note..." I once blurted out with a suppressed feeling, "We were five when we came, only four are now returning." Barin gave me a rebuke, "No sentimentality, please."

As we walked down, I wondered if the frightful noise had not reached the people around. There was of course nothing like a human habitation anywhere in the neighbourhood. But people did come from the surrounding country to gather fuel in the thickets. However, nothing untoward happened and we returned safely. Barin and Ullas left for Calcutta that very night.

Early next morning I looked towards Dighiriya and seemed to see some kites and vultures flying over the hill. That evening, or it was perhaps the next morning, Upen arrived with Barin. Ullas was all right, they said, there was nothing to fear about his wounds. Upen wanted to have a look at the place. We started again for that holy spot, and arrived on the scene. Even from a distance we could see the body lying exactly as we had left it, dressed exactly in the same way, there was no change whatever. Nor was there a sign of decomposition, on this the third day. We came back just as we had gone, leaving the body as it was.

It was decided to end this particular chapter here. Lest the police should get scent, it would be wiser to break up camp and get away. Whatever materials we had in our possession for the manufacture of bombs were packed up in a couple of trunks and dispatched to the shop of a friend in Deoghar. The trunks were left hidden among other things in the godown at the back of the shop. What happened to them afterwards I do not know.

Before leaving for good, we felt a desire to have a last look at Dighiriya hill. It was the fourth day after the event. We climbed to the spot. But how strange ! Where was the body ? There was not a trace of it anywhere. We searched about here and there but did not find even a shred of clothing. Could it have been carried away by beasts ? But without leaving the slightest trace ? The whole thing remained a mystery.

Afterwards, many kinds of rumours got afloat. Some, they said, had seen him in the streets of Calcutta, a Sannyasin was supposed to have come across the dead body and revived it, and so on. To set my doubts at rest, I once asked Sri Aurobindo if there could be any truth in these stories, and what exactly had happened to Prafulla. Sri Aurobindo said, "All that is sheer myth. Prafulla is really dead."

Let me end this Deoghar episode with a little picture that still sticks in my memory. Within about a mile from our camp there was a village called Rohini. There in a garden-house—it was almost covered with jungle when we

saw the place—still lived Sri Aurobindo's mother, Swarnalata Devi. The garden was full of various kinds of trees and shrubs. The house was a large-sized cottage, though the walls and flooring were of masonry work; it had an old dilapidated look for want of repairs. The local people called it the Memsahib's Kothi, the Lady's House. Everybody called Sri Aurobindo's mother a Memsahib, the Fashionable Lady. At that time, she was out of her mind and always remained shut up in her rooms. We passed several times through the gardens by the house, but she could not be seen.

The holy legend of sacred Deoghar would not be complete if I were not to mention in this context the name of Sri Aurobindo's maternal grandfather, Rishi Rajnarayan, who is also called the Grandfather of Indian Nationalism. We saw the house where he once lived, where Sri Aurobindo used to come often. It stood in an open compound—it may have been a bed of flowers once—now a white mansion where no one lived, left lonely as a dream.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

INDIA OF THE AGES

IV

THE POLITICAL SCENE

(We resume here the series begun sometime ago and discontinued for a time—the last instalment appeared in the Mother India of March 1960. The writer begins with the central idea underlying India's political history and will proceed to a general survey of the political scene from the earliest times to the present day, before discussing the main phases of cultural growth.)

It has long been the custom with our historians to devote most of their attention to political history; there are quite a number among them even now to whom history means nothing else. Perhaps it is an old habit contracted from the nineteenth-century historians of Europe, although the tendency today both in Europe and America is to present a more integrated view. Our long subjection to an alien rule that was determined to prove that we had been a politically incapable people may also have helped in this attitude: we were determined on our part to prove that India too had a political history, had its democracies and republics, had warred and ruled and created empires.

But the time has come when some modification in our attitude becomes imperative. This, for a variety of reasons. Much of our political history, at least from the time of the Mauryas, has now been ascertained in fair detail. There is a growing need in the country for a proper appreciation of our past achievements in all fields of endeavour and not in polity alone. Other nations are getting more and more interested in India and they would naturally like to know something of our past; we cannot expect them to get deeply interested in the wars of a Rajaraja Chola and Samudragupta or in the perpetual contest for supremacy between obscure kingdoms in the north and south. And above all, a proper study of our history becomes essential if we are to recover the true spirit of India and shape our future accordingly, for it is almost a truism now to say that each country or nation has a destiny proper to itself and that a proper study of history helps in knowing what that destiny is. Political history has a part in shaping the destiny, perhaps a considerable part—and that is the true justification for attaching so much importance to polity in the recent past. But it is not obviously all that the nation has to show.

The political history of India, like that of every other great nation, cannot be understood without reference to the central idea governing the nation's growth. That idea, as we have seen in the last article of this series, has been

to put the individual and the race in close contact with the deepest Truth that underlies all existence, what the Upanishads call the triune Reality of Sacchidananda. The approach to this Reality, barring the solitary examples of rare individuals, can only be by a slow and gradual process of evolution. Society provides the necessary *cadre*; polity helps, or it can hinder, in this progressive march. Our interest in the political history of India will therefore depend on the extent to which it has helped or hindered the nation in progressing towards its goal.

Sacchidananda is God, and freedom, harmony, unity are major terms through which God manifests in the world. We shall find a meaning in our political evolution by keeping close to these terms. Our aim will be to see to what extent these apparently conflicting needs of the human soul and of the nation as a whole have been secured and harmonised in the course of our history. We shall find that no ultimate solution of the problems they pose has yet been evolved—in no country or nation has it been done. But we shall perhaps get some indications as to the lines on which we might move. If we do not find that, then our study of history will have been futile, a sheer waste of time and effort.

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Before we come to details, it would be wiser to have a clear view of the problem. India, by the very fact of her geographical situation bounded on all sides by mountain and sea, was destined to grow into a separate nation-state. But her size was enormous, it formed almost a sub-continent by itself. Hence it was obvious from the very start that her problems would be continental in their proportions. The difficulties faced by Europe or America in achieving continental unity would be present more or less in her case too—the problems of race, of language, of religion, caste and class, of economic disparities, of cultural levels. The time taken would be enormous, the chances of failure constant; the progress towards unity could be only through the march of millenniums.

The problem was complicated by another special development. Like all other primitive peoples living close to nature, the early Indian clans or tribes of whom we get a first glimpse in the ancient Vedic hymns had a strongly developed sense of communal freedom; they would not easily submit to the rule of an autocratic sovereign, nor could they accept the domination of other clans or tribes. Hence the perpetual wars between clan and clan of which the Atharvaveda preserves a glaring and at times a gruesome record; hence also the prayers for harmony in council, the *sabhā*, and the close attention given by the Vedic “king” to secure the assent of his subjects.

To this instinctive sense of communal freedom was added the deeper spiritual and psychological freedom on which the Vedic mystics laid their whole emphasis. The freedom they demanded on their part as an indispensable

condition of spiritual growth was the freedom of the individual to pursue his own line of development without undue interference from society or king. This lent a peculiar colouring to the Indian polity as the days passed.

Not only was the exceptional individual like the Yogin or Tapaswi readily given the right which he asserted to live his own life without interference by an outside authority. The Varnas and other groups too developed their special lines of discipline, *dharma*, and had to be left alone in pursuit of their creed. Religious sects arose and schools of philosophy in profusion. The merchants and artisans formed themselves into guilds and other associations; it is said that in the Buddha's time there were even corporations of thieves, who obviously had their own idea of freedom! And all this was very soon to be sanctified by the Law, not any man-made law of the king or parliament, but a law that had the sanction of the gods and the Rishis. Neither the king nor any other authority in the land had the power to interfere with these laws. There were in fact innumerable states within the state. The modern definition of the state as being an entity that is absolutely sovereign in the land had no meaning in India till our own day.

With so many disparate elements to harmonise and unite, the task faced by Indian polity was not a simple matter. We should now examine in outline how it set about its task.

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In the beginning and for a long time, no satisfactory solution seems to have been found. At the earliest stage, the domination of the rest of the clans by one powerful king or tribe was out of the question, for the country was vast, communications were impossible, the means at the disposal of the petty kings were meagre in the extreme. The Rishis preached harmony, but few seemed to listen. Inter-tribal warfare continued throughout the early Vedic age and no empires arose. But already, the idea of kingship and empire, *rājyam*, *sāmrājyam*, was being mooted in the hymns. This was no doubt the empire of the gods, but it would need only a slight change to transfer the idea to this earth, as we see actually happening in the next age, the age of the Brahmanas.

The master idea of the Vedic Rishis was that of sacrifice. The whole of life, both the inner discipline and the outer activities, were to them in the nature of a sacrifice to the gods to whom man owed all his powers and possessions. This idea of sacrifice was extended in due course to the political life of the nation. Already in the Yajurveda there have appeared the prayers and the ritual for the two great kingly sacrifices, the Rajasuya and the Aswamedha. The idea seems to have been that the king or emperor aspiring to world dominion—the world in ancient India always meant the world of India unless

the context led one to the gods—should treat his conquests as an act of sacrifice. It was an offering of his protection in exchange for the acceptance of his suzerainty by the conquered peoples. Lest the king should feel too proud of his conquests, he was in the end enjoined to offer the conquering horse to the gods and perform the Rajasuya as an act of thanksgiving to the gods. This idea too found its full expression in the succeeding age, the age of the Brahmanas. There we come across a number of instances where the Aswamedha and the Rajasuya had been performed by kings aspiring to world dominion.

But the true greatness of the early Vedic approach to the problem of Indian unity has to be sought elsewhere. It was not by any external manipulation, the Vedic mystics seem to have held, that a lasting unity and harmony could come about. Unity is of the soul and the soul must be made to feel its unity with all. To the initiate and disciple who followed the Vedic yoga this was the whole basis of the discipline. For the common man too, there must be created a strong sense of unity, something that he could readily grasp. This the old mystics sought by speaking to him of the gods of his worship, for the gods were vital to his existence and the source of all his satisfactions. These gods, the mystics said, were no mere material powers of fire and rain and storm and sun. There were, behind these outer manifestations, real Personalities who were divine in their character, who were close to man and even anxious to help him in his difficulties. And these Powers and Personalities were universal in their nature, not confined to a village or stream but extended all over the world.

This part of the Vedic teaching came in time to exercise a tremendous influence on the Indian attitude to life and also, perhaps unconsciously for a long time, on the shape of Indian polity. If the Homeric poems created the soul of Hellas, in a much wider sense did the early Vedic hymns create the mind and soul of India. They gave India a common culture, a common worship, a common language, a common attitude to life. Without knowing it, the diverse peoples of the sub-continent accepted to be one—not indeed politically united, for that was a problem left for solution to the later ages, but united in their aspirations, in their devotion to the land of their birth, to the gods of their worship.

On this deep sense of unity the superstructure of political unification had to be securely built. It mattered little if the superstructure was found unsuitable or inadequate. It could be demolished and a new one erected in its place. That is what has happened repeatedly in the course of India's long history. The outer political structure has been built and rebuilt and added to in order to suit the needs of the time. But the deeper underlying unity has remained constant.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

4

THE moment we enter into the Vedas we are confronted with a medley of confusions. Spirituality, philosophical ideas, mystic words, magic sentences, colourful phrases, physical images are scattered all around. Expressions of what appears to us as spiritual truths are housed there side by side with ceremonial, natural, historical, geographical, social, even chemical and other ideas. Now the question may arise as to which ideas are fundamental and which secondary, which are the roots, which the branches. The Western scholars are not at all prepared to countenance spiritual and philosophical implications in the Vedas, for they are afraid lest thereby their pet theories should be reduced to dust. They say that it is no wonder if in the course of Nature-worship when the Rishis were making prayers to the presiding Deities of Nature some expressions of philosophical ideas sprang from their lips. These scholars are of the opinion that the Rishis did not mean what they said. If we with our modern mind try to discover abstract and philosophical truths therein, then it will amount to an imposition of modern ideas on those of the Rishis of yore. However, they have not succeeded in giving a connected, systematic and plausible interpretation of the whole of the Veda. The great Max Muller is a striking example of the failure of this method. He had translated the word 'Paramahansa' by "the great goose"! It is quite inevitable that such a word-for-word literal translation of the Veda would bring about no solution.

Sayana has given a ceremonial interpretation of the Veda. Nevertheless, he has not forbidden any other different interpretation. He has clearly admitted that a spiritual interpretation is quite possible. Not only that ; at good many places he has appended alternative spiritual interpretations. Even at places where any other interpretation did not appear at all plausible, he has resorted solely to the spiritual interpretation.¹ Be that as it may, Sayana was committed to the ceremonial interpretation. He made it a rule to bring in this interpretation in order to show how a particular sacrifice was to be performed; he had recourse to the Veda only to establish sacrificial ceremonies in society. In fact, he had a particular end in view in accordance with which he went along his way. Not only in Sayana, but also in the ancient book on Grammar, *Nirukta*, we come across traces of spiritual interpretation. Let us cite here only one instance: *śarīra-madhyavartī*...(Indra designated as the Knower of the field (nature), as Life that resides in the body). This is one of the interpretations of the word 'Indra' given by the author of *Nirukta*.

¹ E. g., I, 16. 4.

But as a matter of fact, the Vedas are not merely literary works ; they are aphorisms for spiritual practice. And he who is devoid of spiritual experiences has no right to meddle with the Vedas. What is imperatively necessary is the purification of the heart. We want to determine the meaning of the Vedic language through discussion and hair-splitting arguments, but we do not know, nor do we try to get at, the esoteric meaning of which the language is but the outer expression. We have long lost the spiritual practice on which the secrets of the Vedas are founded. So it is no wonder that this faculty of argument should lead us astray. This truth has already been declared by the Upanishad : *naiṣā tarkeṇa matvrāpaneyā* ("This wisdom cannot be gained by reasoning".).

In fact, first we must have an access to the Upanishads, then only can we hope to understand the esoteric truths of the Vedas. It is the Upanishads that can claim to be the first exposition of and commentary on the living ideas of the Vedas. The Upanishad is spiritual realisation, supraphysical experience, mystic perception and inner vision. This bare truth we not only believe, but also declare. The Katha Upanishad has clearly indicated: *sarve vedā yatpadamāmananti*¹ ("The seat or goal that all the Vedas glorify and which austerities declare, for the desire of which men practise holy living, of That will I tell thee in brief compass. OM is that goal, O Nachuketas."²)

We have already said that the seers of the Upanishads have time and again cited the Vedic mantras while expounding their own philosophical truths. So it is quite reasonable if we place the Veda on the same footing with their spiritual philosophy and do not consider the former as something exclusively dealing with Nature and ceremonies. For example, *dvā suparnā*...("Two birds, beautiful of wing, close companions, cling to one common tree : of the two one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not but watches his fellow."³) This sloka of the Mundaka Upanishad is bodily taken out of the mantras of Dirghatamas, the Rishi of the Rīg Veda. Or take *agne naya supathā* ...("O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity ; remove from us the devious attraction of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose."⁴) This last utterance of the Isha Upanishad derives from a mantra in the Rīg Veda. Rishi Agastya begins his Agni Sukta (Hymns to the Mystic Fire) with this mantra. Thus the Upanishads have made liberal use of innumerable Vedic mantras. No doubt, the Upanishads do not exactly repeat the Vedic mantras. But even

¹ Shankara has explained the words *sarve vedāḥ* as "a portion of the Vedas", that is to say, the Upanishads. But how can *sarve* ("the whole") become a portion ? Shankara considered the Vedas as something ceremonial, ritual and sacrificial. Hence he had to give a distorted explanation.

² Tr. by Sri Aurobindo.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

there the words and ideas are so similar that we find no difficulty in saying that they possess the same vision of the inner Self.

Vedāham etaṁ puruṣam... ("I know this Puruṣa, Supreme, of the Light of the Sun, beyond the darkness.") We all know that this is a famous utterance of the Upanishad. But do we know that it is a mere echo of the Vedic mantra *udvayaṁ tamasaspari...* ("We have seen the supreme Light beyond the darkness, we have attained the God amongst the gods, the Sun, the Supreme Light.")? Or, *hṛdā maṇiṣā...*¹ ("in the heart and the mind and the super-mind He is seated"). A similar truth we find in the Veda also : *hṛdi pratīṣyā...*² ("The seers discerning Him in the heart by the supramental Intelligence"). Or, *Indrāya manasā maṇiṣā pratnāya...*³ ("The thinkers purify their intellect by the mind for their Lord, the ancient Indra") Have not the Vedas expounded the psychological personality of Indra in these few words ?

Further, the few words of Vishwamitra that we have already cited about Agni : *vaiśvānaraṁ manasāgnim nicāyāya...* ("discerning Fire, the universal Godhead, by the mind") have been explained by the Upanishad : *svargya-magnim naciketah prajānan...* ("Hearken to me and understand, O Nachiketas ; I declare to thee that heavenly Flame, for I know it. Know this to be the possession of infinite existence and the foundation and the thing hidden in the secret cave of our being."⁴)—*nihitam guhāyām gahvareṣṭham hṛdaye sannviṣtam*. The Upanishads as well as the Vedas are replete with such words and expressions.

There are innumerable words common to the Vedas and the Upanishads that convey implications of such recondite profound ideas : Truth, Consciousness, Immortality, Vastness, Knowledge and Light. The spiritual meanings of such words that the Upanishads have discovered are not likely to be degraded in their application in the Vedas. To hold that the Vedas have used these in an ordinary sense must be a wrong view. To say that the Upanishads have taken only the words from the Vedas and not their significance and have used materialistic words with spiritual meanings is in our view nothing but prejudice. The Upanishads are packed with the words of the Vedas, and they have repeatedly made use of them so aptly that it is doubtful if the Upanishads could have used them in that way had there been no such meaning already attached to them. The vibration of truth-realisation with which every word, every mantra of the Vedas is resonant could not be caught by the ears of the grammarians of our country or those of the European scholars.

Not to speak of the Upanishads, even in the Puranas, the Mahabharata and such other scriptures we come across many peculiarities worth noticing. If we just carefully study these religious books of ours, we do learn that there are

¹ Katha Upanishad.

² 10.12.4.

³ 1.61.2.

⁴ Tr. by Sri Aurobindo.

many names, places, stories and legends which are but outer garments or transfigurations of some truth-principles. One or two instances will serve our purpose. According to the Puranas the name of Surya's wife is Samjñā—"consciousness". If we accept the Vedic meaning of Surya as the source of truth, then it does not become difficult for us to understand the significance of this word. Again, let us take the word "Goloka". Goloka is the dwelling-place of Vishnu. If we take the word "go" for light, the light of supernal knowledge, then *devānāmupariṣṭācca gāvah prativasanti vai* ("The Ray-Cows dwell even above the gods") of the Mahabharata can no longer remain abstruse or ambiguous to us.

Now the legend of Savitri-Satyavan arrests our attention. The very names Savitri and Satyavan are immediately inspiring truths. In the Vedas the Truth-Sun is synonymous with Savitr. As Purusha he is Satyavan, and Sāvitrī is his Shakti. Every aspirant is aware of the fact that it is the Truth's own faith and power that can free the Truth from the grip of Matter, Ignorance and Death. However, one may not believe that whatsoever the Puranas say must be based on some truth or other. Nevertheless, we do not hesitate to assert that at the core of the teaching of the Puranas there lies a truth-secret—a Vedic or Upanishadic realisation. The Puranas too have an esoteric meaning based on the truth of the Vedic and Upanishadic realisations which have been colourfully related in the form of stories and legends for the easy comprehension of the masses.

To be sure, the Puranas cannot be accepted as commentaries on the Vedas. No, not even the Upanishads can dare claim to be so. The Vedas alone are the proper commentaries on the Vedas. And to understand the Vedas no other book can be our guide save the Vedas. No doubt, the Upanishads stand quite close to them, and they abundantly possess the Vedic ideas. But at the same time we must know that the dissimilarities too are not negligible. The concept of Matter in the Vedas and the concept of Spirit in the Upanishads—even if we fail to find a connecting link between the two, still we can be sure that the Vedas and the Upanishads are the two principles of one spirituality. To repeat it once again, we should first endeavour to understand the easy and clear portions of the Vedas and then try to discover their more abstruse and obscure truths. And we have sought to explain to our readers that the interpretation attempted here, the spiritual interpretation, means an interpretation of the basic principle of the Veda.¹ But for that there is the

¹ Our interpretation of the Vedas, strictly speaking, is not to be called a spiritual interpretation. It is rather the interpretation of the essential principles of creation. The spiritual naturally implies the doctrine of Brahman expounded in the Upanishads. The Vedas do not exactly deal with the doctrine of Brahman. Brahman in the Vedas means the word, the creative word. They speak of the essential principles ranging from gross to subtle and subtler ones, present in the macrocosm and microcosm (somewhat like the 24 principles of the Sankhya

need of the right attitude for looking at things and their right understanding. Those who will approach the Vedas with an ordinary intellect for the mere satisfaction of an intellectual curiosity will hardly be able to grasp the true significance of the Vedas. What does the Veda itself say about the Rishis? *Ṛtasāpa āsantsākaṁ...*¹ (“Guardians of the Truth, they are with the gods, speaking the Truths with them.”)

They were knowers of the true nature of truth and they used to commune with the gods through the interchange of truth-principles. Therefore the study of the Vedas on the part of those who have no seeking or aspiration for the attainment of the truth is bound to prove futile—a casting of seeds in the desert.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

Philosophy) The Vedas describe the nature, function and mutual relation of these basic principles and initiate us into a discipline whereby the lesser principles can be transmuted into the higher ones.

¹ I.179.2.

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

CLASSIFIED EXCERPTS

SECTION IV (Continued)

X. TRUTH

THE world expresses a foreseen Truth, obeys a predetermining Will, realises an original formative self-vision,—it is the growing image of a divine creation.¹

At present we have arrived at an affirmation and some conception of the divine and creative Supermind in which all is one in being, consciousness, will and delight, yet with an infinite capacity of differentiation that deploys but does not destroy the unity,—in which Truth is the substance and Truth rises in the Idea and Truth comes out in the form and there is one truth of knowledge and will, one truth of self-fulfilment and therefore of delight ; for all self-fulfilment is satisfaction of being. Therefore, always, in all mutations and combinations a self-existent and inalienable harmony.²

It is only when the veil (separating mind and supermind) is rent and the divided mind overpowered, silent and passive to a supramental action that mind itself gets back to the Truth of things. There we find a luminous mentality reflective, obedient and instrumental to the divine Real-Idea. There we perceive what the world really is ; we know in every way ourselves in others and as others, others as ourselves and all as the universal and self-multiplied One. We lose the rigidly separate individual standpoint which is the source of all limitation and error. Still, we perceive also that all that the ignorance of mind took for the truth was in fact truth but truth deflected, mistaken and falsely conceived.³

If we look closely at this general imperfection (in ourselves and in the world), we shall see that it consists first in a limitation in us of the divine elements which robs them of their divinity, then in a various many-branching distortion, a perversion, a contrary turn, a falsifying departure from some ideal Truth of being. To our minds which do not possess that Truth but

can conceive it, this departure presents itself either as a state from which we have lapsed spiritually or as a possibility or promise which we cannot fulfil, cannot realise because it exists only as an ideal.⁴

The Vedic seers were conscious of such a divine self-manifestation and looked on it as the greater world beyond this lesser, a freer and wider plane of consciousness and being, the truth-creation of the Creator which they described as the seat or own home of the Truth, as the vast Truth, or the Truth, the Right, the Vast, or again as a Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun of Knowledge finishes his journey and unyokes his horses, where the thousand rays of consciousness stand together so that there is That One, the supreme form of the Divine Being.⁵

...if a veil could fall between mind and supermind shutting off the light of the Truth or letting it come through only in rays diffused, scattered, reflected but with distortion and division, then the phenomenon of the Ignorance would intervene. Such a veil exists, says the Upanishad, constituted by the action of mind itself : it is in Overmind a golden lid which hides the face of the supramental Truth but reflects its image ; in Mind it becomes a more opaque and smoky-luminous coverture.⁶

It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature ; the rest, their opposites, are a necessary part of experience, but have to be outgrown in the spiritual increase of the being.⁷

Ancient Indian thought meant by Knowledge a consciousness which possesses the highest Truth in a direct perception and in self-experience ; to become, to be the Highest that we know is the sign that we really have the Knowledge. For the same reason, to shape our practical life, our actions as far as may be in consonance with our intellectual notions of truth and right or with a successful pragmatic knowledge,—an ethical or vital fulfilment,—is not and cannot be the ultimate aim of our life ; our aim must be to grow into our true being, our being of Spirit, the being of the supreme and universal Existence, Consciousness, Delight, Sachchidananda.

XI. LIGHT

The master-word of the subconscious is Life, the master-word of the superconscious is Light. In the subconscious knowledge or consciousness is involved in action, for action is the essence of Life. In the superconscious action re-enters into Light and no longer contains involved knowledge but is itself contained in a supreme consciousness.⁸

In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the supreme Ananda: the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came: overcoming the dualities of pain and pleasure, delivering from all fear and shrinking the mind, life and body, it can recast the contacts of existence in the world into terms of the Divine Ananda.⁹

The whole process of man's highest intellectual knowledge is through this mental manipulation and discrimination to the point where the veil is broken and he can see; at the end spiritual knowledge comes in to help us to become what we see, to enter into the light in which there is no Ignorance.¹⁰

If the rift in the lid of mind is made, what happens is an opening of vision to something above us or a rising up towards it or a descent of its powers into our being. What we see by the opening of vision is an Infinity above us, an eternal Presence or an infinite Existence, an infinity of consciousness, an infinity of bliss,—a boundless Self, a boundless Light, a boundless Power, a boundless Ecstasy.¹¹

A downpour of inwardly visible Light very usually envelops this action (of the Illumined Mind); for it must be noted that, contrary to our ordinary conceptions, light is not primarily a material creation and the sense or vision of light accompanying the inner illumination is not merely a subjective visual image or a symbolic phenomenon: light is primarily a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality illuminative and creative; material light is a subsequent representation or conversion of it into Matter for the purposes of the material Energy.¹²

Compiled by NATHANIEL PEARSON

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10. Vol. II. Ch. VII p. 436 (A); 580 (U)
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12. Vol. II. Ch. XXVI p. 839 (A); 1123-4 (U)

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

GROWTH OF WORLD CULTURE

(4)

THE international character of the Ashram, with its doors open to all, is attracting from different parts of the world more and more responsive elements as visitors and residents.

Dr. Jay H. Smith, the right-hand man of Stanley Jones, the famous missionary, was forced back to America by the British Government for his open and active sympathy for Indian freedom; he returned with his wife only to take up Ashram life for good. What led him to Sri Aurobindo's path were some of the Master's evocative words in *Among the Great* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* that he had read in the New York Public Library. He is now occupied with the work of organising the World Union Movement with the collaboration of A. B. Patel, ex-Minister of Kenya, East Africa.

While it was *The Synthesis of Yoga* that brought Dr. Smith into touch with the Mother, it was *The Life Divine* that gave Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg of Stanford University, California, the rare luck to have the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo in 1949. He stayed in "Golconde", designed by a renowned engineer of America, and built under his supervision.

It is due to the efforts of Dr. Spiegelberg that Sri Aurobindo has been introduced into the department of Asian studies in Stanford University. In a letter to Dr. Haridas Choudhury dated November 22, 1950, Dr. Spiegelberg has remarked: "Sri Aurobindo is the guiding spirit of our earth and the prophet of our age."

It should be noted that Dr. Choudhury was among the earliest to receive a doctorate on Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy from Calcutta University. Later, when the Institute of Asian Studies, San Francisco, wished to have a disciple of Sri Aurobindo for its chair of Indian Philosophy and Dr. Spiegelberg invited K. D. Sethna, the latter who was busy with the editing of *Mother India* suggested to Sri Aurobindo the name of Dr. Choudhury as the one he would like to offer to Dr. Spiegelberg. Sri Aurobindo at once gave full approval. This approval was communicated to Dr. Spiegelberg who wrote back that his Guru's word was law to him and that he would at once invite Dr. Choudhury. Now the latter is a Founder President of the Cultural Integration Fellowship at San Francisco.

In 1960 a magnificent "Commemorative Symposium", *The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, edited by Haridas Chaudhury and Frederic Spiegel-

berg and sponsored by the Cultural Integration Fellowship came out of the publishing firm George Allen & Union Ltd. It brought together contributions from philosophical and literary writers from America and England no less than India on the various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's message and work.

In 1961 a booklet *Aurobindo : Prophet of Human Unity* by Sidney Kartus was published by this institute. The usefulness of this publication lies in its presentation, to the world's leading minds, of Sri Aurobindo's solution to the crises, particularly the international, that humanity is facing to-day.

Alexander Markey, an American Motion Picture expert, while on a visit to our Lake Estate, sat calm and quiet, in the shade of a tamarind tree. Presently he saw, as if projected on his mental screen, a concrete picture of a fully equipped modern studio in action.

We have it from a close friend of his that after his meeting the Mother he was so moved that he could not sleep the whole night, with one thought dominating his mind: how to serve the Mother ?

He thought of starting a film-producing Centre in Pondicherry "which will be the most up-to-date, most beautiful and best organised motion picture studio in the world, embodying features not to be found anywhere else. Its most distinguishing characteristic will be an atmosphere of spiritual dedication, in which all the participants in this enterprise will perform their tasks in the knowledge that the motion pictures which will come into being through their efforts will help in the realisation of Sri Aurobindo's dream of 'a nobler life for all mankind,' 'a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness,' an era in which 'a new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race', that will open up a closer and freer interchange between human minds and...a kindlier interchange between human hearts and lives". Fate however did not allow him to see his dream fulfilled.

Nonetheless, he will be remembered as the first to visualise such a lofty scheme. Though he is no more with us his scheme has not been abandoned and will take shape in time.

A portion of Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* was for the first time staged outside India by some American students (28-10-1960). It was in America that five major works¹ of Sri Aurobindo were published (1950) and it was the only country to receive his message on August 11, 1949.

Just after India's independence, the Foreign Embassy of India bought 70 to 80 volumes of Sri Aurobindo's works from the Delhi Branch of the Ashram to meet the demand from various parts of the world.

It was numerous enquiries about Sri Aurobindo from foreigners that led Dr. Harekrishna Mahtab, who was then Governor of Bombay, to pay a

¹ 1. *The Life Divine*. 2. *The Synthesis of Yoga*. 3. *Essays on the Gita*. 4. *The Human Cycle*. 5. *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

personal visit to the Ashram and see things for himself. Now he is closely attached to the Ashram.

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Among other resident members of the Ashram, besides those named above from England, France, America, some are from Canada, Switzerland, Poland, Australia, Austria.

Szarka Josef left Austria in quest of Yoga in 1949 when he was 20. From his school life he had a leaning towards philosophy and Yoga. He wanted to come to India but failed to secure a visa. He had to struggle eight long years before he could find his feet set on the Path.

In the course of his search, circumstances took him to Viet Nam. He had to stay there for four years. There he utilised his time in learning Judo and Jiu-Jitsu. From Viet Nam he wrote to the Ashram in 1951 but had no reply. From there he moved to Africa and wrote to the Ashram again. At length he found himself in the Ashram.

Since March 1958 he has been here as a member of our Physical Education Department conducting training in Judo.

On a request to the Federal German Republic at Bonn, Herr W. H. Haubrich was sent here to coach our boys and girls in athletics and swimming. He was a highly trained coach of the Sports Club, Koln, West Germany. He gave to a select group of our gymnasts a most useful and effective course in the three months that he was with us. The Mother named him Saumitra because of his very friendly (happy) and cordial relations with our boys. He has left us but we have not forgotten him nor has he been able to forget us. Ever since he left us he has been in communication with our physical Education Department, and often speaks on the Ashram wherever he goes. He was staying in the New Guest House which has been opened purposely to meet the needs of casual official and foreign visitors. These are but a few typical instances of the Ashram helping the growth of international cultural relations.

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Another aspect of world culture has now expressed itself in the World Union Movement, with its by-monthly organ *World Union* under the joint editorship of Marguerite Lidchi and Jay H. Smith, both Ashramites.

The organ elaborates its policy :

“Our deepest need today...is to become aware of the unity that already exists.

“The work of World Union is to awaken people to the fact that we are one ...we have one origin and one destiny.

“World Union is not an organisation though it has its headquarters etc. It is a movement, a wave, a voice, an urge in the world to find its wholeness. Everyone who feels this urge, who knows or strives towards unity is part of World Union.”

This paper promises to keep its readers aware of the onward march of the spirit of Oneness.

At a memorial meeting held on December 6, 1957 at the Indian Institute of Culture in London the President Sunder Kabadı summed up Sri Aurobindo’s teachings as a prophetic statement :

“A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret spirit, a Divine Reality, in which we are one, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about the kingdom of this Divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellowmen will become the leading principle of our life, not merely a principle of cooperation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellowmen is his own life complete. There must be realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded.¹

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The number of visitors to the Ashram steadily on the increase is a sign of the world culture silently developing. The international character of the Ashram is exemplified in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, the Sri Aurobindo Library, the International Salon of Photography, the International Education Theatre, international games & sports, the regular receipt of 300 periodicals from different countries and various cultural exhibitions, extension lectures and so on.

Richard Eggenberger a young American musician who has been with us since X’mas (1961) gave a series of talks with demonstrations on the theory of Western music.

Once we were entertained with a Japanese way of exhibition in Golconde, the first of its kind in the Ashram. Two Japanese Agriculture experts who introduced into the Ashram the Japanese method of growing paddy welcomed us to the exhibition in their Kimonos.

An exhibition of Chinese paintings was arranged in the upper hall of ‘Aroumé’ by two noted Chinese artists. One of them, a great scholar, has trans-

¹ *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 19, 1957.

lated *The Life Divine* into Chinese and his translation into Chinese of Sri Aurobindo's works has been going on without a break. When the soul of China reasserts itself his services to his nation will receive proper appreciation.

X, a resident of South Africa, had sent his family to the Ashram before joining it himself. Questioned by the reporter of *The Mail*, his wife said :—

“I have come from Dar-es-Salaam to India to sojourn at Pondicherry in my quest for inner peace, my husband is an engineer there. We have yearned for long to come to India to stay at the Aurobindo Ashram....I have felt that I and many others have been leading mere worldly lives but without inner peace there can be no real life.”

As for her sons she remarked, her idea was to give them also a spiritual background by a stay at the Ashram.

An African youth Savlo Peter and two Tibetan girls Diky and Pema are new admissions to the Educational Centre in 1962.

A Cambodian seeker Bhikshu Dhammadhira of Preah Suramarit Buddhist University (Cambodia) gives his personal experience of his Ashram life¹ thus :

“When I first came to Pondicherry I was under the impression that I was the only person coming from the Far East, and that I would be quite lonely here. But I found that I was, in fact, among my own brothers and sisters here. You have shown me great affection and love which moves me every moment. But the credit certainly goes to the Mother under whose Divine Compassion I am existing.”

About the library Sanjiva Rao, the noted educationist already referred to, observes :

“The Library is a students' paradise—I spent every morning in the library—I wish we could have had a place like that in our institution in Benares. We have built a wonderful place there—a two-mile river-front of the Ganga and a mile and a half of the river Varuna. But we can never dream of building up a study centre like that in the Ashram : books in every language chosen with consummate care, books for young and old from every country on Religion, Philosophy, Social Sciences, Literature, books on travel, beautifully illustrated series of books for children, pictures, records of the music of East and West, all these testify to the atmosphere of a world culture that seems to be slowly emerging out of the meeting of East and West in this Ashram. It is a true monument to the genius of Sri Aurobindo in whom ancient and modern thought of both East and West found a perfect unity.”

By no means is this a comprehensive list of all that has to be said. The Ashram's connections with the outside world are also through correspondence and other means. The subject is too big to be compressed into a few pages.

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¹ He is here since June 1961.

In his speech Herr J.B.Sperling, Resident Administrator, German Social Centre, Rourkela remarked :

“...Here I must say, it should strike anyone who has the faintest acquaintance with Sri Aurobindo’s writings, that though like all other sages and savants he gave an important place to the individual he never forgot the society as such. Here he completely differs from other Indian sages and savants”.

1960 saw the birth of Sri Aurobindo Society. In course of one year it has its members from France, England, America, Germany, Switzerland, Vietnam, Japan etc., and has knit together most of Sri Aurobindo centres and study circles spread all over India and abroad, to help them to proceed together towards the goal as a collective unit.

If the world of love is to emerge from the world of hatred we must learn that we are one in the lap of the Mother and live like stars in the sky as examples of unity in diversity.

We must fulfil the Vedic prayer :

स गच्छध्व सं वदध्व सं वो मनासि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ ऋ० १०. १९१. २

Sam gacchadhvam sam vadadhvam sam vo manāmsi jānatām.
Devā bhāgaṁ yathā pūrve sañjānānā upāsate.

“Join together, speak our word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge even as the ancient gods arriving at one Knowledge partake each of his own portion.”

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ ऋ० १०. १९१. ४

samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vah.
samānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati.

“One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours.”¹

We are at the faint beginning of a great end—the realisation of “A Dream” of the Mother.²

(Concluded)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ English renderings by Sri Aurobindo.

² For details see *Bulletin of Physical Education*.

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US*

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER

It was 1948, the month of August. We were on our return journey from Pondicherry. The train reached Villupuram and I, with my friends, jumped out of the Madras through-carriage to have a snack as we usually did.

Somehow politics came up and we started discussing it, seating ourselves on a cement bench on the platform with our carriage standing just behind us. We talked and talked and finally were quite startled to find that the train had long been shunted off to another line, the next train had come and gone with the through-carriage without any of us noticing it at all. We were stranded with only shirts and trousers on. Our purses and the tickets in our pockets were the only sources of relief. Even our sandals had been carried away.

We were nervous and ran to the Station Master to help us by sending a message to the station where the train would by then be reaching, so that the authorities there might take down our luggage. To our disappointment the Station Master flatly refused to do anything. We requested him, entreated him, quarrelled with him and tried to please him in many ways. He would not listen but waved us away.

We had no way out. All our belongings were thus lost and the only way to regain them was denied. Once again we went to the Station Master, somehow to make him agreeable, but he was adamant. All our persuasions were fruitless. Our hopes now lay only with the Mother whom we inwardly invoked, while we continued with the reluctant Station Master. Suddenly we saw a man walking straight to the telephone-set placed on a projection from the left-side wall. He rattled off some message in Tamil, set down the phone and, while walking out of the room, addressed me, asking me not to worry at all but to board the Kanjiwaram Express, to find our luggage safe at Chingelput, to pick it up there and continue our journey to Madras without bother. Hearing this we could gather, and the hot-headed Station Master could also gather, that the man had overheard us and sent our desired message. In a fit of fury the Station Master shouted, "Why did you handle my telephone?"

"Because I liked it," was the cool reply.

"But why? Who are you? With what authority did you handle my set without my permission?" thundered out the Station Master.

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

“I am the Superintendent of Telephones. With my own authority I sent the message. You may do what may please you.”

With this, he walked out of the room, boarded a train which had stopped at the station and from which he had got down and happened to stroll near us. When the train started, we realised we had no opportunity to thank him or inquire who he was, where he came from, who had commissioned him to help us.

Shortly, the Kanjiwaram Express arrived and we boarded it. At Chingelput we found all our luggage—nothing missing—carefully heaped before the Station Master's room and guarded by a sentry, who at once helped us to take it into our compartment. Again the train whistled away and out flew our tears of gratitude to the Mother.

(To be continued)

Compiled by HAR KRISHAN SINGH

NEW ROADS

Book XII

(ii)

O Brave New Birth !
Advent of Golden Love !
How can 'dying man' receive thy Light ?—
Like golden rain falling from heights above
It pours into desert souls of quickened Night :
Is it only the few who sip thy heavenly Grace ?
The few alone who see thy Golden Bliss ?

O then to live ! To find Perfection's Face
In all these forms that give the promise of thy Kiss !

Each blade of grass, each blossom, every tree
Comes into being, grows, — only to die ?
All life, all living sings of the sacred Guest,
Secret within the realms of ecstasy.
Each gentle plant against the storm will try
To live again—the urge to manifest
Is strong within each seed, each living thing.
The will to perfection, to labour and to toil—
The joy of the youth of the world to laugh and to sing
Is in the blood as in the native soil !

And yet thy Silence, Lord, broods over earth,
Cloud of the Unknown, unseen Mystery—
Speak ! that all may know there is re-birth
Leading man to Immortality !

O Glorious One !
Lord of the Life Divine
O Golden Sun !
Burn in this heart of mine!
Speak !

The answer came
 throbbing in blood and brain—
 In the call of the stars,
 in the storm, in the wind and the rain;
 In the rivers now flooded
 with violent vigorous strife,
 In the valleys and fields
 full-pregnant with a new life;
 His Voice rang out
 as from distant stars above
 And yet whispered within
 the beating heart of love:

‘Who is not part
 of all my Golden Wonder ?
 The flash of the worlds,
 the rumble of stars and their thunder ?
 Who has not travelled
 my long Night of despair ?
 Who will not come at last
 to me in prayer ?
 Who would not share
 my Peace in the heart of a rose ?
 Who would not feel
 my Presence still and close ?
 Who would not drink
 my nectar of sweet Calm,
 Yet sing with all creatures
 in song and hymn and psalm ?
 Who will not come
 to know their rightful place ?
 Who will not one day
 meet me face to Face ?
 All will then walk
 my steep laborious Way—
 Then who will not share, in waking,
 the Dawn of the Day ?’

NORMAN DOWSETT

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(44)

VIII. THE HOUR OF GRACE AND SELF-FULFILMENT

75. ON THE HIGH GREY-LINE

We waited in the hush of morn
Looking at the infinite,
There from the blue robe-clouds was born
Sun-beaming soul of light.

On the high grey-line she shone, stood still
With gold grace radiating,
Below heart-bowls were wide for the fill
Of bliss, love-liberating.

She poured in us the nectar-dew,
The deathless diamond wonder,
Then into her heavens she withdrew,
Leaving us her sky-plunder.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THOUGHTS

If we take various colours from different vessels and splash them haphazard on the wall then we shall be disfiguring it.

But what if the same colours are put at the disposal of some consummate artist ?

Like the colours, each man is meant for a particular design according to his unique nature.

Our world is like a wall smeared with blotches.

Gross colours in the hands of men of genius have made the Ajanta wall immortal.

Similarly, will no Supreme Artist step forth to utilise in the proper way the colours of our souls and our natures so that the haphazard way in which we are at present hustled about may come to an end ?

Will he not produce a marvellous painting by harmoniously blending the infinite colours ?

O Creator, if no human being can accomplish this, then won't you take a human shape and do it yourself ?

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“By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy.” This means enjoy at the very moment that you renounce and renounce while you are enjoying. Tear down the veil which stands between renunciation and enjoyment.

Even when you appear to be wallowing in enjoyment no wise man should be able to detect even by one tittle a diminution in your capacity for renunciation.

Likewise when you appear to have renounced everything no wise man should be able to see in you an incapacity to enjoy.

People look askance at the enjoyer because they have a suspicion that he is a slave of his senses. Remove the cause of their looking askance at you.

People sneer at the ascetic because they believe that he is incapable of acquiring objects of enjoyment. Remove the cause that makes them sneer.

Find the truth behind the opposition of the ignorant and set it right. Afterwards live your own life. Renounce and enjoy simultaneously.

GIRDHARLAL

(Translated from the author's Gujarati book “Uparāma”)

“GRACE” AND “SELF-EFFORT” IN THE UPANISHADS

A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN
DR. S. K. MAITRA AND A. B. PURANI

Benares Hindu University,
10-3-44

My dear Mr. Purani,

You are overwhelming me with kindness. Incidentally, after getting your letter I received a copy of your article on Grace in the form of questions and answers. You have very beautifully shown the relation between grace and self-effort. It is impossible to put it in a better way than you have done. Only, the verse of the Kathopanishad which you have used as your text—

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्य.
तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम् ॥

does not speak of Grace. I accept here Shankar's interpretation which takes it to mean that the Atman reveals its true form to the person who makes it the sole object of his seeking. Madvacharya no doubt interprets it in the sense of Divine Grace, but the conception of grace is foreign to the earlier Upanishads. It is first in the Swetashwatara Upanishad that you find it abundantly. Sri Krishna Prem also admits this, although on the whole he has favoured an interpretation of the Kathopanishad on extremely mystical and somewhat devotional (bhakti) lines. I would draw your attention in this connection to the last line of Verse 20 of the Second Valli of the Kathopanishad : धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मन । This line has been repeated in the Swetashwatara Upanishad (3.20) with two changes, and these are very vital. In the first place it has substituted “धातुः प्रसादात्” for “धातुप्रसादात्” and secondly, it has replaced “आत्मन” by “ईशम्”. The difference which you notice here is the characteristic difference between the standpoints of the two Upanishads. Whereas the one believes in realization through धातुप्रसाद that is to say,

through the tranquillisation of manas and the senses, the other believes in realisation through धातु प्रसाद that is, Grace of God.

Please accept my best regards, I trust you are keeping quite fit.

Yours sincerely,

S. K. MAITRA

Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry.
18-3-44.

My dear Dr. Maitra,

Many thanks for your kind letter. I am very glad that you have taken such an interest in my “questions and answers”.

As to the verse of the Kathopanishad let me hasten to assure you that I had Shankar’s interpretation in my mind but that I preferred the one that I have given on the following grounds :—

1. I do not call in question Shankar’s great capacity to “wriggle out” of inconvenient texts. He has done it ably and often. But I believe the Upanishads are not the proper texts for using such subtlety of grammatical interpretation. One of the cardinal principles of Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of ancient Indian texts like the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita is to take the straightforward construction and meaning. I have found that very often this process yields remarkably clear sense. E.g. “यम्” in the passage refers to the “seeker”; एष (according to me) refers to आत्मन्, “self”; तेन and तस्य refer to the “seeker”;—वृणुते, means chooses: who chooses? —The Atman; विवृणुते “reveals.” The rest is clear.

2. This interpretation is supported by the idea of the context नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन। It implies the inferiority of personal effort as a means of attainment.

3. That the idea of Grace is foreign to the earlier Upanishads is merely a statement—*i.e.* it is arbitrary. I do admit that they do not use the word “grace” but does it mean that they did not know or had not the experience of Grace? The Upanishads are not intended to be complete metaphysical expositions, so that if any idea is left out it does not mean that it is not known. The Vedic hymns pray for many benefits to the Gods and I believe the Vedic Rishis knew

about the power of the Gods to "favour" their devotees. I should therefore think that it would be natural for the seers of the Upanishads to know about Grace—even though in their intuitive expression they often may not have spoken of or about it.

4. धातुप्रसाद—Hume takes it to imply Grace and he supports it by citing the famous Vak Ambhrini Sukta X. 125 in support; though he admits the possibility of taking "Prasad" in the sense of "tranquillisation."

5. The question of 'earlier' and 'later' in the composition of the Upanishads, is one which I have not carefully studied. I could have said something about it if I had been well grounded in the tradition. But unfortunately I am not. The late Mr. Narmadashankar D. Mehta, who was a great scholar of the Upanishads, says in his book (in Gujarati) that "the Upanishads were not considered *separately as collections* before Shankar's time (i.e. 788-820 A.D.). Till then they were always taken together with the Shakhas of the Veda to which they belonged. Ramanuja (1017-1137 A.D.) speaks of the Upanishads as parts of the Shakhas "शाखाः" of the Veda concerned; the collection of 108 Upanishads belongs to the Moghul period; Dara Siko's Persian translation (1637) includes 49 Upanishads." I give his views without any comments of my own. I do not think I am in a position to say anything about this subject.

The dates of the Upanishads depend upon the dates of the Mantra-Brahmanas in which they are included.

Dr. Ranade has tried a kind of chronological arrangement of the Upanishads: I old, and II new. Among the old he puts 13 Upanishads: "Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitereya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Svetashwatara, Kaushitaki Grace, and Maitri. If you admit Svetashwatara to contain the idea of how can it be said that it is foreign to the earlier Upanishads?

He even classes them into groups I to V and includes Katha, Mundaka and Svetashwatara together in the IV (P. 16-17). I am afraid I am carrying coal to Newcastle when I give you the data.

6. After carefully considering the point you have made out about Svetashwatara and Katha I admit I fail to see great difference of viewpoint between them. The Upanishads, in my opinion, were hardly intended for expressing such intellectual distinctions and differences. Anyway, granting that they did express such distinctions it does not seem to me so vital considering the entire spiritual context

of both the Upanishads. I shall be very thankful if you can throw light on any of these points.

Yours sincerely,

A. B. PURANI

Quarters No. D/8 ,
P.O. Benares University,
6-4-44.

My dear Mr. Purani,

I have received your letter, as well as your two post cards. I have also received by V.P.P. a copy of the first number of the *Advent*, for which please accept my best thanks.

Regarding the interpretation of the verse of the Kathopanishad (1.2.23) नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्य, etc., I am not surprised that the late Acharya Dhruva also interpreted it in the manner in which you interpret it. In fact, as I have already written to you, Madhva interpreted it in this way. This is, indeed, the way in which Dvaitavadins and Visistadvaitavadins have interpreted it. I am, however, not interested in the question who interpreted this verse in the sense of grace and who did not. For me the only question is whether, taking the Kathopanishad as a whole, it is possible to say that the doctrine of grace is advocated by it. My view definitely is that it is not. In Katha. 2.3.14 and 2.3.15 the conditions are stated under which the mortal becomes immortal, that is, attains salvation. In one verse the condition is stated to be the complete suppression of the desires of the heart, and in the other, the snapping of all the cords of the heart. The two practically mean the same thing. In neither of these is there any mention of grace. Then again, as I have already written to you, if you compare Katha. 1.2.20 with Svet. 3.20 you at once notice a significant difference. Although the latter is a copy of the former, yet you notice a very important change. This is the substitution of धातु. प्रसादात्, for धातुप्रसादात्, and the consequential change of *ātmanah* into *īsam*. This substitution is full of meaning; it shows the characteristic difference between the standpoints of the two Upanishads. The word धातु. प्रसाद, definitely introduces the idea of grace. If धातुप्रसाद, had also meant the same thing there would have been no necessity of changing it into धातु. प्रसाद.

I would also in this connection point out that Katha. 1.2.23. is repeated without any change in Munda. 3.2.3. Here also it cannot be interpreted in the sense of grace, for the doctrine of grace does not occur anywhere in Mundaka. Take for instance, Munda. 3.2.4. which comes immediately after this verse. Here occurs the famous statement : 'नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्य', which rules out completely the idea of grace. In Munda. 3.1.5 Atman is said to be knowable by truth, by perfect knowledge and by chastity, but there is no mention of grace. So again, in Munda. 3.1.8 it is said that the atman can be known by *jñāna-prasāda*, i.e. by pure, unsullied knowledge. Here also there is no mention of grace. So, too, in those beautiful verses (Mun. 2.2.3 and 2.2.4) where the teaching of the Upanishad is compared to a bow, the mind of man to an arrow and the attainment of Brahman to the hitting of the target by the arrow, there is no mention of grace. On the contrary, the whole idea expressed by the imagery of the bow and the arrow is that provided a man seeks Brahman with one-pointed devotion, understanding thoroughly the teaching of the Upanishads, he can attain Brahman. From all this it is clear that neither in the Katha, nor the in Mundak. is there any mention of the doctrine of grace. It is very different, however, with the Swetashwataropanishad, which distinctly mentions grace (धातु प्रसाद) as a way to salvation.

As regards your contention that unless we interpret the third line of Katha. 1.2.23. as indicating the necessity of grace, the whole verse loses all meaning, I think this view cannot be maintained. A contrast here is not, as you think, between the method of attaining Brahman by self-exertion and that of attaining it by grace, but between the method of attaining Brahman by reason and that of attaining it by intuition. All the methods mentioned in the first two lines of this verse—pravachana, medha and shruta—are methods of the intellect or reason. The verse says that all such methods fail when the object is to attain Brahman. The only method which succeeds is the method of intuition or self-revelation of the Atman (आत्मनैवात्मा लभ्य), as Shankar puts it. This contrast between the method of reason and that of intuition runs through the whole of the Kathopanishad, and the Upanishad states in unmistakable terms that it looks upon the latter alone as competent to give us knowledge of Brahman. I would in this connection draw your attention to such explicit statements as नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया (Katha. 1.2.9.) and प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात्

(Kath. 1.2.24) I would therefore put it to you : Is it not better to accept the interpretation which is in keeping with the general sense of the whole Upanishad than adopt one which introduces an absolutely new idea which is quite out of harmony with the general drift of the Upanishad ?

In your first letter you objected to the term “earlier Upanishads” which I used in my previous letter. It is quite true that the dates of the different Upanishads cannot be fixed with anything approaching certainty. Yet I think one or two things can be said about their relative ages. For example, (1) there is no doubt whatsoever that the Brihadaranyaka and the Chhandogya are the earliest Upanishads, and (2) that the Katha is earlier than the Svetashwatara. On this latter point, Deussen makes the very definite statement (*Vide—The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 24): “That the Svetashwatara is later than the Katha is not open to doubt ; on the contrary, it is very probable, on the evidence of several passages, that *Kathaka* was directly employed in the composition of Svetashwatara”. But apart from this statement of Deussen’s, there is very convincing internal evidence to show that the Svetashwatara is later than the Katha. The most striking of such evidence is the fact that many verses of the Katha are copied in the Svetashwatara with slight changes, and these changes always show a later standpoint. For instance, Kath. 2.2.13 is copied in Svet. 6. 13. with some changes which are significant. Instead of तमात्मस्थं येऽनु पश्यन्ति धीराः, etc., the Svetashwatara has तत्कारण साख्ययोगाधिगम्यम्, etc. Here the words साख्ययोगाधिगम्यम्, clearly indicate that at the time when the Svetashwatara was composed, the systems of Sankhya and Yoga, if not in their fully articulated form, at least in an inchoate form, had already come into existence. This is further evident from the various references to the Sankhya and Yoga systems which are found in this Upanishad. I would particularly draw your attention to the very detailed description of the processes of Yoga in the second adhyaya. The Sankhya system, again, is very clearly indicated in 4.5. and in many other places. Moreover, in this Upanishad we have the beginnings of the later theistic systems, such as Saivism and Vaishnavism. Such words as शिव एव केवलः, (4.18) and रुद्रयत्ने दक्षिण मुख तेन मा पाहि नित्यम्, (4.21) point unmistakably to the fact that here we have the germs of the latter theistic schools. I would in this connection refer you to Belvelkar and Ranade’s *History of Indian Philosophy* :

The Creative Period, pp. 306-307, where the relation of this Upanishad to Saivism and the Sankhya is very clearly indicated.

I need not labour this point. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Swetashwatara is later than the Katha.

This long discussion should not lead you, however, to think that I look upon the doctrine of grace as of no importance from the religious and philosophical points of view. Far from this being the case, I look upon this doctrine as essentially necessary to give man his proper status. Unless man is hooked on to a higher source and enjoys the privilege of receiving light from that source, there is no possibility of his rising to a higher level than what he has attained today. In fact, grace is only another name for the descent of the Divine light upon man. If the destiny of man is to become more than man, then he must enjoy this privilege of enjoying the Divine Grace. But the Katha and the earlier Upanishads know nothing of this doctrine. They rely exclusively upon man's own effort for the improvement of his status. A higher standpoint emerged in the Bhagavadgita, where grace and self-effort both find their proper place. I have recently discussed this question in an article which will probably appear in *The Vedanta Kesari* for May.

Please excuse the length of this letter, as also the delay in replying to your very kind letters. The delay is due to the fact that I had to examine a number of answer books and also to the circumstance that I had to finish an article for *The Vedanta Kesari*. One sentence in your last postcard has given me extreme delight, and that is the possibility that you may some day pay a visit to this place. I need hardly tell you that nothing would give me greater pleasure than this. In fact, what I have been feeling for some time is that men like you, Nolini Babu and Sriyut Anil Baran Ray should occasionally come out of your Ashram in order to give the people who live outside an opportunity of hearing the true doctrine of Sri Aurobindo from the lips of those who are intimately associated with him.

I trust you are keeping quite fit.

Yours sincerely,

S. K. MAITRA

(To be continued)

RISHI BANKIM

BANKIM is one among Bengal's men of supreme genius. Time will never be able to diminish or bring to a standstill his authority on Bengali language and literature. Needless to say that creators like him can never be counted as the monopoly of any province. Bankim is entitled, by his wonder-genius and master-works, to rank among those who have easily transcended all limitations of language, race and continent.

Bankim's childhood demands our candid admiration. At a single reading he mastered the alphabet of his mother tongue. Two months' study the child would unbelievably finish in a day. In the school, to jump up two rungs of the ladder at a time was to him as easy as to breathe in and breathe out. A succession of amazements was he. Even his College life would not permit us to reduce our marvel at his genius. His name is among the first two graduates of Bengal, the other being Jadu Nath Bose.

Bankim's *Ananda Math* is deeply inspired by patriotism. He felt the country as a Deity, a Mother who is at once incredibly sweet and augustly powerful. In the adoration of the Mother, Bankim's heart pined to see his brothers and sisters discover the secret Strength for a glorious future.

Somehow he seems to be the first modern man who could regard India as the collective Mother personified. He had lamented that he was the only person to call and look upon India as the all-supporting Mother. His call to others to share his view was a mere cry in the wilderness.

Now let us focus our attention on Bankim's profusely inspired *Bande Mataram* Song. Over a decade ago the Song was a subject of bitter controversy. On the one hand, some left no stone unturned to label it as idolatrous, while, on the other, some of the true patriots found nothing offensive, nothing absurd in it. Who will dare to forget the great role it has played in the Indian life-atmosphere during the last few decades ? We can be sure that Bankim was not prompted by any narrow motive to offend or belittle any community while offering his immortal Song to the world. His pen simply carried out the command of his heart surcharged with the vision of the true Mother, the Mother who dwells within and without India. It is the deplorable blindness of some of our political leaders that can award the *Bande Mataram* a position of secondary importance. As a protest against this judgment I must cite here K.D.Sethna's irrefutable reasoning and intuition :

"The revelatory vision and the mantric vibration distinguishing *Bande Mataram* throw *Jana Gana Mana* entirely into the shade. And it is no wonder

that not Tagore's but Bankim's song has been the motive-force of the whole struggle for India's freedom. Until it burned and quivered in the hearts of our patriots and rose like a prayer and incantation on their lips, the country was striving with an obscure sense of its own greatness : there was a vagueness, a lukewarmness, a fear : we were overawed by the material prowess and pomp of our foreign rulers and our efforts to find our true selves were spoiled by either an unthinking imitation of the West or else a defensive anti-Western conservatism. We had not struck upon the master-key to the problem of national existence. Then, out of a book that had been neglected when it had first appeared, the music of *Bande Mataram* rang into the ambiguously agitated air of the nations's reawakening consciousness...*Bande Mataram* stimulated and supported the people of India, instilling into them a hope and a strength beyond the human. It is the one cry that has made modern Indian history; not political speeches, but the magical strain breaking through Bankim Chandra from the inmost recesses of resurgent India's heart and interfused by Sri Aurobindo with India's mind and life as the true national anthem, brought us, in 1947, on the fifteenth of August which was also the seventy-fifth birthday of Sri Aurobindo, our political liberation. To put such a saviour-song on any other footing than that of national anthem is to be disloyal to the Power that has given us a new birth."

I believe, it will not be out of place if, for comparison, I deal with some other national songs. Revolution, revenge, sacrifice, pangs, tears—these are the fiery and throbbing words that compel the world to pin its attention on France and the French. In 1792 during the French Revolution *La Marseillaise* was composed by Rouget de Lisle, a French soldier. Nobody will forget Carlyle's wonderful appreciation of the anthem :

"The luckiest composition ever promulgated, the sound of which will make the blood tingle in men's veins, and whole armies and assemblies will sing it with eyes weeping and burning, with hearts defiant of Death, Despot and Devil."

The English national song *God Save the King* is somewhat soft and lucid. At the very commencement the words invoke God, just as the Indians sing *Bande Mataram* ("Mother, I bow to Thee"). But these words long for the welfare and victory of the king as the living emblem of the inner harmony of the nation. The sense of loyalty reigns supreme in the song, with an appealing tune.

The German national song too rightly deserves its place in the vanguard of the world's choicest anthems. It begins with "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit für das deutsche Vaterland" ("Unity and Right and Freedom for the German Fatherland"). In fact, there is no shadow of a doubt that the entire world longs for these pleasant-sounding and oft-inspiring words—Unity, Right and Freedom.

Back to Bankim. Bengali prose owes its origin to Raja Rammohan Roy.

Then is the advent of Vidyasagar to carry the movement dauntlessly yet successfully to an appreciably further distance. Bankim's arrival on the scene is marked by the memorable fact that he made the Bengali language a great literary vehicle.

Destiny works in strange ways. Curiously enough, one of his earliest attempts at literature was in English. Fortunately his *Rajmohan's Wife* had no successor. Like Michael Madhusudan Dutt he too turned to the infinitely vast treasure-house of the mother tongue, throwing off the ruthless shackles of an alien speech. Later he wrote to one of his friends :

"I have myself projected a Bengali Magazine with the object of making it the medium of communication and sympathy between the educated and the uneducated classes. You rightly say that the English language for good or evil has become our vernacular; and this tends daily to widen the gulf between the higher and lower ranks of Bengali society. This I think, that we ought to disanglicise ourselves so to speak to the masses in the language which they may understand."

Bankim's was a frail constitution. But in that frail constitution Bengal saw a reservoir of stupendous possibility materialised.

"Bankim, the greatest of novelists, had...versatility developed to its highest expression. Scholar, poet, essayist, novelist, philosopher, lawyer, critic, official, philologist and religious innovator,—the whole world seemed to be shut up in his single brain." (Sri Aurobindo)

Sri Aurobindo's appreciation of Bankim may partly be attributed to the fact that Bankim had theoretically chalked out the path in ideas in the cause of India's independence which Sri Aurobindo was to work out and extend in his inimitable way.

Sri Aurobindo's India had no material equipment to wage a war against the British. But his strength lay in his touch with God. Does he not say in *Savitri* : "All can be done if the God-touch is there" ?

It is interesting to observe that Vidyasagar, Bankim, Bhudev Mukherjee, Dinabandhu Mitra, Nabin Chandra Sen and Dwijendra Lal Roy who were outstanding writers and poets were produced from the Government service in Bengal. It goes without saying that these literary celebrities were headed by Bankim Chandra. Bankim had done unique pioneer work in the field of Bengali literature. By translating his enthralling novels almost all the major Indian languages have considerably added glory to their literatures. Several languages of Europe too do not lag behind in spreading Bankim's genius into the wide world.

It was Bankim who discovered the supremely poetic possibilities in the adolescent Rabindranath and placed the garland of honour round his neck in a literary conference and hailed him as the fast-rising sun in the firmament of literary creation.

Who will hesitate to say that the budding novelist in Rabindranath was

not considerably influenced by Bankim Chandra ? Young Tagore was a voracious reader of Bankim's novels that were then appearing in the pages of the latter's journal *Bangadarshan*. What effect Bankim's *Bangadarshan* made upon the contemporary Bengali public can easily be understood from the following words of Tagore :

“It was bad enough to have to wait till the next monthly number was out, but to be kept waiting further till my elders had done with it was simply intolerable.”

He further said that Bankim Chandra had “invited both East and West to a veritable festival of union in the pages of his *Bangadarshan*.”

As Bankim was at home in Sanskrit literature and Vaishnava poetry, he drew abundantly upon their riches. He peacefully housed in his creations colloquial style and Sanskrit literary style. They say, Sir Walter Scott (Bankim Chandra is often called the Scott of Bengal) is almost buried in oblivion in England. But we dare say that Bankim's fate is otherwise in India. His patriotic fervour, his seer-vision, his inspiration-flood that aroused the nation will retain his fame perpetually not only in his native province, but also far outside its four frontiers.

A most winning sympathy, a most exquisite tenderness were not less inherent in him than remarkable courage and manliness.

Now let us learn in a flash from Sri Aurobindo the difference between the earlier Bankim and the later Bankim : “The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist—the later Bankim was a seer and nation-builder.”

This humble effort of mine ends with the firm conviction that *BandeMataram* will keep Bankim's memory green for all time in this great sub-continent and will stand out in the future as the national Mantra that it is.

CHINMOY

Students' Section

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

TALKING

YES. The speech must come from within and be controlled from within.
12-1-1935

*Mauna*¹ is seldom of much use. After it is over, the speech starts again as in the old times—It is in speech itself that the speech must change. 2-9-1935

In talking one has the tendency to come down into a lower and more external consciousness because talking comes from the external mind. But it is impossible to avoid it altogether. What you must do is to learn to get back at once to the inner consciousness—this so long as you are not able to speak always from the inner being or at least with the inner being supporting the action.
12-3-1935

Outer speech belongs to the externalising mind—that is why it is so difficult to connect it with the inner life.
14-3-3

Retirement is not necessary for passing from one plane to another. It is necessary only in rare cases and with certain temperaments for a time.
16-5-1935

It is quite possible for one person to get depressed by talking with another. Talking means a vital interchange, so that can always happen. Whether they have observed rightly in a particular case is another matter.
17-5-1935

Talking of an unnecessary character [fatigues] the inner being because the talk comes from the outer nature while the inner has to supply the energy which it feels squandered away.
27-9-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

¹ Constant enforced silence (Ed.)

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-FOUR

“PURE poetry”—that is a phrase we have used once or twice in the course of our Talks. But so far we have put aside discussion of it. Now that we have talked of Logopoeia—poetic “thought-making”—the phrase becomes topical, for, though there are several schools of “pure poetry”, they combine in ruling out logopoeic expression. Any kind of thinking, all reaching of conclusion moral or any other, they condemn as out of place in real poetic speech. They regard Arnold’s formula—“criticism of life”—in relation to this speech as philistine impertinence. Poetry, they hold, produces a mood, but it does so in a direct fashion : it does not tell us to be glad or sad or mad or anything else. Thus when Hugo writes—

Comme c’est triste voir s’enfuir les hirondelles—

(How sad to see the swallows fly away—)

he is introducing a non-poetic element by those opening words. He should have presented just a picture of swallows flying away and presented it so that we would at once have felt sad. I suppose the direct mood-productive speech of “pure poetry”—not perhaps quite confined to the mood of sadness yet not very far from it—may be hailed in the lines of J. A. Chadwick (“Arjava” to our Ashram) :

Drowsy pinions whitely winging
Smoulder dimly past the strand,

but the advocates of "pure poetry" would be disappointed to learn that these two lines are followed by :

Visionary trance-light bringing
From some strange remoter land.

"Pure poetry" should convey what it wishes by a concrete image or symbol and stop there : it should be a poetry of sheer sight or at least bring before us colour and shape and gesture, and banish information or exposition.

Symbolism, as developed by Mallarmé, was perhaps the most famous school that laid claim to being "pure poetry". It did so, as we have noted, by distinguishing poetry sharply from prose : prose was called reportage, something intellectual and explicit and not particularly rhythmic, whereas poetry was assigned the task of creating with rhythmic language indefinite, non-intellectual, mysterious effects by concrete suggestions that took the form of images without even mentioning what they might serve as similes or metaphors for and that conjured up by an almost abrupt succession of these images a significant vision which exceeded the picture of anything recognisable as a whole in the natural world. Thus Mallarméan Symbolism was not only mysterious but also mystical and to the ordinary mind it seemed to make some sort of superior non-sense which yet affected one with a profound though not clearly formulable meaningfulness, a meaningfulness such as music appears to have. To do in the highest degree what poetry alone could do was to produce "pure poetry", according to the Mallarméan definition.

This definition was accepted in general—nay, even actually framed—by Valéry who was Mallarmé's most gifted disciple. But Valéry was not steeped in an atmosphere of the mystical as his master was in spite of being by intellectual conviction an atheist and a materialist. "Pure poetry", for Valéry, achieves its absolute distinction from prose through a conscious deliberate construction upon a theme itself utterly indifferent by a musical pattern of words which gives delight and communicates not anything intelligible on the whole but a subtle many-shaded state of mind. Valéry even said that his best poems had their origin in an intense obsession with certain metrical forms which he afterwards filled out with words connected with one another by what he felt to be their inner suggestive affinities. But Valéry was a marked intellectual and his work is, not so much a sheer evocation from the depths of the being as a thought-scheme imaginatively complicated and rendered enigmatic. That is why the French people have recognised in him their own typical temper, however strange-hued, and accorded him a high place in their poetic pantheon, unlike Mallarmé whom most of them deem an exotic growth and a fantastic failure rather than a sphinx-like success. Something of the subtlety of Mallarmé's Symbolism merges in something of the clarity that is French Classicism's to make the "pure poetry"

of Valéry. An instance is the stanza from *Le Cimetière Marin* (*The Graveyard by the Sea*), where a little after the start he is describing a moment of self-rarefaction as if anticipating, under the poised noonday glare which looks like a glimpse of Eternity, his own disappearance by death :

Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance,
Comme en délice, il change son absence
Dans une bouche où sa forme se meurt,
Je hume ici ma future fumée,
Et le ciel chante à l'âme consumée
Le changement des rives en rumeur.

C. Day Lewis has Englished this example of what I may term clear-cut elusiveness :

Even as a fruit's absorbed in the enjoying,
Even as within the mouth its body dying
Changes into delight through dissolution,
So to my melted soul the heavens declare
All bounds transfigured into a boundless air
And I breathe now my future's emanation.

I think Valéry here has a similarity in general spirit and art-attitude, though not in style, to the writing which a certain side of the seventeenth-century Metaphysicals practised—say, Marvell at his most delicate and most deep. I may quote a stanza from *The Garden* on which we once drew when speaking of Mallarmé and of a modern English poet's ideal in which Mallarmé was coupled with Marvell. Marvell also speaks of a dreamy luminous disembodiment anticipating the "longer flight" from the sense-world at time of death. His lines run :

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit-tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide :
There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
Then whets and claps its silver wings,
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Marvell is less sophisticated as well as less "vaporous" than Valéry, his subtlety is simpler, as it were, yet there is an exquisite deliberate distillation of expe-

rience and expression marking the poetry very keenly off from any mere refinement of the prose-turn. Contrast Marvell's closing phrase—

Waves in its plumes the various light—

with one of Pope's on sylphs, air-spirits :

Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.

Pope has effective sound-values supporting his expression. The three long *a*-sounds in "change", "they" and "wave" suggest a kind of repeated expansion—an expansion suggested further by the three *w*'s with their propulsive openness of articulation. Then there is the twinkling *n*-sound three times, just as again the *r* occurs thrice and produces a whirr. All in all, we get a vivid impression of wings widening and beating the air and gleaming with each waft—and the threefold reiteration of each of the three significant letters makes us feel as if three colours were gleaming. A skilful line, this, but its deft representation of things differs from prose-style by a charm of rhythm more than by a special word-magic. Marvell's line has a more exquisite art which stirs us to sight on a deeper level of consciousness. His alliteration is not so open : the *v* in the midst of "waves" finds an echo in the *v* at the beginning of "various" and similarly the *l* combined with *p* in "plumes" tolls once more in *l* at the opening of "light". There is the *a* assonance too, twice. Only the *s* is thrice sounded, twice as *z* and once with a clear sibilance. This play of *s* carries on the sound-effect of line 6—

Then whets and claps its silver wings.

The light that diversely comes and goes is a shine and a shimmer slipping like strange water and suffuses the word "wave" with an extra overtone of liquidity on top of its direct sense of vibrating with a sinuous or sweeping motion : it is almost as if the verb meant "turns into waves". Not only are sounds employed more skilfully : a more direct connection is established between things. It is not plumes that are waved : the waving is of light itself. Thus light becomes a component of the wings. Also, light is not made various by the wing-waving : just as it is one with the plumes, the variousness of it is one with the waving. Further, the light is already various but its variousness gets revealed when the light is waved—the waving breaks the uniformity of appearance and with that non-uniformity the variousness comes out. And the oneness of waving and variety, as well as the oneness of plumes and light, is brought out by the similarity of certain sounds we have already noticed in the words.

In Marvell's speech, poetry is as if washed clean of the presence of prose, the relationship between it and prose seems erased by a special novelty and

sensitiveness of vision and word and rhythm. "Pure poetry" of an iconopoeic kind is the result. But must poetry be iconopoeic in this way or even in a more cryptic way as in Mallarmé and a more rarefied way as in Valéry in order to be pure? And must it always be iconopoeic in order to ensure its purity? The Symbolists would return an emphatic Yes. So would the school known as the Imagists.

One of the founders of Imagism was the American-English poet Ezra Pound. Imagism is a revolt against the development of Romanticism into the vaguely and vastly emotional, the sense of at once the crepuscular and the cosmic, the mind twilight-blurry and tending to float away in what T.E.Hulme termed "circumambient gas". Imagism demanded objectivity, clarity, exactitude, conciseness—it also recommended free verse as more suitable to the individuality of the poet—and above everything else it stressed the importance of the image, the focused picture rendering particulars and conveying the poet's state of mind without discussion or reflection. Imagism overlaps with Symbolism in several matters, but in its penchant for sharp and hard outlines it was inclined to fight shy of the mysterious, the ultra-natural, the dream-world and the world of interior vision. Yet its desire to cut the cackle and to short-circuit description led to a degree of compression which at times made the created poetic brevities fuse pictures and speak elliptically: thus the surface was occasionally a vivid entanglement without sacrifice of that precise definition, that Chinese quality of *ching ming* which Pound recommended and sought to practise as an indispensable mode of true poetry. In the eyes of Pound and his followers, "a poem is an image or a succession of images, and an image is that which presents an intellectual or emotional complex in an instant of time."

One or two examples of Imagist poetry may be offered. There is Pound's own well-known two-lined piece with a title half the length of the poem, *In a Station of the Metro*:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet black bough.

Imagist poetry of this kind harks back to Far Eastern models—Chinese and Japanese forms, particularly the latter. The shortest form of Japanese verse is known as the *hokku* or *haiku*, consisting of three lines, the first in five syllables, the second in seven and the third again in five—altogether seventeen syllables. Pound's piece just exceeds the limit by two syllables. If we elide the *e* in the opening "the" and slur the two words "in the" into one sound "inth" by another such elision we shall have an equivalent to the total length of the *haiku*. The three-line division, however, would not quite conform to the pattern. It would be:

Th' apparition
Of these faces in th' crowd;
Petals on a wet black bough.

But, interestingly, Pound's little poem—Pound's penny of a poem, if we may put it punningly—has in part of its mood an affinity to the very first extant *haiku* of Japan, dating from the early thirteenth century—namely, of Fujiwara no Sadaiye :

Chiru hana wo
Oikakete yuku
Arashi kana.

(A fluttering swarm
Of cherry-petals—then comes,
Chasing them, the storm !)

Like Fujiwara's petals, Pound's seem also to be blown ones, dislodged from the stems and flung by rain-sweeps to a black bough, just as the passing apparition-like faces in the crowd are separate units thrown somewhat helter-skelter yet shinily hanging together inside a station in the dull weather against a background of dampened spirits. But there is perhaps more pleasure in the Japanese poet's attitude and more feeling too of the energy of Nature's life : the sense of mere apparition is absent.

If the minor scale of spirit were made major and the energy became more actively present and the joy grew mixed with a sense of awe and grandeur, Fujiwara may be considered as Englished in the opening lines of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, at the same time that a touch of Pound's "apparition" enters through the word "ghosts" in the Shelley-passage :

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red...

The phrase that comes just after these lines—

Pestilence-strucken multitudes...—

goes, of course, beyond both Fujiwara and Pound in its mood, but it remains Imagist poetry; and the *ensemble*, for all its more direct, more weighty tone, still satisfies the demands of the new school—the blend of the clarity and objecti-

vity of the Greeks with the effective visual condensation of the Oriental miniature. The lines would be accepted by the Imagist as pure poetry. What, however, about the close of Shelley's Ode ?—

...Be thou, Spirit fierce,
 My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !
 Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
 Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth;
 And, by the incantation of this verse,
 Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
 Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
 The trumpet of a prophecy ! O Wind,
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

There is in this magnificent outburst too much statement, too much elaboration, too explicit a development of the idea and finally too clear a conclusion for the Imagist or Symbolist definition of the purely poetic. Also, the poet's attitude and interpretation are too much in evidence for this definition. Not that this definition insists on sheer objectivity. In fact, there can be no such thing. Always we have an attitude towards the material, always a selection of the details of the material : an interpretation, however hidden, is embodied in every poem. Subjectivity of even a more noticeable kind is accepted by the Symbolists; but it must be put forth pictorially with the utmost economy in connective tissue. Among the Imagists, though, there was a tendency to cut down subjectivity and most poets could not live up long to the Imagist ideal either in this respect or in respect of brevity. So a modified conception of "pure poetry" grew out of the Imagist extremism. To this conception Pound's admirer and ultimately surpasser as poet, T.S. Eliot, gave critical formulation.

Here a premium was put on the contemplation of doctrine or of ideas without setting at a discount the cult of imaged moods : the contemplation was to be done exclusively through imagery. The poet was encouraged to do a lot of thinking but a bar was placed against the intrusion of it in the poem. The ideas have to be squeezed out of the finished poetic product and the reader must supply them after receiving the sheer image-impact. Poetry resides, as Eliot said, in the "objective correlative". Here, as in Imagism, the emotion is not to be told us as this or that subjective condition of experience but must be communicated through "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." However, plenty of brain-stuff can and should go with the emotion, provided a symbol is discovered as a focal point of heightened

consciousness and all that belongs to the conventional structure of a poem is removed: no connections, no transitions, nothing explicitly directing and explaining the heightened consciousness. The reason advanced by Eliot of such abbreviation of method is that "the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression". Naturally, this method conduces to an elliptical style with a lot of obscurity and ambiguity. It can take for its patron-saint, as it were, John Donne of the seventeenth century; but, to carry it off, the poet must have Donne's ecstatic intellect, Donne's analytic heart, Donne's mystic nerves of sensation; and even Donne with his extraordinary gifts often turns out untransformed stuff of a thought-emotion-sensation *mélange* powerfully compressed yet not keenly crystallised. Our modern practitioners of the imaged ellipsis go astray deplorably because they do not tap the elemental forces within, forces without which no poetry can come to birth. A follower of Eliot who has made quite a name in our day, William Empson, offers us things like these six lines that open his poem *Arachne*:

Twixt devil and deep sea, man hacks his caves;
 Birth, death; one, many; what is true, and seems;
 Earth's vast hot iron, cold space's empty waves.

King spider walks the velvet roof of streams;
 Must bird and fish, must god and beast avoid;
 Dance, like nine angels, on pin-point extremes.

I think it would be precious pretension if such products were passed off as "pure poetry". Imaginative intensity is wanting, though a few lines are well turned and even striking.

The want is of something considered indispensable by Gerard Manley Hopkins whom our Modernists look upon as their premature Father—premature because he wrote in a period of poetic conventionalism pieces vibrant with a new vision and a new technique. "Sweet fire the sire of Muse"—so pronounced Hopkins in the midst of his newness. Like Donne with his high-pressure effects, Hopkins time and again overdoes his originality and gives us strained piled-up novelties instead of achieved and possessed audacities; but he has the true sense of the poetic—what he calls "inscape" and "instress", the inner significant pattern of things, the inner harmonious excitement of sight. I may illustrate his departure from poetic conventionalism by picking out, as a critic has done, a verse from him and a couple of lines from Crashaw, both on the theme of Christ's incarnation through the Virgin Mary. Crashaw refers to the heavenly babe:

Christ left his father's house and came
 Lightly as a lambent flame.

Here we have a good simile suggesting the soft secrecy of the Divine's entry into the human. The epithet "lightly", while meaning a movement delicate and refined, prepares the gentle light indicated by the closing phrase. Also, perhaps in the adjective "lambent" we have a subtle allusion to the common phrase about Christ: "Lamb of God." But the cleverness is not obtrusive: it is assimilated into the fine taste of the whole expression. A variety of ideas and attitudes is smoothly packed into a couplet simple and sincere in a conventionally poetic manner. How different, how dynamically different, how directly suffused with the glory and profundity and awful loveliness of the event are the words of Hopkins:

The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled
Miracle-in-Mary of flame...

The whole first line is adjectival and the noun it qualifies is the compound "Miracle-in-Mary". The words "of flame" go with "Miracle" and not with "Mary": the incarnating Christ is the "Miracle of flame" within Mary. The total expression in the two lines is repeatedly concrete in unexpected ways. We have not even distinct images, we have a picture in each phrase with an assimilation of whatever images are there. We see Jesus's origin in divinity from which he has come missioned as both force and grace, as both pressure of power and largesse of love; we see his love's acceptance of humanity and humanity's acceptance of him in love; we see his preciously secret birth through deeply and tenderly guarded virginity; we see the prodigious Godhead that was the unborn child lying with all its light and fire in Mary's quickened earth-womb. The representation of the theme by Crashaw has been compared to the chaste and lucid art of Raphael, that by Hopkins to the impassioned and complex art of Michelangelo. For our purposes the distinction would lie not only as between the chastely lucid and the passionately complex: it would lie also in the nearness of the Crashavian utterance to the prose temper and the farness of the Hopkinsian from it. The latter articulation has a subtlety and intensity quite foreign to the spirit of prose: the former has not the same sheer poetic *enthousiasmos*. Its rhythmic breath keeps it within the realm of poetry, but it is almost on the frontiers of that realm whereas Hopkins is right in the centre of it, in the royal visionary and rhythmic core. The poetry here has shed all prose-resemblances: it stands pure in its own essence. But, while differing from Crashaw, it differs also from Empson who for all his imaged ellipsis stands with one foot inside and one outside the poetic frontiers. This double nationality is what is wrong with most modernist poets, and no Imagist theory, no dogma of "objective correlative" or inexplicit concentration can save them.

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

RAINBOW PLAY

A SHORT STORY

LITTLE Shashi would always become gloomy on hearing either from her mother or from someone else any news of people in their town being unhappy owing to some reason or other. She always thought, "When someone is sick the doctor gives a nasty medicine which adds to his pains, when a little kid at school falls down someone puts a kind of liquid on the cut and the cut burns so severely that the kid has to cry aloud in agony. Can't there be a nice way to help people forget their misery and pain? Mummy can at least go to these poor and sick people and talk kindly to them but I am so young I cannot talk like that. If I could find some way!"

Once when Shashi sat brooding like this, her brother Amit called, "Shashi, look out of your window. What do you see?"

She got up quickly and reaching the window gasped, "Oh, a rainbow!" She went on looking at the soft colours which so beautifully merged into one another to make a lovely bow. Then her eyes turned to the rest of the sky. And at once they brightened up as a dark corridor does on our switching a light on. She thought, "The day looks gloomy because of so many clouds, the atmosphere is heavy and everything is lazy, yet all these depressing things hide away in front of the rainbow, because it is so lovely and cheerful."

At night she slept with a cheerful rainbow in her mind and got up in the morning with a definite decision in her face. At breakfast she asked her mummy if she could pluck some flowers from the garden. Her mother asked, "What do you need them for?" "Mummy, I am going to play a new game and I need them. I won't spoil them, I assure you."

"I am sure you won't, Shashi. You can have the flowers for your game."

Shashi went to her room, dressed up and went to get the flowers. When she had a little gay bunch of them she walked out of the garden and was on her way to the general hospital. When she reached the hospital one of the nurses in a pure white dress saw her and said, "You must have come to see someone, but didn't you know, dear, that the visiting time is only between 4 and 6? But I can take these lovely flowers to the person for whom you have brought them."

Shashi shook her head smilingly and said, "I haven't anyone sick from our house. I have brought these flowers for the person who is suffering the most today in your hospital." Her bright eyes sparkled as she spoke.

The nurse was wonder-struck at Shashi's happy expression. She said, "How wonderful of you to think of these unlucky people in pain! I think you look so lovely in your fine pink frock that the patient who suffers the most today will be happy to see you carry these flowers to him. Come, I shall take you to his room."

"Oh ! thank you so much. Do you think these flowers will help him ?"

"You will see it yourself just now."

She opened a door and asked Shashi to enter first. She came behind, went to the bed with Shashi and putting her hand on the sickman's forehead, said, "See, this delightful girl has some flowers for you."

"For me ?..." asked he in a feeble voice as though he could not believe it. But Shashi went up to him and, placing the flowers near him, said softly, "Yes, sir, they are for you." The man seemed so content at the words that he closed his eyes and patted her hand for a while.

The nurse then arranged the flowers in a vase and, putting it on a table near the bed, took Shashi by the hand and walked out of the room. She thanked her heartily for having made her worst patient happy and bade her good-bye. Shashi ran home, the happiest child of the day.

She continued her play. Every morning she would go out with flowers for the sick, at other times she would just walk down to the house of anyone whom she knew to be unhappy or miserable and with her ever cheerful gay manner talk to them as though she knew them as close friends. The people were surprised at first but when they realised how they forgot their sad thoughts when she talked and laughed in her own way, they thanked her with grateful hearts. Soon everyone in the town came to know her and she visited practically all the houses one after another, leaving in each of them her laughing echoes.

After a long time, when once she went to the hospital with flowers, the nurse who had met her on the first visit asked her in a friendly voice, "Shashi, who asks you to do all this ? Do you never feel tired ?"

"Oh ! it is a play ! No one asks me to do it. But I like to play this game, and as I like it how can I get tired of it ?"

"A play you mean ?"

"Yes ! See it goes this way. There are seven days in a week and seven colours in a rainbow. I put on seven different coloured frocks on the different days of the week to match with the colours of the rainbow..."

"How very, very true ! You have become a rainbow child playing a rainbow game, with your red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet frocks. Soon we shall have rainbow happiness pouring out of the places you visit."

SRI AUROBINDO IN THE SUBURBS OF CALCUTTA

(Some Biographical Notes)

SRI AUROBINDO had the busiest days of his life when he was at Calcutta in 1906-7.

Not only the editorial responsibilities of the daily newspaper *Bande Mataram* were on his shoulders, but many of the knotty financial problems were also to be solved.

The Secret Society founded by him to free Mother India from the bondage of a foreign domination gradually gained ground throughout Bengal. He had to direct personally the affairs of the organisation. The trouble was much enhanced as he had to pull the wires *incognito*, from behind the curtain.

The Anushilan Samity had its director in no other person than Sri Aurobindo. It was a very innocent institution on the surface, imparting physical and moral instructions to the younger generation; performance of some simpler religious rites, such as worship of idols, chanting of orisons, offering of oblation on the sacrificial fire and the like, was not wanting there—after all a guileless concern indeed. To avoid suspicion of him, Sri Aurobindo nominated as its executives an Anglicised England—returned barrister-at-law, Mr. P. Mitra, an Irish lady Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda), and an influential member of the highly aristocratic Tagore family of Calcutta. They were all seemingly Pro-British people. But the Samity was nothing save a disguised revolutionary force of the first water. Through the sagacious guidance of Sri Aurobindo it grew from power to power and there was a network of its branches throughout the length and breadth of the then undivided Bengal. But just after his withdrawal from the scene to Pondicherry in 1910, the Samity failed to check its explosive intent and burst into open violence in different centres, and thus prematurely lost its existence, as we have seen elsewhere in our journal (*Mother India*, December 5 1959, p. 113).

SRI Aurobindo was then a full-fledged householder having a wife, a sister, a brother, besides some dependants in his family, lodged in a rented house. He himself had to manage the affair of this private concern. Of course, on the day of his arrest as a political prisoner—the morning of the 5th of May 1908—we find no trace of his wife Mrinalini anywhere in his apartments; and the brother Barindra Kumar was snatched away by the police from Maniktala garden, more than eight furlongs from their residence at 23, Scott Lane; while his only younger sister Sarojini, who dedicated her long life of more than seven

decades to the noble cause of her brothers and remained unmarried all along, was found on the premises, and was almost fired at with a revolver by the British police officer, on the suspicion that she was no less a terrorist than the two dangerous brothers.

Under such circumstances even a demi-god of Herculean nerve would have been shaken. But as a Mahayogi even then, Sri Aurobindo was firm and calm in the midst of all these multifarious activities.

To relax himself slightly, he had to leave the metropolis, holidaying for a little while in some seclusion. And this would have never been if it had not been compelled on grounds of health. He would go on a journey to Deoghar in Bihar, where his maternal uncles were staying. Or he would flee from Calcutta to some village nearby, and no body but two or at most three of his closest comrades or followers knew of his whereabouts.

On one such occasion he went to Panihati, a village on the bank of the river Ganga, a few miles off from the northern border of Calcutta. It was in the neighbourhood of the famous temple-garden of Dakshineswar, where Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the guardian-angel of the Mother Kali of that temple. The Paramahansa had hallowed the village with his holy presence for more than a quarter of a century by then.

Sri Aurobindo was in indifferent health owing to over-exertion and his attendants were in great anxiety about him. Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, the Marathi Yogi, had some closer relation with him and it was in regard to Yoga. He was telegraphically invited to come over to help with his sage counsel.

Raja Subodh Mallik of Calcutta had been an intimate associate of Sri Aurobindo ever since they had been introduced to each other in the Thana (Bombay) Camp of Charu Chandra Dutt, a member of the Indian Civil Service, then posted in the judicial department at Thana. This was fairly earlier than 1905, when Sri Aurobindo left Baroda for Bengal. Subodh Babu would come there to meet his sister, the wife of Charu Dutt ; and Sri Aurobindo the friend, philosopher and guide of the civilian would occasionally visit his quarters from Baroda which was not much distant from Thana.

This Raja was not really a ruler of any kingdom, but his countrymen had entitled him such for his munificent donation of a lakh of rupees to the National College where Sri Aurobindo became the first Principal. He lived for a pretty long time as an honoured guest, rather an affectionate member, of the Mallik family, before he hired a house for himself.

Incidentally it may be noted here that the College has now become a University with a different name. The press and the platform of Calcutta made at that time some feeble attempt to name the University after Sri Aurobindo ; but the successor of the British Empire in India—I mean our National Government—found no way then to honour the National College in the manner suggested.

The Malliks had a garden-house at Panihati, and it was decided that Sri Aurobindo and Lele should be sent there for a fortnight or so, and none except Charu Dutt and Subodh Mallik should go there, but they too only on urgent necessity.

I heard it from our Charu Kaka (Uncle Charu—he was addressed as such, considering his intimacy with our Master) that his maternal grandfather-in-law had a Radha-Krishna temple at Sukhchar (an adjacent village), and a distant grand-uncle of his wife was there in the temple-garden, dedicating the few remaining years of his life to the service of the Divine alone, with his rosary of prayer-beads and worship and meditation, on the banks of the sacred Ganga. This grand old man requested his grandson-in-law Charu to bring once his friend Aurobindo to him, disabled as he was from going to him by his age-inflicted infirmity. The young man readily responded, greeted the pious patriarch as a grandson should do, partook of the sacrament (prasad of a few bits of fruits and sweets), and chatted with him—though in chaste and elegant Bengali, unaccustomed as he was to speak fluently in the colloquial language.

During this period he graced another suburban locality at Shibpur with his divine presence,—the description of this visit was given in an earlier issue of *Mother India* (December, 1959, p. 113).

Thus these places so sanctified with the sacred dust of Sri Aurobindo's feet, are now raised to the status of Tirtha-Kshetras (pilgrimage-shrines) in the scriptural terminology.

PRABHAKAR MUKHERJI