

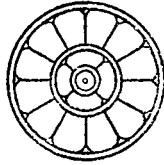
MOTHER INDIA

FEBRUARY 21, 1964: THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

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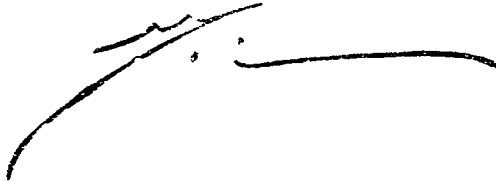


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I executè.

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. XVI

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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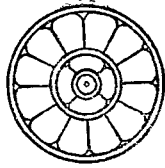
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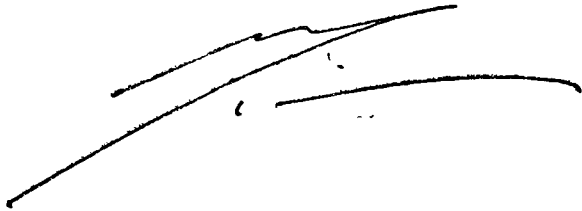
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To do properly the work of the Akram one must be strong and plastic enough to know how to utilise the inexhaustible Energy which is backing you all.

I expect everybody here to rise to the height of the needs

If we are not able to do even that much, how can we hope to be ready for the descent of the Light of Truth when it will come to manifest upon earth? ...



FEBRUARY 21

(February 21 is the Mother's birthday. Most relevant to it are the great passages in which Sri Aurobindo speaks of the four powers and personalities of the Supreme Mother. They occur in his book, "The Mother". But we are familiar with them. Very little known is the following eloquent passage—summing up those very powers and personalities—from the Chapter, "Faith and Shakti", in "The Synthesis of Yoga".)

THE DIVINE SHAKTI

THE faith in the divine Shakti must be always at the back of our strength and when she becomes manifest, it must be or grow implicit and complete. There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit's omnipotence. All knowledge, all strengths, all triumph and victory, all skill and works are in her hands and they are full of the treasures of the Spirit and of all perfections and siddhis. She is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision for all kinds and widenesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination : she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme strength, and with her are all mights and spiritual force and severest austerity of tapas and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter, the *attahāsya*, that makes light of defeat and death and the powers of the ignorance : she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit's grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing : she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill and of the works of the Spirit, and hers is the Yoga that is skill in works, *yogah karmasu kauśalam*, and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies. And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument, oneness, a participating sympathy, a free identity, with all energies in all beings and therefore a spontaneous and fruitful harmony with all the divine will in the universe. The intimate feeling of her presence and her powers and the satisfied assent of all our being to her workings in and around it is the last perfection of faith in the Shakti.

TOWARDS FEBRUARY 29

(February 29 of this "leap year" will mark the second recurrence—after eight years—of the day, February 29, 1956, on which took place what the Mother has called the Manifestation of the Supermind, a universal pervasion of the earth's subtle-physical atmosphere by the supreme Truth-Consciousness as a power working out gradually a new evolution beyond the mental status reached so far in the world. To help us take an evolutionary leap during this leap year we cannot do better than try to live out the spiritual message of the following talk by the Mother to the Ashram children soon after the second anniversary of the great event.)

SINCE the end of February I have been receiving a considerable number of questions : "How is the Supermind going to act, what must we do to receive it, under what form will it manifest ?"

...It happens that in the book, *On the Veda*, by Sri Aurobindo, there is a footnote on a certain page and in this note he has given his answer to the questions. I always tell people, "If you take a little trouble and read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions will become useless, because he has already answered them." However, it is possible they have neither the time nor the patience nor the will nor anything necessary; they do not read. Books appear, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but very few people read them. Let it be; here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Try to think over it and if you have a special question to put, I will answer. Listen :

"The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting."

(On the Veda, p. 463, footnote 2)

That is to say, for you to hope to receive, utilise and form in you a supramental being and consequently a supramental world, there must be in you first of all an expansion of the consciousness and a constant self-perfection, not to have impulses, a little aspiration, a little effort, then fall back again into somnolence—it must be the constant idea of the being, the constant will of the being, the constant effort of the being, the constant preoccupation of the being.

If you happen to remember for five minutes per day that there is something in the universe like the supramental force and that "after all it would be good if it manifested in me," then for the rest of the time you think of something else, there is not much chance for it to come and work seriously in you. Sri Aurobindo says it very clearly and precisely. He does not say that you will do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don't come and say, "Ah, I cannot do it myself." You are not asked to do it, but you must have in your being a sufficient aspiration and adhesion for the expansion of the being, the expansion of the consciousness to be possible.

Because, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is no room to put the Supramental in. It is so small that it is already filled up with

all the small ordinary human movements. You must widen it to a large extent in order to make room for the movements of the Supramental.

And then there must be an aspiration for progress, not to be satisfied with what one is, as one is, with what one does, with what one knows or believes that one knows, but to have a constant aspiration towards something more, something better, towards a greater light, a wider consciousness, a truth more true, a good more universal. And, over and above that, a good will that never fails.

This cannot be done in a few days.

Besides, I believe I took, from this point of view, my precautions and when I announced that now it was given to earth to receive the supramental force for manifesting it, it did not mean that the manifestation would be evident instantaneously and that everybody would find himself suddenly transported to the peak of light and possibility and realisation, without any effort. I said at the very moment that it would not be like that; I even said that it would take quite a long time. However, people complained that its coming had not made things easier and that even in certain cases it became more difficult. I am very sorry, but I am helpless. Because it is not the fault of the Supramental Force. It is the fault of the way in which it is received. For I know cases where the aspiration was truly sincere and the collaboration complete and where many things that had appeared before very difficult became at once infinitely more easy.

But there is a great difference always between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with ideas and words and a true aspiration of the being, which is the cause why truly it is that that counts essentially and nothing else—this aspiration, this inner will which is the cause why nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation, nothing counts except that and you have no other reason for existing, no other reason for living than *that*.

And yet it is that which you must have, if you want the Supramental to show itself to the naked eye. Note that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for you all know that you do not expect to become overnight luminous, plastic, to lose your weight, freely move from place to place, to appear at a dozen places at the same time and so on.... No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect all that to happen immediately—that will take some time.

After all, it is simply the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over the body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity for identification and a clear vision instead of this cloudy and hazy vision which sees only the appearance which is so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised. A more direct perception, an inner perception, this must come; it will come soon if you are prepared.

Simply to have this sensation that the air one breathes is more living, that the force one has is more durable; and, instead of groping always like one blind to know what is to be done, to have a precise, clear inner intimation: it is this, not that, this. These are the things that can be acquired immediately, if one is prepared.

TRUTHS FOR THE REPUBLIC DAY, JANUARY 26

ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER TO A QUESTIONNAIRE, PUBLISHED IN "THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY OF INDIA" ON JANUARY 26

1. *If you were asked to sum up, just in one sentence, your vision of India, what would be your answer?*

India's true destiny is to be the Guru of the world.

2. *Similarly, if you were asked to comment on the reality as you see it, how would you do so in one sentence?*

The present reality is a big falsehood—hiding an eternal truth.

3. *What, according to you, are the three main barriers that stand between the vision and the reality?*

(a) Ignorance; (b) fear; (c) falsehood.

4. *Are you satisfied with the over-all progress India has made since Independence?*

No.

5. *What is our most outstanding achievement in recent times? Why do you consider it so important?*

Waking up of the yearning for Truth. Because without Truth there is no reality.

6. *Likewise, can you name our saddest failure? On what grounds do you regard it as so tragic?*

Insincerity. Because insincerity leads to ruin.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

THE MOTHER'S COMMENTS ON A LETTER TO THE EDITOR BY A BOY OF 17

Do you really think that to be near Mother one must be in Pondicherry ? I feel I am near her all the time without consciously trying to think about it. There was a time, a few years ago, when I had to make a deliberate effort to think about Mother, but now I find myself saying things to her in the oddest places and at the oddest times. It's a wonderful feeling.

Very good.

Some days back I was talking with a few friends about religion and God. I was born a Parsi and so I guess that's my religion, but is it really necessary to say those prayers that I can't even understand? And even if I read the English translation and with difficulty manage to understand what I am saying, do I have to say what is written down ?

No.

Isn't praying a very personal deed and shouldn't one speak to God in one's own words, however inadequate ? You don't have to be a master of English or any language to make God understand what you want to say.

Yes, certainly.

Quite right.

I asked a lot of people what they pray for, and why they pray in the way they do, and they answered : "I want to do it because everyone else does, or because my father would kill me if I didn't, or I don't want to be a rebel". What do you think of all this ?

This has nothing to do with a spiritual life, not even with religion.

Amal will explain to you in details, but I can tell you that Yoga is not only an aspiration of the mind but also and chiefly a yearning of the heart.

Would you please explain to me how doing Yoga brings one nearer to the Divine ? And what is the real meaning of Yoga ? Is it only contortive body-exercises or is there a Yoga of the mind also ?

OBSERVATION, LOGIC AND TRUTH

SOME UNPUBLISHED NOTES BY SRI AUROBINDO

...logic can serve any turn proposed to it by the mind's preferences...

This idea of pure mental impersonality in the human reason is an exploded superstition of the rationalist mind ; psychology in its recent inquiries has shown that this supposed impersonal observation of pure objective facts and impartial conclusion from them, an automatic writing of truth on the blank paper of the pure mind is a myth ; it has shown that the personal factor is inevitable ; we think according to what we are...

...a dry and strong or even austere logic is not a key to Truth ; an enthusiastic vision often reaches it more quickly. The business of logic is to give order to a thinker's ideas, to establish firm relations between them and firm distinctions from other people's ideas, but when that is done, we are no nearer to indisputable truth than we were before. It is vision that sees truth, not logic—the outer vision that sees facts but not their inner sense, the inner vision that sees inner facts and can see the inner sense of them, the total vision (not belonging to mind) that sees the whole.

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 right 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.)

DECEMBER 4, 1939

N : I was feeling very sleepy at the time of your walk. Could it be mere sleep ? Or was it a lucky descent of the Force ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It may be either.

N : At one moment I dreamt or rather saw that Norway was preparing for war.

P : Then it can't be sleep. N must be having an inward opening.

N : What sort of opening is this ? What have I to do with Norway ? I want the Psychic opening.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? Yoga is universal. So Norway is part of you. *(Laughter)* But was it really Norway and not Sweden ?

N : I think it was Norway. Was my sleep a tamasic (inert) condition ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Maybe ; but since you had a dream you may have gone within and not sunk into mere *tamas*. In such cases either one goes within while the surface consciousness falls into the subconscious or one goes down to the subconscious altogether.

N : C also was sleeping.

SRI AUROBINDO : C can sleep any time unless he has a toothache. *(Laughter. C was actually suffering from toothache at this time.)*

N : Are there no dreams in tamasic sleep ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There are—especially when the surface consciousness goes into the subconscious. But then the dreams are incoherent.

N : Doesn't tamasic sleep leave afterwards a heaviness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

N : But sometimes after meditation one feels a heaviness. What could that be ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It may not be necessarily due to *tamas*. The descent of the Force into the physical gives at times a heaviness or else in meditation one may go into the subconscious. All depends on the kind of heaviness.

N : To go back to dreams : Mrs. Sen told me that once she dreamt that you were taking *Khichuri*¹ and around you Meghnad Saha and others were sitting.

SRI AUROBINDO (*surprised*) : Meghnad Saha ?

N : Yes. And in the dream Nolini Sen brought Mrs. Sen before you and you said to him : "You know I can see the inside of people. She has something in her." And then you said to her that the Hindu-Moslem problem was going to be settled very soon. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : From *Khichuri* to Yoga and then to politics ! I hope I spoke the truth when I made that last remark.

N : You also told her the way the problem was going to be settled. But she does not now remember your words.

SRI AUROBINDO : This must have been the most interesting part. A pity she has lost it !

N : That brings me to what Sen told me. He asked the Mother if he should do *Japa* (Name-repetition). The Mother said he needn't and could try to feel the Presence. The curious part is that as soon as the Form comes when he tries to feel the Presence, he rejects the Form. He says that in the Hindu Shastra *Japa* goes with Form. So if *Japa* is not to be done the Form too has to go. "Very queer," I remarked.

SRI AUROBINDO : But why does he reject the Form ? The Form is very good—unless, of course, he wants to feel the Impersonal Presence. No doubt the Presence which the Mother spoke of is much more than the Form; the Form is only an expression of the Being. Not that it has no value or reality, but the Presence can be felt as impersonal as well as personal.

S : I suppose he has the same idea as Ramakrishna once had.

SRI AUROBINDO : What was that ?

S : When Ramakrishna wanted to go into the Nirvikalpa Samadhi the form of Kali used to come and intervene. So he took an inner sword, as it were, and clove the form in two, and then he was able to pass into that state of featureless and undifferentiated trance.

SRI AUROBINDO : But Sen is not going into the Nirvikalpa ! (*Laughter*)

DECEMBER 5, 1939

P : Have you seen the pictures of mad people in M's book ? They don't seem to show Yogic madness ; they look like possession.

SRI AUROBINDO : I haven't seen the pictures. Yogic madness is a very rare thing. It is due to some overpowering experience such as *paramahamsabhāva* disturbing the balance of the lower being.

¹ Dal and rice cooked together.

N : Some people come out of meditation in a mad state. Why ?

SRI AUROBINDO : They open themselves, while meditating, to vital forces, forces of the occult life-plane. In Yoga, madness results from some mistake. In the lower nature there may be an erotic impulse or else ambition, which rises up and then one gets possessed by those forces.

N : Isn't fear also responsible ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, especially when people who are not fit for Yoga do meditation, say, for instance, at the burning ghat or in a cemetery during the Tantra process.

N : I couldn't quite catch the distinction you make between madness from *paramahamsabhāva* and the type we see in those pictures in M's book.

SRI AUROBINDO : In the one case the realisation is there behind while the Yogi allows the external nature to play about as it likes. In the other the contact has not yet been established between the higher consciousness and the lower, though there may be some result of the higher consciousness in the being.

N : In connection with the Form and the Presence you said the Presence is greater.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not greater but much more than the Form.

N : In feeling the Personal Presence, is it like feeling the Presence of Krishna everywhere ?

SRI AUROBINDO : As I said, the Presence may be personal or impersonal. It may be the dynamic Divine with a personal appearance or the still immutable Brahmic Consciousness which is impersonal and universal. Form is only a certain manifestation of the Presence. You can see Krishna everywhere as a Person and feel His Presence in all, while in the experience of the Impersonal you will perceive the One Self in all or the silent Brahman present everywhere.

LATE EVENING

While Sri Aurobindo was lying in bed after the walk, there was some more conversation.

P : Dara has written a poem on *The Life Divine* to celebrate its publication.

SRI AUROBINDO : What sort of poem ? Life Divine, Full of wine ? (*Laughter*)

P : Yes, you have caught it. It goes :

Life Divine
Mother's Wine—
The book is out,
Let us shout !

The subject then changed and the War came in.

P : Everybody is indignant against Russia's attack on Finland.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, Uruguay wants to kick her out from the League.

(Laughter)

P : The Finns seem to be doing well.

SRI AUROBINDO : They are good fighters and especially good at guerilla warfare.

P : In connection with your talk on Presence and Form, N has given the analogy of flower and smell to correspond to Form and Presence. It did not seem correct to me. I told him : "Smell is the result of Form, while here Form itself is a result."

SRI AUROBINDO : Besides, the flower is not conscious. The Presence is of the Being and the Form is the embodiment of the conscious Force of the Being for some particular purpose on a certain level. Physical form is for work to be done on the physical level. And there are subtler forms for work on other planes than the physical.

P : May not the Presence felt be of the Soul in everything ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The word "Soul" brings in the suggestion of something individual. But we can speak also of the World-Soul which is the Cosmic Self.

P : Can one perceive the Presence without the Form ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

N : By the flower and smell analogy I meant to ask whether the Presence, when one feels it, is impersonal like the smell.

SRI AUROBINDO : Personal or impersonal is not the question here. The smell belongs to the flower—that is, to the Form—while the Presence may have no Form. It may manifest itself as Form or may not. You may not be aware of the Form of the Presence and yet feel the joy and the power of the latter. These may be compared to smell, if you like.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE INCARNATION

Q : What is an incarnation? From what plane does it take place?

SRI AUROBINDO : An incarnation is the Divine Consciousness and Being manifesting through the body. It is possible from any plane.

Q : When the Divine descends here as an incarnation, does not that very act mould his infinity into a limited finite ? How then does he still continue to rule over the universe ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Do you imagine that the Divine is at any time not everywhere in the universe or beyond it ? or that he is living at one point in Space and governing the rest from it as Mussolini governs the Italian Empire from Rome ? 11-5-1937

Q : I was speaking of the Divine in the body, and not of the Divine in his supreme plane above in an impersonal and formless aspect. Does not his incarnation on earth necessarily limit him? Living in such a world he has to govern all the three universes !

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the omnipresent cosmic Divine who supports the action of the universe; if there is an Incarnation, it does not in the least diminish the cosmic Presence and the cosmic action in the three or thirty million universes. 12-5-1937

THE AVATAR

Q : Since an Avatar comes here with a divine Power, Light and Ananda why should he pass through the same process of sadhana as an ordinary sadhaka ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way—he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there. 10-1-1936

Q : People say there are quite a number of Yogis in India. At least in some of them, like Sri Raman Maharshi, there is truly something great. That means they are open directly to the Divine in some way or other. If the Divine manifests on earth in human forms—as we believe has happened here—would they not be aware of it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no reason why they should. Each has approached the Divine in his own way. He may not recognise if the Divine manifests in another way or a new form. 19-3-1936

THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO : There are not many Mothers, there is One in many forms. The transcendental is only one aspect of the Mother. I don't know what is meant

by “the embodied aspect of the transcendental Mother.” There is the embodied aspect of the One Mother—what she manifests through it depends on herself. 8-7-1936

I do not know how you are going to *live into* the manifested form. To live in the Mother’s consciousness even to the physical with the manifested form as the centre of this unity is possible. Perhaps you mean that ? But how are you going to do that if the other parts are left to remain as they are? They will go on pulling you out of the true consciousness as they do now. And how are they to be changed if the Mother’s Force is not there in them to change them ? 14-1-1936

Q : You and the Mother know already what is happening in us. Why then do you want us to state all that takes place in our sadhana ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is necessary for you to be conscious, and to put your self-observation before us; it is on that that we can act. A mere action on our own observation without any corresponding consciousness on the part of the sadhak would lead to nothing. 7-1-1936

Certainly, samadhi is not barred from this Yoga. The fact that the Mother was always entering into it is proof enough of that. 10-6-1936

The Mother spent many years entering the occult worlds and learning all that was to be learnt there. . . . She sees things always when she goes into a trance. 8-7-1936

Q : About my vital sensitiveness or opening to others you said, “It is neither good nor bad. It comes like that in the course of the development.” So many sadhaks pass through the same state and yet they all are not troubled by it. Why then I so particularly ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The Mother and myself have passed through it. It comes inevitably in the full opening of the being to the universeal. Do you know so much about the sadhana of others that you can state they have passed through the same development ? 17-4-1936

Yes, but the vital’s test is very foolish. If the sadhana goes on whether you see the Mother or not, that would rather show that the psychic connection is permanently there and active always and does not depend on the physical contact. The vital seems to think the sadhana ought to cease if you do not see the Mother, but that would only mean that the love and devotion need the stimulus of physical contact, the greatest test of love and devotion is on the contrary when it burns as strongly in long absence as in the presence. If your sadhana went on as well on non-pranam as on pranam days it would not prove that love and devotion are not there, but that they are so strong as to be self-existent in all circumstances. 8-6-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

THE MOTHER

(This article, originally in Bengali, is by Barindra Kumar Ghose, the younger brother of Sri Aurobindo. The Bengali version first appeared in the journal "Khulnabasi" of February 21, 1940. The English translation is by Chinmoy.)

IT is difficult, except for a wholly surrendered aspirant, to conceive what the Mother is to those who have taken to the spiritual life in the Ashram of Pondicherry. For the Bengalees there is no greater object of worship than the Mother-Form of Adya-shakti (the Primal Energy). The Bengalees draw power and delight into their life by invoking the Mother in the clay or stone image. Ever since they began to look upon the country as the Mother, the lost vitality has been coming back to them.

If worship of the clay image can give such power, it is easily conceivable what strength could be generated by invoking the Mother in a human form incarnating the Yogic Fire. In the Yoga-Ashram of Pondicherry the Mother is the living embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The touch of her creative genius has given the Ashram its present shape. The work of each department bears the stamp of her originality and constructive genius. It is doubtful if there is any other place on earth where such a big family could be seen carrying on like clock-work its day-to-day activities in silence and in harmony without a shade of conflict. The constructive power of the West and the whole-hearted surrender and self-giving of the East are moving hand in hand in the life of the Ashram.

But to have given a perfect shape to the Ashram is not the Mother's greatest achievement. She is the living image and the outer expression of the Yogic Power that is operating everywhere with the Ashram as its centre. To attribute Divinity to a human being may seem to others a sheer fantasy of the devotees or nothing but sentimentalism. But one who has had the slightest touch of the spiritual Power of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga knows for certain that the open-sesame of his Integral Yoga lies in the Mother alone.

Sri Aurobindo once said to me that he doubted if there was in the past any figure embodying so great a Yogic power. He added that he had done ten years' Yoga by one year's contact with her. The Mother was then absorbed in an inner sadhana away from all human gaze while Sri Aurobindo was in the open, in the company of his disciples.

Then there came about a turning in the Ashram life. All of a sudden Sri Aurobindo retired into seclusion. The Mother as the Mother of the universe took charge of all the disciples. The Yogic Power of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo opened wide the doors of the unostentatious Ashram, so long in the grip of want and difficulty,

to the steady inflow of sufficiency and prosperity. Spontaneous offerings came from disciples and admirers. The most ordinary men found in themselves an outflowing of the poetic power, a wonderful talent for painting, a capacity for meditation, occult vision and skilfulness in work. Day by day the Pondicherry Ashram grew into a Yogic place of pilgrimage for the entire world. An aspirant had a vision : the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were inside a golden tabernacle on the top of a luminous hill, and men from different climes from all directions thronged to the place in endless streams. To-day his vision has materialised.

In the course of repeated experiences, a restless fellow, mad after work, with impurities unpurged, a man of vitalistic temperament, I have realised, from the play of the Mother's miraculous Power, how true were the words of Sri Aurobindo. From the angle of Yogic vision the Mother has no equal even in India, the *tapobhūmi* (the land of Tapasya).

To-day is the Mother's birthday. On this blessed day this is a tribute at her Feet from her erring child. Whatever my deviations into wrong paths, however grave my errors, my labyrinthine movements will at length lead me into the Temple of the Mother's Consciousness, for where else except in the Mother's Lap can her son find the end of his journey ?

REMINISCENCES

TWO GREAT WARS

II

THE Second World War broke out in 1939. Sri Aurobindo had at first remained undecided about taking sides. Perhaps the indemnities levied on Germany after the First War had been excessive and it was therefore natural that Germany should seek to avenge herself on her victors. The advantages and disadvantages had also to be considered from our point of view, the interests of India. But the bleak reality that lay hidden behind this mighty conflagration was soon revealed to his vision. The Evil Force that had all along been trailing behind like a dark shadow now appeared to be descending on earth in its final Form of destruction, the Undivine Force always casting its dark body "across the path of the Divine Event". So he declared in clear terms the side he was on; he stood for the Allies, entirely and without the shadow of a doubt. He lent even his physical support by a token gift of money to the War effort.

At this supreme moment of crisis in the destinies of man, when the whole future of the world depended on the outcome of the War, he received into his own body this stroke of thunder, this all-out invasion of the Evil Force upon earth, in order that the earth be saved. Otherwise it would have been beyond the capacity of any earthly power to hold at bay this invincible Force. Like Mahadeva of old, he swallowed up into himself this poison that was to engulf the world. It was like the gift of Dadhichi of the bones of his own body to fashion the thunder-bolt of Indra. This was the inner meaning of the attack that fell on Sri Aurobindo's body in 1938—it was therefore a few months before the actual hostilities broke out on the material plane. Perhaps in these months the hostiles had been making their last preparations, taking their final bearings.

The Mother at once made it known that this War was her war, and those who would be joining this War on the side of the allies would be fighting for her cause. She expressed her desire that Indians should enlist freely and largely and help in the War effort to the best of their ability. Many of the French citizens in Pondicherry had to join the colours, this time in much larger numbers than on the previous occasion. We are all familiar with the monument that stands on the Pondicherry seaface to the citizens who have laid down their lives; there is a fitting ceremonial enacted there every year in memory of the dead. Some of the children of the Ashram too had joined the army and navy and air force; and some that were very near and dear to us have even given their lives, as you know. This reminds me of the stirring words used by Sri Aurobindo in the fiery days of Swadeshi :

Our sacrifice at the altar of the Mother must be as relentless as that of the Carthaginian parents who pressed their children through fire to Moloch.

It was in the course of this War that we saw from the Ashram so many aeroplanes flying directly overhead, by day and by night, although the enemy's missiles did not quite reach us. Trainloads of troops passed through Pondicherry and soldiers came in their batches to obtain the Mother's darshan and blessings. The Mother kept open door for the soldiers; they could come and have darshan almost at any time. I remember one officer, a Rajput and very fine man; his name was Arjun Singh, I think. About himself and a friend of his, a senior officer, he said they had a particular love and enthusiasm for the practice of yoga in spite of their having taken up the profession of war. We lost touch with them later on.

India had to feel the impact of this War to a considerable extent, though it was mostly our own doing. Perhaps the patriots and lovers of Indian freedom had been losing their patience and they thought that the discomfiture of England was going to be their last and best opportunity; so they created a good deal of trouble. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother held a very different view. What they said in effect was this : "Help the British government to the best of your abilities. Enter every branch of their civil administration and their military organisation. Associate with them everywhere, on land, in the air and at sea; capture all positions of power, master the technical details. The position that you make for yourself in this manner, the position of competence and authority, will not slip away from you; it will be the unshakable foundation of freedom." Had the way shown by Sri Aurobindo been adopted, the winning of India's independence would have been an easier task and it would have been more complete; many have begun to admit this now. In the actual result what was achieved was a kind of compromise between the two points of view.

There had come a time however when the success of the enemy appeared as a living menace. We began to hear the warning notes of imminent peril, such as the orders for the black-out of street lighting on the seaface of Pondicherry, and many other similar preparations, though most of them did not go beyond the stage of practice drills. Trenches were dug within the precincts of the Ashram itself to provide a hide-out in case of an air-raid; buckets and sand were kept ready all over the place for extinguishing the fires. This was known as Air Raid Protection work and it was under the care of a local resident, the father of our Shanta and Babu (the Ashram record-holder in long-jump). He has been dead a long time since, but his widow, the mother of Shanta and Babu, is still known as Tara ARP to the Mother.

Eventually, the situation grew more and more serious. Pavitra too received a call to leave here and join the colours; he then held the rank of Captain. I believe he had to report to the local barracks for duty. The Mother went so far as to make the necessary arrangements for his work during the period he might be away, though he did not have to go after all. You remember how the Mother herself had to leave here soon after the outbreak of the First War and was not able to return till

after the end, six years later. The Japanese were now coming close upon us. The Andamans were already in their hands, and Madras was not so far away. They had overrun Burma and were at the gates of East Bengal on the north-eastern front, with the Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose. Our Doctor Jyotush, who was then serving as a medical officer in the Indian Army, had been sending out frantic SOS calls from his station at Imphal city, then practically a besieged garrison. From French Indo-China the French were running away and were on their way back through Pondicherry in the hope of reaching their own country some day—but which country ? They said the Japanese might be expected any time and that we should start learning their language. Some thought we had better concentrate on German instead, for the Germans were going to occupy India. Hitler was at the time pouncing on England and Churchill alone stood up fearless against that furious onslaught.

It was at this time that, as you have already heard from the Mother, there began a rush of young children, or rather of people with young children, seeking shelter in the safety of the Ashram. In fact, we who lived here under the direct protection of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not get into much of a panic. Nor was there noticeable any great austerity in our day-to-day life, and we did not have to undergo much privation either in the matter of food or clothing. Let me here tell you a rather amusing anecdote. One of the inmates of the Ashram who happened to be away on some business chanced to meet one of our prominent nationalist leaders. The conversation naturally turned on the question of India's future. The leader asked him what Sri Aurobindo thought of the impetuous march of Japan. To that our friend replied somewhat like this : "There is nothing to fear; for the Japanese will not be able to come in, they will have to retire. So we have been assured by our Master." The leader's reaction was a smile of incredulity. I do not know if our friend ever had a chance later to remind the leader of Sri Aurobindo's prophecy. Most of our political leaders had not realised at the time how chimerical it was to hope to free India with the help of Japan, Germany or even Russia, that is, by accepting their rule which would have been simply to exchange our masters. The new bondage would have been terrible, for the neo-imperialism of their ruling cliques was no more than a modern version of the old intoxication of power; to escape from them would have needed some more centuries of struggle.

I may in this connection tell you another story, a true story and a very pleasant and reassuring one. Some of you may have been actually eye-witnesses. Not so long ago, the air was thick with rumours of a possible danger of a crisis for India: this was a little before the Chinese attack. Was India going to be invaded and subjugated by a foreign Power once again ? India was no doubt big and had ample resources in manpower. But her manpower was little more than that of a rabble, it lacked the cohesion of organised military strength. The question was put to the Mother at the Playground. The Mother gave a smile and, pointing to the map of India on the wall, said, "Can't you see who is guarding India ? Isn't the north-eastern portion of Kashmir a lion's head with its jaws wide open ?" The portion indicated does have the appearance

of a lion's head as you can see if you look at it closely. Its nozzle projects with wide-open mouth facing the front, as if ready to swallow up anyone who dares to come. It is the Lion of Mother Durga. Another little piece might be added to this story. Matching the lion on our northern frontier, there is an elephant dangling its trunk on the southern tip of India bordering the sea; that too is clearly visible on the map. It is as if giving the warning, "Here am I, the coast-guard ever on the watch. Beware!" It is the Elephant on which rides Lakshmi—*gaja-lakshmi*, the divine Mother of Plenty and Beauty. The elephant is the symbol of material power.

As Hitler was threatening to cover, as with an ominous comet's tail, the whole of earth and sky, one of our sadhaks here sent up to Sri Aurobindo his wail, "What, O Guru, is this happening to the comforting words you gave? Don't you see that the earth is getting on to the verge of ruin? Where, O Saviour, are you?" Sri Aurobindo's reply was a quiet admonition, "Where is the worry? Hitler is not immortal." After a short while the castle that Hitler had built was blown to the winds like a pack of cards. It was as if an all-englobing fog had been puffed away by a breath, a frightful nightmare had got dissolved in the light of the dawn...

(Concluded)

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE

MIND CONTROL

SOMEONE has classified men into two categories : the race-horse type and the farm-horse type. Those who come in the first are habitually high-strung, living at great speed, wearing themselves out in no time. Those that belong to the second are slow, leisurely in movement and generally easy-going. Most of us would have no difficulty in saying which label fits us. At any rate I instantly recognised myself as the race-horse type. For I have always been of the kind that lives at a high pitch. Even when there is no need to be hurried and there is plenty of time to do things, I must go to it in a spirit of now or never. The nerves are tense; the brain is intent and the mind cannot give room for anything else till the thing is done. And even when it is over, there is no stopping. "What next ? What next?" The system is in a continual state of tension, excitement and rush. And I had always thought that this was the only right way to act. It had never occurred to me that things could be done otherwise. My eyes opened only when I saw the Mother at work. I observed that the Mother would not be stampeded even in the midst of the most pressing urgencies. The very air about Her would be so quiet as to appear almost remote from 'reality'. She would take up each item—whether it was reading or writing or doing anything—in a measured, controlled manner and proceed as if the whole of eternity was there to complete the job. It is a picture of calm collected power. The vibrations of hurry and excitement are foreign to Her atmosphere. And each thing is done not only perfectly, but-- as I noticed gradually—in less time than it would need from one in a rush! I have since tried to change my ways and have found that not only is work done better and completed quicker with a mind and temper that is quiet and collected, but the worker himself is not exhausted in the work. The art is to keep the mind stolid, free from tension. If that is somehow done then the system does not suffer, life is better lived.

I was strongly reminded of this experience and experiment of mine as I was reading the other day a book¹ by Rear Admiral Shattock in which he describes his search for a system or technique that could give release from the constant tension-producing currents of modern civilisation. He first thought of religion but wisely gave it up as he saw that, among other things, it meant involvement in fresh emotions. He sensed that meditation could be a way out if it was kept free from emotive and re-

¹ *An Experiment in Mindfulness* by Rear Admiral E. G. Shattock, Pub. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

ligious complications. And it was by 'chance'¹, he says, that he came across a book describing such a course of Meditation conducted at a training Centre in Rangoon, for monks and laymen, by Mahasi Sayadaw. The course looked a simple method of mind-training and was called Satipatthana. The admiral wrote to the authorities asking whether he could be allowed to attend the course and on receiving a more than encouraging reply he took leave for 4 weeks from service and joined the Centre.

Mr. Shattock describes with engaging humour how he was first enjoined to undertake to abide by the five preliminary rules, *viz.* : abstention from killing, stealing, lying, intoxicants, sex. He was advised to avoid unnecessary talk, reduce sleep to four hours a night and give up all reading and writing for the duration. That done, two basic exercises were prescribed. The first was to walk up and down a stretch of about fifty paces. While walking, the attention had to be kept on the movement of each foot as it was lifted, swung forward and put down and each of these several movements had to be accompanied by mentally saying, 'up', 'forward', 'down' or words to that effect. At the end of the stretch attention was to be given to stopping, turning and starting again. Thus each act, every movement in the walk had to be separated from the other and concentrated upon slowly, deliberately.

The second exercise was to sit in a relaxed position and the attention riveted on the rising and falling of the abdomen as the breath was inhaled and exhaled. Both these exercises were to be done alternately throughout the day, with intervals of rest, as many times as possible. Though they appeared simple when prescribed, things were found to be pretty difficult at the first touch of practice. The mind would not stay in attention. Thoughts would distract, attention would stray elsewhere. Each time this happened, the novice was advised to make a mental note of the distraction and bring back the mind gently but firmly to the subject of attention. If the distraction persisted, the mind was to be fully turned on the object of distraction till its force was expended.

The mediator was soon to discover that distractions came not only in the form of words, *i.e.*, thoughts, but in the form of pictures, scenes, etc. Next to follow were mysterious itchings, aches and pains in the body. This last phenomenon was explained by Sayadaw, the teacher, in the following way. The body is never at rest. There are always movements, irritations, pricks, brushes, etc., in the physical organism. But normally the mind is so much occupied with the incessant flow of thoughts that unless the disturbances are strong enough they are not singly taken notice of by the mind. In a practice like the Satipatthana, the continuity of thought-process is broken and each small disturbance in the body comes to be noticed by the conscious mind.

Another difficulty experienced in the sitting exercises was that the practitioner found himself gradually leaning forward and more forward till he would lose balance

¹ Of course we know there is no such thing as chance in these matters. What is called 'chance' is simply a cover for a high point reached by the forces behind the surface working out the destiny of man. The so-called chance happenings are really the result of the configuration of karmic and other agencies forging the growth of the soul.

and topple. Sayadaw took it very casually and explained that it was a sign of approaching 'samadhi' and it would pass.

Thus all the exercises that were to be done were aimed at control of the mind by restricting its field of activity for longer and longer periods. With persistence and daily guidance, the admiral arrived at a definite stage of mind-control before the lapse of his four-week period. The thought-activity slowed down gradually. He became conscious of every minute reaction in his mind to the objects outside. His sensitivity was heightened and each sound, sight, touch brought a unique value. There awoke in him a new joy of perception of much that he had missed hitherto. A new rhythm of life began to form itself yielding a continuous refreshment to the body and mind. He became conscious of an immense power in himself following the stoppage of all wasteful effort. The range of his awareness widened enormously and the mind could be turned like a torch on anything he liked. The writer felt satisfied with the results obtained and wished he could have stayed for a few more weeks to complete the course. The mind got into a constant state of relaxation, the system de-tensioned.

No doubt Mr. Shattock is aware that this method of meditation—we would call it concentration—is not the only way of acquiring control over the mind and arriving at freedom from tension. We know, for instance, that this object and much more can be achieved by sustained Pranayama. Sri Aurobindo has spoken of the spectacular results that followed his Pranayama sessions in his early days at Baroda. Vivekananda has pointedly stressed the wonderful effect of Pranayama on the mind and the life-energy. The least that one gains from Pranayama is a steady quieting of the mind, a widening and heightening of its range of consciousness and a certain detachment of the being from surface activity. The sadhana of Mantra-Japa is also efficacious in the same direction, particularly in the stamp of Peace that it imparts to the practisant. In our Yoga we proceed by collecting the mind and letting it lie open to the Higher Consciousness which begins to flow into it as a result of the working of the Yoga Shakti to which one surrenders oneself. This Consciousness brings with it its own Quiet, Silence, Peace and, as they settle, the very texture of the mind undergoes a change. That way things are less strenuous and more natural.

PRABUDDHA

IRA PROGOFF : PSYCHOLOGIST OF THE DEPTH

AN INTERVIEW

THE last on the map, about to be folded, of my American tour was Ira Progoff, psychologist of the 'depth'. At the Crescent Moon Ranch Mrs. Lois Duncan, who knew him well, had suggested that we might meet. As I was about to take off, she suddenly murmured, "If it is destined you will meet." At the time I had not taken it too seriously. In any case, you can't argue with Fate. Or can you?

I knew him by reputation and through his books : *Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning*, *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* and *Depth Psychology and Modern Man*. Dr. Progoff was both author and practising psychiatrist, one of the top. But his handling of cases and the cure he offered differed considerably from the ways of the tribe. He saw man, to quote him, in terms of "what his nature requires him to become", as a unity ever in process of growth. He still thought in terms of wholeness, of a total inclusive pattern, and did not deny the divine its share in the paradox of man. Even if he did not spell out 'spiritual' in so many letters, or get lost in a metaphysical mist, he seemed friendly to ideas and ideals, and "the need of the modern person to re-establish a relationship with the creative sources of life." He was also not unfamiliar with yoga. In other words, sensitive to the entire spectrum, which is more than what can be said about the presiding deities, or ogres, of the psychiatrist pantheon. Decidedly *simpatico*.

ASCENT OF F7

For my part I was eager to meet him. A live psychiatrist held a kind of fatal fascination. But my days in New York were numbered, less than a week. Two days before leaving the States I was taking an inventory of all the vast undone. What a lot of missed and messed opportunities stared at me from the Engagement Pad ! With an uneasy conscience I had to admit to myself that I had done nothing about seeing the doctor. At the time I was sitting in a Broadway office with a friend, Mr. Sengupta. He asked me my plans for the day. I had a free afternoon, I told him. It was then that the idea came—that I should ring up Dr. Progoff. I knew enough of New York to know that a practising psychiatrist could not be had for the asking. However, on an impulse, I rang him up. "If it is destined, you will meet him." Mrs. Duncan's words came back to me.

I had tempted destiny and was waiting for results.

What's in a voice ? Much. I had won in the first rounds. The voice at the other end could be easily described as friendly, even enthusiastic. Yes, he had

heard about me from the Duncans. How long was I going to stay in New York? I told him that I would be leaving the day after next. "Could I see you sometime tomorrow?" I added. "I am sorry," said the voice, "I shall be going out of town for the day." Destiny had spoken. I had lost the game. But wait! Just then, when I had given up hoping, once again the doctor's voice came over the wire. "Look here," it said. "I shall be free for an hour today at three in the afternoon. An interview has been cancelled at the last hour, just now. Can you come?"

As easy as that.

A little before three we presented ourselves in front of his 16th Street apartment. There were rituals to be undergone. I doubt if I could have made it without Mr. Sengupta, who guided me through the portals, beyond the F.B.I.-ish janitor who eyed me with open suspicion. In the end, we were out of his reach and on our way to the seventh floor, which, you will agree, is a good place for a psychiatrist's office.

It was a neat little room. A sofa on one side. On the other a small table, with a typewriter, a telephone, book shelves with familiar and unfamiliar titles. Some toys, including for some unknown reason an Indian baby elephant. The only object to make you uneasy was a tape-recorder, happily silent.

Knock and it shall open. It was opened by the young secretary, a tall friendly creature. Not only intelligent but more than that, understanding, with that perfect charm that educated women everywhere have, whether they have been to the university or not. Miss Lynn Krug had been, however. After taking a course in physics she was now majoring in anthropology. No, she did not go in for psychology for fear that it might make her too clinical. She was then writing a term paper on "The Concept of Time among the Hopi Indians, the Jews and the Hindus". "Would you care to read it sometime and give me the benefit of your opinion?" she asked me with an earnestness that university teachers find so attractive and embarrassing. I pleaded ignorance and promised to find a better mentor for her. We were all rather relaxed, when—straight from attending a 'case' (we had a glimpse of the case, and the glimpse was enough)—Dr. Progoff walked in. In his middle fifties, gentle if not shy, he had very attractive manners and at once put us at our ease. If this was a psychiatrist, psychiatry did not seem so dreadful after all.

DEEP DIALOGUE

"Have you been to India?" we asked him. There was no special reason for asking that question. But somehow we did. It came.

"Alas, no," answered the doctor. "But India calls me in many ways. It is always good to know other people, other cultures, other ways of life and thought. It gives an additional dimension to one's being. India above all."

"But India can hardly be 'another country' to you, Dr. Progoff," we protested. On his part he seemed surprised that his books were known in India.

"Dr. Progoff," we continued, "as a practising psychiatrist which insight of modern psychology appears to you to be the most valuable?"

“Well, for me,” he said after a pause, “the insight that seems most important is the fact that the experience of a person at a particular point of time isn’t confined to that point alone, but stretches before and after. It has many dimensions. That is important. Really, we don’t start just where we are, we have a long history somewhere, as Emerson said, writing about Whitman. But then Emerson was one of the few who knew something about an earlier tradition and knowledge. As you know, this was largely lost in the 19th century and now we have to re-discover it—the depths and dimensions within us.”

“What precisely is meant by depth psychology?” asked Sengupta, with an innocence that was most becoming in a Burra Sahib.

“What precisely is depth psychology?” Dr. Progoff repeated the question. “I would say that by means of images, dreams and symbols depth psychology makes available to us a dimension of the past, a lost forgotten language. That is, so far as the modern man or the western psyche is concerned, depth psychology provides a scientific means of communication and connection. For instance, the various urges and impulses that a person feels from time to time without always knowing why. With the help of depth psychology he can know where these come from or where they lead to, to what hidden depths of the being. With a little training one may even know how to use these for one’s future development. For in psychology it is not enough to be oriented towards one’s past—that was the mistake with analysis—but towards the future too. But after all,” added Dr. Progoff, “what we call depth psychology is just a form and a phrase. Its significance in the history of Western thought, as I see it, is that with its help western man may work his way back to the forgotten depths of the psyche. If there had never been a break or scission such as the Age of Reason involved, there would not perhaps have been any need for this kind of psychology. But, mind you, this is not to equate depth psychology with religious psychology—the older religious psychology. Mediaeval culture may have had a symbolic richness that we have lost. But it is very different from ours. Today we have arrived at a point of view and a technique which mediaeval Christianity at no time possessed. In some respects I would say the mediaeval mind tended to be too literal, it took a horizontal view of things, so to speak. This was so even with the greatest. For instance, when ‘How many angels can be balanced on a pinpoint?’ becomes a genuine problem for the theologians, you know something has been missed or gone wrong. It is the same with their Angelology. There is something-behind it but it has become too literal and is no longer a part of real knowledge or experience, I would say.”

“Isn’t this true of their Demonology too?” we asked.

“Yes. Demons and Angels, they are after all cousins. In earlier ages things were looked upon horizontally, without any organised scientific knowledge. The sanction of dogmas was all that was needed. Very often that was all that was needed to kill knowledge, or whatever of the knowledge had survived.”

TENSION AND GROWTH

"I don't think either Jacques Maritain or Etienne Gilson would accept that," I objected mildly. "But let's leave the mediaeval mind and come to the modern. Dr. Progoff, you know in recent years there has been an enormous increase in mental cases and other forms of neurosis. Is this a sign of degeneration or does this point to a crisis of awareness and selfhood?"

"Yah," was all that he said in the purest New Yorkese. The monosyllable seemed to help him collect his thoughts, for he soon continued. "This is a large historical question. In fact wherever an industrial order has come into being there has been this increase of tension and difficulty. Also, don't forget, we now have terms or categories to describe signs of this imbalance. A long list of new terms describing these imbalances. Hence we see more of these diseases too. It is well-known that every time a symptom or a disease is better described or understood we have a rash of the same. Because we know more of it, we see more of it too. But there is also something basic in this—a transition from one culture to another, that is from one vision of truth to another, briefly from agriculture to industry, from village to town, from a unified to a fragmented view of life. Naturally the effect of all this has been a prolonged confusion. This is the price that we have to pay. Wouldn't you say," asked Dr. Progoff turning towards me, "that at any point crisis is the road to selfhood?"

"Yes," I could not deny that. "The distresses of choice are our only chance to be blessed," I added wisely, quoting, or misquoting, someone.

"That's it and so it has always been. In our historical period this has created, as we can see, enormous problems and difficulties. Nor is it confined to Europe and the West alone. It exists throughout the world, maybe not in the same measure. Take Japan or even Africa. I am told that something similar is going on in your own country too."

"Indeed. I would say the new generation in India has a civil war with itself. It is not merely the European mind that is divided against itself. We all are. The 'educated' Indian has often been described as a schizophrenic. It is an interesting study, sad but neglected."

"I know what you mean," said Dr. Progoff. "For, growth is rarely a happy process. But in the process the depths of the psyche get stirred and something comes out, something valuable, which we would not otherwise have or use. I am not particularly worried about tension. I think it is a good thing, or can be. Everything depends on what happens to the tension, that is what we do with it. Very often instead of helping our development it helps our own destruction, as is happening today."

"Then might we not say," we asked, "that to be adjusted, or well adjusted to a society like ours, is itself an error and a deprivation?"

"Not only an error but to be in error," agreed Dr. Progoff with a *tout-comprendre* smile.

SEX AND SELF

"Dr. Progoff, many believe sex to be at the bottom of all this tension or trouble. What do you say ? In a man's total life which is more important—sex or a sense of significance ?"

"Well, I would say sex is part of the whole pattern of life. And when you come to think of it, sex is not just sex. It is a category that becomes important only in a certain context, time or culture. In most early cultures it remained part of a social, even religious ritual. There was no problem, at least not to the extent that it is at the present moment of history. It is only when society becomes complex and fragmented, when there is more leisure, when values break down, and there is no single, governing image or pattern and every impulse and activity demands autonomy that sex acquires this strange, distorted importance such as we see nowadays. This is the main reason for all our pains and problems. This is natural and yet not natural."

"How or why has this happened ?"

"In other words, why had the older cultures this overall pattern and we don't ? Because it made life possible."

"And today, by implication, we have made life impossible ?"

"Yes, if you like to put it like that. Isn't that the simple truth, after all ? This is the first time in history when we have the power, the ability, perhaps even the desire to wipe out all life from the planet. Not a pleasant prospect, you will agree. Compare, rather contrast the Hindu stages of life. Even Shakespeare seems to imply something like that in his picture of the seven ages of man, that there is an order or inter-relatedness in life. You ask, How will this pattern, or wholeness, come back ? Well, that is what we are all after, I would say. It will come, but only by the hard way, I am afraid. At present there is no society or group with such a pattern. One day the like-minded might come together. There have been feeble attempts here and there, among artists and thinkers. But nothing definite. It has not crystallized yet."

KNOW THYSELF

"In the task of setting his house in order do you think a man can cure or understand himself best ? Or is this better done by another ?"

"Well, after all most of the older traditions did require another or second person, *guru* or spiritual preceptor, or the Wise Old Man. Ultimately, no doubt, one does it oneself. The *guru* too, I believe, is not so much 'another person' as your Higher Self. Some creative artists, like Melville and Whitman, have done or tried to do all this alone, all by themselves. Tolstoy too tried to do the same, it was bitter and costly, and did not end happily."

"Does this call for solitude ?"

"Yes, I would say so. But more than outer solitude it requires an inwardness

that would remain unmoved even in society, even in the midst of activity. Aloneness is a way to Reality. All the old disciplines insist on that. But, generally speaking, there is in the human situation something like a dialogue relationship : I and Thou. It seems to me that the seed of Self is real in all of us, but it is a potentiality rather than an actuality. At best there are intimations, unsure, flimsy, fleeting. The task of the other person, I would say, is not so much to diagnose or to analyse, as to feel the seed, to awaken it. To communicate, bit by bit, the reality of it. It is easier to see it in another than in oneself. Hence the master-disciple relationship. In truth, there is neither master nor disciple, it is the same seed or the same Self in all. But I am getting too metaphysical and might soon get out of my depth, especially in the presence of a man from the East. What I mean to say is that what one sees is not merely the person as he is at the moment, what he has become for the present, but what he might be in future, the true nature or flowering of the seed. Self-understanding, one might say, is a dialogue with the future."

"Isn't it also an escape from time and all time-made things ? A dialogue with eternity ?" I asked.

"Yes, in a deeply mystical sense, yes," answered Dr. Progoff.

"But how is all this to be done ? How will the seed flower ?"

"Well, I can't use the Rorschach test very well. Nor have I much faith in perception tests and things like that. With the help of these tests you may perhaps get the past mapped out. But what about the future ? In the end, I suppose, you have to rely on intuitive factors, such as sympathy, imagination and understanding. Science means knowing, it is also a method and a discipline. But here what we are after is an intangible, because it is a psychological knowledge. This cannot be done by any external computer machine."

"You seem to imply idealistic values. But is a psychiatrist allowed to have these values ? By the way, what is your idea of a balanced life ?"

"But why should the psychiatrist *not* be allowed to have a sense of values ? I should say much depends on that, on what kind of values he has. Isn't a psychiatrist a man speaking to men ? But of course it is always difficult to state one's sense of values so coldly as that. You see, one's values must somehow come from one's life, that is from within. You know for some time I have been working with the American Ministry. But this does not mean that I accept the dogmas or doctrines of any particular sect. For instance, if I speak to a church group in support of a conclusion, let us say in support of morality, my reasons for doing so may not be the same as the church's reasons for doing so. Individuals may arrive at a point of view without owing any allegiance to a particular group or doctrine. Does this involve subjectivity or relativity of values ? I don't think so. In any case, with regard to individual life and growth there is hardly any other way. The ultimates of life are not objective measurable facts. They call for a different approach, because we are here dealing with a different order of facts. Let me give you an extreme example. Supposing Hitler had been my patient. Now I would have tried to find

out the 'seed' in him, the seed from which his kind of megalomania and destructiveness had developed. It wouldn't have been easy, but I believe if one went deep enough one would find the same seed, or life-principle, in all, in all things and beings. This answers your last question. A harmonising in terms of growth and of the many dimensions of the personality would be my idea of a balanced life. Or does this sound too academic and general ? You know what I mean."

"I suppose I do. But let me ask you something else. Freud used to speak of the death instinct. What do you think of that? Has man no immortality instinct as well?"

"As regards your last question, yes. In the sense that Immortality is a will to extend life, the organism and the personality. But the word or idea has acquired all kinds of metaphysical overtones. Sometimes the question arises if it is the immortality of a particular physical body or being, or, as in some religious systems, the persistence of the psyche or the psychic factor. The details of the doctrine may differ, but there is something basic or analogous about the experience. And of course in order to be true, it must be more than a theory or a doctrine. An experience. As regards Freud and the death instinct, death is inherent or implied in the pleasure principle, which is all that Freud knew or seemed to care for. Now in all forms of pleasure, there must be the limitation of time, by time. For what is pleasure but gratification in time ? That is, it suffers from momentariness. Now if you put all your stress on what is momentary you naturally cannot escape from the conclusion that the pleasure will end, that is die. There is nothing wrong with pleasure. It is a fact of our vital being. But I like to believe, as you meant when you spoke of a dialogue with eternity, that there can also be a pleasure in the timeless, of the timeless, such as Vedantic psychology has always held. 'By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy.' Will you please repeat that Sanskrit phrase ? ...Ah, yes. That is possible. The people who talked of these things knew what they were talking about. The ideal was also a realisable fact, at least for them it was. In Oriental thought or in mystical writings like *The Cloud of Unknowing* or in Meister Eckhart we come across similar ideas, expressions and experiences. Unfortunately, this is difficult for the average Westerner, especially today. It is difficult for him to change his way of thinking and place it in the mystical context. The very suggestion frightens him and rouses all his rational fury. Here, then, is the problem : How to actualise, effectuate or communicate this change and the need for it ? That is the problem. For you cannot communicate these truths by voting or by talking, as they are trying to do it in the U.N., for instance. And advertisement, or propaganda, is of course just helpless. It can manipulate the surfaces of our being but is defenceless against the depths. The change must come from within and we must desire it first."

CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

"Talking of Freud, is civilization a cause and another name for instinctual dissatisfaction ? Or can instincts be sublimated ?"

“In terms of what Freud thought about instincts the conclusion is inevitable. Freud thought of instincts in purely animal terms, confined to man’s lower nature. The conflict which is here implied between the psyche and society is part of 19th-century romanticism. None of the modern thinkers think that way. Not even the most important of ancient thinkers. In depth psychology, in Plato, in Aristotle, in Jung, man’s instincts are looked upon as social and capable of adaptation. They are meaningful and part of a wider pattern. It is the business of life and education to help the pattern and not to break it. There is no culture without sublimation.”

“Then would you say that the work of an agency like the U.N. or the school in a community is mainly psychological?”

“Yes, of course. Ultimately, yes. I was interested in reading an excerpt in *World Today* about someone very popular at present in India. What’s the name? I forget. I must get my Indian names straight. The man, Gandhi’s successor, who walks about the countryside, collecting and giving away free land to the peasantry. Yes, Vinoba Bhave. He is reported to have said somewhere that today politics and religion are both out of date. The things that matter today are science and spirituality. Now, that’s very true. I doubt if Gandhi would have said that. Religion and politics are things to argue about and this is what happens most of the time in the U.N.—argument, endless argument.”

“To which the Indian contribution *à la* Krishna Menon is often not negligible,” added my friend who had often heard that fallen fire-eater at Security Council debates.

“Oh yes,” replied the doctor with a ready smile. “Indians are not poor in polemics. Goodness, no. Compounded with an English education the result can be astounding. But to go back. The problem for us is—how can we meet the real task of understanding and communication, that is how are we to draw the level of our dialogue to a more fundamental awareness than the political position of a party or government or mere political expediency? Let me give you an example. American Aid is generally known to have failed. Why? The answer, which may not be palatable to the American people, is that our one criterion is money, which is a purely external measure. Because of this sometimes even Americans cannot communicate with each other, what to speak of others belonging to another culture, and with another set of values. A few can, but then they are not the people in power, anywhere. As our advertisers once put it: Diamonds are a girl’s best friend. That may be so,” added the doctor with a quasi-Buddhist smile, “but I am afraid it is true only of a certain kind of girl. To be truthful or effective we must reach or actualise a level of awareness where Reality is directly experienced. Those who can do that have a way of communicating, non-discursively, if you like.”

Then after a slight pause he went on. “All positions of power are transitory and usually selfish. That is why it may be important one day to have an international body for the whole world. The U.N. itself cannot hold a permanent *status quo*. We need some kind of Central Intelligence if the race is to go ahead. But in order to

make this real we would first need a psychological change, a revolution in our ways of thinking and being. Are we ready ?”

The answer was obvious and none too cheerful.

ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGY

So I changed the topic. “What is the relation between religion and psychology and ethics ?”

“Well, I can speak only from my own feelings about what psychology is or ought to be. Psychology, as I understand it, has to contribute in a tangible way to a personal religion. And by a person I of course mean one educated in the modern way and the modern world. That is our starting point. For those who can accept or function within the older framework the problem does not exist. They can do without psychology. For me the great value of modern psychology is that it makes possible for us to have inner meaningful experiences apart from any doctrinal allegiance or adherence. In fact, I would say that psychology as we know it is a transitional phenomenon. It is there because we don’t have what we ought to have. When you catch the fish you throw the net away. But, of course, I wouldn’t like to be thrown out of my work,” added the doctor with a light laugh.

There was no immediate fear of that, we readily reassured him. “In what way can depth psychology help in the integration of the personality ?” we continued our query.

“Well, that is the whole question, I would say !” exclaimed the doctor. “You asked me to relax,” he pointed an accusing finger at me, “but with such a question how can I do that ? Well, again, by providing new ways, concepts and disciplines by which modern man can arrive at the awareness and use of his various dimensions or magnitudes, the lost traditional ways, depth psychology provides or tries to provide a path to Reality that meets the criteria of the modern man and the modern point of view.”

This had the familiar Jungian ring. “But will this not involve metaphysics of some sort ?”

“Yes, but what’s wrong with that, seeing that it is inevitable ? But today the old distinction between physics and metaphysics is fast disappearing. The more sophisticated physicists no longer make that distinction. Again, of course, everything depends, or will depend, on whether the modern man’s experience is unitary or fragmentary.”

“Did you know,” I told him, “that in India the highest knowledge, or knowledge of the Self, used to be called *Ekavidyā*, the knowledge of the One or the knowledge that unites different aspects of self or reality ?”

“No, I didn’t. But I am not surprised to hear it.”

YOGA AND HOLINESS

"You must be familiar with yoga. What do you think of it ? In what way can it help us in our present crisis ?"

"Well, there I have questions to ask ! No, I don't know much of it, and my first question would be : How far has yoga, as we have come to know it, to do with a special culture complex ? and how far is it universal and modifiable ? I think we must find new ways of the spirit, new hypotheses and new practices, to get the old knowledge and technique. That is, we must translate them into our own terms, in terms of our present-day experience. Otherwise we shall be suffering from a kind of form fetish and be content to repeat rather than advance. The basic truth is no doubt one, but it must be renewable in modern terms, that is other than the accustomed and accredited terms."

"Supposing we said that yoga is the archetype of depth psychology ?"

"I suppose you very well could. In fact, Jung did hint at a kind of alliance. Only, we would not like to be committed to all the paraphernalia or inessentials. Of course I speak as one who has not undergone any specific discipline and you should not give too much value to what I say. By the way," he added in a lighter vein, "did I tell you of the Indian lady who had gone to Jung for treatment ? Ah, now I have an Eastern psyche, thought Jung, who had never had an Indian patient so far. But at the end of the treatment he only said : 'Only an English schoolmistress!' You see, she was an emancipated woman, from Delhi or Bombay maybe, with all the problems of masculinity and modernization, more familiar with the modern West than with the ancient East."

"Don't we know the type ? Of such is the kingdom, the culture of our cities," said Sengupta with a tolerant smile.

"Do you believe in Holiness ?" I continued. "And how do you relate it with your special discipline ?"

"Again, I am not an expert on the subject. But isn't Holiness, as we understand it, another culture idea ? As a particular idea, or way of expression, belonging to a particular period or people, as a thing of the past, I do not think it is either available or even necessary to us today. That is, it has to be put over and re-defined. We have to renew and speak of it in new terms and in a new context. If by Holiness you mean spiritual capacity, such as Meister Eckhart meant, I accept it, though not, as I have said just now, in its old, familiar, traditional forms only. If there is to be Holiness for us, it must be a new kind of Holiness."

(Was the doctor an existentialist ? Yes, "holist and existential".)

"Do you believe in other levels of awareness or consciousness ? How does one reach these levels ?"

"I do believe. But how does one reach these levels ? I don't know. The difficulty, I would say, is that the reaching is really not to be attempted deliberately, in the sense of a mechanical know-how. I am afraid a good deal of yoga falls under this

category, of following old principles and practices without full understanding of what is involved in the process. Of course a man has to make some effort, even continued effort, because of certain aboriginal inheritances and resistances in his being or make-up. Hence all these disciplines, these austerities or *tapasyā* as you may say. When the resistance has been got rid of, the effort also can stop."

"The yoga of no yoga in fact."

"Precisely. This is so even in therapeutics. The real healing comes through a spiritual capacity in the patient to profit. It is not : Take this medicine, cure guaranteed. The way to achieve awareness is, I would say, through awareness itself."

"The Self is to be won through the Self," I added, quoting the *Gita*.

"Yes, one goes along the whole process. It is a kind of psychic evocation, *evocare...*"

That, I told him, was the heart of the Aurobindian yoga too. And I quoted :

But for such vast spiritual change to be,
Out of the mystic cavern in man's heart
The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil
And step into common nature's crowded rooms
And stand uncovered in that nature's front
And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.

"One of the reasons why I haven't read Sri Aurobindo very carefully," conceded Dr. Progoff most generously, "is that I might lose all my originality."

HOPE FOR MAN ?

"Do you see any hope for man ? And in what direction ?" I shot my last question.

"Well, I do feel hope, unless of course we are all blown off. The main hope lies in the fact that when and where peoples of different cultures and points of view come together sooner or later they realise that individual doctrines and ways of life can be set in a total perspective and thus lose their separate minutiae. That where basic and fundamental qualities, such as make up man's essential nature, are concerned differences give way and you are brought past argument. That is the level where we really meet—on common ground, of common experience and shared attitudes. About outer, inessential things one can argue, discuss, fight. Not where the deeper communion has been established. Today such a communion of peoples has become possible, even inevitable. It is up to us to make it real and enduring. I feel the levels of communication are deepening. I feel this with respect to even the Communist countries. When the political traumas are over, even the socialist states will be faced with basic human questions and qualities, and we may have another Dostoevsky or a Doctor Zhivago. This points to happier, in the end identical aims. Of course this

cannot come about without much pain and suffering. That is the inevitable price of growth. But I don't despair. We might yet conquer time through time, as you might say."

The doctor looked at his watch. We understood.

"Beyond time, beyond timelessness," I whispered.

Dr. Progoff only smiled.

Our one hour was over. Soon we stepped out and merged into New York's afternoon rush and roar. But at the back of our minds, out of the depths, sang another music, of daring and discovery. Walking down the New World's noisy traffic we felt what Arnold had known before and expressed so well.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
 But often in the din of strife,
 There rises an unspeakable desire
 After the knowledge of our buried life,
 A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
 In tracking our true, original course;

A longing to inquire
 Into the mystery of this heart that beats
 So wild, so deep in us, to know
 Whence our thoughts come and where they go,
 And many a man in his own breast then delves,
 But deep enough, alas, none ever mines. . . .

Only—but this is rare—(sometimes)
 A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
 And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know,
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
 And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

YOU, EYES OF MAN

You, eyes of man . . . Fierce eyes of wonder-gaze...
From house of earth on foam of hungry waters
Above the pride of peaks and lone sun-blaze,
With moon amid the still Void's starry daughters,
In dream and day the phantom-truth you chase.
Man's eyes ! Away from man in tempting haze
Of distances a fleeing God you praise.

You, eyes of man . . . Young Earth's dark seeking eyes . . .
The beast you pierce and sky, from filth and flower
You dash, you run to death. A world that cries,
A hero-leap or the ideal's tower,
All are but this dimension's mighty ties
That only let you, slaves, to noble cave-vaults rise
But curb each dart for the true Paradise.

We call you, eyes . . . Back into us we call
From myriad paths of long blind quest and straying...
Return ! Go in—pierce through our heart's black wall
Where deep in Heart of Light the King is playing
Who loves to throw and watch His magic ball.
There, there at last, O cling to His lids' sweet fall
And be the wonder-lenses of the One-All.

JANINA

DIVINE MOTHER

Divine Mother,
Nameless Eternal Being, Creatrix Supreme,
Grace Incarnate in a fragile body,
Who art beyond the Form and the Formless,
Beyond the zenith of our climbing,
Beyond the widest waking and the deepest sleep,
Only one boon we ask Thee to hasten Thy manifestation:
Transmute these earthen vessels into immaculate receptacles
And fill them with Thy transcendent Love,
Delight-content in the lotus-core of the Reality.
No Light can persuade the Night to mend her ways.
No power can bend the self-will of a wind-blown thistle-down.
No beauty can break through the armour of gloom and selfishness.
But Love conquers by surrendering her omnipotence
To division, derision, violence and death.
All opposition succumbs to her, worn out in the end
Like a sword that yields to water finding no resistance.
Only Love can reveal the Beloved in a speck of dust caught in a sunbeam.
Only Love can prepare the destined hour for the birth of the unborn Spirit.
Thy Love self-fulfilled gives and gives and wants nothing in exchange,
Sustains the humble violets and the majestic chrysanthemums with equal grace,
Leads the unwilling blindness to illumination through tenderness,
Nurses with compassion the wounds of the victor and the pride of the vanquished,
And sees the promise of God in each closed bud sleeping in the glow of the Dawn.
Love lies bleeding in the sand pierced through the heart by a jeering rabble
And transforms each particle into a crimson epiphany of sacrifice.
Power can obliterate a vast empire with a mere glance,
Break the frail bodies but cannot tame the indomitable spirit of man.
Knowledge can dazzle the mind with its prismatic splendour
Yet cannot change a sun-bleached mountain into a forest of orchids and ferns.
When Love smiles and rains down its sweetness,
Buried hope is resurrected, rocks melt into fountains and cascades,
Deserts stop their march towards barrenness,
Worms and caterpillars are exalted to a nobler sphere,
The Daemon locked in the mute heart of the atom is delivered.
Love finds the psychic lines of rapture,
Gathers the consecrated petals of yearning
And unites them into a mystic gesture, a symbol of close-linked harmony,
Pink meditation of a dedicated Rose.
Occult powers, riches and artistic faculties,
Though precious gifts, we lay them at Thy feet.
Only one boon we ask Thee to hasten Thy manifestation :

Transmute these earthen vessels into immaculate receptacles
 And fill them with Thy transcendent Love,
 Delight-content in the lotus-core of the Reality.
 Love is the recondite name of the One,
 The insoluble bond holding together the Mansion of the manifold creation,
 The ever-new mystery which knowledge cannot fathom.
 Love is the foundation, Love the stair of our ascension,
 The ring of fire which keeps the wolves at bay when falls the darkness,
 The miracled tonic that prevents fatigue on the way,
 The crown that awaits the seeker at the summit of aspiration.
 Mother Divine, only Love can realise on Earth Thy purple design.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

THE MOTHER FACE

WHAT facial infinity !
 Never was beauty turned
 To more perfect sublimity
 Than in this sphinx-like face
 Summing up the enigma of earth
 And beaming forth its solution.

The face of the resolute high priestess
 Captaining this crescent of creation
 Through an abysmal void
 To sunlit certainty and calm.

The face with eyes
 That see the horizonless
 Through numberless unopened horizons
 Numbered only by generations unborn
 Beyond the ken of our cabined vision.

The Supramental Face
 Sculptured out of living and veined marble
 And sun-like swaying the earth
 Until the terrestrial temple,
 Like a sun-flower smitten to its roots,
 Bathes, basement and all,
 In the lustre of the Deity turning it divine.

V. K. GOKAK

O THE HARP WITH A THOUSAND STRINGS

(This poem, originally in Kannada by D. R. Bendre and translated into English by V. K. Gokak, describes the wonderful experience the poet had on the day of THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION, 29-2-1956, when he was aboard a railway train.)

OM ! Om ! The pillar of seed sound
In the vast Heavens thunders around
Like Matarishwa's over-mind,
Like music by the gods designed;
O, the harp with a thousand strings !
Listen ! A message it brings
Listen to the music it flings.

This constellated universe
Is Many from One, the Voice avers.
One only rules this myriad world,
Poised, when many around are whirled.
In Him creation lives and moves.
In His Love meet our many loves.
Victory is the cooing of His doves.

Behold the World-Destroyer's dance.
Hear His cosmic utterance.
Out of the blue depths came that thunder
Moving men to awe and wonder :
'Dadadā dadadom, damadaya dattom :'
Give,—it matters not to whom.
Pity the vilest in their doom.

Gods and demons, satyrs, fauns,
Humans, children of many dawns,
Myriad lives in the womb of Time
Emerging from their earthly slime—
May they join the choric hymn
Lifting their symphony to Him
For the Dawn that breaks on the World's rim.

Out of a thousand lilies flames
The Maiden with celestial names:
The hidden Love-Fire in Brahma's heart,
She essays forth to play Her part.
What is She at ? What does She bring ?
Of Grace an endless blossoming—
In clay an endless burgeoning.

Light and Delight are about to rain.
Earth's udders will stream with milk again
At the downpour of Truth's monsoons
And to the chanting of Love's tunes.
Head dissolves in ambrosial shower,
The nooks and crannies of Earth are aflower
'Tis the Birth of a New World, a New Power !

THE CLOSE OF DANTE'S *DIVINA COMMEDIA*

(PARADISO, CANTO 33)

This is not, strictly speaking, a translation. It keeps Dante's metre, the "terza rima," and renders faithfully as regards the main points the account he gives of the last stage of his journey in the Other World, the attainment of the highest Paradise. But it does not treat these points with an imagination utterly subdued to the original. Even apart from verbal liberties, it takes up Dante's vision and experience and passes them through the atmosphere of a mysticism that has not exactly the same psychological colour and movement. Besides a certain personal difference of plane, there is some difference of general "milieu": the Orient has mingled its own soul with that of Mediaeval Europe and the Christian intuition tends here to bear the touch of India's more open-eyed familiarity with spiritual light. Dante is not submerged or falsified, he is absorbed and re-created. The style has not always the severe cut of the Dantesque suggestion; whatever force comes into play is at times of a more "lavish" type, yet it tries to preserve in the midst of lavishness a compact turn and a loaded significance which are not alien to the essence of Dante.

ST. BERNARD SUPPLICATES ON BEHALF OF DANTE

“O VIRGIN Mother, daughter of thy Son !
Life's pinnacle of shadowless sanctity,
Yet, with the lustre of God-union,
Outshining all in chaste humility—
Extreme fore-fixed by the supernal Mind,
Unto such grace rose thy humanity
That the Arch-dreamer who thy form designed
Scorned not to house His own vast self in clay :
For, thy womb's sacred mystery enshrined
The omnific Love by whose untarnished ray
Now flowers this rose-heart of eternal peace !
A beaconing magnificent midday
Art thou to us of saviour charities,
To mortal men hope's ever-living fount !
So great thy power that, save its fulgences
Shed purifying gleam, whoso would mount
Unto this ecstasy might well desire

Wingless sky-soar ! Nor dost thou needful count
 Grief's tear, but even ere its soul aspire
 Thou minglest with its bitter drop thy bliss.
 Whatever bounteous world-upkindling fire
 Sparkles below, thy heart-infinities
 Hold in full blaze....Here kneels one that has viewed
 All states of spirit from the dire abyss
 To heaven's insuperable altitude :
 I, who have never craved the rapturous sight
 With such flame-voice of zeal for my soul's good
 As now for him implores thy faultless light,
 Beg answer to this orison : O pierce
 The last gloom-vestige of his mortal night
 By the miraculous beauty that bestirs
 The sleeping god in man with its pure sheen :
 Disclose the immeasurable universe
 Of ultimate joy, O time-victorious Queen !
 Quench the blind hunger of his earth-despair
 With flood of glory from the immense Unseen !
 Deny him not perfection—lo in prayer
 A myriad saints with Beatrice upraise
 Sinless love-splendoured hands that he may share
 The vision of inviolable Grace !”

DANTE APPROACHES THE BEATIFIC VISION

The Eyes that make all heaven their worshipper
 Glowed on the suppliant's mouth and in their rays
 Streamed the mute blessing deep prayers draw from her.
 Then to the Light which knows no dusk they turned
 Full-open, gathering without one blur
 What never in a creature's look has burned.
 Neighbouring the Vast where the gold laughter stood,
 End of each clay-desire in clay unearned,
 I ended every hunger in my blood.
 Bernard was beckoning up with smiling face
 My soul, but to the crowning azurehood
 My glance had winged already a long space;
 For, that high splendour shapes all Nature new,
 One with the Pure that needs no power or praise
 Beyond its own white self to keep it true.
 Henceforth so large an aureoled surprise

That words are shut in, memories scarce break through !
 As fade dream-pageants from awaking eyes
 At the rude touch of clamorous common day,
 Even so my spirit loses paradise.
 Yet though the enormous rapture rolls away,
 A silent sweetness trickles in my heart !
 Even thus the snow is in the sun's hot ray
 Unsealed or, when the vague breeze blew apart
 The sibyl's thin leaves, back to the unknown
 Vanished her secrets of sooth-saying art.
 O Lustre seated on a reachless throne,
 Rejoicing solitary and aloft
 In ethers where no thought has ever flown
 Out of the bound of earthly hours, enwaft
 Once more the primal brilliance to my sight—
 Slay my song's discord with Thy glory's shaft,
 That I may leave of Thy miraculous light
 A deathless sparkle to posterity !
 Empower with Thy unconquerable might
 The dim voice of my mortal memory
 To lift above the minds of future men
 The burning banner of Thy victory !
 The grace withdraw not which Thou gav'st me when
 With superhuman courage I pursued
 Thy beckoning blaze of beauty till my ken
 Reeled on the verge of dread infinitude !
 In the depths divine the myriad universe
 Clasped by a giant flame of love I viewed :
 All that the wayward winds of time disperse
 Stood luminous there in one ecstatic whole :
 Beyond corruption and the taint of tears
 Shone the deific destiny of man's soul !

THE CROWNING VISION OF DANTE

Stunned by that flash of limitless unity
 I felt as though upon my being stole
 The weight of one mute moment's lethargy
 Heavier than the dead centuries that fall
 On the Argo's plunge across the pristine sea....
 What flickering earth-lure has tongue to call
 The spirit grown wide with this magnificence ?

Each longing here attains the rapturous All—
 Here life's lost heart of splendour beats immense !
 But the deep relish of divinity
 How shall my words convey ? Its radiance
 Leaves my mouth stricken with helpless infancy
 Draining in dumb delight its mother's breast.
 Not that the Flame rose now more goldenly
 (For ever unchanged its high perfections rest),
 But my gaze found a growing miracle
 No power of human speech could have expressed,
 As orb within bright orb unthinkable
 From that abyss of tense beatitude
 Swam slowly into my wondering sight until
 The mystery of heaven's triune mood
 In mingling fire and rainbow-beauty shone !
 O Light eternal, in self-plenitude
 Dwelling exultant, fathomless, unknown
 Save to the immaculate infinity
 Of luminous omnipotence Thine alone !
 'Twas Thy supremest joy Thou showed'st to me,
 Thy grace most intimate masked by dazzling awe,
 When, fixing on Thy uncurbed brilliancy
 My marvelling look, with heart o'erwhelmed I saw
 Thy nameless grandeurs wear the face of Man !
 But as in vain without geometric law
 An intricate figure one may strive to span,
 So the impuissant scrutiny of thought
 With which my labouring mind essayed to scan
 This mighty secret, fell back dazed, distraught,
 Till Thy mercy flashed a beam on its dark eye
 And the heart found the ineffable knowledge sought ! . . .
 Then vigour failed the towering fantasy;
 Yet, like a wheel whose speed no wavering mars,
 Desire rushed on, impelled perpetually
 By the Love that moves the sun and all the stars.

A MERE MANUSCRIPT

A SHORT STORY

“Is there forgiveness for me ? Tell me, holy father, what should I have done ? My eyes are dimming and my own voice comes from afar as came those sounds that made me hurry across the Piazza. A terrible fire was eating up the house, and when I saw its hungry colours leap madly laughing above and around, and all the crowd helpless in the street, I forgot that I was lame and my body rushed like a moth towards the glare.

“Before I knew where I was, I found myself plunging through smoke and cracking woodwork, up the stairs to the room where my old mother lay, sick and stifled in a ring of fire. The door was open and I could have burst in to drag my darling out. Oh I loved her as no man ever loved his sweetheart—my little frail mother with that soft glance full of understanding !

“But I saw a still fiercer confusion of flames raging higher up where the stairs reached the second floor. And in a flash I remembered the man whose room was there. He could not be in, for he returned late every night from a lonely walk. His firm short step I used to hear on the landing, and he would be humming to himself in a slow and rhythmic tone. I had often seen him in those humming moods—his large gaze forgetful of everything, the nostrils of his curved nose quivering as if he had run and were breathless. What a strange man, with a long melancholy face and with eyes for ever absorbed to recall some felicity lost like a dream. He looked almost a priest. If he had your robe, father, he would suit it as even priests seldom do. He seemed to have no interest any more in life—but there was something unbreakable in him, hard like a diamond and like a diamond precious”

After a pause the weak voice went on.

“Yes, his room was above, there where the flames were hissing most violently. I stood on the edge of one terrible moment of decision—then tore myself away from my mother’s chamber and stumbled upstairs, fighting through that golden torture which shrieked like a hundred devils. My clothes were ripped by the keen fire, the flesh of my legs sizzled, but I clove my way undaunted.

“Through the door I rushed. I saw his big lamp, which had been left burning, overturned somehow and splintered. I knew where his table stood, and with a blind hand I searched the dazzle that now enveloped it. The bundle I was looking for was there; I grabbed it just in time—a mass of sparks and ashes flew from its wrapper, but to my great delight the contents seemed almost undamaged. I thrust the heap

into my doublet and dashed downstairs. But here it was indeed too late. My mother attempting to rise had fallen upon the floor. Her face and hair were so horribly burnt that I nearly swooned at the sight. . . .

“My heart has known pain such as nobody will guess. What had I done ? I had killed my mother, for I could have saved her. I had killed her for a mere bundle of manuscript. I myself would have gladly dropped beside the dear flesh all ruined now. It would have been a joy to get rid of a heart seared with grief and a soul consumed by sin—but I could not let go that manuscript. I ran down the scorching stair and afterwards I knew nothing. The people in the street must have caught me as I staggered out, and carried me here.”

Niccolo Scalza, the young poet of Udine, was too exhausted to continue. He stared straight in front of him while his mouth endeavoured vainly to form words. At last he mumbled for water and the friar put it to the ashen lips. Then, with a weak twisting of them, the disfigured man continued :

“When I look back, I shudder. If I had saved her, I would have saved myself too; but there is no hope now. I must be ugly, father, with the signature of fire all over my face—ugly as my own crime. But I knew also that I could not have acted otherwise. For I was aware of what lay hidden in that manuscript. It is a miracle, it is a word born from the skies. To let so much of the mind’s magnificence perish would have been to fling away the Creator’s grace—grace not only to our time but to the endless future as well. . . .

“Where is my friend ? He will be mad with sorrow, thinking his work has been destroyed, but he will come to see me—to see my corpse. Give then the treasure to him; it is his ten years’ labour, and when the world will see it he shall wear the crown of immortality. Even the cruel city that has exiled him will bow at his feet and repent the miseries and humiliations heaped on his head. . . .

“Whose face is this ? Is she still alive ? I wish she were and it was not only my wandering brain which painted her. But she had most understanding eyes, and perhaps she will forgive me. Father, is there mercy for me from God ? Why are you silent ? Ah, you have not read the divine poem.”

“My son, yours is a deed most unbelievable. You have sacrificed two lives. May God look at the heart of your folly, not at its cruel exterior.”

“Give me your hand, father. My head is throbbing with too sharp a pain. I am a little afraid of the coming darkness.”

“There is a Love in which often the darkness feared by the world proves to be pure light. I commend your soul to that Love. Pass in peace.”

The friar performed the last ministrations. The dying man listened, tried to smile and before the smile could fade from his lips life was gone. The friar arranged the thin scorched hands, put a crucifix in them and turned sadly to the open window. The town of Udine was asleep, for it was near midnight. The clear Italian sky was filled with stars. He moved back to the bed where in one corner the saved manuscript was lying. As he lifted it, the last sheet broke in two, owing to the effect of the fire;

but luckily there were only a few lines scribbled there. The friar bent his head and puckered his eyes to decipher them and slowly read a music unknown yet to the world :

All' alta fantasia qui manco possa;
Ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,
Si come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,
L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle ! ¹

K. D. SETHNA

¹Then vigour failed the towering fantasy;
Yet, like a wheel whose speed no wavering mars,
Desire rushed on, impelled perpetually
By the Love that moves the sun and all the stars.

MEETING NICOLAI SCHEIRMAN, NOW 95

MY travel through Germany was all by car with Carlo Schuller. We had to go from Munich to Stuttgart, a distance of some 275 k.m. But we stopped at Heilbronn reaching it at 5 o'clock in the evening of 22nd November, 1962.

Having fulfilled a programme at Heilbronn in the evening between 8-15 and 9-15 p.m. we remained for the night in a hotel.

The next day we started for Farnbach, a village on the way to Stuttgart, where Nicolai Scheirman (then 94) lives. I did not know much about him except that he had welcomed the World-Union movement of the Ashram and that he had met Tolstoi in his young age. What I heard about him gave me the idea that he had a colourful life. He has been a revolutionary wanting to change entirely the basis of man's existence : he has struggled hard against individual property, and tried to create a collective life without individual possession. He believes that many problems of men are due to this possessive instinct. He worked in Russia for about 30 years and had to leave the country when political trouble came. He tried to carry out the same idea in Germany, but there also everything had to be abandoned when the Nazis came to power. Now, a few of his followers are trying to realise his idea in Brazil in a collective farm.

I noticed that he was in very good health for his age and not only had he a clear and active mind but a mind that was ready to receive new ideas. He had grown in his inner being through sincere pursuit of an ideal; he was a ripe man.

I met him on 23rd November, 1962. My talk with him gave me a glimpse of his philosophy of life. Nicolai believes in the Spirit, that is to say, he is not a materialist. In his struggle to arrive at the solution of man's problems he prayed earnestly and as a result of his prayers he saw the Light and found it enlarging. That was, of course, long ago, but he has a faith that the Light can and does manifest through Great Personalities and thus enlarges its scope.

He told me that creation is perfect. When I showed him my hesitation in accepting the idea, he said : "It is not perfect in parts, if you see parts you may find it imperfect. But look at the whole—like a tree—and you will find it is perfect. The Atman—Self—when in the body and mind is imperfect, Mind is only a window, it is not important in itself, what comes through the window is important. If man lived in the Spirit only then there would be no world—it would evaporate. Man is the dream of the Spirit; when spirit is awake man disappears. God sees himself in a mirror—that is the world. It is God's dream."

I did my best to understand him. I tried to show him that there was a flaw in his philosophy. I said : "God is Omnipotent, so his dream—even if it be a dream

—can't be unreal. If it is real then perfection must be possible to God's creation."

He said : "Perfection is possible, perhaps, for an individual or a few individuals. But to have many people in a group is not good because in a big organisation the true spirit cannot remain. I tried in Russia, I tried in Germany. In these countries it seems impossible. Now I am trying in South America through one man. But, in spite of all appearances, the Light is increasing."

I pointed out that perfection was not possible because of the imperfect constitution of man's nature. If man can centre his life—individual and collective—in the Spirit then harmony is possible. On the plane of ideas, ideals and ethical values it is not possible to create either a perfect or a harmonious world.

He said that for the modern man it was almost impossible to build life around the Soul or Self; for men to-day Mammon is God.

He had arrived, I saw, at a simplification for himself about the fundamental ideas : he believes in Love, Truth, and Freedom. I attempted to explain to him that his including a free play of the sex-impulse in love or accepting mental ideas or ethical ideals as equivalent to Truth was not quite correct. I could not but put the differences in a very cautious and qualified manner. But he was so earnest, sincere, full of humility that I felt myself at ease even when there were fundamental differences between his vision and Sri Aurobindo's.

After lunch with him we had again about two hours' talk. I had to leave for Stuttgart. In about three or four days I received a card thanking me for "enlightening" him as he put it and he asked for my photograph which I sent.

In a few days again I received another letter which I reproduce here. (His English is not very correct and I have made a few changes in the grammar.)

Beloved Master and Brother in the One unspeakable :

You opened my eyes to something quite new to me in my understanding of Truth. But I see now that I have not drawn the first consequences of It. I would ask you to tell me by reading the following in which I am trying to draw these consequences from the grand idea with which I have been enlightened by you.

There is none besides the One—i.e. God. At any moment all is in perfect order in the whole universe, because the Creator of All-Existence is perfect.

The imperfection which seems to exist is the consequence of the Cosmic Law of Karma, the cause of which is ego-centricity of human beings on their way to perfection. These truths I grasped long ago.

The New Horizon which is opened by the enlightenment of Sri Aurobindo's teaching that personal knowledge of the external Form by itself has no value, that its value depends on the spirit vivifying it, this statement continued to its consequence reaches the conclusion that all Forms vivified by the Spirit are perfect! This seems to be the key to a changed human culture and a peaceful, happy cooperation of all people.

Since we know that every human being is unique and in a state of evolution, we cannot have all human beings at the same time all perfect. But always there are

a few individuals perfect to some degree. These few have to be the Leaders of the many groups who will live in limited self-supporting communities under the guidance best of a creative woman with a group of elders ripe in spirit. By the leadership of quite unselfish spirits all Form will become perfect.

Since the absolute Spirit is love, truth and life, its manifestations have to be without any superstition of race, religion, nationality, class. These high principles have to be the basis of all activities and relationships among the given group.

I am very sorry not to have any gifts either of eloquence or of formulation of some basic truths necessary for explaining to all seekers of Truth and Reality the Ground Idea of the New Life and Order to come after the great change.

I am sending my thoughts to our International Unorganised Brotherhood of Love-Service in Freedom which we call "The Human Family" existing since 1922. Now and then circular letters are sent out. I wish I could formulate best such a conception of the basic principles of the New Divine Life and Order to come.

I believe this will be also useful for spreading the World-Union idea abroad—some general credo of World-Union.

I am always open and grateful for every correction of this my trial to formulate all these ideas necessary for a New-Life.

Affectionately yours in Love, Truth and Freedom,

NICOLAI

To this letter I replied on 21-12-1962 from Zürich as follows :—

21-12-1962, Zurich

Dear and reverend Nicolai,

I was very happy to receive your postcard to Stuttgart and letter here.

Many thanks !

I. "There is none besides the One—i.e. God"—This *is* true for God, *not* for men!—because man has *not realised* that "there is none besides God". It is only a very few who realise that and then they try to act in the light of their experience.

But as God is infinite and has innumerable facets it is very rarely that a spiritual person gets the *central* truth of God—particularly, of God in movement—God manifesting in time.

Thus, though the Universe is perfect to God, it is imperfect to men. A creator who is perfect may be *creating* perfection and during the *process* his creation may *not* be perfect. It will reach perfection when his labour is successful. When a carpenter or sculptor is fashioning an image, the image during the process is *not* perfect—though the artist may have a vision of perfection in his creation.

II. "The absolute Spirit is love, truth and life"—you may change this a little : The absolute Spirit is *pure* love, spiritual or *divine* truth, and *transformed* life.

You have to see that what men call love is not pure Love ; what men accept as truth is only intellectual or mental truth, not the divine Truth; and what is accepted as life is a mixture of impulses, animality and some ideas—it is not divine Life.

New Life, New Creation is coming because the higher level of Consciousness beyond Mind is now acting and some say it will succeed in transforming human life into divine Life.

I wish you a very happy Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Yours with best wishes,

A.B. Purani.

P.S. I enclose a photo of myself.

I received another letter dated 25-9-1963 at the end of which Scheirman wrote :

“Please give my love and deep devotion to dear Mother and accept my gratitude in Love, Truth and Freedom.

Brotherly yours,

Nicolai.

BEAUTY-DESCRIPTION IN KALIDASA, SHANKARACHARYA AND SRI AUROBINDO

I

INDIAN literature follows an old tradition in the description of beauty in its classics and the seers of spiritually-inspired literature have given particular importance to this subject and have shed much light on it. Indeed the description of beauty lies not merely in poetic similes and metaphors, but also in spiritual symbols.

The Vedic and Upanishadic literature has consciously enunciated the spiritual element that lies beyond the human body ; even in later developments, when Indian literature has sought to depict the pleasurable play of life through romantic themes, it has yet expressed the same element without being particularly conscious of it.

But, in the description of beauty, we can make a distinction between beauty and charm. A Sanskrit classic, *Ujwal Nilmani*, puts it thus :

*aṅgānyabhūṣitānyeva kenacid bhūṣaṇādīnā
Yena bhūṣitavad bhāti tad rūpamiti kathyate.*

“Without the use of beautiful dress or ornaments on the body, that by which the body looks as if beautifully dressed and ornamented, is called beauty.”

Another Sanskrit classic, *bhaktirasamrita sindhu*, says :

bhavet saundaryamaṅgānāṃ sanniveśo yathocitaḥ

“The right proportion of the body alone is beauty.”

Ujwal Nilmani describes charm in this manner :

*muktāphaleṣucchāyāyāstaraḥlatwamivāntarā
pratibhāti yadāṅgeṣu lāvanyaṃ tadihocyate*

“The splendour that comes out of the body-members, just like the splendour emanating from the lucid reflection of pearls, is called charm.”

All-round description of body-form has been a theme congenial to the traditional Indian scholars of aesthesis. This not merely gives us an idea of the development of literature in a particular field, but is also symbolic of the inner growth of mental consciousness projected in limpid language through the pen of seers of aesthetic literature. That is why we often come across, in Sanskrit literature, an integral description of aesthesis.

The aesthetic description of form has been intimately related with the sublimation of emotions and sentiments. If we want, indeed, to know the evolution of man's inner nature from the point of view of aesthetic description of form, we have to throw a keen glance at the words of those outstanding personalities who have identified themselves with the true consciousness of aesthetic literature. We can get from them some glimpse of the true Indian aesthesis.

Literature being the outflow of mind, mental development has always reflected itself there in its various aspects. In the case of description of the human figure too, there has been a similar increasing consciousness from the gross to the subtle. This reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's view in regard to the evolutionary process in every field of life.

The first step in the development of literature is an increasing sensibility of mind and its tendency to open itself towards ever-new truths. With the growth of mental consciousness, we can see the gradual development in the description of human beauty. When anything hidden or involved begins to unfold and evolve, it takes the shape of development on the physical level. In literature this gets translated into a quintessential manifestation of body and life in a minute description of each limb and gesture of beauty, in a full expression of the aesthetic consciousness based on feelings and emotions. As the peak-point of this development, we come face to face with Kalidasa.

We hear of "the matchless similes of Kalidasa". These give us an indication of his great power to project the beauty of the human form and of Nature for the purpose of aesthetic enjoyment. This he is able to do through his subtle consciousness and sensibility and his unique images. Kalidasa makes profuse use of metaphors in order to give us a complete figure of beauty for the visual satisfaction of man. The feeling of surprise at the vision of form comes from that attraction of beauty that lies hidden in it.

*Kamale kamalotpatih śrūyate na ca dr̥śyate,
bāle tava mukhāmbhoje kathamindīvaradwayam*

"None ever heard of or has seen
A lotus from a lotus growing;
How then, O damsel of beauteous sheen,
On thy lotus face two lotuses blowing?"

The clouds of Kalidasa's *Cloud Messenger* appear to him as living beings. His descriptions convey the deep and poignant essence of separation and union in an incomparable way and his picturing of form has a surprisingly close relationship with feelings and emotions. See how vividly he brings home to us the profound sorrow of Shankuntala :

*Kṣāmaksāmakaṣapolamānanamurāḥ kāthinyamuktastanam
madhyah klāntatarāḥ prkāmvimatāvamsau chaviḥ pāṇdurāḥ
śocyā ca priyadarśanā ca madanakḥṣṭeyamālaksyate
patrāṇāmva śoṣaṇena marutā sprṣṭā latā mādhavī*

“Her cheeks grow thin, her breast and shoulders fail,
Her waist is weary and her face is pale ;
She fades for love, oh, pitifully sweet,
As vine-leaves wither in the scorching heat.”

Kalidasa has thoroughly observed and examined the emotional mind of man and has tried to offer a highest object for its satisfaction. In the rainy season, when the sky is overclouded, we find in him a heart-rending description of a woman burning with the fire of separation (*proṣitā patikā nāyikā*) :

*tanvī śyāmā śikharidaśanā pakvabimbādharoṣṭhī,
madhye kṣāmā cakitaharīṇīprekṣaṇā nṃmanābhūḥ,
śroṇūbhārādālasagamanā stokanamrastanābhyām,
yā tatrāsīd yuvatviṣaye sṣṭirādyeva dhātuḥ.*

“There is a fane, a beauteous creature stands,
The first best work of the Creator’s hands,
Whose slender limbs inadequately bear
A full-orbed bosom and a weight of care,
Whose teeth like pearls, whose lips like ‘Bimbas’ show
And fawn-like eyes still tremble as they glow.”

Kalidasa has been able to indite an incomparable glory of beauty in a most living symbol of separation which can in no way be described as an exaggeration. The similes are luminous and living, created with apt images.

We have seen in a couple of examples above that Kalidasa has succeeded marvellously in describing sentiments of tragedy in a very subtle and minute way, but he is equally at home in giving an all-round picture of the sentiments of a happy life. To look at beauty for the sake of beauty and to enjoy it as a manifestation of a divine element is possible only under the influence of a divine power.

In *Mālavikāgnimitram*, the traditional way of beauty-description of Malavika is just an earlier glimpse of Kalidasa’s poetic glory :

*dūrghākṣam śaradindukāntavadanam bāhū natāvansayoḥ
saṅkṣiptam nibdonnatastanamurāḥ pārśve pramṣṭe va
madhyah pāṇmito-s-mitaṅca jaghanam pādāvarālāṅgulī
chando nartayitur yathaiiva manasaḥ śliṣṭam tathāsyā vapuḥ*

“The face has long eyes and the splendour of the autumnal moon ;
the arms are rounded at the shoulders ;
the bosom compact, with full and prominent breasts ;
the sides are as though polished ; the waist has the measure of the hand ;
and the hips are immense ; the feet have curving toes ; her body
is framed to suit exactly the fancy in the mind of the dancing master.”

These descriptions, developing in the course of time, abound in Kalidasa’s work in the form of poetical fancies and elaborate similes.

*bāhū dwaū ca mṛṇālamāsyakamalam lāvanyaḷilājalam
śroṇī tīrthaśilā ca netraśfaram dhammullaśavālakam
kāntāyaḥ stanacakravākayugalam kandarpavāṇānalar
dagdhānāmavagāhanāya vidhūnā rāmyam saro nirmutam.*

“It seems that the Creator has made a pond in the form of a damsel for the ill fated who is plunged in the flames of separation by the fiery arrows of Cupid. The two arms of the beloved are the lotus-stems, her face is the lotus, her charm is the glittering water, her buttocks are the steps of the bathing ghat, her restless eyes are the fish, her luxuriant hair is the pond weeds, her full-orbed breasts are a pair of chakravaks.”

These very symbols or images, when used in deity-description, gather a diviner atmosphere. We can see that the similes used in depicting Shakuntala’s beauty belong to a high and subtle level. Kalidasa says :

*mānuṣisu katham vā syādasya rūpasya sambhavaḥ
na prabhātaralam jyotirudeti vasudhātale.*

“How could such beauty from a woman take birth ?
Never was a liquid lightning flash born from the earth !”

The detailed top-to-toe beauty-picture of Parvati in his *Kumārsambhava* is an ideal description. Due to his well-knit arrangement of similes and poetical fancies, Kalidasa, with the richness of his creation, has successfully been able to keep the wholeness of the image.

A moralist would call Kalidasa’s depiction of Parvati’s divine beauty vulgar. This depiction is, in fact, a sheer and full manifestation of the divine beauty at the lower material level to which alone the ordinary human consciousness has close access. The description is made in such a striking way that the similes taken from Nature fall short of the sublimity of Parvati. For example,

*pravālanīlotpalanurviśeṣamadhīravipreṣitamāyatākṣyā
tathā grhītaṁ nu mṛgāṅganābhyastato grhītaṁ nu mṛgāṅganābhīḥ
śrīsapuṣpādīkāsaukumāryau bāhūta dīvyāvīti me vitarkaḥ
parājītenāpi kṛtau harasya yau kaṅṭhapāsau makaradhvajena
anyonyamutpīdayadutpalākṣyāḥ stanadvayaṁ pāṇḍu tathā pravṛddham
madhye yathā śyāmamukhasya tasya mṛṇālasūtrāntaramaṭṭyalabhyam.*

“Was indeed the tremulous glance of the large-eyed one, not different from a blue lotus in a windy place, taken by her from the female deer, or borrowed from her by the female deer themselves?

My guess is that those two hands of hers which were made a noose for the neck of Hara by Cupid, though defeated, had a delicacy greater than that of the Shirisha flower.

The two white breasts of that lotus-eyed one had so developed pressing against each other that space for even a lotus fibre was not available between that dark-nippled pair.”

It is clear that Kalidasa was the seer of Right Erotics and Pure Form. At the human level, he enjoys the physicality of beauty to its utmost. Without binding himself to crude social traditions, he has always been the worshipper of beauty and art. Not only Kalidasa, but in fact each style-creator of literary evolution has always been a few steps ahead of his time. As Kalidasa’s poetry gained subtlety, he employed material objects to describe the form of the Lord of the Universe and has hymned that aspect of Him which can be expressed in human adjectives.

In a small simple sentence, the Mother gives a perfect definition of poetry. She says, “Poetry is the sensuality of the spirit.”

Kalidasa has sung beauty in its very essence and, at the summit of the inner soul-evolution, is it not the same beauty that Sri Aurobindo describes in his poetry?

(To be continued)

DEV DUTT

(Translated by Har Krishan Singh from the Hindi)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

LAMPS OF LIGHT by M.P. Pandit, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2.
(Pages 77). Price Rs. 5:-

What fruit is by learning if thou adore not
The beautiful feet of the Master of luminous wisdom?

(Tirruvalluvar)

How aptly does this epigram sum up the Oriental, and especially the Indian, attitude towards learning ! As the mind develops by study and the personality of the seeker of knowledge grows rich and mature, he begins to realise more and more the limitations of his sense-bound and ego-centred mental instrument, a flickering tiny flame in a manifold darkness, which can at best lead him to 'a victorious analysis of the externalities of nature', but has no right of entry into its soul. He begins to yearn now for a knowledge that is vast, unequivocal, plenary and luminous. If he is ardent in his quest a great longing arises in him to meet some Master of luminous wisdom, who, in the language of the Veda, 'has crossed to the other shore beyond the darkness', and adore his feet. For, rare as a Phoenix in this world is such a Master. To quote an aphorism of Nolini Kanta Gupta :

What is the Truth ? The Man who bears the Truth.
Ask me not to test and toil for the Truth :
Ask me rather to love the Man who bears the Truth.

As we read this latest book of Pandit, it is this impression that comes uppermost in our mind—his adoration for the Master of luminous wisdom. This also, perhaps, explains the title of the book which at first sight appears to be a little pretentious if not tautological. What are the lamps and what is the light ? We have only to turn the fly-leaves and we find the answer—a beautiful geva-coloured picture of the Mother, the Light from which the lamps have been lighted.

M.P.Pandit needs no introduction to the reader. As a lucid exponent of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, an original research scholar of the various systems of Yoga, an erudite commentator of the ancient lore, spiritual and occult, he has written much and carved a niche for himself among contemporary circles. Few persons, however, outside the pale of the Ashram know that apart from these qualifications of his, he has had the invaluable privilege for 25 years—apparently on account of the nature of his work in the Ashram—of coming into close and regular personal contact with the Mother and receiving Her guidance on innumerable aspects of life and sadhana. What this means can only be understood by those who have approached Her with faith and received Her illuminating touch.

In this book Pandit has shared with us some of the very interesting and important problems on which he sought and received the Mother's guidance. Each problem is discussed in a separate chapter in a simple, candid and almost personal manner. First the complexities and implications of the problem discussed have been brought out and then the revealing Light thrown on it by some words of the Mother. There are chapters, among others, dealing with 'The Spiritual and the Occult', 'Dreams', 'The Divine's Help and its Conditions', 'Crises in Sadhana', 'The Guru', 'Consciousness in Material Things', 'Difficulties in Sadhana', etc., in which the aspirant will find much to learn and profit from.

For example, there is the vexatious problem of self-depreciation, which, in the initial stages of the sadhana incessantly, and later on occasionally, haunts the aspirant. Dealing with it in the chapter on 'The Mother's Sunlit Path', Pandit says, "One of the most usual causes for this sort of moroseness or grip of depression in the earlier stages of the sadhana is when the sadhaka becomes conscious of his weaknesses, what he calls his defects. He is occupied with them, is possessed by a feeling of helplessness at their obstinate refusal to cancel themselves. He develops a kind of obsession of his weaknesses and begins to despair of ever overcoming them." What is to be done? How to get out of the groove? Here is the solution he offers. "These so-called defects are not the exclusive product of any individual manufacture. They are universal movements, tendencies and workings, which express themselves more in some and less in others. But they are there in all, in some measure or other. When one takes to spiritual life in earnest these formations, hardened into habits by long repetitions, begin to show up in the manner of spots showing on a cloth that is being washed. It is the path of wisdom to recognise this fact, separate them from one's deeper being and treat them with the Higher Light. It is the wrong way to go about trying to root them out thoroughly before proceeding further. This is a negative way and hardly ever successful. A better and surer way is to look more to the positive gains. One has to aspire for and imbibe the higher calm, peace, purity, faith, etc. In the measure they are received and settled in the being, the deficiencies of restlessness, desires, impurities and similar elements get gradually displaced and rendered ineffective. As one grows in devotion, in dedication, in purity, the outer and lower pulls begin to lose their hold and just drop off like dry skin."

In the chapter on 'Space and Time in the Spiritual Context', the author narrates an interesting incident. "Some time recently the Mother told me: 'Broader and Higher! that is the programme for you.' She repeated it once again before I took leave. I received Her command and came out with this Mantra, *broader and higher*, in my heart. Hundreds of miles away, my brother had just returned from a conference and arrived home. . . . Suddenly he felt his consciousness expanding and rising upward. He noted it but the full meaning of it dawned only later when he came to know the Mother's message to me. The fact is, apart from his openness to the Mother, there is so much of understanding and harmony between him and myself, that the spiritual workings which the Mother released into my being automatically reached

him and manifested themselves. That he was so far away did not in the least matter.”

The printing and get-up deserve special praise as also the artistic cover designed by artist Jayantilal.

The book is well garnished with incidents and anecdotes from the personal life of the author and makes delightful reading. Nowhere is the page merely didactic or preachy, nor splashed over with effusive outpourings, which in a subject of this nature is really creditable. On the contrary there is everywhere a sense of balance—‘nothing too much’. We meet with a personality complex and mellowed with time and yet simple and ardent, one who has trod the path, sharp as a razor’s edge, suffered and hoped and sought peace in adoration of the feet of One whose personality beggars all praise and is redolent of the lines of Sri Aurobindo :

The calm speed of heaven, the sweet greatness, pure passion, winged
power had descended;
All the gods in a mortal body dwelt, bore a single name.

JAGADISH KHANNA

Students' Section

THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY AND ITS SPEAKERS

POETRY is the native and natural form of speech of a certain type of people scattered all over the world. Outsiders who learn it must consider themselves fortunate if they are able to understand the various nuances of this speech. One begins to approach the language, rightly, through interpreters—if sometimes (perhaps often!) very imperfect interpreters. One learns it further by familiarizing oneself with the various modes of the speech. There is nothing wrong if one attempts to speak it oneself though no one can ever hope to speak a language, not native to one's own genius, as it should be spoken. The attempt, if made with this awareness, *may* help one to get behind the skin of the native speakers.

As linguisticians¹ point out, every language embodies the culture of its speakers. The 'culture' of the people speaking the language of poetry is very peculiar. There is very little similarity in external life between one person and another of that strange race. Apart from their speech there is very little that can show any kinship between any two creatures of the race. What makes them one race is the peculiar attitude to life. All of them live a dual life—a life in common with that of the other people of the genus which goes by the name *homo*, the life of the actual and the factual; and the inner life in which the member of the race sees in a magic mirror (as it were) the experience of the actual and the factual, along with other kinds of experiences of the mind, heart and imagination, reflected with modifications and fusions. The magic of the mirror makes what the member of the race sees not only harmonious and beautiful but true, in some way, and significant. It is not given to all the members to see in the mirror at all times. The most fortunate or the best among them see for long stretches of periods only through the mirror, and they, during these periods, live a single life, a life of vision, if we may so call it.

All the members have an urge to speak out what they see irrespective of the fact whether others hear them, mishear them or do not hear them at all, whether those who hear understand, do not understand or misunderstand.

The best speakers of any language are always few, the excellence of the language depending not only on the richness of words and modes of speech but on the richness

¹ Linguisticians are scholars in the Science of Linguistics, a recent development of the Science of Language, formerly called Philology.

of what one has seen and what one expresses, and still more on the suitability of the particular form of speech to the particular thing that is expressed. The perfect marriage of the vision and the word in the language of poetry is a very rare phenomenon and is seen only in a countable few and they are the immortals like Valmiki and Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.

There are any number of dialects in the language of poetry, some conservative and formal in the mode of utterance, some revolutionary and bold in coinage and invention and others of a number of varieties in between the two extreme types.

There are idiolects too—particular modes of speaking, evolved or deliberately adapted, sometimes consciously differing from the normal form. Sometimes the idiolect of a great speaker may become a dialect and even an accepted form of the Received Standard Speech.

In spite of all these differences the speakers of the language of poetry are a happy race of people ready to make others happy but not always keen on it. They have a self-existent *joie de vivre* and some of them claim kinship with a superior race called saints and seers. In some at least is heard the authentic voice of the superior race. Some saints and seers themselves use the language of poetry. Though most of the speakers of the language of poetry have travelled far from the race of saints and seers, there seems to be much to be said in favour of the theory that they were the same race once.

K.B.SITARAMAYYA

BATTLE FOR LIGHT

A PLAY

ACT I

SCENE I

Maya's Palace

The scene opens with the three elements of creation: Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. Sattwa calm and collected like a Rishikumar, a far-off mystic look in his eyes. Little children mica-winged dancing and singing in chorus round him.

We, children, long for light.
To light for ever we have cleft.
Light is our breath, light is our life
Without it we are left
A jumble and a strife.

With zeal we love the light
Mad we are for its sight,
The light is our cry,
We'll live for it or die.
We, children, long for light,
Light is our right and light is our might.

We love but no return we crave;
Alone for love we live,
Our love we freely give,
Give all we are and have.
This joy of giving is truly known
By love and love and love alone.

Giving is our endeavour,
Giving fulfilment's peak.
Children of light and love, for ever
Sole light we seek and love we seek.

We children long for love and light,
Light is our right, love is our might.¹

¹ Rendered by Har Krishan Singh from the writer's play *Satya-ka-Sainik* in Hindi.

SATTWA : Oh, that grown-ups had such ideas ! Thank you all, my children
(*smiling good-bye to them.*)

(*Enter Rajas. A splendid youthful figure of strength and force, dressed in flaming red, a princely crown shining on his head, eyes sparkling with ambition and hope. The stage light turns bright red.*)

SATTWA (*taking Rajas by the hand and speaking in a gentle tone*): Would you listen to me, Rajas ?

RAJAS : I would if you didn't cross me.

SATTWA : If I do, it is for your good. You are carried away by appearances, caring nothing for the future.

RAJAS : That's not your concern.

SATTWA (*in his usual soft voice*): It is for your good, I say—join hands with me. Look ! That's my chariot. You'll always be safe there. Safe from all risks of rash driving. Will you ?

RAJAS : No, no, no. Airs of superiority I abhor. Better ask Tamas. He may agree.

SATTWA : Good God ! What a suggestion ! Won't it throw people into a dilemma ? Who lulled India to slumber ? I or Tamas ? Was India's downfall due to religion, I ask ? Can a country rooted in Sattwa be dragged down to such a level ?

(*Tamas staggers on to the stage. Body bulky and bulging, clumsy and unwieldy, a figure of dense darkness, hair unkempt and matted, eyes half-closed and drowsy. The stage looks sombre. Sattwa stands lustreless.*)

TAMAS : People see in Rajas an egoistic Titan. Few, very few know that you are no less so.

(*Sattwa disappears.*)

TAMAS (*holding Rajas by the hand*): Come, Rajas, let us rule the earth.

RAJAS (*shaking off his hand*): Off with you ! A mere carter, crawling like a tortoise, dreaming of ruling the earth !

TAMAS : All right ! I shall see you both.

(*He departs in a huff.*)

(*Rajas in a mood of musing, thinks of Pravritti.*)

(*Enter Pravritti, an image of lust gorgeously dressed.*)

PRAVRITTI : What are you thinking of ?

RAJAS (*charmed by the splendour of her beauty*): I was meditating on you.

PRAVRITTI : Agreeably ?

RAJAS : Oh, yes, with an in-com-pa-rable sweetness.

PRAVRITTI (*coming nearer*): I've news for you. First promise me something; then only you can know it.

RAJAS : News ! if it proves untrue ?

PRAVRITTI : If so, I'll slave for you.

RAJAS : If so, I too will. Darling, who's there on earth who wouldn't bow to your wishes ?

PRAVRITTI : Dear, some in India living like wild animals call me queen of hell and not of heaven ! They see in my beauty fire, not light ! There's poison in my lips, they say, not nectar. Oh, it's horrible, it's horrible.

RAJAS : Fools, fools they are ! Do they realise what life would be without you ? A sheer desert !

PRAVRITTI : My only fault is that I say to people that love is the beauty of life.

RAJAS : Wait, dear, wait ! Let me be king, then I shall see who does not bend his knees to you.

TAMAS (*entering*) : You aspire to be king !

RAJAS : Who, who else can ? Who's there on earth as my equal ? Come, darling.
(*goes out with Pravritti, hand in hand*)

TAMAS : Oh, I am undone ! (*sinks to the ground in depression.*)

(*Enter consort of Tamas, Apravritti, body clumsy as of a rhinoceros, lips thick.*)

APRAVRITTI (*looking at Tamas*) : Weeping ? My God ! Why ?

TAMAS : Have you heard that Rajas wants to be king ? The idea is so distressing.

APRAVRITTI : Fie ! If men weep like that what would not women do ? If you long to be king why don't you use your might ?

TAMAS : Use my might ! No, no, I'm not for war.

APRAVRITTI : Never mind. You know how to sleep ? Why don't you go into profound sleep ?

TAMAS : But will Rajas allow me to ?

APRAVRITTI : How do you mean ! Who can disturb ? (*In a whisper*) Let us benumb the bodies, freeze the minds, deaden the souls of people and drug them to unending sleep. (*Raising her head*) Who can then dare foil our plan ? (*Lowering her voice*) Ah, no more. I am off. Nothing like my cosy bed.

(*Enter Maya who twirls the world on the tip of her little finger. Rajas, Sattwa and others follow. The stage looks dazzling with the lustre of her jewellery.*)

MAYA (*turning to Sattwa*) : I never knew that you would be such a disgrace to the family. Is the family's good something you can't brook ?

(*Sattwa makes no reply.*)

MAYA : Why do you keep silent ? Do you think because you are my son I must put up with all your nuisance ?

SATTWA (*in a serene tone*) : No, no, don't say so. My life is for yoga and not for petty enjoyments.

MAYA : You see there's a limit to tolerance. I tell you, don't compel me to...

SATTWA : I can forsake you, can accept banishment but never can I afford to forsake the Truth, forsake Mahamaya—the Mother.

MAYA (*flaming up*): Away with you to your Mother, off from my sight and at once.

SATTWA : If that's Her Will, I bow to it.

(*Exit*)

MAYA : Let him go to his Mother. I shall see how he can dare usher in an era of Truth on earth ! Oh Rajas and Pravritti ! Oh Tamas and Apravritti ! give birth to such demons as would be a terror to the gods. (*After a pause*) No, I must wield the sceptre myself. Come, my children. (*about to go*)

Enter Sattwa in a lion's skin, in the height of his splendour.

SATTWA : Accept the Pranams of your spoilt child, Mother !

(*Unable to stand his lustre all disappear.*)

(*Enter beautiful Nivrutti, wife of Sattwa, clad in white.*)

NIVRITTI : Lord ! Am I not worthy to be in your company and tread your chosen path ?

SATTWA : Soft and sweet as a flower, how would you be able to tramp the rigours of this path ?

NIVRITTI : Heaven lies about you wherever you are. Where you are not is hell.

SATTWA : Then come along. And let us consecrate ourselves wholly to the Mother to obtain her Grace for the world.

(*To be continued*)

NARAYANPRASAD

YOGA AND LIFE

I

A BROAD VIEW OF YOGA

THE modern mind's attitude to life is analytical. It does not view things as a whole. Its tendency is to see them separately, departmentally; it divides, turns them into bits and then tries to judge them. To look at them in their totality is not its nature.

Yoga, if not viewed as an obsession of the mind and something dangerous or fatal to life and so to be dreaded and kept carefully away from, is at most considered a specialised activity meant only for the ascetic of the cave or a few souls who withdraw completely from the continuous flow of life and devote the greater part of their energies to pursuing this mysterious or magical method of attaining *siddhis*.

This view of Yoga, if not entirely inaccurate, does little justice to its *raison d'être* and its true purpose and true utility in the economy of Nature's multifarious workings.

It is tragic that even in a land of spirituality like India where it is rooted deep in her soil, Yoga should be viewed so narrowly and that in a fast-awakening India its full meaning and utility should remain yet unappreciated.

It is high time that we who have, on the one hand, cut ourselves off from the rejuvenating waters of the Spirit and have dreaded irrigating the human soil by them, and, on the other, have been engaged exclusively and intensely in life-shunning asceticism, now understood the true meaning of Yoga and spirituality and their relation to life.

Sri Aurobindo, for whom all life is Yoga, describes it as a methodised effort towards self-perfection. "In the right view both of life and of Yoga," he says, "all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga." Yoga is conterminous with the progressive development or spiritual evolution which is essential to all life and Nature. "All life, when we look behind its appearances," he adds, "is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality."

The forms of life, Nature's courses of progression and human development, can remain alive and push forward only if they are reinvigorated by fresh streams of energy. And Yoga being a method of mustering, storing and canalising the unseen powers and potentialities of Nature for the reinvigoration and reorganisation of life is the only true and dynamic method which, following Nature's own line of slow yet sure unseen push and intensifying it in the human individual, can keep it alive and energetic for increasing and perpetual perfection.

Yoga is a conscious or unconscious aspiration of Nature, in man as well as in the universe. Unconsciously this aspiration goes on ceaselessly through the trials and

travails of Nature, through the ups and downs of life; consciously it manifests in exceptional men of vision and action and tries to fix a visible aim before slow-struggling Nature and before individuals who are ready to follow and have the will to respond to its call.

Thus we can see that a peasant tilling his field, a writer at his desk, a coolie pulling his rickshaw, a student busy with his text-books, a friend talking to his companion, the newspaper-distributor hurrying on his cycle, all are doing Yoga in a sense and in their way, more or less unconsciously. But as the push for these actions comes not from a conscious will to progress, to exceed one's limits and to create a higher life, but from desires that bring worldly, limited and temporary results, we cannot achieve the vigorous, vast and high effects of a conscious Yoga. In the unconscious and mostly mechanical seeking, the aim is restricted and to a large extent selfward-turned, while in a conscious Yoga the whole attitude and emphasis is changed. Here there is an ardour for breaking the petty limits of life, of our phenomenal, brief and crude desires and for linking our personality with the Vast that exceeds us. This opening and aspiration towards the All has as its goal the Eternal, the Infinite, a life wide and high and divine. Here all is done not for self but for achieving union with the all-encompassing One. This conscious self-broadening quickens our progress into a richer and greater living.

But this aspiration is not for leading man away from life, this call is not to dry the stream of developing and changing life. It is to refresh it and sublimate it, to ennoble and lift it to a higher status and finally to divinise it. In the total view of Yoga, life is the field of its working. Any form of Yoga which rejects the instruments of life and excludes any improvable aspect of life from its action and its influence—and there is hardly any aspect which is not improvable and is based on a wrong view of life and Yoga.

Yoga is a harmonising power. It discovers for us the underlying unity of all life, the common and stable ground of the Spirit. It seeks to establish all life on firm foundations of peace and unity, being at the same time its perpetually reinvigorating and dynamising power of progress.

If we look at Yoga from this catholic and all-embracing viewpoint, we can imagine its utility for the reorganisation of life. When Yoga discovers for us the potentials of the individual being and of Nature and canalises them for the amelioration of our human plight and for the conversion of a life of sorrow and suffering into a life spontaneous and creatively peaceful, we can be sure that a great future—a future burdened with boons of God and bounties of Nature—is not very far off. It will soon dawn before our awakened eyes, an amazing aurora that will flush off all misery and malady of the human race and usher in the promised era of divine peace and prosperity.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH