

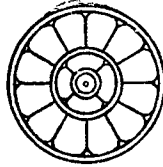
# MOTHER INDIA

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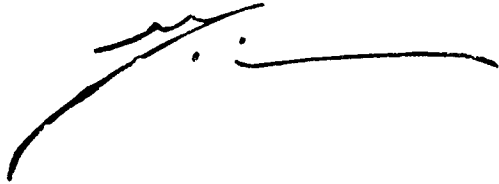


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVI

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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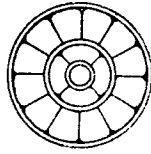
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*Nehru leaves his body but his soul is one  
with the Soul of India that lives for Eternity.*

27-5-1964

A handwritten signature or scribble consisting of several overlapping lines.

## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND MODERN INDIA

PANDIT Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, passed away on May 27 in his seventy-fourth year. What India has lost may best be suggested by asking a question he would himself have loved to hear : "Was he seventy-four years old or seventy-four years young ?" Nehru never outgrew the happy audacity that was his in the days of his youth. He was at one time the living symbol of young India, and years did not change that aspect of him. This Prime Minister of ours was the country's sole Minister who was always in his prime. For, he represented India in her modernity. It is because modern India flamed in his being that, even when his hair was sparse and white and his face had a drawn expression, we still felt youth to be incarnate in him. Nehru had a face with the light of the future on it, the great new ideas that have been springing up in our day and whose fulfilment is yet to come glowed in his eyes—and what else ever is it to be young ?

But we must emphasise that Nehru, no matter how westernised by his education at Harrow and Cambridge, was an Indian; and his having been seventy-four years young was a realisation, in his own individuality's terms, of the Indian way of youth. The happy audacity we have spoken of is not essentially an exuberance of the life-force, an overflowing physical energy, but the *élan* of high ideals. Idealism endeavouring to mould and govern physical and vital existence by means of principles sought within some eternal order of things, so that a radiant smile of something imperishable and immortal, something Godlike that never ages, begins to work in the world's affairs and dynamise the world's nature : this is how the true Indian is happily audacious and does not grow old. And it is to be noted that the taste of idealism's *elixir vitae* is not of a conservative fixity of principles. To oppose the permanent to the changing is similar to setting up the One in antagonism to the Many—facile faults into which thinkers, Indians not excepted, frequently stumble. But genuine Indian culture is free from them. India has not really sat navel-gazing, entranced in a superhuman infinite Unity and Immutability, oblivious of the multi-coloured million-mooded play of space and time. She was in her most typical periods never anti-life. And Nehru himself was well aware of this. His own words are there in *The Discovery of India* :

"The basic background of Indian culture was not one of other-worldliness or world-worthlessness. In India we find, during every period when her civilization bloomed, an intense joy in life and nature, a pleasure in the act of living, the development of art and music and literature and song and dancing and painting and the theatre, and even a highly sophisticated inquiry into the sex relation. It is inconceivable that a culture or view of life based on other-worldliness or world-worthlessness could have produced all these manifestations of vigorous and varied life. Indeed it should be obvious that any culture that was basically other-worldly could not have

carried on for thousands of years...I should have thought that Indian culture, taken as a whole, never emphasized the negation of life, though some of its philosophies did so : it seems to have done so, much less than Christianity."

Yes, the Indian way of being young does not cast a pallor on life's changing face. Although never giving priority to the life-force as such and always taking its stand in the deep awareness of supreme ideals that cannot be corrupted for passing or personal ends, it is keenly conscious of the onward pressure of the world-movement, it is full of the sense of man's adventure through the years, it is ever on the *qui-vive* for the new and the undreamt-of. The future is its passion no less than the past, evolution is its delight no less than the unchangeable Atman, modernism is its inspiration no less than the "beauty of ancient days". Nehru, more than any other Indian on his own level and within his own sphere, combined the spirit of experiment and discovery and the eager look ahead with the idealistic spirit that cannot be bought or bartered or made subservient to selfish interests : that is why he stood out among his colleagues as the representative of the youth that is Indian, the youth that all should cultivate.

Two points, however, are to be observed when we look back at Nehru with pleasure and pride. They spring from the paradox that he was even more young in his sixties and seventies than he had been in his twenties and thirties : in other words, of late his idealistic modernity, shedding some early biases, was brighter, wider, deeper, and he was living out more and more the Indian youthfulness afire in him. Nehru grew up side by side with the Soviet Union : his adult life synchronised with the development of Leninism and Stalinism, and it was very much coloured by the Marxist doctrine as embodied in contemporary Russia. He was for years impressed by the Stalinist regime because he identified it with the opposite of things he most condemned : capitalism, racialism, imperialism. Of late he was no less an enemy of these things. But it is significant that in 1949, on the eve of his sixtieth birthday, he went on a mission of goodwill to the U.S.A, a country whose whole economy ran counter to the Marxist collectivism of the Soviet Union. The mission could never have come about if he had not realised, as he had scarcely done some years before, that countries which were not unstained by a history of capitalist, racialist and imperialist evils could still be, on account of some radical outbalancing virtue, leaders of progress and contribute immensely to the flowering of all that India has considered the finest in man.

Nehru did not stop keeping in his mind a shining picture of Marxism. Yet he came to feel acutely that a country which called itself Marxist and had, to a surface-view, abolished economic exploitation, established racial equality and denounced all attempts at turning Asia into Europe's colonial empire, need not be more productive of essential life-values than countries which formed a bloc against it. Seeing the flaws which could not be slurred over in those countries, he refused to let India be hustled into any bloc and stuck to a neutrality waiting on future events; but his awakened sense of the greater good on the whole in the western bloc was evident.



"It is our aim," he said in America, "to keep friendly contacts with everybody." He, however, added: "Naturally we are bound to be closer to some nations than others. For example, we consult with the nations of the Commonwealth." Although this consulting was declared, in the very next clause, to diminish by no jot the independence of India's foreign policy, the willingness to be bound closer to Commonwealth nations which were quite antagonistic in feeling to Marxist Russia was a fact characteristic of Nehru approaching sixty and unthinkable of Nehru reaching forty. Still more characteristic and so far unthinkable was his pronouncement: "There is the growing tendency to centralization and regimentation which is a danger to individual freedom. Soviet Russia is the extreme example of centralisation. I would not like to limit freedom for any nation." Here we had in the clearest terms the recognition by Nehru that what glittered was not always what he took to be the gold of Marxism and also that far more precious than anything else in a nation's life was individual freedom and that those countries where individual freedom was not lost were, in spite of all their faults, more worthy of consultation and friendly relation than one which claimed to have got rid of capitalism, racialism and imperialism and yet had reduced the individual human being to a robot.

In brief, while Nehru had not outgrown his rose-spectacled hope for a perfect society through Marxim, he no longer could be tempted to equate the distinction he drew between Marxism and Capitalism with the distinction between Stalin's Russia and Truman's America, much less between Stalin's Russia and Attlee's Britain. This breaking of an old association and throwing of the value of individual freedom into relief was of first-rate importance, and made Nehru face the future with an idealistic modernity all the younger from the Indian angle of vision.

We may add that subsequent world-events showed the same increased youthfulness. Terrible for Nehru was the time when Mao Tse-tung took violent possession of Tibet. The act appeared to contradict all that his representatives had erroneously pictured to him of the new mentality abroad in China. Still believing in this picture he found himself sorely taxed with the problem of adopting the correct attitude. It was impossible not to protest. But what he felt—mistakenly, in most eyes—to be more crucial questions of international relationship prevented the full condemnation that was due. All the same, the true Indian in Nehru came to the fore when in spite of Mao's fury he threw India wide open to the Dalai Lama and his fellow-refugees. The political asylum offered to them was never withdrawn and the principle of it never abjured. Mao did not forgive Nehru this assertion of the right of individuals to maintain their freedom of mind and to keep intact in the hospitable arms of India the vision of their deepest heart.

Significant too is the clear pronouncement on Russia under Khrushchev in comparison with the state of things during Stalin's rule. Nehru declared that now there was some welcome relaxation of monolithic control. Stalinism was thus criticised once more and condemned in retrospect. Finally, there was the spontaneous turn mainly towards Britain and America for military aid when the Red Chinese struck

across India's Himalayan borders and shattered for good whatever illusions had lingered in Nehru about Communism being inevitably non-imperialist.

The second point to be observed about his increase in youthful Indianism relates to issues beyond the political. It was principally in connection with them that he could hope to deserve fully to be reckoned as what, to his extreme pleasure, he had been widely called by America in one phrase or another during his 1949 tour : quintessential India of the twentieth century. Idealism, holding that there is a sense of the "ought" in our consciousness, a sense as of some supreme Law which is not born of mere expediency and is more than a mere generalisation from facts of Nature—idealism with its high ethical sense must look for a sanction to right conduct in nothing short of what India has termed the spark of divinity in man. A common tendency of our time is to make ethics a branch of Freudian psychology or Marxist sociology. But these are reachings after empirical science, attempts at description of mental happenings or social relationships. They cannot imply any norm, standard or ideal. As a reviewer of Amber Blanco White's *Ethics for Unbelievers* has aptly reaffirmed, ethics is rooted in "values", not in a charting out of the way things occur. To give a description, Freudian or Marxist, of "what is" can never yield those key terms of ethics : right, duty, obligation, good, ought. An empirical study of behaviour and a list of inductions from observed facts are utterly impotent to explain or justify the normative character of idealism. Idealism such as Nehru felt and advocated cannot admit of a purely natural explanation : it must seek both its motive force and its sanction in a Divine Being and can act only by virtue of this Divine's Being's representative *scintilla* in the depths of our humanity—a soul that functions with an instinct of divinity and that, even in letting itself be driven by considerations which it knows to be undivine, recognises the "ought" from which it deviates. Not that the human consciousness can always in its idealistic operation claim possession of the infallible divine rule; but the feeling that there is a supreme Reality faultlessly guided by its own Truth-light and that we are ethical inasmuch as we strain to express this Reality, must be present if idealism is to have any meaning. In other words, genuine idealism implies, however inexplicitly, a world-view whose utter consummation would be the mystical experience, the direct God-vision and God-realisation such as, in historical India, have been most powerfully recorded in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. It was high time Nehru saw this—not only because he had arrived at an age which historical India had regarded as eminently suitable for filling oneself with the sense of the Divine but also because if there was any Indian with a disposition of the best "sattwic" and Brahmin type, precisely made, as it were, for turning to supreme spiritual truths in the twentieth century it was our Prime Minister for all his lack of concern with what is popularly labelled as religion. In fact, this very lack of concern would distinguish, on the negative side, the spiritual aspiration of our modern age that had come out into the light by discarding the fears and fanaticisms and ascetic refusals of the old religions. And, on the positive side, could any contemporary political figure surpass Nehru in innate refinement and spontaneous nobility,

in a humanistic, international and forward-looking attitude profoundly in tune with a secret oneness underlying the divided world ?

Even in the early days when the stamp of Marxism was sharp upon his intellect, signs were present that pointed towards the final mark of the idealistic modernity which would be true Indianism today. There could not be a keener contrast in both temperament and habit than between Nehru the complex and free-thinking Marxist and Gandhi the simplicitist, the primitivist, the religionist, the extreme Tolstoyan. And yet what drew Nehru to Gandhi was a stupendous unknown quantity, something uncharted by Marx and unanalysed by science and inadequately covered by merely moral principles. He compared Gandhi's influence to that of Socrates, and thereby confessed his own intuition of the metaphysical and "daemonic" touch. Even apart from his sense of a mighty X behind Gandhi, he has not omitted to report *en passant* his own unfathomable yearnings. In *The Discovery of India*, published in 1946, he has written that though much in the Marxist philosophical outlook he would accept without demurring, almost unawares a vague idealist approach would creep in, "something rather akin to the Vedanta approach". And he has added significantly : "It was not a difference between mind and matter but rather of something that lay beyond mind."

There was another hint too : his response in the midst of the dust and strife of the world to the image of the Buddha seated on the lotus flower above mortal passion and desire. He asked himself if this tranquillity could be reconciled with action, and said : "Behind those still unmoving features there is passion and an emotion, strange and more powerful than the passions and emotions we have known. His eyes are closed but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame." Some vast and quiet impulsion from beyond the mind was what Nehru seemed to aspire after when the surface of him was not too insistent. And how genuine the aspiration was could be guessed from the photograph which was printed in every newspaper when, not long after India's independence, he went all the way to Calcutta to receive the relics of the Buddha's disciples, Moggalana and Sariputta. However opposed to formal religion, he stood with his palms joined and held in front of his bowed head. No Marxist has stood thus even before the embalmed body of Lenin in Moscow's Red Square.

It was also a sense of more than natural presences that was aroused in Nehru by the loveliness and grandeur of Nature as well as the perfection of art and poetry. And most of all the spiritual unknown was at the back of the intense hunger he mentioned in his *Autobiography* (1936) to visit "Manasarovar, the wonder-lake of Tibet, and snow-covered Kailas nearby"—two of the holiest spots of Hinduism. "I dream of the day," wrote Nehru, "when I shall wander about the Himalayas and cross them to reach that lake and mountain of my desire." The words were as of a Pilgrim of Eternity who had lost himself in Time.

No doubt, prior to 1946 his Marxist *penchant* made him turn down the experiences of the ancient Indian mystics as probably phantasms of the self-deluded

imagination; he chose to admire only the passion connected with them for truth and for practical endeavour : "What interests me is the approach, which was not authoritarian or dogmatic, but was an attempt to discover for oneself what lay behind the external aspects of life." Nevertheless, a veiled instinct within him kept on saying : "Whether we believe in God or not, it is impossible not to believe in something, whether we call it a creative life-giving force or vital energy inherent in matter which gives it its capacity for self-movement and change and growth, or by some other name, something that is as real, though elusive, as life is real when contrasted with death. Whether we are conscious of it or not, most of us worship at the invisible altar of some unknown god and offer sacrifice to it—some ideal, personal, national or international : some distant objective that draws us on though reason itself may find little substance in it; some vague conception of the perfect man and a better world. Perfection may be impossible of attainment, but the daemon in us, some vital force, urges us on and we tread that path from generation to generation." (*The Discovery of India*, p. 625)

Clearly, here is a strong pressure of the spiritual inner on the pragmatic outer. And that it is no passing phase but part of a continuous process is shown by the Will Nehru wrote on June 21, 1954, when holidaying on the hill-station of Simla. The publication of this Will after his death has revealed the real Nehru perhaps more than anything else from his pen. While staunchly refusing to have the ceremonies of conventional religion performed over his body, he has left about the disposal of his ashes instructions which make a most lyrical and visionary document.

There are two blending voices in this poetry of the idealist Nehru and each has again two movements. The major portion of his ashes, he says, should "be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they may mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India." We are faced with a profound humility coupled with a passionate love of the country's masses, a noble self-effacing gesture towards the wide stretch of earth that is visible Mother India. But along with this patriotic worship there is the upward aspiration symbolised by the aeroplane-flight of the ashes. Ultimately the aim is earth's own service, but after attainment of the far freedom of the sky. Nehru, we may observe, has the word "high" and makes a specific point of its meaning by following up with "that height" without needing to do so : he could have just said "and then scattered..." The sense of the altitude to be reached above the earthly has distinctly shot through the inspiration of the imagined death-hour.

Even more spiritually significant are the two movements of the second voice in the request about the ashes : "a small handful... should be thrown into the Ganga." Although a mere handful and not the major portion is now involved, the portion of the Will dealing with this handful is the major one. It is the great burning core of Nehru's self-disclosure, non-religious on the one hand and undeniably packed with spiritual suggestions on the other :

"My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Jamuna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often thought of the history and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of their flowing waters. The Ganga especially is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing and yet ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast.

"Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall : a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India running into the present, and flowing on to that great ocean of the future. Though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body, though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from the past completely. I am proud of the great inheritance that has been and is ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it, and as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance, I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shores."

What have we in this sustained moving eloquence? First, a personal and private attachment to the Ganga and then an attachment of Nehru who is one link in the age-long uninterrupted chain of Indian history. First, a repudiation of the "religious sentiment" which, to his mind, has caused shackles, constraints, divisions, suppressions and proved an obstacle in the way of the body's free development—and then a whole-hearted affirmation of "India's cultural inheritance" which is well known to be predominantly spiritual. And the personality which has discarded "much of the past tradition and custom" is merged in the self which is "proud of the great inheritance" and, cherishing it, draws motive-force from it. As vibrant sign of this merging is Nehru's setting of the Ganga at the very centre of his Indianism. Together with Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailas, Ganga—the river mythologised as the Grace brought down from heaven by the Yogic meditation of Bhagi-

ratha—stands for India's basic God-awareness. And it is worth marking, as an instinctive pointer to the merging, that Nehru uses for his own association with the Ganga the same word as he employs, with a slight shift in the nuance, for the association with it of India's history and myth and tradition and song and story through the long ages. Just as he speaks of his own "attachment" he speaks of all these spiritually-charged things of the past having become "attached" to the Ganga and the Jamuna, especially the former. We may also emphasise his statement that this river, "a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization", is through all her changing and flowing "ever the same Ganga". Are not these words a recognition of the ancient spiritual India that never dies and a recognition too that Nehru is portion and parcel of her? That he should fasten his heart on this sacred symbol and dedicate himself in death to it at such length of poetic enthusiasm is once more indicative of a strong pressure of the spiritual inner on the pragmatic outer.

The pragmatic outer was indeed too firm-moulded in Nehru by early influences to undergo complete alteration; yet the vague approach akin to the Vedanta's, which had an appeal for him, appeared to be acquiring a kind of concreteness when during the last decade or so he began to take sympathetic interest in the directly spiritual figures of this ancient land of the Rishis. Although Gandhi, by his intimate relation with Nehru and by his political leadership of the India of Nehru's generation, remained in Nehru's explicit affirmations his "Master", here was a turn exceeding the feel of the "Socratic" which he had known through Gandhi's ethico-religious make-up. That such a turn was long preparing may be best inferred from a fact that has been disclosed only a fortnight after his death. Nehru, we are told, read the Gita in the early morning each day from as far back as his daughter Indira can remember. Whenever he went abroad, the Gita went with him in his pocket, and with the Gita a picture of Buddha. Is it any wonder that the spiritual inner should at last effect a breakthrough of some sort and a sympathetic interest in modern saints and seers kindle up? The most notable instance of this novel orientation was his look of admiration and reverence at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the International Centre of Education associated with it. Ever since his first visit to these institutions on January 16, 1955, he had come to see there a most original venture which he wished would find its true fulfilment instead of declining into an ordinary cultural movement. The new culture which is at work under the light of an earth-embracing Integral Yoga, full of constructive physical and mental vigour no less than of creative spiritual vision, went home to Nehru's ever-young heart. Time and again he expressed in private his sense of the preciousness of the Aurobindonian experiment constantly developed in all directions by the Mother even after the passing of the Master. Deeply happy he seemed each time he was in her presence and in front of the positive progress of the institutions under her both in the outward life and in the inner, so that it is no exaggeration to say that in Nehru these institutions enjoyed the greatest possible goodwill in the Indian Government.

On September 27, 1955, he was in the Ashram a second time. Actually, it was

his daughter who was on a visit. But Nehru unexpectedly dropped in, the same evening, by turning aside from his chalked-out itinerary. On the third and last occasion he was in Pondicherry—June 13, 1963—he broke through the packed official programme and made special time for a Sports display by the Ashram children. Still more fraught with meaning was the meeting he had with the Mother as the very first event of his stay. After a silent session she gave him a white rose which in the Ashram language of flowers signifies Peace. Peace was indeed what his whole being appeared to cry for—peace not only because China's treacherous attack on India in spite of his unceasing attempt at friendship with her had given a rude shock to his dream of Asian solidarity no less than of a world without war—peace also because "something that lay beyond mind" and its restless dreams was distantly calling to him more and more and here from the Mother's eyes he could receive its touch. Her blessings went with him, working to bring closer to him the depths of that mighty "Soul of India" with whom his soul had always been in love, depths hinted by the Mother's phrase that India's Soul lives for Eternity. To live for Eternity is not only to exist for ever but also to exist for the Everlasting. One with this inmost super-life of the nation, Nehru's soul will march into the future illustrious with the history of his beloved land's achievement of political freedom as well as with the promise of achieving a greater liberation that has always beckoned the heart of this land and that may most comprehensively be summed up in the words of Sri Aurobindo :

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,  
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,  
An unvalled mind dissolved in the Infinite,  
Force one with unimaginable rest.

K. D. SETHNA

## 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 11, 1939

At noon N read out a letter to Sri Aurobindo. It was written by Sisir Maitra to Anilbaran in the course of their discussion of Reason, Buddhi, Kant, Hegel, the Gita, etc. Ultimately Sri Aurobindo was referred to. In the evening P took up the topic.

P : Anilbaran asks if Buddhi can mean the same thing as Understanding. Prof. Maitra says they are the same and so he places Buddhi lower than Reason just as Kant does with Understanding.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, Kant seems to place Understanding lower than Reason while Hegel, it is said, puts Understanding and Reason on the same level. But Buddhi seems to me to be more than Understanding. What does Indian philosophy say ?

P : According to it, *sadasad viveka shakti* (power of discriminating the true from the false) is called Buddhi.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not Understanding. Can one discriminate *sadasad* by Understanding alone or does one require Intellect ? It is by what Indian philosophy calls Vijnana that one can do it. And Vijnana, in Indian philosophy, is more or less equivalent to Buddhi. Hence Buddhi is Intellect. Understanding is only a part of Buddhi.

P : Kant says we are free while we follow Reason, not while we follow out senses.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then Buddhi can't be the same as Kant's Understanding. If anything it should be Higher Reason.

P : Anilbaran asks another question. Kant says that one can arrive at the Truth by Reason. Maitra says the Gita also affirms the same thing, while Anilbaran contends that one can't.

SRI AUROBINDO : Does the Gita say so ? Or is it Maitra's own opinion ? If it



is, it may be all right as a constructive thought, and it may be true in a certain sense. But if the Gita is mentioned, the proper text has to be traced. I think the Gita has advocated Reason as one of the means through which one can approach the Truth. Even Shankara, I believe, doesn't say that Reason is useless. He admits that it prepares for what is beyond—even for going beyond Sattwa, etc. It is a stepping stone.

P : Anilbaran wants to know whether Kant and Hegel had a notion of a faculty beyond mind.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't think so.

P : They didn't believe in a suprarational consciousness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, they thought Reason can arrive at the Truth.

P : Kant's *Critique* begins with the statement that knowledge of the thing in-itself is not possible with the present human instruments of knowledge. He distinguishes between phenomenon and noumenon and says that men can only know phenomenon. He combats Berkeley's view of subjectivism—that there is no world outside the perceiving consciousness. According to Berkeley, you project the world out of yourself. Kant does not admit that. He says that the tree you perceive exists or rather something (noumenon) exists which appears to us as the tree. But our knowledge of it may not be quite correct : for instance, we see it standing on its roots. But it may be standing on something else for that matter.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the story of the Vishnu Purana where we read that it is difficult to say whether the king is on the elephant or the elephant is on the king.

All European philosophers after the Greeks hold that Reason is the faculty by which you arrive at the Truth. The question about sense-perception and its reliability is easily met. We perceive certain things by our senses and the sensations are the same because our senses have a common organisation. Even so, different persons perceive the same thing differently in some respects. And if you had the senses differently organised, you would perceive the same thing differently.

About Reason, what I may say is that if it was sufficient for arriving at the Truth, then all men by reasoning would arrive at the same conclusion. I am not speaking of abstract Reason. If Reason could work in the abstract and be an ideal faculty, it might perceive Truth. As it is, practical Reason deals with different ideas and there it differs in different individuals and they reach different conclusions even from the same data.

What I say is that Reason can perceive that there is something beyond itself and that this something is the Truth. But each reasoner tries to assert that this Truth is what he takes it to be. His own idea he sets up as the whole Truth. But the Truth is infinite and has an infinite number of sides. Each conclusion of Reason has some truth in it but we have to find something which is fundamental behind all the particular formulations of Reason, and we can do this only by experience. That which is beyond is the Absolute, and the Absolute can't be known by Reason or Mind. What can be formulated by Reason is Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence-

Consciousness-Bliss. That is to say, the Absolute presents itself to the mind as Sat-Chit-Ananda. You can't go beyond this concept.

P : Kant's *Critique* is very difficult to understand and very dry.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, I tried to read it and after reading two pages I gave it up. Besides, the German language itself is difficult. The subject in a German sentence comes at the top of a page and the verb at the bottom. So perhaps it is more suitable than other languages for philosophy !

P : Does Western philosophy believe in Mukti ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. In the West they believe in Heaven or Salvation.

#### EVENING

P : N was asking : if Reason comes to different conclusions, don't spiritual experiences also do the same ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is quite another field. What Reason does is to assert one thing as true and the rest as false. For example, if the Impersonal is true, the Personal is false. But when you go above the mind you realise that the Truth, being infinite, has many sides and all of them are true. In the Overmind, all the different truths converge and are held together.

NIRODBARAN

## LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

### KNOWLEDGE

*Q : I do not understand this stage. At times I feel myself in the proximity of knowledge and at times miles apart from it although silence is there !*

SRI AUROBINDO : Neither knowledge nor anything else is constant at first—and even when it is there one cannot expect it to be always active. That comes afterwards.

3-1-1936

*Q : On one side the useless (mechanical) mind is active, while on the other the useful or the recording mind is fallen completely silent. It cannot do any thinking or even recording of the experiences. What's to be done then ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Perhaps it is waiting for a higher mind to act from above.

5-1-1936

*Q : You must have marked in me that in a certain state the language (of the knowledge) flows lucidly. How I wish the state could remain all the time !*

SRI AUROBINDO : When the knowledge comes strongly from above, it very often brings its own language and the defects of the instrument are overcome. There are people who knew very little but when the knowledge began to flow they wrote wonderfully—when it was not flowing, their language became incorrect and ordinary.

20-1-1936

*Q : During the descent of the higher knowledge, at times I ask some questions or show my hesitation to accept it as perfect. But there is a disadvantage in such interferences. For I find it difficult afterwards to connect myself with the flow.*

SRI AUROBINDO : Such questions should not be allowed to stop the flow. Afterwards one can consider them and get the answer. The knowledge that comes is not necessarily complete or perfect in expression ; but it must be allowed to come freely and amplifications or corrections can be made afterwards.

30-1-1936

*Q : I have been badly missing the flow of the higher knowledge for a long time.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is probably because the physical mind has come up into activity and finds difficulty in receiving the knowledge.

26-1-1936

*Q : But even when the physical mind is quiescent and there is but silence the knowledge does not come.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is still the stuff of the physical mind which must receive it and, as that physical mind is too obscure, it does not come.

27-1-1936

It is because you have come down from the mental into the physical—therefore the physical mind comes across the knowledge.

11-5-1936

*Q : Cannot the knowledge and experiences change the mechanical mind by their action upon it ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : The question is whether they merely act upon it or act within it and occupy that plane of the nature.

24-4-1936

*Q : At present should I concentrate on the heart-centre ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : You may do it or you may not do it. It may succeed or it may not succeed. One cannot say beforehand. I said finally No because of this restlessness of your mind. It seems to me better to call down the Force and let it work in its own way rather than the mind always asking "Shall I do this, shall I do that. Will this device serve ? will that device help ?"

18-5-1936

Your mind is too active. If it were more quiet and less questioning and argumentative and restlessly wanting to find devices it seems to me that there would be

more chance of knowledge coming down and of intuitive, non-intellectual consciousness developing within you. 18-5-1936

*Q : My inner being does not like this questioning business. It often gets tired of it as it is all mental. But what to do when the intuition is not available ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : So long as the outer mind is not quiet, it is impossible for the intuition to develop. So if you want to go on asking intellectual questions about what is beyond the intellect until the intuition develops in spite of this activity, you will have to go on for ever. 19-5-1936

*Q : Now I want to put aside mental questioning and return to knowledge. Kindly let me know if there was anything wrong in the way it was descending before.*

SRI AUROBINDO : It is all right. It is not the way of descending that can be wrong—what one has to guard against is the mind making a wrong transcript of it or a lower mental mixture. 19-5-1936

What is to be left out is the ego. Limitation of knowledge will necessarily be there so long as there is not the fullest wideness from above ; that does not matter. 20-5-1936

*Q : What is the difference between the knowledge of the higher mind and that of the illumined mind ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : The substance of knowledge is the same, but the higher mind gives only the substance and form of knowledge in thought and word—in the illumined mind there begins to be a peculiar light and energy and ananda of knowledge which grows as one rises higher in the scale or else as the knowledge comes from a higher and higher source. This light etc. are still rather diluted and diffused in the illumined mind; it becomes more and more intense, clearly defined, dynamic and effective on the higher planes so much so as to change always the character and power of the knowledge. 3-6-1936

*Q : Is it true that the knowledge of the higher mind always brings down with it light and force so far as they belong to its own plane ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Light, not necessarily force. 4-6-1936

You will have to let it (truth of the higher knowledge) develop till you can see what the sides are. There is no limitation to one side or two or three, there may be a hundred. 4-5-1936

...mental knowledge is of little use except sometimes as an introduction

pointing towards the real knowledge which comes from a direct consciousness of things. 25-6-1936

It is not a mental knowledge that is necessary, but a psychic perception or a direct perception, in the consciousness. A mental knowledge can always be blinded by the tricks of the vital. 26-6-1936

Absolute certitude about all things can only come from the supermind. Meanwhile one has to go on with what knowledge the other planes give. 7-7-1936

It is only the supramental that is all Knowledge. All below that from Overmind to Matter is Ignorance—an Ignorance growing at each level nearer to the full Knowledge. Below Supermind there may be Knowledge but it is not all Knowledge. 20-9-1936

*Q : At the Pranam ceremony I am not able to fathom the mystery of the Mother's working : what she gives and how I receive it. What is the inner meaning of her touch on my head or her look into my eyes.*

SRI AUROBINDO : You have to develop the inner intuitive response first— i.e. to think and perceive less with the mind and more with the inner consciousness. Most people do everything with the mind and how can the mind know ? The mind depends on the senses for its knowledge. 10-7-1936

*Q : You wrote, "It may have been a partial knowledge, but badly expressed by the mind." How did the knowledge come full of errors in the act of transmission ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It comes through the mind, so the mind can always modify its expression unless it is entirely and absolutely still. 23-9-1936

*Q : About my mental defects you said, "They are more likely to go by an increasing capacity coming from above." Did they not disappear when the knowledge was descending ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : They did not disappear—they were only quiescent. However, your mental capacity has already increased by what knowledge came. For instance there is a great superiority to X in your understanding power which was not there at the beginning. 27-12-1936

Thought and expression always give one side of things; the thing is to see the whole but one can express only a part unless one writes a long essay. Most thinkers do not even see the whole, only sides and parts—that is why there is always conflict between philosophies and religions. 3-1-1937

No poet feels his poetry as a “normal phenomenon”—he feels it as an inspiration—of course anybody could “make” poetry by learning the rules of prosody and a little practice. In fact many people write verse, but the poets are few. Who are the ordinary poets ? There is no such thing as an ordinary poet. 30-5-1937

*Q : But how is it that when the knowledge was descending in me I hardly felt myself inspired? It seemed like natural phenomena.*

SRI AUROBINDO : The knowledge is not inspiration. I repeat that you did not write of it at that time as natural phenomena but as knowledge coming down. Your mind at the time was quite incapable of such knowledge or of expressing it as you did. 3-6-1937

Is getting knowledge from above and getting it by the mind in its own capacity the same thing ? If the mind is capable then there is no need of knowledge from above, it can do the getting of knowledge by its own greatness. 4-6-1937

When you get the true intuitive plane, there will be no need for instructions or questions as to how to do sadhana. The sadhana will do itself under the light of the intuition. 3-9-1937

from NAGIN DOSHI

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## THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

### THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

#### IV. THE EVOLUTIONARY DESTINY

To minds bound to the present form of things the divine transfiguration of the human body, the golden dream of planting heaven here on the soil of Matter, may well appear as ‘a senseless and impossible chimera’<sup>1</sup> the ‘bright hallucination’<sup>2</sup> of an idealist’s thoughts, a vain and ineffectual imagination and ‘the noble fiction’<sup>3</sup> of man’s subconscious yearnings.

For, the problem at the base is this : how, through what mechanism, and by following what definite process, can this vision of the emergence of the transfigured body, this ‘corps glorieux that would be plastic enough to be constantly remodelled by the

<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup> & <sup>3</sup> Expressions taken from Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem *Savitri*.

deeper consciousness',<sup>1</sup> be translated into shining reality and realised here on the face of the earth ? In the absence of any clear indication on this point, it may very well appear that, after all, 'the Ideal is a malady of the mind'<sup>2</sup> and 'a bright delirium'<sup>3</sup> of the visionary's 'speech and thought',<sup>4</sup>

And never shall it find its heavenly shape  
And never can it be fulfilled in Time.<sup>5</sup>

For, is it not too much to expect ever seeing 'a face and form divine in the naked two-legged worm'<sup>6</sup> otherwise called man ?

But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother come to assure us that the transformation of the body as envisaged above is going to be the *natural, logical* and *inevitable* result of our destined evolution out of the present human ignorance and imperfection into a far greater truth and consciousness of the Spirit.

Indeed, in the inmost reality of things, the emergence of consciousness in an apparently inconscient universe of Matter, and then a progressive growth of this consciousness and a concomitant growth of the light and power of the being has always been the essential purpose of the organic evolution and the key to the mystery of its secret process. The development of the form and its functioning or the physical organism's fitness to survive in the conditions of the environment, although indispensable, are by no means the whole meaning or the central motive force of evolution.

Now, this emergence and growth of consciousness in evolution has by no means ended with the appearance of man on the earth-scene, with his characteristic mental consciousness. For, mind is too imperfect an expression and man too hampered and limited a creature to be the last terms of evolution. It must then imply a progressive ascent to higher and higher reaches of consciousness till it reaches the highest possible. As Nature has already evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, evolved beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must now evolve even beyond Mind—which seems as yet her last term—and manifest a supramental consciousness and power of our existence in which "there is no longer an ignorance seeking for knowledge but knowledge self-possessed, inherent in the being, master of its own truths and working them out with a natural vision and force that is not afflicted by limitation and error."<sup>7</sup> This would mean an entry into "a truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies; every thought and will and feeling and act would be spontaneously right, inspired or intuitive, moving by the

<sup>1</sup> The Mother on the *Bulletin of Physical Education*, Vol IX No. 3, p. 123

<sup>2</sup>, <sup>3</sup>, <sup>4</sup> & <sup>6</sup> Expressions taken from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

<sup>5</sup> *Savitri*, Book X, Canto II, p. 696.

<sup>7</sup> *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, pp. 30-31.

light of Truth and therefore perfect. All would express inherent realities of the spirit; some fullness of the power of the spirit would be there. One would have overpassed the present limitations of mind : mind would become a seeing of the light of Truth, will a force and power of the Truth, Life a progressive fulfilment of the Truth, *the body itself a conscious vessel of the Truth* and part of the means of its self-effectuation and a form of its self-aware existence."<sup>1</sup> (Italics ours)

Once we have grown into this Truth-Consciousness or into Supermind as Sri Aurobindo has termed it, once we have opened ourselves to its descent and unveiled action in us, its divinely potent truth of being will shape and determine everything in its victorious stride. No obscuration or limitation of the earth-nature will be able to prevail against its omniscient light and omnipotent force, for "light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit."<sup>2</sup>

And if Matter—which has so far in the course of the long march of evolution taken into itself and manifested 'the power of life and the light of mind,' although in its original status it appeared to be lifeless and mindless—can once open itself to the action of the divine Supermind and allow a full play to this supreme power and light of the spirit, it would "in an earthly body shed its parts of inconscience and become a perfectly conscious frame of the spirit. A secure completeness and stability of the health and strength of its physical tenement could be maintained by the will and force of (the) inhabitant; all the natural capacities of the physical frame, all powers of the physical consciousness would reach their utmost extension and be there at command and sure of their flawless action. As an instrument the body would acquire a fullness of capacity, a totality of fitness for all uses which the inhabitant would demand of it far beyond anything now possible. Even it could become a revealing vessel of a supreme beauty and bliss,—casting the beauty of the light of the spirit suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its indwelling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy of life and spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy. This would be the total perfection of the spiritualised body."<sup>3</sup>

But one further question arises here : The evolutionary process upon the earth has been so far extremely slow and tardy, extending over thousands and millions of years;—what principle must intervene if there is to occur in the foreseeable future this envisaged transfiguration of the whole being of man ?

The necessary clue can be found in the fact that with the appearance, upon the

<sup>1</sup> *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33



earth, of man with his developed thinking mind the evolution has decisively changed its course and process and become 'reflexively' conscious. Up till the advent of man the organic evolution had been effected through the automatic operation of Nature without the conscious participation of the organisms involved, in the form of the latter's self-aware will or seeking, aspiration or endeavour. But in man the living creature has for the first time become 'awake and aware of himself'; he has felt that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own; the aspiration to exceed and transcend himself is 'delivered and articulate' in him'.<sup>1</sup> It has thus become conceivable and practicable that in man a conscious evolution may replace the sub-conscious and subliminal evolution so far to which Nature has taken recourse, and a further growth of consciousness and change of being be effected through a process of *conscious self-transformation*.

As a matter of fact, "in the previous stages of the evolution Nature's first care and effort had to be directed towards a change in the physical organisation, for only so could there be a change of consciousness; this was a necessity imposed by the insufficiency of the force of consciousness already in formation to effect a change in the body. But in man a reversal is possible, indeed inevitable; for it is through his consciousness, through its transmutation and no longer through a new bodily organism as a first instrumentation that the evolution can and must be effected. In the inner reality of things *a change of consciousness was always the major fact, the evolution has always had a spiritual significance* and the physical change was only instrumental, but this relation was concealed by the first abnormal balance of the two factors, the body of the external Inconscience outweighing and obscuring in importance the spiritual element, the conscious being. But once the balance has been righted, it is no longer the change of body that must precede the change of consciousness; *the consciousness itself by its mutation will necessitate and operate whatever mutation is needed for the body.*"<sup>2</sup> (Italics ours.)

But here at this point we have to contend with a double denial arising out of two diametrically opposed views of existence : 'the materialist denial' and 'the refusal of the ascetic'.<sup>3</sup>

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> *The Life Divine*, p. 751.

<sup>3</sup> These picturesque expressions form the titles of two of the chapters of *The Life Divine*.

# MYSTICS AND SOCIETY

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IDEAL GROUP

(Continued)

WHAT, one wonders, are the chances of a mystic group, or a group of devoted individuals as Huxley once described it? What are the chances of a monastic order in the world today? Not so little as those who have never thought about these matters might imagine. Some remarks, chosen without much care, will show this. "If the work is to be done and it is clear that unless it is done, the state of the world is likely to become progressively worse—it must be done by associations of devoted individuals," was Huxley's view in *Ends and Means*. "At any given moment of history it is the function of associations of devoted individuals to undertake tasks which clear-sighted people perceive to be necessary, but which nobody else is willing to perform." That "dark sun", D. H. Lawrence, had once written: "I want you to form the nucleus of a community which shall start a new life among us.... Let us be good all together, instead of just in the privacy of our chambers. . . . The question now is how we shall fulfil our declaration 'God is'. For all our life is based on the assumption that God is not." The history of aesthetic utopias is of course much longer. For instance the ideal community on the banks of the Susquehanna (chosen for its beautiful name) to which Coleridge and his friends in the end did not go. Or this from the early Yeats: "I planned a mystical order that should buy or hire the castle, and keep it as a place where its members could retire for a while for contemplation, and where we might establish mysteries like those of Eleusis or Samothrace.... I had an unshakable conviction that invisible gates would open, as they opened for Blake, as they opened for Swedenborg, as they opened for Boehme, and that this philosophy would find its manuals of devotion in all imaginative literature." Though these artistic dreams have a way of remaining unfulfilled promises they show the persistence of an attitude which it would be idle to deny.

Here is a version from a more serious source. "If we had to wait for the mass of humanity to reach a state of harmony, unity and aspiration, strong enough to bring down the Light and change the material conditions and the movement of Nature, there would be little hope. But there is a possibility that an individual or a small group or limited number may achieve the descent. It is not quantity or extension that matters."<sup>11</sup> Or, as Huxley has stated clearly enough: "At almost every period and in almost every country private individuals have associated for the purpose of initiating desirable changes and of working out for themselves a way of life superior

to that of their contemporaries. In the preservation and development of civilization these groups of devoted individuals have played a very important part and are destined, I believe, to play a part no less important in the future."<sup>12</sup> Alexis Carrel, who had thought deeply over the whole problem, had this to say : "Revolutions often start with small groups in which the new tendencies ferment and grow. . . . In the past the efforts of isolated individuals caused the ascent of religion, science and education." And "Why should not some individuals sacrifice their lives to acquire the science indispensable to the making of man and of his environment ? In fact, the task is extremely difficult. But minds capable of undertaking it can be discovered. . . . Men grow when inspired by a high purpose, when contemplating vast horizons. The sacrifice of oneself is not very difficult for one burning with the passion for a great adventure. And there is no more beautiful and dangerous adventure than the renovation of modern man." A new encounter with monasticism, or modified monasticism, is not unlikely. Perhaps that is what the age needs.

The fact that the work of renovation is likely to be confined to small groups is not surprising. For "a group, although small, is capable of imposing upon its members rules of conduct modelled on military and monastic orders. Such a method is far from being new. Humanity has already lived through periods when communities of men or women separated from others and adopted strict regulations, in order to attain their ideals. . . . Are we not capable of repeating, in a different form, the accomplishments of the monks, the knights, and the artisans of the Middle Ages ? Two essential conditions for the progress of the individual are relative isolation and discipline. . . . It is a well-established fact that discipline gives great strength to man. An ascetic and mystic minority would rapidly acquire an irresistible power over the dissolute and degraded majority." Carrel, however, goes off at a tangent when he adds, a little triumphantly, "Such a minority would be in a position to impose, by persuasion or perhaps by force, other ways of life upon the majority." Now, that way error lies. The mystic does not "impose" and never by force. It is a dangerous but attractive error. The mystic is not a dictator in sheep's clothing, he is not a persuader, subtle or crude, demanding the sacrifice of your intelligence and individuality. He helps you to grow into the ways of the Spirit, he does not first bind you in order to make you free later. As Rufus Jones has pointed out, "But it is an eternal law that there can be no *compulsion* in the realm of the spirit. It is essentially a world of free creative choices."<sup>13</sup> Or as the psychologist, Allport, puts it, "Though he is socially interdependent with others in a thousand ways, yet no one else is able to provide him with the faith he evolves nor prescribe for him his pact with the cosmos."<sup>14</sup> After all, however useful the community of the faithful, the devoted individuals, each man must work out his salvation alone. No man can free another. He can only help.

But that such groups or orders are a possibility must be granted. After a careful and sympathetic study of some of the great founders of the Christian orders this is the conclusion of a scholar : "Indeed, a renewal of the Orders, in their original intent, would be one of the most effective aids in the spiritual conflicts of our times. . . .

Another major possibility is the deliberate endeavour to create new orders....Difficult not to believe that it will be new religious foundations that will transform our times.... Unless the spirit of monasticism is injected into our society anew... Deliverance from the distress of our times can come only from small groups with the courage to remain small... In the new religious foundations the waters of mysticism are again beginning to flow. But, it is as well to know that, "however much one may long for new orders they cannot be artificially created. . . What is holy can never be commanded."<sup>15</sup> "We do not create fellowship deliberately," it has been said, rightly. Or, as Dean Inge put it, institutionalism and mysticism have always been uneasy bedfellows. The Buddha warned his disciples against all "external refuge". In admitting, even welcoming the possibility of new forms of monasticism we must however be aware of the dangers of all such institutionalism, as the history of religious societies or institutions is there to show.

Today too many speak, cheerfully, of a return to religion, what Sorokin has described as salvation in a mild religious therapy. But this is not what the age needs or is looking for. Referring to the so-called revival of religion in American society and specifically to such influential apostles like Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale, Tillich has shown how neither is an answer to the religious question of the period. In a slightly different context Jung had observed : "The passionate interest in these (psychic) movements arises undoubtedly from psychic energy which can no longer be invested in obsolete forms of religion . . . The modern man abhors dogmatic postulates taken on faith. . . He holds them valid only in so far as their knowledge-content seems in accord with his own experience."<sup>16</sup> As the mystic sees it, there is—in Sri Aurobindo's phrase—"a way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded". Or, as Hoffding has said, from being a pillar of fire in the van, "organized religion has become an ambulance trailing behind, picking up the weary and the worn." More explicitly : "If we look at the old religions in their social as apart from their individual aspect, we see that the use society made of them was only of their less spiritual parts. It made use of them to give an august, awful and would-be eternal sanction to a mass of customs and institutions, it made of them a veil of mystery against human questioning and a shield of darkness against the innovator. So far as it saw in religion a means of human salvation and perfection, it laid hands upon it at once to mechanise it, to catch the human soul and bind it on the wheels of a socio-religious machinery, to impose on it in the place of spiritual freedom an imperious yoke and an iron prison. It saddled upon the religious life of man a Church, a priesthood and a mass of ceremonies and set over it a pack of watchdogs under the name of creeds and dogmas, dogmas which one had to accept and obey under pain of condemnation to eternal hell by an eternal judge beyond, just as one had to accept and to obey the laws of society on pain of condemnation to temporal imprisonment or death by a mortal judge below. This false socialization of religion has been always the chief cause of its failure to regenerate mankind." As Simone Weil put it, "Christ rejected the Devil's offer of the kingdom of this world.

But the Church, His Bride, has succumbed to it." Dean Inge has noted that Church history is not pleasant reading. Institutional Churches are really secular corporations, moulded to attract average humanity. Powerful Churches have gained the upper hand by methods utterly opposed to the Spirit of Christ. As Berdyaeff says, men have set themselves to hate in the cause of love, to use compulsion in the name of freedom, and to become practising materialists for the inculcation of spiritual principles.<sup>17</sup> "The falsehood of the old social use of religion is shown by its effects," as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out. "History has exhibited more than once the coincidence of the greatest religious fervour and piety with the darkest ignorance, with an obscure squalor and long vegetation of the mass of human life, with the unquestioned reign of cruelty, injustice and oppression, or with the organisation of the most ordinary, un aspiring and unraised existence hardly relieved by some touches of intellectual or half spiritual light on the surface, the end of all this a widespread revolt against the established religion as the keystone of the regnant falsehood, evil and ignorance. It is another sign when the too scrupulously exact observation of a socio-religious system and its rites and forms, which by the very fact of this misplaced importance begin to lose their sense and true religious value, becomes the law and the most prominent aim of religion rather than any spiritual growth of the individual and the race. And a great sign of the failure is when the individual is obliged to flee from society in order to find room for his spiritual growth; when finding human life given over to the unregenerate mind, life and body and the place of spiritual freedom occupied by the bonds of form, by Church and Shastra, by some law of the Ignorance, he is obliged to break away from all these to seek for growth into the spirit in the monastery, on the mountain-top, in the cavern, in the desert and the forest. When there is that division between life and the spirit, sentence of condemnation is passed upon human life."<sup>18</sup>

The freedom of the individual and the freedom of individual seeking call for the most delicate handling and few societies have a good record to show. But while the individual as law unto himself has a tendency to run into unregulated fantasies and other excesses difficult to control or approve, the safety belt of prohibitive regulations is no answer either. If in deference to the safety of the type, or the group, society insists on conformity, something withers. And, either as symptom or protest, fanatics, fantasists and other signs appear on the horizon. Some leave society and elect silence. But, as we have seen before, a lonely salvation is not the ideal and does not make sense. The perfected individual is one with all. Loneliness can only be a stage, it is not an end. And loneliness need not separate, it may and often does unite as well.

"We miss the secret of the human birth if we do not see that each individual man is that Self and sums up all human potentiality in his own being... No State or legislator or reformer can cut him rigorously into a perfect pattern; no Church or priest can give him a mechanical salvation, no order, no class life or ideal, no nation, no civilization or creed, or ethical, social or religious Shastra can be allowed to say

to him permanently : On this way of mine and thus far shalt thou grow and act and in no other way." True, he has to use the ideals, disciplines, systems of co-operation which he finds in course of his search, or what others have found before him. But he can only use them well, if they are to him means towards something beyond them and not burdens to be borne for their own sake or despotic controls to be obeyed by him as their slave and subject.

The liberty claimed by the struggling human mind for the individual is no mere egoistic revolt and challenge, however egoistically and with whatever exaggeration it may have at times expressed itself. It is true the individual belongs not only to himself but also to society, the race, the national type, to humanity. But in a deeper view it is also true that he exceeds the human formula—that he belongs to God and to the world of all beings and to the godheads of the future. The free development of the individual and a respect for the same freedom in others would, therefore, seem to be the ideal law of social development which the imperfect human race has never yet fully attained and it may be very long before it can attain that, a real *consortium vitæ, divini et humani juris communicatio*. Still it is this ideal, of free growth rather than a constricted growth by rule and limit, that has to be held up before the evolving individual.

The ideal group, the "beloved community", if it materialises, will not be brought about nor held together by any man-made rules and formulas, by what is called planning. The human mind cannot really foresee, much less lay down the law of this enormous transition or transformation. "What is a perfect technique of yoga, or rather of a world-changing or Nature-changing yoga?" Sri Aurobindo once asked in answer to a disciple's letter. "Not one that takes a man by a little bit of him somewhere, attaches a hook and pulls him up by a pulley into Nirvana or Paradise. The technique of a world-changing yoga has to be as multiform, sinuous, patient, all-including as the world itself. If it does not deal with all the difficulties or possibilities and carefully deal with each necessary element, has it any chance of success? And can a perfect technique which everyone can understand do that?"<sup>19</sup> In other words, the mystic groups would be institutions that would not be institutions at all or not that primarily. We who have supped full on the horror of Organization Man—indeed have known little else—and seen how Mechanization Has Taken Over may well wonder at the possibility of a free society of spiritual seekers, who could carry our effete and self-destroying civilization to an undreamt-of fulfilment. But "the evolved man has reached a state of development of his conscience which enables him to broaden his outlook and to become fully aware of the magnificent role he can play as a responsible actor in Evolution. Unlike the polyp who blindly fights for his life at the bottom of the sea and will never know that he is laying the foundation of a coral atoll which, in the course of centuries, will become a fertile island swarming with higher forms of life, man knows that he is the forerunner of a finer and more perfect race which will be partly his doing. He should be proud of the tremendous responsibility bestowed upon him, and his pride should be great enough to over-

shadow the inevitable but momentary disappointments and hardships. If only more people could grasp this, if they gloried in their work, if they rejoiced in it, the world would soon become a better world, long before the spiritual goal is reached."<sup>20</sup>

Such is the faith of the mystics. In that faith they will triumph. There are difficulties but, if we know how to look at them, difficulties are also opportunities. In any case they have never held back men from trying. The thing shall be done by the doing, the hope of an ideal group or society, a fairer world in which the spiritual life would be the normal life and not, as now, something to be striven for or imposed upon the rest. Here is a way out, if there is one anywhere, out of the impasse of history. This will be other than the compulsive or fixed ways of religious orders and societies. As Waite (*Lamps of Western Mysticism*) has said, other ways are possible. Yes, other tried and untried ways of the spirit. Perhaps it will be less an old-type monastery and more like an ashram, where all are welcome, according to their need and capacity and which has no rigid, sectarian rules to observe. Or it will be the spirit of the old doorkeeper who told Tolstoy who had knocked for rest and refuge. We receive everyone. While that is the ideal, unideal possibilities are within the range of possibility too. Maybe "we have to face the tragedy that the whole situation of modern man is so far out of hand that we shall be compelled to let external events take their terrible course. In this case the only hope left will be the withdrawal of a remnant into a temporary solitude of the spirit, there to derive power from the only source which can in the long run change human life for the better."<sup>21</sup> But whatever happens, "there is in all of us a margin of initiative".<sup>22</sup>

How or what shall we choose? Perhaps our enlightened moderns will need, first of all, a dose of humility to cure themselves of their entrenched folly. In this respect the older cultures seem to be better off, if only they can throw off their form-fetishism, because they still have "the memory of men who trained themselves by silence and solitude and reading and meditation and so came to a knowledge superior to that of the multitude engrossed in fighting and bargaining ... The wise men fitted into these societies, whereas he seems out of place in a society which will not go beyond a common or 'horse' sense."

The journey is long. But, as the old Chinese saying has it, the journey of a thousand *li*-s begins with a step. We can always take that step, we who have been moving on that onward journey from the beginning of history. Even today there are indications on the horizon.

"Purity of heart, too, is the beginning of the monk's union with his brothers. His true union . for monastic charity is not merely a 'social contract', a bargain arrived at by the agreement of many egoisms. It is the purity of heart which is reached only when the separate wills of the brethren become one will, the one will, the will of Christ. This community of will cannot be attained by a business-deal. It is an embrace of souls in the purity of the Spirit of God...the fulfilment of the Eucharistic mystery which is the heart of the monastic life.

"But when will such fulfilment be realized? Can it be attained perfectly on this

earth ? Who can say ?... But they are at least beginning on earth to build a heavenly city."<sup>23</sup> The heavenly city is not yet built, but it is for ever building.<sup>24</sup>

"We seek. That is a fact. We seek a city still out of sight. In the contrast with the goal we live. But if this be so, then already we possess something of Being even in our finite seeking. For the readiness to seek is already something of an attainment, even if a poor one."<sup>25</sup>

It only asks a little of us here.  
It asks of us a certain height.

(To be continued)

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

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## THE BEAUTEOUS BLACK DIVINITIES OF INDIA

*The author of this article, Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh, is an eminent poet, critic and editor of Orissa. He has about a dozen well-known books of poems and essays in Oriya to his credit. At present he is the chief compiler of the Oriya Encyclopaedia, commissioned by Utkal University.*

*The subject of his article is an interesting one and it is treated with considerable insight, vivacity, and charm. But not all of its ideas on matters of fundamental significance tally with those of Sri Aurobindo. The differences are not such as to affect very much the dynamics of the inner life; yet in view of ultimate aims it will be welcome if our readers submit comments in the light of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision.*

WHICH young Hindu, even if himself dark-skinned, does not dream of a fair-coloured bride? Let us frankly admit our aesthetical preference for fair skins although, down south, dark skins, more often than not, do carry an exquisite feminine charm which fair skins can never pretend to. Yet anomalously enough the Indo-Aryan, proud of his *varna* (colour), has not only been worshipping gods and goddesses that are deeply dark but adoring them for that very reason. There is no end to eulogy of the charm of their dark skins in Indian literature. How can this incongruity be explained?

The Sanskrit (Indian) word *Kāla* means, strangely enough, both Time and Black. "I am Time, the endless," says Lord Krishna (The Black One) in the Gita (10.33). Our Dark Divinities might be said therefore to represent Time that is beginningless and endless. But what justification could there be to conceive Time as black, displaying, as It does, the glorious panorama of sunrises and sunsets, the witchery of full-moon nights, and the endless merry-go-rounds of the colourful seasons? There appears to be no earthly reason to equate Time with Black.

On the other hand, the great seers of the Upanishads, one after another, in proclaiming their personal realisation of the Divinity, have described It, in no uncertain terms, as nothing but Light of unimaginable effulgence. Nothing in world-literature could surpass the following pregnant, tell-tale lines of the Swetaswara Upanishad, declaiming to slumbering humanity the unalloyed Beatitude of the human soul in the supreme moment of the vision and realisation of the Divine :

Known have I that Great Existence,  
Like the splendour of a Sun,  
Beyond the veil of our Darkness,  
By knowing Whom only, one gets the victory over Death;  
The only way for gaining Immortality.

This grand human Testament has been reiterated and strengthened manifold, in the suprasensuous vision of Divinity that the Bhagavad Gita presents to us in its celebrated eleventh canto :

Suppose a thousand suns blazed out simultaneously in the sky;  
With such only, might the glory of that Presence be compared.

In our contemporary rationalistic or rather cynical times the mystic utterances of the seers of the Gita and the Upanishads have been overpoweringly substantiated by the experience of Paramahansa Ramakrishna whose intellectual integrity is beyond all the morbid questionings of doubting Thomases. The great saint of Dakshineswara has said again and again that the final Beatific vision that he was graced with, of the Cosmic Mother, was nothing but endless waves of glorious Light. Romain Rolland, in his life of Ramakrishna, provides the information also that the ecstatic realisation of this great Hindu saint has amply been corroborated by those of many a Christian counterpart of his in medieval Europe.

In the Semitic religions the Creation is presented as a perpetual battle-ground of the forces of Light and Darkness, the former standing for Divinity and the latter for the hosts of Satan.

How then have we, modern Hindus, come to equate so unquestioningly the concept of Godhead with Black ?

#### THE BLACK-BLUE

It may be noted, however, that the Hindu concept of Divinity is not really Black, like say, coal, but Beauteous or Bright Black-Blue. Hinduism cannot be described as a worship of the Dark (*i.e.* of the Satanic) Forces when India's sky every day reverberates with the recitation, from a myriad devout Hindu lips, of this supremest of prayers ever uttered in any religion or any human tongue :

Lord,  
Lead me from the untruth to Truth,  
Lead me from Darkness to Light,  
Lead me from mortality to Immortality.

We might, on the other hand, conclude that the Hindu concept of Divinity rather intriguingly boils down to the twin visions of either splendidous Light or Beauteous Black. Could the two apparently contradictory concepts be reconciled through some analogy of Nature or some historic process of development ?

#### KRISHNA, THE BEAUTEOUS BLACK

The most popular anthropomorphic representation of the Beauteous Black of the Hindus is Krishna, the loveliest of Gods even in the colourfully crowded Hindu

pantheon. And in the plenitude of cults that is Hinduism, so catholic as to concede religion to be as variedly personal as there are minds in this world, the cult of this Krishna the Black Beauteous has turned out to be the most total of all, for the simple reason, that His story appears good enough to satisfy all varieties of spiritual appetites natural in a human heart. What amount of actual history remains behind the life of Krishna as we find it in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata Purana is for scholars to say. But from the amazingly elevating poetry that has grown round the personality of Krishna in Sanskrit as well as in the other Indian languages one can safely say that there cannot be any story more movingly human or more stirring than that of Him. For, here is a God who could be adored as a child, as a playful and dependable friend, as the most ardent and endearing of Lovers, as a freedom-fighter and a prophet of Human Rights in the truest modern sense, as a resplendent king, as an astute leader of men both in war and peace, and above all, as the great Attractor or Enchanter (the most sensible sense of the word Krishna) of human souls. It is not without justification that the Hindu theologians have declared Krishna the completest of the many Avatars of God.

But that makes it all the more tantalising why He should be Black !

Yet, though generally taken or talked of as Black, Krishna is pictured oftener than not by our poets and saints as Blue (*śyāma*), the colour of the naked sky or the newly formed rain-clouds being usually brought in for comparison. But a sky-blue-skinned human being is yet to be born. A Blue Krishna should therefore be taken as poetic fancy, rather than as a reality that has ever occurred on this planet of ours.

#### THE NON-ARYAN OF THE GITA

Even in the Gita of supposed universal appeal and broad-based human sympathies, the contempt for the Non-Aryan by the Aryan speaker stands undisputed. Like the Buddha's, the message of Krishna too is emphatically 'Aryan'. Krishna reprimands Arjuna's apparent escapist attitude on the eve of the battle of Kurukshetra as 'non-Aryan', *i.e.* unworthy of an Aryan. Krishna, like the Buddha Gautama, was born an Indo-Aryan Kshatriya, and seemed to remain proud of his racial culture. Demand on our credulity would be too violent indeed, if we were forced to accept that this Krishna, the proud Aryan, was himself black-skinned. A black Aryan is a contradiction in terms.

#### THE IMAGES

We have to admit that the images of Krishna, the Buddha and Jesus Christ that are so familiar to humanity now can by no means be taken as authentic. No contemporary painting or sculpture of these great leaders of humanity is known to have ever existed or to have survived with even a semblance of verisimilitude. The representations in stone or colour of these great personalities appeared centuries

after their passing away. Archaeological evidence leaves no doubt on this matter, with regard to at least the Buddha images. These appeared about half a millennium after the Master's Mahaparinirvana, slowly replacing Buddhistic symbols such as the Bodhi tree or a pair of feet (supposed to be the Buddha's). They were either in imitation of images of Greek deities in the Graeco-Bactrian Gandhara country or as a means of outrivalling, through imitation, the Brahminic cult in which the prehistoric Fire-worship or the Yagna had already made room for equally colourful idolatry, more appealing to the masses than the highly difficult mental and spiritual culture which Hinayana Buddhism meant or aimed at. Art has always acted as an excellent handmaid of Religion and, thanks to the supposed perversion of Buddha's message through the heresy of Mahayana, the world has grown all the richer for it. History unrolls an amazing panorama of lofty waves of Art stemming from the apocryphal but inspiring Buddha image, and inundating the vast lands of the Asiatic continent. from the picturesque parks of Japan to the treeless tablelands of Afghanistan and from the barren snow-deserts of Siberia and the desolate sand-deserts of Central Asia to the verdurous valleys of Ceylon. Without Mahayana the world would never have witnessed the glorious human achievement that is Ajanta or the incredible potentiality of human art that reigns so majestically in the Saranatha Buddha.

There is every reason to believe that the popular image of Krishna was conceived long after Man-Krishna's demise, exactly as it happened in the case of the Buddha-image. The conception took place in times when both great men must have grown into legends and divinities. This is not surprising in India where image-making is almost second nature with the people : Gandhi was worshipped in images of shapeless stones like other villages gods and goddesses, even in his own life-time, made to accept even bloody sacrifices at that ! And just as the imaginary Buddha-image (the Yogic pose in particular) was most probably modelled on the concept of Shiva whose worship in symbols as well as in images could now clearly be traced up to the Mohenjodaro civilisation, that of the deified Krishna was probably created after that of some popular Vedic or non-Vedic God, as the real personality of Man-Krishna, centuries after his passing away, must have completely been lost by then.

But what God was that ?

#### THE VEDIC DEITY OF THE SUN-SKY

Because of changes in names, forms and social set-ups, the modern Indian is astonishingly unaware of the pervasive influence of the Vedic Solar God in the life of to-day. It is still more strange that Vishnu, worshipped by millions of devout Hindus, is forgotten to be basically no other than that Solar Deity, the Vedic Mitra-Varuna. Millions of Hindus even today directly worship the same Sun-God, Savita, when they articulate the spiritually pregnant lines of the celebrated Vedic mantra, Gayatri. This Sun-God was once the most popular Deity not only in India as Mitra, but also all over the Middle-East and the sprawling Roman empire under the Iranian name of Mithra.

In Vedic India, this Sun-God Mitra, however, was always inseparably associated, in quite a logical way, with Varuna, the God of the Blue Heavens. Symbolic of the Vedic sage's clear grasp of the laws of coordination and interdependence in the cosmos, we come across in the Vedic pantheon several twin and multiple Divinities. Of the twins, Dyava-Prithivi (the Sky and the Earth as they meet at the horizon) and this Mitra-Varuna are very well-known. Both Mitra (Sun) and Varuna (sky) are taken to be so inseparable from each other that many hymns are jointly offered, in the Rig-veda, to them as if to one.

This Mitra-Varuna or just Mitra (Sun-god) continues to be worshipped in India even today under the modern popular name of Vishnu, a well-known synonym of the Sun-God even in the Rig-veda, carrying now all the qualities of the former under the veil of Puranic myths of later creation.

And the present writer is convinced that the Blue-Black Krishna of popular Hinduism is no other than He who was Mitra-Varuna or Mitra or Vishnu in the Vedas.

#### THE GITA

Students of the Gita might recall how in the very beginning of the fourth canto of that great book, Krishna, the prophet, candidly admits that his great spiritual heritage, which was being conveyed in His discourses to Arjuna, came originally from the Sun (Vivasvata). In canto X He identifies Himself with Vishnu on the one hand and Ravi (Sun) on the other, in one and the same line. And how nicely the following part of a hymn of the Rig-veda (Mandala V, Sukta 69) fits into the character of Krishna, the famous cowherd of Vrindavan !

“Oh Mitra, Oh Varuna, it is on your command that cows give us milk !”

And the Vedic Vishnu, as ‘Kuchara’, is known to steal also butter and other edibles just as child-Krishna, the Avatar of Vishnu, has been notorious for doing. Vishnu, the later popular transformation of Mitra-Varuna or the Sun-God, has always been conceived as a Deity with Blue-Black complexion. Naturally, then, such too are His popular Avatars, both Rama and Krishna. Thus the Aryan Rama and Krishna are no real black-skinned humans, but in all probability no more than popular presentations of a cosmic concept of the Rig-vedic seers. They are Bright-Blue because Vishnu (Mitra-Varuna), their Archetype, has always been pictured as Bright-Blue, being the joint Gods of both the deep blue sky (Varuna) and the celestial Effulgence (Mitra) that flashes on it both in the day and the night. Behind the Puranic twins, Rama and Laxmana as well as Krishna and Balarama, one black, the other fair, this writer discerns nothing but that Vedic concept of joint Divinity of Mitra-Varuna (Blue-Varuna of the Heavens and Mitra the Bright-sun taken together) which has just continued in popular Hinduism through colourful human stories of the Puranas. Even our concept of Blue Krishna adorned always with bright yellow silk (Pitavasa) reminds me of nothing but the continuance of the Mitra-Varuna image of the Vedas in one single personality. •

## THE DHARMA

Not in the externals alone, but even in their inner characteristics Vishnu and His popular Avatars Rama and Krishna seem to be no more than a continuation of the Vedic Mitra-Varuna concept. Varuna, unlike most other Indo-Aryan Gods who behaved more or less like boisterous tribals, ever eager to kill their opponents and enjoy the good life undisturbed, lived in imperial dignity in a palace of His own in the high heavens. This seems to be the distant origin of Vishnu's Vaikuntha of the later Puranas. And above all, this Varuna was the Lord of "*Rta*" (Right), the cosmic order as well as the ethical laws of human society. It is this concept of Rita that seems to have got transformed in later times into that of the all-pervasive Dharma. It is to establish Dharma or Rita, destroying the forces of Adharma (un-Truth or un-Righteousness) that Vishnu descending from His heavenly palace (Vaikuntha) takes Avatars on this earth of ours. Varuna, of all the Rig-vedic gods, is feared most by the sinners, and the hymns offered to Him in the Rig-veda are piquantly personal, the beginnings perhaps of the outcrop of wonderful devotional poetry that took place in Sanskrit as well as in all the modern Indian languages round the personality of Vishnu, and particularly round that of Krishna, His most popular Avatar. If Vishnu is but one of many aspects of the Rig-vedic Mitra (Sun) and no more than a mere synonym of His, both Vishnu and Varuna are also etymologically the same, meaning "He who covers all". Both the titles therefore are wonderfully symbolic of the unique monistic yet many-shaded Pantheism that is Hinduism, right from the days of the distant Vedas. And what a marvel of unbroken continuity, unique indeed in the whole history of mankind, the Hindu culture reveals, when we are aware that for five thousand years or more the Hindu has been worshipping not sticks and stones, but cosmic Gods—those of the Infinite Blue Firmament and of the Light Divine, so grand in conception and so noble in thought. And that is our Krishna, the lovely resplendent Blue-Black God, dear to millions of hearts, the terrestrial representation of "He who covers All", that is Vishnu, that is Mitra-Varuna, the joint Gods of the Blue Space and of the celestial Effulgence of the Vedic seers, than whom there could be no better human concept of the Godhead.

MAYADHAR MANSINGH

# ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

(Continued)

## 2. VALUE

NEXT we shall see what value the people of the two periods have given to these two epics. Milton filled the gap of the poverty of sacred literature during the Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan periods. But Dryden was not appreciative of blank verse for epic. Otherwise Milton was well received and, with a great dearth of any entertaining reading during the 17th century, *Paradise Lost* was acclaimed as a great work which overshadowed other works of similar nature, by its elevation grandeur energy.

The populace at that period was not well-read or sufficiently critical. The elite apart, great intellects were rare. Thus it was the Biblical theme that carried the show during Milton's time. The worth and true appreciation—except for Addison's comment—came much later; during the 19th century and our present age when literary criticism has become an art, writers have probed into the different aspects of Miltonic literature and the whole heritage was realised. There were differing voices in several matters, but all agreed about the value of Milton as a poet. We learned of the many aspects; various problems were raised and answered. Questions about style were posed and we saw from different angles the substance, and body of his poetry. What was a few men's opinion in the 17th century became a universal thought in our times.

The world knows Sri Aurobindo more as a politician or a Yogi. But his fame as a poet is rather restricted. It was in 1947 that the first canto of the first book of *Savitri* appeared. It caused a great flutter among those near him. But for the most part, there was no response at all. The reason for this apathy lies not in his poetry, but in the minds of men of our time and the theme Sri Aurobindo comes to reveal. Milton faced an ignorant public, but a public that had great credence in Biblical themes. But Sri Aurobindo faced a critical public who, trained either in the Western way of looking at things or believing in the greatness of contemporary literature, almost totally ignored his poetry. People had no time to read an epic. Further, it was their opinion that epic as a form was outdated. Sri Aurobindo did not speak of this busy modern metropolitan life, or of its petty problems, of its insolvent culture. He touched on matters which even the elite do not stand quietly to contemplate. To them his value was in his philosophy but not in his poetry.

Neither of the poets wrote for the age they were born in; they wrote for the future age. They were ahead of their times in spirit. The values and appreciations given by their respective publics are not commensurate with their true values.

The poetical value of Milton lies in his construction and energy. As regards

construction, we shall later examine it in detail. Now we shall examine the next part of the question. There are other aspects too : these we shall see when we get the opportunity.

Each poet has his particular characteristic that at once marks him out and reveals his true value. Intuitive beauty is the feature of Shelley, going to the very depth of life is the peculiarity of Shakespeare. In Milton not life-force or passion or intuition but energy is the true poetical nature; hence his poetical value can only be assessed in terms of energy. Energy is not necessarily the dash and sweep, the superabundance of vital force, or the passion, the vivacity, the delight. It may have one or some of these aspects; in its essence it is the creative will, vision, Sri Aurobindo has energy too like Milton—in fact all true and living poetry must have this. But his energy is not derived from the intellect. His source is on a level which he terms the 'overhead'. From this supra-intellectual standpoint, he directs his vision, his will, and the words that come are the winged messengers that glide spontaneously into his ken. His height is full of felicity. His vision is a ray that penetrates the deepest knot of things and at the same time wings that spread above the world. We have no parallel in English of this kind of felicitous vision and height. Blake touches some occult domains, but he cannot reveal them. Coleridge has his flights, but we arrive nowhere. Shelley is magical, subtle and has moments of true spiritual revelations; but he does not live on the spiritual plane like Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo does not move out of this world. He has no sudden moments of the Wonderful—he lives on the mount of existence where each moment is magical, each heart-beat is a wonder.

This does not mean he is uniform, flat or monotonous. Living on a supernal altitude, he discovers surprises, freshnesses, beauties and is at every step ever new. This is the value of his poetry. It is a pointer to all poets who insist on progress. He shows what the poetry of tomorrow can be—not abstract but veridical and spiritual. The poetic value of his work shows the richness one can reach, the heights one can climb, the depths one can dive into, the rare subtlety one can arrive at without diminishing in true art content. Then one would not have to go out of the way into vague or impossible abstractions in order to find newness. There would be no need to harp on our dark and half conscious depths in order to be true to life. But all these wonders can be compassed if one has undergone some type of spiritual and inner discipline and has opened up oneself to the rarefied vistas of the Spirit.

Milton's poetry did not attain this magnitude. It was a personal triumph and all those who came after him only imitated his form and succeeded in becoming verbose, artificial or clumsy. He stands like a solitary figure apart even in poetry. He does not open up an age as did Shelley or Keats, Homer or Aeschylus, Dante or Virgil or in our times Sri Aurobindo. The value of his poetry remains confined to his own self, with that vigorous mind of his which did not share the limits of his age, that intellect which did not stoop to the artificialities of his time. He almost came before his time—but with no more than his unique personality.



Sri Aurobindo in a sense did so too. But his mind saw the time-spirit and he saw that the culmination of poetry was not in sterile abstractions but in the growth of the soul in the realm of the spirit. He hastened the evolutive process of poetry by taking on himself the burden of creativity and forging this into an unsurpassable epic. He did not stand apart like Milton and was not a highbrow who scorned to stoop to the current of the age. Only, he shunned vulgarities, did away with mannerisms, petty whimsicalities that are the characteristics of poetry today.

We shall now try to assess the value of these two epics in themselves as they are.

*Paradise Lost* in itself is an epic of great force, span and grandeur. It has a place amongst the great epics of the world because it deals with a theme which is cosmic and treats it magnificently. In spite its many lapsès the lowering of the tonal quality, the lessening of the intensity, the slowing of the pace, the result is a work that puts English on the map of world-literature. In fact this is the only true epic in the language. The others that came before it were too much under the influence of Latin, Italian or French authors and too lyrical, ornate, too full of abstractions to be true epics. The others that came after it were showy, lacking in any dignity or height or having too limited a view of life to be classed as epics. We have had some truly great dramas; but truly great epics have been wanting. The different periods of literature that came after Milton fell short of this energy of his drive or his inspirational force. They dealt with small issues and played about with trifles. In the romantic renaissance we have a break. Here are great poets and significant poetry. Keats' *Endymion* and *Hyperion*, Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* are not true epics. They deal with things that are beautiful but have little world-significance. Also the treatments are too personal or intimate to give them height. There is not enough force or vastness, grandeur or passion, height or energy to turn them into epics. So what was attained by Milton yet remains a great high-water mark of poetic creation.

Also Milton shows the possibility of English as a medium for epic. So far Greek, Latin or French with the *Ihad*, the *Aeneid*, or *Chanson de Rolland* were considered to possess the qualities of an epic language. English was a mere vernacular, a mixed tongue. Milton broke this tradition. English acquired new horizons, a fresh personality, a novel force. The English of the Bible, that chaste and precise medium, became in Milton's hands a language of massive power. Sri Aurobindo added something else to this new strain, the mystic overtones and undertones. To Milton's power he added subtlety and profundity, the 'mantric' roll of the great Indian scriptures. English is an Anglo-Saxon tongue whose hard consonants are characteristically Germanic. It lacks the complex cadence of the Latin languages. Milton exploited this possibility as far it could go under the circumstances. Sri Aurobindo brought in an element of ancient Sanskrit and exploited the vowels and consonants fully. Milton on the other hand missed the occult strain. Thus we see blended in Sri Aurobindo the intensity of Shakespeare, the grandeur of Milton, the grace of Shelley, the felicity of Wordsworth, and the perfection of Keats,

Milton had not a long poetic tradition to follow like Sri Aurobindo. His predecessors or contemporaries were either medieval poets or else Elizabethans. He got no epic tradition from them and could imbibe no exemplary influence. Latin and Greek were the only two stars on the horizons and the English pentameter could hardly rival the classical hexameter, the surge and magnificence of the Homeric epic. Despite this he managed to create a language that was not dramatic but intensely narrative and which could bear the strain of true epic poetry. In this is his greatness and the value of *Paradise Lost*.

Sri Aurobindo, it is true, had a long tradition to fall back upon. Not only the English but the Oriental Epics as well were there. The whole gamut of the poets of the Romantic era was there. They had further thrown back the limits of the English language, had made English maturer, larger and of greater amplitude. But he created too his own tradition. For what he created had not been conceived before him, the 'overhead' poetry had some predecessors prior to his advent, but we have only snatches of lines here and there in the whole history of English poetry shining out as marvels of such inspiration. Vedic and post-Vedic literature in Sanskrit was full of such inspirational outbursts. Even in the later Sanskrit period, that of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Banabhatta, Vasa or others, this element is markedly absent. Thus what there was before him was also just the beginnings of mystic poetry. In *Savitri* we find the full culmination of this trend.

Both Milton and Sri Aurobindo are path-finders; both gave us epics that enhanced the English language and increased its possibilities.

The value of each is different and yet there are surprising similarities. Between them there is more than a wide gulf and yet both have given us new literature, new thought, a new outlook which not only affected literature but almost influenced the common man and life. The creation of a new type of poetry is the manifestation of something unique and unforeseen. It marks the inner progress of man. It shows the trend of humanity. From the mind of Milton we emerge into the intuition of Sri Aurobindo. From the gross ethical we arrive at the subtle unveiling of the spirit. What Milton promised, Sri Aurobindo fulfilled.

(*To be continued*)

ROMEN

# THE STORY OF PURURAVUS AND URVASIE

RETOLD FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S NARRATIVE POEM *Urvasie*

THE story of Pururavus and Urvasie occurs originally in the first book of the Mahabharata. It became a favourite theme for fiction and drama with many later writers. The most notable among their works was the poetic play *Vikramorvasie* by Kalidasa. Sri Aurobindo has given us in English blank verse a translation of this play. But he has also a narrative poem of his own on the same theme, in four cantos (again in blank verse), written in the middle nineties of the last century during his stay in Baroda. His story differs from those of other writers in many respects. It is full of incidents of surpassing sweetness and grandeur, told with brilliant imagery. In it the early heroic age with its traditions and visions lives before our eyes. We see how greatly the ancients prized the good of society more than the happiness of the individual. The king who sacrificed his duty for his love obtains the boon of immortality and reunion with Urvasie in the heaven of the Gandharvas but his descendants of the lunar line must bear the burden of his sin of beauty and love and fall by his failure. Because he has maimed and discrowned the Aryan people, this land will yield to the impure grasp of barbarians from the outer shores.

I have attempted in this prose rendering to keep Sri Aurobindo's own words as much as possible so that the readers may form some idea, however faint, of the splendour, beauty and greatness of the poem, while the text has been sufficiently simplified to make it easily understandable.

PRITHWI SINGH

## CHAPTER I

### THE MEETING

Pururavus, son of virgin Ila and monarch of Pratisthana, was invited by Indra, king of the gods, to assist him in his fight against the Asuras. After the battle, the victorious hero was returning from heaven in his chariot to his earthly kingdom. Through illimitable space he travelled like a star slowly and brightly. The divine hooves rushed downwards and he approached earth. With the first line of dawn he touched the peaks. He did not pause there but reached the lower heights subject to the rain, and rested there. He looked towards the North, saw the giant snows climbing up to the sky and felt the mighty silence. After the noise of battle he drank into his soul with a greater joy the inaccessible virgin silence of the mountains and divined his mother's breasts. As he listened to the silence a thought came to him and he gazed towards the East watching the birth of day, as if a line of some great

poem grew out of dimness, unfolding slowly into perfect speech. Coming with a virginal sharp strength, life renewed as from the streams of Paradise. As he drew nearer, he saw a face of dawn move out of the widening glory, a body enveloped with a prophecy of light. It was Usha, the virgin mother of light. She came in a sweet silence, unveiled, soft-smiling, rose-cheeked, like a bride. Her bosom was full of flowers, the morning wind was stirring her hair and all about her was gold. Behind her were girls of heaven whose beauties ease the labour of the battle-weary gods. They sprang golden in the gold dawn of things. Born from the youth of immortal Ocean, they were youthful and immortal; the waves were in their feet and in their voices fresh as foam; and Ocean was love in their souls. They ran laughing among the clouds, their hair and raiment all a tempest in the breeze. The sky grew glorious with them. So they danced, numberless, as gleam the dewdrops. Many were their names—Menaka, Misrakeshi, Mallika, Rambha, Nilabha, Shela, Nalini, Lolita, Lavanya, Tilottama and others. Among them was Urvasie.

Seeing her, King Pururavus shuddered as if afraid of felicity. Her face was secret in its own divinity like a high sun of splendour half seen, all troubled with her hair. Yet Paradise breathed from her limbs. The King stood voiceless for a space, troubled, watching that lovely advent. At last his vague passion broke from him in speech, "Who are you, O strong God who grasp me with hands of fire? Even though the hills may move and the eternal stars deviate from their immutable rounds, I thought 'Pururavus would never fall. Yet I fall. Men said of me, 'King Pururavus grows more than man. He lifts his sublime spirit in vast equality to azure heaven.' Why do I now sink towards attractive earth? O golden wonder, who are you? O moving enchantress! were you not a part of soft evenings I have loved? Have I not seen your beauty in the moonlight and in the starlight? O was your voice a vernal repetition in some grove, telling of lilies clustered over with bees and of quiet waters open to the moon? Surely I loved your name in some past life and now strive to recall its past sweetness syllable by syllable. Your voice seems the grace of visible things, of hushed and lonely snows, burning noons, towns and valleys and the mountain winds. All beauty of earthliness is in you, all luxurious experience of the soul. Come, unveil yourself from light, limit yourself that I may find and clasp you. Set your feet upon my heart, O Goddess; woman, move to my bosom. I am Pururavus, O Urvasie." The King cried aloud joyously and lashed his steeds that leaped from Himalayan heights, trampling the southern wind with their hooves.

But now a cry of fear broke from that lovely crowd. Pururavus heard a low roar as of a distant cloud, coming from the North. Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom, darkness hidden in darkness. Thunderous whispers rolled and lightning quivered from edge to edge. Suddenly a frail light cloud rushed through heaven and behind it streamed the downpour all in wet and greenish lines. The splendid anarchy rushed swiftly and broke with a roar of rain, and tumult on the wings of wind and a burst of thunder and lightning. Like the vast eagle of Vishnu, all the blackness swept down over the inferior snowless heights and swallowed up the dawn,

Lost in the streaming tumult Pururavus stood amazed. As he watched he became aware of flying locks, a wild face and terrible familiar eyes. He looked again and knew the giant Cayshie whom he had encountered in a hundred battles. In the dim disguise of rain, he came all swift with storm and filled the region with himself. Immense he stooped upon the brides of heaven. Like flowers scattered and blown everywhere in a gust they fled. But Cayshie, the giant, sprang upon the beautiful Urvasie and lifted her up. Rising up arrow-like in a cloud towards the snow-bound heights, he rushed with the goddess to the trembling East. But King Pururavus hurled after him with more formidable speed. The giant turned and knew the sound of victorious wheels and the light in a man's face which is more dangerous to evil than all the shining gods. The vast chariot of Pururavus, magnified by speed, came threatening on with echoing hooves. The fiend paused, rolled his eyes full of defiance, passion and despair upon the swooning goddess in his arms and that avenger. Violence and fear poised him for a moment on a wave of fate. The former was the way to death, the latter the way to shame. Then he dropped heaven's ravished flower upon the snow and fled, a blackness in the East.

New sky, replenished from the sullen cloud, dawned out. The great pure azure rose in wide sunlight. King Pururavus did not pursue the giant but checked his chariot and sprang down towards Urvasie. Like a luminous mishandled lily she lay perfect amid her tresses. Her face was like a fallen moon among the snows. As he beheld her, King Pururavus became maddened with love which he at the same time feared and cherished. Hardly breathing, he knelt beside her. At length he raised her up and laid her in his chariot. Then he himself ascended. On one arm he rested her drooping head with fearful joy and with the other ruled the car. Soon she moved. Her wide eyes quietly gazed into his as if in a muse. Afterwards a lovely slow surprise crept into them and lastly something far lovelier which was herself, and was delight and love.

But hardly had that inner dawn bridged joy between their eyes when laughter broke in and the returning world. For Menaka, standing like a lily on the snows, smiled towards the chariot. All the others came with quick and panting bosoms. Menaka was in front of them all and spoke smilingly, "O King Pururavus, whither do you bear your victory? Will you set her as a golden triumph in your halls? But she is other than your caryatids. Give us back our sister." Pururavus set down the nymph in her sister's arms and, quivering in vast incertitude, stood awhile. Then spoke divine Tilottama, "O King, O mortal mightier than the gods, for the gods do not change their strength but are of old and as of old, while man, though less than the gods, may yet proceed, self-evolved, to greater strength! By perfecting his faculties man widens his nature as it rises till it becomes conterminous with God. As one who tames the hot tremulousness of his soul and feels around him a quiet perfection of joy and peace like an atmosphere and images the divine to which he tends, so are you sole among men. And to-day you have perfected a high deed. You have saved not only the great gods of the first solar world and with them the stars; but you have

saved Urvasie without whom all that world would cease. O King, hurting yourself with good, you shall gather strange rewards, lose your life to have the life of the solar world and draw infinite gain out of infinite loss. Retire to-day, do not pluck the slowly ripening fates, since he who anticipates the patient gods finds his crown ashes and his empire grief. So the blind Titans choose, forfeiting the beautiful world for momentary splendours.”

He made no reply but, gathering his reins, swept from the golden group. Through mute Himalayan doors of earth his car went groaning down the wind. He, the sole living, passed over the dead deep-plunging precipices. He tended towards Gungotri's solemn peaks and savage glaciers and pure caverns where the Ganges, our mother, leaps, virgin-cold. But before he plunged into the human vales he was moved by a gust of his great heart to look back and see her. In blowing raiment and a glory of hair she stood on a separate divine peak and with serious eyes watched him go. One hand was in her streaming folds and with the other she shaded her eyes as if the vision she saw was brighter than even her deathless eyes could endure.

A laughing crowd of luminous faces pressed over her shoulder. Pururavus staggered as smitten and, shaking wide his reins, he rushed like a star into the infinite air. So curving downwards on precipitate wheels, his spirit all a storm, he came into Ila's peaceful town.

*(To be continued)*

PRITHWI SINGH

**AN ASPIRATION AND A PRAYER**

THIS body is Thine to keep  
Or take away  
In a moment's sudden sweep  
Or slow decay.

When organs function ill  
And senses fail,  
Still must I do Thy Will,  
I shall not quail.

May God's Infinity,  
The wondrous Whole,  
The true immortal "I"  
Seize all my soul—

The silence of the Self  
Come into me  
Who seek no god or elf,  
But only Thee.

3-6-64

PRITHWI SINGH

## TWO POEMS

### WISHES

I WISH my heart could hold my hand—  
 keep it from trembling.  
 I wish my arm would hug my soul  
 to steady it.

I wish my steps would cross my mind  
 on common ground.  
 I dare my eyes to look around  
 the vision of the inner eye  
 and focus on the selfless I

I'm looking for  
 since half past four  
 this morning,  
 or eternity  
 maybe.

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### AGAPE NOT EROS

There is no love in this.  
 But Love there is.  
 More than you know  
 and surer than I care.

There is no love in this  
 to seize and tear,  
 to clutch and hold—  
 to kiss.  
 But Love there is.

Blest be the pending absence of desire,  
 slight distance between chairs,  
 the transmutation of a chrysalis.  
 There is no love in Bliss.  
 But Love there is.

ERIKA RENON



## THE MARIONETTE OF JOY

RAISE up Thy dappled harlequin of Joy,  
 Thou One Sweet Actress, for the Play's bell rings.  
 Breathless is waiting Thy puppet, Thy toy,  
 For the lightning-pull of the magic strings.

Quite numb I am, just dead, a graceful rag,  
 As all true harlequins have always been.  
 My long and will-less limbs helplessly sag,  
 But in the mellow heart throbs Thy Force, my Queen.

O let these strings now be my nerves of steel  
 That I may vault to the caprice of Thy song,  
 In somersault-whirls Thy Power let me feel  
 To fight in this stuffed body fierce and strong.

JANINA

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## FROM IRRATIONAL TO INTEGER

(A Mathematician's Mysticism)

INTERMINABLE chain, untangled trace,  
 Myth-real across the dense of Being,  
 Surreal graphs' finger-marks in Space  
 Whose viewless tips soothsay mind's seeings—  
 Is it you that have conquered and gone beyond,  
 Here appear whole, filled, enigmatic,  
 Monolith-rooted in God-quick motion ?  
 Thought's pace a snail's to yours—  
 Flight-frozen you stand stone-still in Time.

MADAS  
 (HECTOR ACOSTA)

## THE MACHINE AGE

O SPIRIT of the Future, come apace  
Anointed with the quintessence of the past,  
And wipe away the monstrous shape of things—  
The gross material genius of the times.  
The larger life of the heights and depths has gone,  
And with that too depart their light and peace;  
Soul safely dead in the depths, God nailed to His heights—  
Disturbing unknown quantities erased—  
The mind of Man swayed as Earth's over-lord,  
And surface living took on Eden-taste !

The scene was thus set for a different dawn—  
Man's own creation—and there came Machines—  
Solid, immortal (not ephemeral  
Like a raw Creator's handiwork of life)  
And so unerring, swift, efficient  
That their own maker's master they became !  
No more the hallmark of perfection runs  
'In God's own image' as the scriptures held,  
But 'just machine-like' goes the measure now !  
The finer, subtler impulses of life,  
Intangible intimations from the unseen  
Are only twists and freaks and vagaries—  
Mere temperamental angularities—  
That must be straightened out into the norms  
Of trim behaviour, patterned thought and work;  
The unique in man is the raw-material  
To be turned to finished product in a mass !

Knowledge, character, personality—  
Nothing is soul-deep now, where formerly  
Stood the white centre of man's universe  
Of thought and being, into which filtered down  
From sages, solitudes and Nature's lore  
The meaning of the sacred plan of life,  
The secret of his kinship with the stars;  
But from within man beat a swift retreat,  
And his new commerce with the myriad things  
Created infinite centres nearer them  
Teeming skin-deep; hence now presides on earth

At the solemn altar of utility  
 The hydra-headed Ego animal-borne;  
 And these to satiate is all we seek—  
 Egos and brutes for our constant catering:  
 To think, to act, to feel, to like-dislike,  
 And eat and drink, be merry, live and die  
 In herds, pell-mell, idiosyncrasy-proof !  
 Gigantic planning, clap-trap, slogans, noise—  
 This hot delirium of community Mind  
 Imparts a new soul to each cog of life !  
 Thus link by link, on the social anvil forged,  
 An all-pervading chain (a cosmic God  
 Of latest Panch-Parmeshwar<sup>1</sup> brand) appeared  
 Very much alive, loud-heard and seen, and felt  
 Full iron cool-hot in and out at once !

And like the Titan and the God of yore,  
 The man-machine has its hierarchy vast—  
 Brain-trusts all over, so that a spasm on top  
 Releases brain-waves for Receivers down :  
 Schemes and projects and the given method,  
 Then through the dull-go-round of drab routine  
 Stereotyped and cyclostyled and all  
 Reach their assigned base; a large net-work  
 Of automata of some creative fire  
 And robots of the executive fever's drive  
 Then dumps the market with the commonplace.

'Less pains, more gains *versus* cheapest and best'—  
 Between these positive-negative poles now beats  
 The master-rhythm of dire self-interest,  
 This epoch's boon, the incentive royal that binds—  
 As soul-ties and God-ties could never do—  
 Man to dear man in pious agreement-bond,  
 Binds in such social solidarity  
 And such surfeit of unity intense  
 That life begins to cloy and sicken, one  
 Long languid heaven, listless, inertia-lulled !  
 Then to end the tedium of such gravelike peace  
 Itches for sheer sensation-trial of strength—  
 Full blooded five-act wars when the steam is hottest,

<sup>1</sup> Panchayat-God, meaning that the decision of the Panchayat, the Council of five citizens, is as good and infallible as a divine decree.

Quick one-act conflicts to sustain the warmth ;  
 But when the pendulum swings the other way  
 And tragic tension reaches breaking point,  
 Peace-mongering steps in for comic relief !

The story of Creatrix-Mind is thus  
 A marvel-saga of re-fashioning all—  
 From brute machines to brutal wars and more !  
 But what of that much-vaunted alchemy,  
 Man-making by the good old demigods ?  
 Some tribal fad, primitive, mystifying  
 That yielded place to a tangible ideal—  
 Leader-citizen-training, the national need !

Once in our land the Teacher sat amid  
 His tapovan's<sup>1</sup> ministering sylvan air  
 A sage, an institution in himself  
 With no pretension to technique or tact  
 And all those tricks of the trade of teaching art—  
 But a silent power straightway to touch the soul  
 And help his pupil in its fostering light  
 To form his mind and heart and body—all of him  
 Carved as the icon of the inner man—  
 This was illumined knowledge self-possessed.  
 Now a concrete common-sense denies a core  
 Self-luminous, living, articulate within;  
 After what image then can man be 'formed' ?  
 There's but to 'inform', so the dark cells of the brain  
 Are just 'informed' by outer light through nerves !

The external world is a world of stimuli  
 Weighing on the ignorant cells' world of response;  
 All information pressed home in the small  
 Cerebral store-room is education now—  
 A random hotch-potch of all ends and aims,  
 A hybrid with no genuine name, a tree  
 All 'branches' with no visible trunk, no roots  
 To nourish and sustain, untraced, unlinked  
 To that first cause, the seed, where knowledge folds  
 Its wing upon itself and glows serene  
 Within its integral unity of being;  
 But now each 'branch' is a law unto itself,  
 And to know but that is to become a friend,

<sup>1</sup> Forest-retreat's.

Philosopher, guide—a teacher of young souls,  
A master, as of any other craft !

An aura of austere nobility

There was about the teacher's calling, while  
Its diamond heart disdained the grab of gold ;  
But a plebeian now, it has entered the lists  
Rubbing shoulders with professions mammon-gripped;  
Alien alike to the old world and the new,  
Craving withal to seize the best of both—  
The glory that was Guru in others' eyes,  
And the glamour that is wealth in others' hands—  
It is at home nowhere, with angel's wings  
Tucked on to feet of clay, yet it is given  
The semblance of its reverent prototype :  
Of all professions, this alone enjoys  
A luxury no money can secure—  
The Nation-builder's pompous pride of place—  
Custodianship of wishful sentiments  
And pious hopes of the powers that be, who bind  
With a flattering title submission to his lot;  
But the teacher's loss is his investment too,  
For exploiting his position, he compels  
Respect and precedence from every class,  
Which comes his way without his stepping out  
Of his obligations' barest bookish round  
That cuts him out for the common winner of wage.  
The two accounts being squared up finally,  
The balance-sheet records the teacher's gain,  
By a sum of unearned prestige far above  
The others' earned surpluses that he envies;  
The old Have-nots' enormous credit-figure  
In its own right secure, unbloated stood—  
A paradox to our professional Haves,  
An outrage on the current creed of rights !  
In that thin air, bare heights the Guru trod,  
Earth's richer climate suits the teacher now !

The taught glean all the glitter that can pay,  
True to the logic of appearances—  
All window-dressing shams, tit-bits and froths  
Of knowledge gathered on the facile tips  
Of fingers, tongue, and pen for three brief hours !  
The teachers' lofty labelled duty is

To pack a wholesale roomful wagon brains  
 With market-stuff and roll them down the rails  
 For big junction unloadings at the end  
 Of wayside terminal ones ; and those alone  
 Who pack so safe that nothing goes amiss  
 Are deemed fit for the guild's fraternity <sup>1</sup>

In tune with such high culture of the mind  
 Emotions' training too has got a ring  
 Of planned felicity : nurtured they are  
 Not by the central 'self', but things around.  
 That puerile gospel—'Swabhav', 'Swadharm'<sup>1</sup>—taught  
 The secret of all work is rest and joy ;  
 An elder, wiser cycle now discovers—  
 All work is task and toil and sweat and tears,  
 It must needs sap all energy, deaden heart,  
 So re-fresh, re-create, be whole again.  
 The primitive met his need of simple rest  
 By crude relaxing (like his animal cousins);  
 His pagan self could sniff vitality  
 And charm and beauty over the barren heaths;  
 Into the deep hollow of his centre poured  
 Ethereally, Nature's supernal nothings!  
 But we on the dazzling crest of culture must  
 Uplift diversion from its moorings low,  
 Surround it with the elegant airs of art,  
 And make the natural artificial now!  
 The savage in men has now to undergo  
 The sea-change of processed complexity—  
 Else a whole productive gear inventing tastes  
 For the eye, the ear, the heart fastidiously,  
 And a rich variety show for the tipsy mind,  
 All shot upon the crowded dangling Screen,  
 Shall wind up and fizzle out from life's bazaar !  
 Then might, alas, fall on poor evil days  
 The fertile Studio's chequered shadow shapes  
 And the droning fervour of the iron throats  
 That sweeps the throngs of rapt mechanic hearts !  
 Endless distraction, pageantry, romance  
 Have burst upon our teeming appetites

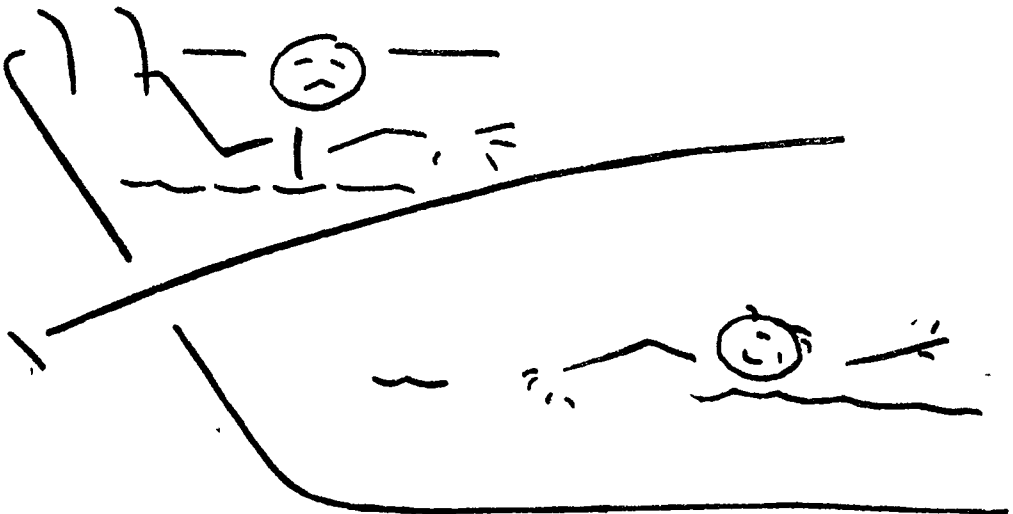
<sup>1</sup> Self-nature, Self-law, implying the Gita's gospel of disinterested action guided by personal aptitude and the inherent moral sense.

Seasoned with sumptuous colour, sound and form.  
 Against that kill-joy Bulder's vistas bleak,  
 A jolly thrill-god's slim pandora-box  
 Unlids visitations every other hour  
 Of panoramas of daintier earths and skies !  
 Heavy doses of manufactured bliss are thus  
 Doled out to hallful bundles of dead nerves—  
 Drudgery's asylum-seeking casualties,  
 Technology's mirth-begging multitudes !

The ancient puzzle of Brahmic hide-and-peek  
 Has found its modern version in the game  
 Of sowing the seeds of cheerless tiring work  
 Only to reap magnificent joy and rest :  
 The one static and stark monotony  
 Blooming into many-hued diversity !

*(To be continued)*

NARESH BAHADUR



"I'm not afraid . . ."

"You have to trust yourself to the water if you want to learn to swim."

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**English in India: Its Present and Future** by *V.K. Gokak*, Asia Publishing House, Rs. 12,50.

Education is going through such revolutionary changes today that any authoritative book on a major aspect of these changes demands that those responsible for its function should read it. Professor Gokak's work is such a book.

Many 'experts' on English in India might have written a book like this but not with the special experience and insight that Professor Gokak brings to the subject. One feels that he has lifted the argument from the arena of national controversy not only to the academic plane but on to a level of objectivity which may well serve as an authoritative reference for teaching English as a world language and therefore be of practical help to teachers in almost every country in the world.

It is not only the thoroughness of the work and its many-sided forms of approach to a complex subject that one has to admire, but that almost intuitive insight into the pattern of events that stands witness to a much vaster canvas of understanding. One is reminded of world events that have imposed themselves upon the structure of our lives—the Romans invading Britain and 'unconsciously' bringing to those Islands the power of administration, the organization and discipline of man and his affairs, the sense of law and justice and the knowledge to build roads and buildings that endure. And not least of all the Latin tongue, on which is based the grammatical structure of the English language. All these attributes of government, administration, law and organisation have been part of the 'legacy' which Britain has left to India. No doubt, among the paraphernalia (the word is used advisedly) of that legacy there were some things that India did not want—such as the type of education planned to supply clerks and Civil Servants for the Administration—no doubt there were some things that the Ancient Britons did not want from the Romans, but forces of world issues are beyond the understanding of mere man. Nevertheless, there are men who concern themselves with the petty squabbles of political patriotism and there are men who see their subject with a wider view. Professor Gokak is of the latter. He points to the present in unequivocal detail and to the future as one who has not only the courage of his convictions but also a great concern for the welfare and good of the young student body for which all sincere teachers are to a very large extent responsible. One feels it is out of this larger sense of responsibility that the book has been written. English in India is no less than Railways in India, or Law in India, or Government in India. It is one of the instruments of communication; perhaps one of the most needed at the moment. Did not Walt Whitman exclaim in his *Leaves of Grass* ?—



“Passage to India !

Lo, soul, seest thou not God’s purpose from the first ?  
 The earth to be spann’d connected by networks,  
 The races, neighbors, to marry and to be given in marriage,  
 The oceans to be cross’d, the distant brought near,  
 The lands to be welded together.”

Perhaps the most cogent advice Professor Gokak has to give is in the chapter on Research in English in our Universities. He points out the fruitlessness of work which is merely repetitive collating of facts rather than an original contribution to knowledge and suggests an investigation into the field of the impact of English literature on the literatures of Indian languages. With regard to this suggestion, it may be remembered, the indubitable contribution English has made has been very well outlined by Shrimati Tilottama Daswani’s talk over the air, which was also featured as articles in *The Indian P.E.N*, 1963-64. These articles could very well serve as a basis for a more serious work on the subject.

In pointing out the chaotic state of the teaching of English in our schools and colleges Professor Gokak puts his finger on the crucial difficulty of the problem—the difficulty of finding trained and qualified teachers. The foundation years, he says, are in the hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far-reaching developments in the pedagogy of English. Pupils are taught English for about six periods a week for six years. But it has been estimated that they hardly know 1500 words by the time they join the university. This means that they have hardly been able to learn English words at the rate of one word per period.

One wonders if the Government of India will shy away from Professor Gokak’s important book or endeavour in time to do something about it. There are, however, two factors which might be further considered. One, that children today have a much wider range of mental capacity than the older educators conceive of, and they can easily learn three or even four languages at the same time, given the proper facilities. Two, that perhaps the facilities and the teacher problem might be partially solved within a few years when satellite television comes to India and we would be able to use it on a wide national scale for all aspects of training, instruction and education. Until then, Professor Gokak’s book should be read and assimilated by all teachers who have that sense of dedication and responsibility to the growing intellects and rising youth that are to become the greatness of our future India.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

**Luminous Lotus** by *Arunendu Nandy*. Published by Granthadham, Calcutta 25.  
Price : 0.50 nP.

It is at once a pleasant and a painful task to be able to review a collection of poems by a new poet, though Arunendu Nandy, the poet in question, is not altogether unknown to our circle. Pleasant if the reviewer happens to find the poems "charged" enough and soaring above his criteria of the minimum in poetic perfection. And painful, otherwise. For, the reviewer is seldom ignorant that each poem means to its author nothing less than a child to its father; that a poet's ink is thicker than blood.

In spite of the devotional and aesthetic eagerness present behind these poems, at times Nandy seems not to have been strict enough with his critical awareness even as far as the very external and elementary perfection of form is concerned. And, until and unless we satisfy these fundamental needs of good poetry, how can we claim to follow the sunlit path leading to the luminous lotus of what Sri Aurobindo calls "the Future Poetry"?

Had the poet been conscious of these minor shortcomings, we would have enjoyed much more this little bunch of "wild flowers" where there are, now and again, sincere tones of emotion, such as :

Thou art the heart of my heart, O Mother,  
On earth ambrosial shower.  
    Golden beauty charms our eyes,  
    In Thy hand's touch deep peace lies...

The writer has also an occasional turn for quaint effects which hold an interesting promise :

As an atom's split by neutron  
    By Thy glance gloom's shattered in me,

or

Poems will be cages  
    For truth-birds, great healers.

PRITHWINDRA

## WORLD UNION'S LETTER TO HEADS OF STATE

MEDHANANDA, who is in charge of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library, has co-operated with WORLD UNION by composing the following letter which will be sent through World Union to Heads of State and people who are in a position to mould world opinion. The replies will be published in *World Union Goodwill* and the editor of *Mother India* will make his selection from them

1964

Your Excellency,

WORLD UNION is planning in its journal, and later in book form, a collection of quotations from all the world's leaders under the title, "Unity in Diversity", with special emphasis on the unity of our aspirations.

In our opinion, man's aspirations and longings are a contributing factor to and an indication of his future evolution. Even if there seems to be a disagreement on our immediate political aims, there may be a common purpose on which agreement is possible.

We respectfully ask you, therefore, as spokesman for your people :

*What do you consider the highest political purpose and at the same time the ultimate achievement, the true aspiration of mankind ?*

(Either a personal statement, or a quotation from some of your writers or statesmen, would be acceptable.)

Past endeavours to formulate man's "earthly" aspirations have usually been either veiled by religion or buried beneath the more immediate need for an absence of fear, famine, disease, exploitation or war.

We don't expect statements on which we shall all agree but we hope they will be of a wide, positive, ultimate nature which all can respect.

Yours sincerely,  
WORLD UNION

When WORLD UNION wrote to the Mother asking if it could send out this letter, she replied :

*"Yes do—Something interesting may come out of it. Blessings."*

# Students' Section

## BATTLE FOR LIGHT

A PLAY

ACT I

Scene 6

*Abode of Jnana, a centre of Truth and Power. Everything here seems to have taken shape after "an inner law of beauty." Even flowers breathe the hymn of a "blissful Dawn". All bespeak reverence for beauty.*

*Enter Tapasya—body lean and spare, but a "mass of courage and heavenly strength", with "unsleeping eyes". A halo is round her head.*

TAPASYA (*looking about*): What's there that fills the heart with spontaneous bliss here ?

JNANA (*coming out*): Tapasya, you here ?

TAPASYA : The Rishis of yore sang :

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्य

*Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ.*

"The soul is not attainable by weaklings." Yet in the world of today is there any place for me ? Modern men shy at austerities...

JNANA : Austerities ! Rejection of life was not the way of the Rishis. Their's was a life of bliss in a life of renunciation. Master of themselves, they lived like gods on earth and in affluence.

TAPASYA : Lived in affluence ? Can austerity and prosperity—two opposite poles—meet ?

JNANA : That's the demand of the day. Prosperity governed by spirituality. One must learn to rise like vapour under the sun's radiance and fall like life-giving rain.

TAPASYA (*curiously*): But can one ?

JNANA : Man has reached a stage where he needs the help of one who can open his eyes to the vision of a new world, a new life. Then he will learn to live in harmony with others like stars in the sky.

TAPASYA (*unable to contain herself*): Ah, say no more. (*Ridiculing*) One who cannot guide himself dreams of guiding the world and for him you'd win the place of a god ! You'd have a rose blossom in a desert !

JNANA : All can be done if there is a touch of the Mother's golden Grace. Life can grow happier than the rose if there opens the "hidden spring of sweetness."

TAPASYA : It all looks like a day-dream.

JNANA : Is that all you've to say ? Why is there no "touch of sweetness" in your thought and feeling for earthly creatures, Tapasya ?

TAPASYA : My only concern is to make men learn to do or die and not keep on looking up to the heavens for everything. That's all. Tell me where I am wrong.

JNANA : To open your eyes, shall I say (*a pause, then in a soft voice*) that all you've to do is to prepare the field for higher powers to act.

*(Tapasya looks vacantly.)*

You must not forget, Tapasya, ours is an inner war and much more difficult than any outer one.

TAPASYA (*smiling assent and adding*) : That means an endless battle with oneself, and an unending austerity.

JNANA : Again austerity ! You want to win me over to your side ? No "big spiritual gain" without labour, I admit, but can any amount of askesis bring about transformation of body, transformation of life and mind ?

TAPASYA (*puzzled*) : What's that ? What does the word "transformation" signify ?

JNANA (*a smile quivering on his lips*) : You seem shocked !

TAPASYA (*bewildered*) : You mean purification ?

JNANA (*smiling*) : No flight of imagination can give you an idea of transformation.

TAPASYA (*seriously*) . You may soar as high as you can but you can't be blind to the fact that so long as the whole being of man does not welcome the Divine, His Light cannot shine in man's heart, His Power cannot act through him.

JNANA : We're fully alive to the situation. That's why our progress is so slow. But remember "earth's yearning and her cry for bliss" shall not go for nothing.

TAPASYA (*still unconvinced, her being refusing to change her notions, but her lips reluctantly mumbling*) : I see.

JNANA (*a prophetic light playing in his eyes*) : You may or may not believe. No power on earth can stop the onward march of evolution. No darkness can stand the might of the rising Sun.

TAPASYA : Hard even to conceive.

JNANA : Wait, wait. Let our war with the Serpent power come to an end; then you'll see what transformation is.

Earth has seen my struggle; it must wait for the "prophetic hour" to see my victory.

A BLISSFUL VOICE : Then this very spot will be hailed as the "City of Delight".

*(To be continued)*

# YOGA AND LIFE

## V

### TRADITIONAL YOGAS . YOGAS OF THE PAST

WE have seen how through the developing elements of life a greater and greater harmony is being achieved by Nature. In this process of development, divergent and contradictory elements and functions are brought together to achieve more and more complex accord and integration at a higher level.

This harmony is worked out through thesis and antithesis of life's variegated movement ascending towards a wider and richer consciousness and culminating in a more and more integral and powerful synthesis, in terms of consciousness as well as translated in types of species. Man, being at the summit of Nature's present growth, is the key and hope for the next step of her evolution heralding the advent of higher types of species than himself. For, by his conscious effort and collaboration with Nature's onward and upward urge for more and more complex harmony, he can speed up this process of growth and create a new, a more concordant and synthetic life.

"Exceed thyself" must be his motto, with his regard fixed on the glorious future for the human race. "Be thyself" of the Vedanta, which indeed means and can only be effectuated by self-transcendence, must in precept and practice become equivalent to the aforesaid dictum of Nietzsche whose prophetic words pronounced a great truth. Only his conception of this truth is too Titanic and quite out of the track Nature seeks to pursue towards the Divine. The traditional Yogas have variously helped Nature in her end.

Rajayoga enunciated an eightfold path for self-transcendence. *Yama* (restraint), *niyama* (discipline and culture), *āsana* (body-posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath-control), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal from the senses) : these five constitute the outward means. *Dhāraṇa* (concentration and dwelling on the consciousness)—consisting of *smaraṇa* (remembrance), *cintana* (reflexion and repetition) and *nidhyāsana* (dwelling upon), —*dhyāna* (meditation) and *samādhi* (complete absorption) . these three constitute the inward means.

Rajayoga seeks to attain liberation from bondage and inner discord and division and a single-purposefulness culminating in union and harmony with the highest state of consciousness. The process and principle on which this Yoga is based consist in disciplining the mind to become one-pointed and fixed on the ascending states of consciousness with the supreme consciousness at the apex, by *citta mrodha*, (discipline and austerity of the mental consciousness) achieved by the said eightfold path.

But this Yoga leaves out the bodily perfection which is the aim of Hatha Yoga. Also its final achievement, *i.e.* *samādhi*, ignores the many-sided life of the individual in society. In effect, it involves a sort of escape from life. Samadhi becomes an indispensable state; and perfection in action, movement and stir of Nature and mastery over her multifarious activities in the world are not taken into account and remain

ignored, except to the extent that is absolutely essential to the individual body's normal functioning.

Similarly in Hatha yogic discipline of the bodily life, the cumbersome and arduous processes of body-postures lead us more and more away from the life of society inasmuch as more and more reliance and emphasis on *samadhi* becomes indispensable. The Yogi tends to withdraw from the life-field which must be our foundation for a spiritual and divine life and a basis for the one-levelment of Yoga and life.

The Yogas of Devotion, Knowledge and Works—*Bhakti Yoga*, *Jñāna Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*—in the same way seek exclusive attainments through the particular centres of consciousness in the human being connected with the respective disciplines.

*Bhakti Yoga* is followed more or less exclusively through the heart, even to the detriment, the irregular or undisciplined development of other parts of the being, *Jnana Yoga* through mind and intellect and *Karma Yoga* through will and action. Even their composite triple path tends, in practice, to be a successive and a separative following rather than an integrated and synthetic process.

In *Tantra Yoga*, also called *Mahayoga* or *Kundalini Yoga*, the emphasis is on the awakening of this dormant Nature-Energy, this *Shakti* in the various centres of human consciousness, particularly at the base of the spinal cord where it lies serpent-like coiled. But as it is actually practised, its action tends to become individual and self-centred. The equally important life-in-action and society-aspect remain unstressed. The method followed is exclusive, arduous and not easily accessible even to those who are sufficiently willing to pursue it; also it exacts all-excluding time and energy.

However, in its massiveness, rather than in its method, central process and scope, it comes very near to the all-embracing Yoga with which we shall deal later.

In *Tantra*, the preoccupation is with the action of the awakened Nature-Energy more than with the discipline, purification and integration of the being and on the lines of Nature's own integral movement of progress essential for an all-round growth. Another distinction of great importance between these Yogas is that in *Tantra*, with the increase and possession of Yogic power and capacities, a certain egoism tends to grow, most often deeply-rooted, subtle and imperceptible. And when with this joins—undetected, secretly creeping up or complacently indulged—enjoyment of the results of the realised powers, the situation becomes really critical from the spiritual point of view and there is every danger of fall from the path.

This danger is avoided in the Yoga we are going to describe. It is avoided by a calculated preparation and an indispensable action of surrender and complete erasure of ego before its full-fledged action becomes spontaneous and the onward and upward Yogic turn becomes definitive and irrevocable.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

# SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

No. 6.

June

1. The passing of Jawaharlal Nehru on the 27th May gathered the world in a hushed moment of concentrated remembrance that here was a great man, a great statesman, a great soul. And if we agree with Shakespeare that "All the world's a stage,/ And all the men and women merely players", then here was one who was more than a mere player; rather was he one who directed the players, pointing the way to unity and harmony.

He was a great man because he had that rare quality of pursuing with perseverance a great ideal. He was a great statesman because he alone among his fellow politicians had the rare vision of his country's destiny. He was a great soul because he was a complete personality and used it to identify himself with the greater unity of the Soul of India.

## 2. Books

Students ! You cannot read all the books in a library in a lifetime—you should then consult your teacher or the librarian about which books and which authors to read on a particular subject.

## 3. Libraries

As far as libraries go, the amount of recorded knowledge doubles every ten years. But the book stock of the Bradford Institute of Technology has doubled its stock in three years and reached 26,000 volumes—suitable, perhaps, for a local technical college, but a college working party were appalled and recommended a plan for expanding the stock to 500,000 which would be comparable to other university institutions, says *The Times Educational Supplement*

## 4. Audio-Visual Aids

The Oxford University Press (Education Department) are now issuing books on 'tapes' for teaching French—i.e. "Let's Speak French" by Pamela Symonds, 20 reels with a duration of six hours, costing fifteen guineas. This still makes audio-visual aids far too expensive for schools in India.

## 5. Education in Hongkong

This small British Crown Colony must be one of the most education-conscious territories in the world. Almost a quarter of its population of 3,750,000 attend classes—pre-primary, primary, secondary, adult and university. To the Chinese, education has almost equal priority with a sufficiency of food, a home, and family honour. To them education is more than learning, it is a tradition dating from the Han Dynasty of 200 B.C.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT