

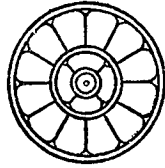
MOTHER INDIA

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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. XVII

No. 10 & 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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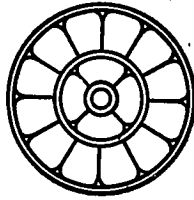
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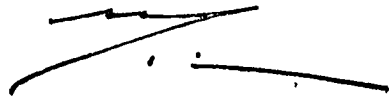
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Il y a, derrière toute chose, une beauté, une harmonie divine ; c'est avec cela qu'il faut entrer en contact ; c'est cela qu'il faut exprimer.

19-8-1965



There is, behind everything, a divine beauty and harmony ; it is with this that we must come into contact ; it is this that we must express.

19-8-1965

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.)

JANUARY 19, 1940 (Cont.)

LATE EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO : I was reading Nishikanta's *Alakananda*—it is exceedingly fine poetry, but in order to be called great that is not enough. The body of the work must be great. That is what I meant when I wrote that in order to equal Tagore he must progress more. By "body" here I don't mean length. His whole work lacks "mass", it hasn't yet got sufficient body in that sense. I have read his long poems but this element has yet to come. Yeats and AE have not written long poems. But if you take Yeats' works piece by piece, you will see that he has a sufficient body. Both he and AE have created something which adds to the world's literature. That is what I mean by "body". Tagore also has added to the body of the world's characteristic literature. If you take Nishikanta poem by poem he may equal Tagore, but he has not yet that characteristic body that can as a work stand by itself.

N : Hasn't Nishikanta produced characteristic work ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He has, but I don't mean "characteristic" in that sense. For instance, if Milton had not written *Paradise Lost*, he would still have been a great poet but he wouldn't occupy so great a place in English literature. Keats, people say, had he lived, would have been as great as Shakespeare. At least there was the promise in him. But he did not create a sufficient body by which his work could stand by itself. He had the promise but it couldn't fulfil itself.

N : What about Harin ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He is a beautiful lyrical poet. He showed a promise and I expected more from him.

N : But Amal once wrote an article in which he said that Harin was the greatest living poet.¹

¹ The statement was concerned with short poems ; Harin was called the writer of the largest number of excellent short poems at present. (Editor)

SRI AUROBINDO : Even while Yeats was living ?

N : Yes. That was an exaggeration, of course. I don't know now after Yeats' death.

P : Amal himself has done some remarkable work.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not sufficient.

P : If Dilip could practise some reticence in his art he would be a great artist.

N : The defect is not so much absence of reticence as repetition of ideas.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not only ideas but images too.

N : Otherwise he has a great mastery over the technique and language. If only his consciousness would change, he would perhaps create something.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. And self-discipline, *tapasyā*, too is needed.

N : It is really very strange that his poetry is not recognised. I don't know why, unless it is due to his cutting a new line altogether.

P : Pujalal too was opposed by people when he brought in sonnets. They said he was doing something foreign. But some people have asked him to attempt something big, like an epic.

SRI AUROBINDO : For an epic you require the power of architectural construction.

All these poets have shown only a promise, they are yet forming and not formed. What I mean is the formation of a poetic personality that has fulfilled itself. With them it is yet the promise and not the fulfilment of the poetic personality.

N : Nolini also used to say that it is just the beginning with Dilip, Nishikanta and the others. We used to be surprised to hear that.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : Nolini is a good judge.

After all had gone, Sri Aurobindo asked N what Tagore had meant by saying that Nishikanta alone had acquired mastery over rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO : Dilip has sent me two poems today. I find that in one of them he is as good a master.

N : Tagore seems to mean that only Nishikanta has easy mastery over the language, while the rest are not yet quite natural, easy and spontaneous, Nishikanta has followed the old tradition, while the others, especially Dilip, have cut quite new paths which seem not entirely native to the soil. I think this is the main difficulty with all these people. Otherwise Dilip has an equally great mastery over technique, though his expressions may not always be happy and he repeats.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, he hasn't yet made the full right use of his gift.

JANUARY 20, 1940

N read to Sri Aurobindo Tagore's letter to Nishikanta, praising Nishikanta's book *Alakananda*. Sri Aurobindo was very glad and exclaimed "Oh!" and at the end said, "That is wonderful."

When P and others came, P said, "N is feeling triumphant today." S did not understand and looked sideways at N.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is because of Tagore's eulogy of Nishikanta's poems. Tagore has acknowledged defeat.

S : Has he written again ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. Where's the letter ? (*When the letter was produced, Sri Aurobindo translated it into English.*) You can't say more than that.

N : P is also triumphant because he was sure Tagore would write again.

P : Yes, I felt like that. Tagore is very polite in these things.

S : In view of his first letter, there seemed no chance of his writing anything more.

N : Now he finds that his two grievances have been satisfied—first his consideration for mass-understanding and then his call for variety, for Nishikanta has made the book a representative collection.

SRI AUROBINDO : His former letter meant : "Yes, you have written something but you are not a poet." (*Then addressing P*) This business of mass-understanding is rather stupid, it appears. I have been reading the quotations you have given. I find them so clearly mystic. I don't know how these people try to make out a realistic meaning, instead of taking the matter in its obvious mystic significance. They are creating all sorts of interpretations : *Rita* is water, and all that—Dravidians and Aryans fighting, etc.

N : I asked Nolini yesterday what people like Tagore meant by saying that Nishikanta alone has easy mastery over language or expression, while others do not. He says that he means our language or expression is rather far-fetched, laborious, not spontaneous or easy.

SRI AUROBINDO : Does that mean something created by the mind ?

N : I believe so.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then it is not true. It is, on the contrary, something coming down from above by inspiration.

N : Nolini also says that Nishikanta follows the Bengali tradition while Dilip and others have cut a new line and one has to enter into the new spirit to appreciate it. Some people here say too that we make things deliberately difficult.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not true. Of course, it is not necessary to make things unintelligible in order to be a poet.

P (*after some time*) : Nishikanta now can advertise Tagore's opinion.

N : Yes, Tarapada has already asked him to send him at once any appreciation. When I took the letter to Nishikanta and said it was from Tagore, he asked : "Why again ?" He expected another cold reception. But after reading he became jubilant and said : "See how promptly he has replied, while to others like J he has kept quiet." (*Sri Aurobindo laughed.*)

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO : X has written to me that Y has said: "Sisir Maitra came here out of emotion." By "emotion" he means *bhāva*, I suppose. But I don't understand what is wrong with emotion.

P (*just coming in*) : I verified the story of the bull. The bull's name is Bholanath. Lalji himself has seen its performances. It can even pick out from a crowd the man whose name has been pronounced to it. If a photograph is hidden in somebody's pocket and the bull is asked to detect the man, it can do so !

SRI AUROBINDO : To pick out by name is something remarkable. Must be an intuitive bull. And how can it get the name of an unknown person even by intuition ? Not even a Yogi can do it. He can know a certain person by first seeing him in a vision, but he can't know him by his name.

N : It is Shiva's bull perhaps ?

P : The name Bholanath also has the Shiva-touch.

B : When the bull finds a man by his name, the whole thing may be prearranged by the party.

P : How ? Even in an unknown crowd the bull can do it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Animals have vital intuition and they find out things by it, as man does by thought. You know about horses being trained in Germany to do arithmetic.

P : Yes, Maeterlinck himself wrote about it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Did he ?

P : Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO : It was not one horse only, but a group of them. Animals can be trained to many things and they can be made familiar with sounds and names by repeated utterance. But to find out an unknown man by his name is, I repeat, remarkable. Can't explain it.

(*After some time*) Another remarkable thing—of a quite different kind—I read of in the *Sunday Times*. Some doctors say that an attack of asthma can be instantly relieved by inhaling the smell from a pot of honey. The relief lasts for half an hour.

S : But won't one be tempted to eat from the pot ?

SRI AUROBINDO : An asthmatic like J would finish the pot in one night. (*Laughter*)

N : Not possible during an acute attack which simply lays one up with distress.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then she would finish it between the attacks. Honey seems to contain many chemicals.

N : What are they ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have forgotten, and I am not a scientist.

S : It is good to forget, Sir. Scientists also have to forget at times.

N : In Ayurveda, honey has many uses,

JANUARY 21, 1940

EVENING

P : Dilip told me just now that AE moves him very much. He has a great depth, he says.

SRI AUROBINDO : Because he moves Dilip? But many people don't like him.

N : S also likes AE very much, more than Yeats because of his spiritual substance.

SRI AUROBINDO : AE is a spiritual poet while Yeats is an occult one; AE has a far richer mind and a finer intellectual power.

P : Yes, I have read his essays on Irish national reconstruction. I was glad to find that he has such a grasp over things like agriculture.

SRI AUROBINDO : He has done more than anybody else for Irish national reconstruction. Yes, his personality is many-sided and varied, while Yeats has only power of imagination.

N : AE is a better critic also.

SRI AUROBINDO : I haven't read his criticism. Yeats is a bad critic. He is nothing else except a good poet, a very good and great poet. His character is not up to much. He is said to be vain and proud.

JANUARY 22, 1940

P showed Sri Aurobindo four pictures of events in Buddha's life by Nandalal Bose, published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*.

SRI AUROBINDO : Are they published as realistic pictures ? They are not meant to be realistic. Buddha remains young till the end. His dying does not look like dying but like going to sleep, nor does it show that he had severe indigestion at that time.

(*Looking at a few specimens of Moghul art*) Some of these are very fine. (*About a coloured picture of Krishna playing the flute and the Gopis dancing, in the usual modern style of painting*) Ah, this is a masterpiece, a real bacchanal ! ((*Laughter*))

P : I didn't want you to see that.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some time*) : How do they say that Buddha after passing through four dhyanas (meditation) entered Nirvana ? How do they know it ?

N : That is the Pali text. All of them say that.

SRI AUROBINDO : Now they are trying to prove that "a piece of pork" is not meat but some vegetable root which caused his death, "a piece" or "part" being root.

N : My Pali teacher used to give another ingenious explanation. He said that *sukar* means what has been cooked well and many good things jumbled and cooked together may act as poison. It is not *khaṇḍa* (portion) but *maddava*, a stewlike preparation.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then it is not *sukar* but should be *sukrita* as adjective.

N : In Pali it may be *sukar*.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is your Pali teacher's explanation. It may be Gujarati also : *su kara* ? —what are you doing ? (*Laughter*)

After this, some discussion followed on Aryans and Dravidians.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Dravidians are said to have been described in the Rig-veda as flat-nosed. But look at the Tamils. Most of them have projecting noses. Very few have flat ones.¹

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*leading the talk*) : I have finished reading Nishikanta's book *Alakananda*. I don't see why D says that he has no intellectual substance.

P : Nishikanta himself was telling me just now that at least the poems at the end of the book contain such substance.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why only those ? The earlier poems too have it.

(*Later*) You must have read that Gandhi has been authorised by the Congress Working Committee to negotiate with the Viceroy. As a matter of fact, he is already doing it. He has been given the sole power.

P : Perhaps the Viceroy is coming down now. The *Times of India's* comment suggests that. Have you seen it ? It says that Jinnah's demands are unreasonable, etc. That may be the British Government's view too.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, the *Times* is their official organ.

P : There is a reason also. It seems Russia and Japan are trying to come to a settlement. In that case they may have designs on India.

If the Muslims combine with the Congress, still another difficulty remains : the Princes.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

N : Gandhi says he has no objection to the Princes if they remain like the King of England.

SRI AUROBINDO (*with a smile*) : If the Princes remain at all, I am not for stinting them—they must have some power. If a Prince is capable or if he has a capable minister, he can do a lot of good, which a parliament can't.

¹ Cf. *On the Veda*, pp. 30-31, where Sri Aurobindo writes : "The distinction between Aryan and un-Aryan, on which so much has been built, seems on the mass of the evidence to indicate a cultural rather than a racial difference. The language of the hymns clearly points to a particular worship or spiritual culture as the distinguishing sign of the Aryan.... There is no reliable indication of any racial difference."

Also footnote to the first occurrence of "racial difference" in the above passage : "It is urged that the Dasyus are described as black of skin and noseless in opposition to the fair and high-nosed Aryans. But the former distinction is certainly applied to the Aryan Gods and the Dasa Powers in the sense of light and darkness and the word *anā a* does not mean noseless. Even if it did, it would be wholly inapplicable to the Dravidian races; for the southern nose can give as good an account of itself as any 'Aryan' proboscis in the North."

P : Moreover, the Princes are getting wise. The present Gaekwar has already curtailed a big amount of his privy purse. Sahaji Rao in that way was bad. He used to grab heavy amounts for himself. But at the same time he did a lot of public works too.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, he didn't starve the Public Services.

P : Only, he spent a lot of money in going often to Europe. However, he erected a lot of good buildings in Baroda.

SRI AUROBINDO : His Europe-visits no less than his buildings have done good to the State.

P : Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan has frankly admitted that the question is after all of the loaves and fishes of office and not religious at all.

N : The Muslims don't seem to trust the Hindus. Even Sir Akbar Hydari said he couldn't trust Gandhi.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's only because of Gandhi's way of life and philosophy.

P (*when Sri Aurobindo had started resting*) : It appears your *Life Divine* is finished now.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not yet; only the first draft is done.

P : *The Psychology of Social Development* won't take much time.

SRI AUROBINDO : No.

N : Is that the next book you'll be working on ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. (*Looking at P*) *The Ideal of Human Unity* will have to be rewritten perhaps. Things have changed and Hitler is mainly responsible for it.

NIRODBARAN

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

I

SOME PROBLEMS OF SADHANA

NOT to be touched or disturbed by the difficulties, to feel separate from them is the first step towards freedom. 6-6-1936

Q : Probably the ego and the vital being feel baffled due to the stormy action of the Mother's Force and my resolution to get rid of them before the 15th August. Is it not so ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course, they always resist a pressure to get rid of them—and if one fixes a given time, they are all the more resistant in the hope of creating disappointment and discouragement by the failure to do it in the given time. 6-6-1936

Q : Is the heat, felt in the body, of the fever or of the Mother's Force which has exerted a tremendous pressure on my "ādhāra" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That has still to be seen. It is most probably the tapas heat; the question is whether it is turned partially in the body into fever. 7-6-1936

Q : In the morning, at the same time some parts of the body experienced heat and others cold. Was it not the result of a simultaneous action of Agni and peace ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is probably that. 7-6-1936

Q : Fullness upto 2-30 p.m. and emptiness in the evening was my normal life. But for the last three days there has been practically no sadhana in the morning. Why these fluctuations ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know. Times and seasons vary according to the poise and flux and reflux of the forces in the consciousness. It is not a thing to which you can affix a rationalised and systematised explanation. One can feel it and understand in the essence of the consciousness, but not formulate precise cause and effect. 10-6-1936

One cannot say whether the conquest is near or not—one has to go on steadily with the process of the sadhana without thinking of near and far, fixed on the aim, not elated if it seems to come close, not depressed if it still seems to be far. 23-6-1936

The lower nature is called lower because it is unenlightened—it can't be en-

lightened and changed by ignoring it, the higher has to be brought there—so one must speak of both, not of the higher alone.

11-7-1936

As for the inconveniences, you should take them as a training in *Samatā*. To be able to bear inconveniences is one of the most elementary necessities if one wants to enter into the true spirit of Yoga.

28-8-1936

From what you wrote it may just as well be the reaction that frequently follows an experience; the adverse Force coming in with a contrary movement. Tests come sometimes from the hostile forces, sometimes in the course of Nature. I suppose they must be necessary, since they always come in sadhana.

16-9-1936

Sadness is of no use—it is itself a form of *tamas* (inertia) and therefore does not help recovery.

22-7-1936

These generalisations on either side are not of much value. One does not need to get a hatred for food in order to get rid of the greed for food. On the other hand, to develop dislike for certain things may help to reject them—but that too is not always the cure, for they may remain in spite of the dislike.

27-7-1936

Q : By the increasing signs of the inertia I knew that the lapse from the good to a lower state was coming. I failed to prevent it. Was it really an inevitable fall?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is nothing inevitable, only things that happen, because of the condition of the consciousness, the forces that work on it and the reaction to the forces by being more responsive to us than to the inertia.

25-9-1936

Q : You wrote, "...but an effort in which also there is the spirit of surrender..." Kindly explain to me how to keep a spirit of surrender in my effort?

SRI AUROBINDO : By calling in the Force to aid the personal effort, by not getting into despondency and the rest of it if the results do not come, by a never failing tranquil confidence in the final outcome of the sadhana.

25-9-1936

You have to be conscious of the wrong movements, but not preoccupied with them only.

26-1-1936

It is not a question of giving an equal value to everything you do, but of recognising the value of all the different elements of the sadhana. No such rule can be made as that trances are of little value or that experiences are of inferior importance any more than it can be said that work is of no or inferior importance.

17-4-1936

Q : I thought there must be some rules and regulations even in the fluctuations (of our sadhana), fixed by the cosmic or Divine forces. In that way cannot one find out what makes the oscillations come and go and how they can be managed?

SRI AUROBINDO : There are no fixed rules. There are simply a mass of tendencies and forces with which one has to become familiar. It is not a fixed machinery which one can manage by devices or by pulling this or that button. It is only by the inner Will, the constant aspiration, by detachment and rejection, by bringing down the true consciousness, force etc. that it can be done. 10-3-1936

Q: I can't make out how the ego, sex, inertia and vital difficulties have all come up together at the same time. Surely they were not in such a mess before? Can you not kindly make this thing clear?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is nothing to be made clear. These things were there before but to some extent controlled by the will or not sufficiently recognised by the consciousness. They now come up in the physical nature separated from the rest in their true appearance and force. They are able to persist because of the tamas in your nature which is unwilling to make a sustained and constant reaction of a quiet, steady and resolute kind. To be firm in rejection and firm in the call for the higher consciousness, is the only way to deal with these things. 20-3-1936

Q: When asked why the evenings brought a straight fall into inertia, you said, "Because the inertia is there in the physical consciousness and has made itself habitual—so the consciousness falls back to it." Well, the inertia is there in the mornings also and yet I remain in the higher consciousness. What is the exact reason of the fall after 4 p.m.?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no mentally definite and rigidly effective reason for the thing coming in the evening rather than at 2 p.m. or in the midnight or in the morning. For some people the fall comes in the evening, for some in the morning, for some at other times, and so too with the rise. But the alternations happen to most people in one law of rhythm or another. The times vary with people and even can vary with the same man. There is no definable reason for it being at a particular time except that it has made itself habitual at that time. The rest is a question of the play of forces which is observable but the reasons of which escape mental definition. 7-4-1936

Q: How does the work of transformation of the Earth-consciousness proceed? Are not some of its parts conquered and the resistance reduced?

SRI AUROBINDO : It seems to me they are pretty strong still. There is a progress, but not very definable,—more in tendency than in precise result.

Q: There is a certain amount of peace and silence so long as I keep myself plunged in writing. But when I go for meditation the same old thing returns—small and useless thoughts.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is either because you lose the concentration by the cessation of the writing which helps to concentrate you—or else because you are invaded by

the general atmosphere which is full of inertia and the small movements of the little physical mind and physical vital. 13-4-1936

2

MENTAL SILENCE AND LEARNING LANGUAGES, ETC.

Q: Is it not a fact that most of the true Yogas demand a passivity of the mind as the first important basis? Does our Yoga differ from them in this discipline at least? If not, what is its secret in allowing the sadhakas to keep their minds constantly active in learning languages? Or has it created for them such a climate that they can keep their minds calm and quiet somehow behind and in spite of this mental activity?

SRI AUROBINDO: One can go on without anything except a little rice daily and some water—without clothes even or a house to shelter. Is that what you call true Yoga and that should be followed in the Asram? But then there is no need of an Asram. A cave somewhere for each will do.

Why do you use a fountain pen? You can very well go on with an ordinary one. Why do you take these cahiers¹ from the stores? Cheap papers would do. Why do you write? The mind should be passive.

If by passivity of the mind you mean laziness and inability to use it, then what Yoga makes that its basis? The mind has to be quieted and transformed, not made indolent and useless. Is there any old Yoga that makes it a rule not to allow those who practice it to study Sanskrit or philosophy? Does that prevent the Yogis from attaining mental quietude? Do you think that the Mother and myself never read anything and have to sit all day inactive in order to make our minds quiet? Are you not aware that the principle of this Yoga is to arrive at an inner silence in which all activities can take place without disturbing the silence? 24-3-1937

Q: What is the need for so many here to learn French? Are you preparing them for giving lectures or opening centres in France or French-knowing countries?

SRI AUROBINDO: Are life and mind to be governed only by material utility or outward practicality? Spiritual life would then be inferior even to ordinary mental life where people learn for the sake of acquiring knowledge and culturing the mind and not only for the sake of some outward utility. 24-3-37

Q: By this I do not mean that reading or studying is bad. The outer mind is to be developed. But, if one knows one language well, is it not quite enough of an aid to one's sadhana?

SRI AUROBINDO: One does not learn English or French as an aid to the sadhana; it is done for the development of the mind and as part of the activity given to the

¹ Copy-books (editor).

being. For that purpose learning French is as good as learning English and, if it is properly done, better. Nor is there any reason, if one has the capacity, to limit oneself to one language only. 25-3-1937

Q : Learning languages makes the mind active. Does not the Yoga mean to keep the mind quiet and turn it always to the Divine ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Do you mean to say that in order to have quietness of the mind one must do nothing ? Then neither the Mother nor I nor anyone else here has a quiet mind. 6-4-1937

Doing nothing with the mind is not quiet or silence. It is inactivity that leaves¹ the mind thinking mechanically and discursively instead of concentrating on a subject—that is all.

Keeping the mind without occupation is not the same thing as peace or silence. 6-4-1937

Your objection was to learning languages and specially French as inimical to peace and silence because it meant activity. The mind, when it is not in meditation or in complete silence, is always active with something or other—with its own ideas or desires or with other people or with things or with talking etc. None of these is any less an activity than learning languages. Now you shift your ground and say it is because owing to their study they have no time for meditation that you object. That is absurd, for if people want to meditate, they will arrange their time of study for that; if they don't want to meditate, the reason must be something else than study and if they don't study they will simply go on thinking about "small things". Want of time is not the cause of their non-meditation and pressure for study is not the cause. 6-4-1937

Q : Now I have finally decided to study. Arjava (Chadwick) has consented to take me. He will teach me the subject which you think good for the development of my mind.

SRI AUROBINDO : I think some knowledge of science will be most useful to you—that field is quite a blank for most people here, and yet the greater part of modern thought and knowledge is influenced by it. 10-9-1937

¹ Uncertain reading (Editor).

TOWARDS HUMAN UNITY

SOME VIEWS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY

TODAY the ideal of human unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness. The emergence of an ideal in human thought is always the sign of an intention in Nature, but not always of an intention to accomplish; sometimes it indicates only an attempt which is predestined to temporary failure. For Nature is slow and patient in her methods. She takes up ideas and half carries them out, then drops them by the wayside to resume them in some future era with a better combination. She tempts humanity, her thinking instrument, and tests how far it is ready for the harmony she has imagined; she allows and incites man to attempt and fail, so that he may learn and succeed better another time.

Still the ideal, having once made its way to the front of thought, must certainly be attempted, and this ideal of human unity is likely to figure largely among the determining forces of the future; for the intellectual and material circumstances of the age have prepared and almost impose it, especially the scientific discoveries which have made our earth so small that its vastest kingdoms seem now no more than the provinces of a single country.

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

But this very commodity of the material circumstances may bring about the failure of the ideal; for when material circumstances favour a great change, but the heart and mind of the race are not really ready—especially the heart—failure may be predicted, unless indeed men are wise in time and accept the inner change along with the external readjustment. But at present the human intellect has been so much mechanised by physical Science that it is likely to attempt the revolution it is beginning to envisage principally or solely through mechanical means, through social and political adjustments. Now it is not by social and political devices, or at any rate not by these, chiefly or only, that the unity of the human race can be enduringly or fruitfully accomplished.

SMALL UNITS

It must be remembered that a greater social or political unity is not necessarily a boon in itself; it is only worth pursuing in so far as it provides a means and a framework for a better, richer, more happy and puissant individual and collective life.

But hitherto the experience of mankind has not favoured the view that huge

aggregations, closely united and strictly organised, are favourable to a rich and puissant human life. It would seem rather that collective life is more at ease with itself, more genial, varied, fruitful when it can concentrate itself in small spaces and simpler organisms.

If we consider the past of humanity so far as it is known to us, we find that the interesting periods of human life, the scenes in which it has been most richly lived and has left behind it the most precious fruits, were precisely those ages and countries in which humanity was able to organise itself in little independent centres acting intimately upon each other but not fused into a single unity.

Modern Europe owes two-thirds of its civilisation to three such supreme moments of human history, the religious life of the congeries of tribes which called itself Israel and, subsequently, of the little nation of the Jews, the many-sided life of the small Greek city-states, the similar, though more restricted, artistic and intellectual life of mediaeval Italy.

Nor was any age in Asia so rich in energy, so well worth living in, so productive of the best and most enduring fruits as that heroic period of India when she was divided into small kingdoms, many of them no larger than a modern district. Her most wonderful activities, her most vigorous and enduring work, that which, if we had to make a choice, we should keep at the sacrifice of all else, belonged to that period; the second best came afterwards in larger, but still comparatively small, nations and kingdoms like those of the Pallavas, Chalukyas, Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras. In comparison she received little from the greater empires that rose and fell within her borders, the Moghul, the Gupta or the Maurya—little indeed except political and administrative organisation, some fine art and literature and a certain amount of lasting work in other kinds, not always of the best quality. Their impulse was rather towards elaborate organisation than original, stimulating and creative.

Nevertheless, in this regime of the small city state or of regional cultures, there was always a defect which compelled a tendency towards large organisations. The defect was a characteristic of impermanence, often of disorder, especially of defencelessness against the onslaught of larger organisations, even of an insufficient capacity for widespread material well-being. Therefore this earlier form of collective life tended to disappear and give place to the organisation of nations, kingdoms and empires.

NATIONS, KINGDOMS, EMPIRES

And here we notice, first, that it is the groupments of smaller nations which have had the most intense life and not the huge States and colossal empires. Collective life diffusing itself in too vast spaces seems to lose intensity and productiveness. Europe has lived in England, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, the small States of Germany—all her later civilisation and progress evolved itself there, not in the huge mass of the Holy Roman or the Russian Empire.

We see a similar phenomenon in the social and political field when we compare the intense life and activity of Europe in its many nations acting richly upon each other, rapidly progressing by quick creative steps and sometimes by bounds, with the great masses of Asia, her long periods of immobility in which wars and revolutions seem to be small, temporary and usually unproductive episodes, her centuries of religious, philosophic and artistic reveries, her tendency towards an increasing isolation and a final stagnancy of the outward life.

Secondly, we note that in this organisation of nations and kingdoms those which have had the most vigorous life have gained it by a sort of artificial concentration of the vitality into some head, centre or capital, London, Paris, Rome. By this device Nature, while acquiring the benefits of a larger organisation and more perfect unity, preserves to some extent that equally precious power of fruitful concentration in a small space and into a closely packed activity which she had possessed in her more primitive system of the city state or petty kingdom. But this advantage was purchased by the condemnation of the rest of the organisation, the district, the provincial town, the village to a dull, petty and somnolent life in strange contrast with the vital intensity of the *urbs* or metropolis.

LESSONS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The Roman Empire is the historic example of an organisation of unity which transcended the limits of the nation, and its advantages and disadvantages are there perfectly typified. The advantages are admirable organisation, peace, wide-spread security, order and material well-being; the disadvantage is that the individual, the city, the region sacrifice their independent life and become mechanical parts of a machine : life loses its colour, richness, variety, freedom and victorious impulse towards creation. The organisation is great and admirable, but the individual dwindles and is overpowered and overshadowed; and eventually by the smallness and feebleness of the individual the huge organism inevitably and slowly loses even its great conservative vitality and dies of an increasing stagnation. Even while outwardly whole and untouched, the structure has become rotten and begins to crack and dissolve at the first shock from outside.

Such organisations, such periods are immensely useful for conservation, even as the Roman Empire served to consolidate the gains of the rich centuries that preceded it. But they arrest life and growth.

We see, then, what is likely to happen if there were a social, administrative and political unification of mankind, such as some have begun to dream of nowadays. A tremendous organisation would be needed under which both individual and regional life would be crushed, dwarfed, deprived of their necessary freedom like a plant without rain and wind and sunlight, and this would mean for humanity, after perhaps one first outburst of satisfied and joyous activity, a long period of mere conservation, increasing stagnancy and ultimately decay.

Yet the unity of mankind is evidently a part of Nature's eventual scheme and must come about. Only it must be under other conditions and with safeguards which will keep the race intact in the roots of its vitality, richly diverse in its oneness.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of the unification of mankind resolves itself into two distinct difficulties. There is the doubt whether the collective egoism already created in the natural evolution of humanity can at this time be sufficiently modified or abolished and whether even an external unity in some effective form can be securely established. And there is the doubt whether, even if any such external unity can be established, it will not be at the price of crushing both the free life of the individual and the free play of the various collective units already created in which there is a real and active life and substituting a State organisation which will mechanise human existence.

Apart from these two uncertainties there is a third doubt whether a really living unity can be achieved by a mere economic, political and administrative unification and whether it ought not to be preceded by at least the strong beginnings of a moral and spiritual oneness.

THE NATION UNIT

At the present stage of human progress the nation is the living collective unit of humanity. It is a distinct group-soul which is driven by inward necessity and uses outward circumstances to constitute for itself an organised body.

...The most striking example in history is the evolution of India. Nowhere else have the centrifugal forces been so strong, numerous, complex, obstinate. The mere time taken by the evolution has been prodigious; the disastrous vicissitudes through which it has had to work itself out have been appalling. And yet through it all the inevitable tendency has worked constantly, pertinaciously, with the dull, obscure, indomitable, relentless obstinacy of Nature when she is opposed in her instinctive purposes by man, and finally, after a struggle enduring through millenniums, has triumphed. And, as usually happens when she is thus opposed by her own mental and human material, it is the most adverse circumstances that the subconscious worker has turned into her most successful instruments.

The beginnings of the centripetal tendency in India go back to the earliest times of which we have record and are typified in the ideal of the Samrat or Chakravarti Raja and the military and political use of the Aswamedha and Rajasuya sacrifices. The two great national epics might almost have been written to illustrate this theme; for the one recounts the establishment of a unifying *Dharmarājya* or imperial reign of justice, the other starts with an idealised description of such a rule pictured as once existing in the ancient and sacred past of the country.

The political history of India is the story of a succession of empires, indigenous and foreign, each of them destroyed by centrifugal forces, but each bringing the centripetal tendency nearer to its triumphant emergence. And it is a significant circumstance that the more foreign the rule, the greater has been its force for the unification of the subject people. This is always a sure sign that the essential nation-unit is already there and that there is an indissoluble national vitality necessitating the inevitable emergence of the organised nation.

In this instance, we see that the conversion of the psychological unity on which nationhood is based into the external organised unity by which it is perfectly realised, has taken a period of more than two thousand years and is not yet complete. (But it must be remembered that France, Germany, modern Italy took each a thousand or two thousand years and more to form and set into a firm oneness.)

And yet, since the essentiality of the thing was there, not even the most formidable difficulties and delays, not even the most persistent incapacity for union in the people, not even the most disintegrating shocks from outside have prevailed against the obstinate subconscious necessity. And this is only the extreme illustration of a general law.

THE AGGREGATE CALLED EMPIRE

A tendency to large homogeneous aggregations has shown itself recently in political thought, as in the dream of a Pan-Germanic Empire, a great Russian and Pan-Slavic Empire or the Pan-Islamic idea of a united Mahomedan world¹

But these tendencies are usually associated with the control by this homogeneous aggregate over other elements heterogeneous to it under the old principle of military and political compulsion, the retention by Russia of Asiatic nations under her sway,² the seizure by Germany of wholly or partially non-Germanic countries and provinces, the control by the Caliphate of non-Moslem subjects.³

Even if these anomalies were absent, the actual arrangement of the world would lend itself with difficulty to a remodelling of empire on a racial or cultural basis. Vast aggregates of this kind would find enclaves in their dominion inhabited by elements wholly heterogeneous to them or mixed. Quite apart therefore from the resistance and refusal of kindred nations to renounce their cherished nationality and fuse themselves in combinations of this kind, there would be this incompatibility of mixed or heterogeneous factors, recalcitrant to the idea and the culture that sought to absorb them.

¹ All three have been broken by the effect of revolution and war, but, if the nation idea dwindled, the last might still at some future date revive, the second, if Communism destroyed the national idea, may still be a possibility.

² This has been modified by the substitution of a Soviet Union claiming to unite these Asiatic peoples voluntarily with Russia, but one is not quite sure whether this is a permanent reality or only a temporary apparent phenomenon.

³ These two empires have now disappeared and there seems to be no possibility of their revival.

THE WORLD-EMPIRE

...What other possibility can there be of the unification of mankind by political and administrative means? That can only come about if either the old ideal of a single world empire be, by developments not now apparently possible, converted into an accomplished fact, or if the opposite ideal of a free association of free nations overcome the hundred and one powerful obstacles which stand in the way of its practical realisation.

The idea of a world-empire imposed by sheer force is in direct opposition to the new conditions which the progressive nature of things has introduced into the modern world.

THE WORLD-STATE

The unity of the human race by political and administrative means implies eventually the formation and organisation of a single World-State out of a newly created, though still loose, natural organic unity of mankind. For the natural organic unity already exists, a unity of life, of involuntary association, of a closely interdependent existence of the constituent parts in which the life and movements of one affect the life of the others in a way which would have been impossible a hundred years ago. Continents no longer have a separate life from continents; no nation can any longer isolate itself at will and live a separate existence. Science, commerce and rapid communications have produced a state of things in which the disparate masses of humanity, once living to themselves, have been drawn together by a process of subtle unification into a single mass which has already a common vital and is rapidly forming a common mental existence.

A great precipitating and transforming shock was needed which should make this subtle organic unity manifest and reveal the necessity and create the will for a closer and organised union and this shock came with the Great War.¹ The idea of a World-State or world-union has been born not only in the speculating forecasting mind of the thinker, but in the consciousness of humanity out of the very necessity of this new common existence.

The World-State must now either be brought about by a mutual understanding or by the force of circumstances and a series of new and disastrous shocks. For the old still-prevailing order of things was founded on circumstances and conditions which no longer exist. A new order is demanded by the new conditions and, so long as it is not created, there will be a transitional era of continued trouble or recurrent disorders, inevitable crises through which Nature will effect in her own violent way the working out of the necessity which she has evolved.

There may be in the process a maximum of loss and suffering through the clash of national and imperial egoisms or else a minimum, if reason and good will prevail. To that reason two alternative possibilities and therefore two ideals present themselves,

¹ World War I (Editor).

a World-State founded upon the principle of centralisation and uniformity, a mechanical and formal unity, or a world-union founded upon the principle of liberty and variation in a free and intelligent unity. These two ideas and possibilities we have successively to consider.

THE FORM OF THE WORLD-STATE

The last form is the most desirable, because it gives sufficient scope for the principle of variation which is necessary for the free play of life and the healthy progress of the race. The process by which the World-State may come starts with the creation of a central body which will at first have very limited functions, but, once created, must absorb by degrees all the different utilities of a centralised international control, as the State, first in the form of a monarchy and then of a parliament, has been absorbing by degrees the whole control of the life of the nation, so that we are now within the measurable distance of a centralised Socialistic State which will leave no part of the life of its individuals unregulated. A similar process in the World-State will end in the taking up and the regulation of the whole life of the peoples into its hands; it may even end by abolishing national individuality and turning the divisions that it has created into mere departmental groupings, provinces and districts of the one common State.

Such an eventuality may seem now a fantastic dream or an unrealisable idea; but it is one which, under certain conditions that are by no means beyond the scope of ultimate possibility, may well become feasible and even, after a certain point is reached, inevitable.

A federal system and still more a confederacy would mean, on the other hand, the preservation of the national basis and a greater or less freedom of national life, but the subordination of the separate national to the larger common interests and of full separate freedom to the greater international necessities.

THE CONSIDERATIONS

A centralised World-State would signify the triumph of the idea of mechanical unity or rather of uniformity. It would inevitably mean the undue depression of an indispensable element in the vigour of human life and progress, the free life of the individual, the free variation of the peoples. It must end, if it becomes permanent and fulfils all its tendencies, either in a death in life, a stagnation, or by the insurgence of some new saving but revolutionary force or principle which would shatter the whole fabric into pieces.

The mechanical tendency is one to which the logical reason of man, itself a precise machine, is easily addicted and its operations are obviously the easiest to manage and the most ready to hand; its full evolution may seem to the reason desirable, necessary, inevitable, but its end is predestined.

A centralised Socialistic State may be a necessity of the future, once it is founded, but a reaction from it will be equally an eventual necessity of the future. The greater its pressure, the more certainly will it be met by spread of the spiritual, the intellectual, the vital and practical principle of Anarchism in revolt against the mechanical pressure. So, too, a centralised mechanical World-State must rouse in the end a similar force against it and might well terminate in a crumbling up and disintegration, even in the necessity for a repetition of the cycle of humanity ending in a better attempt to solve the problem. It could be kept in being only if humanity agreed to allow all the rest of its life to be regularised for it for the sake of peace and stability and took refuge for its individual freedom in the spiritual life, as happened once under the Roman Empire. But even that would be only a temporary solution.

A federal system also would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities; it could allow only a play of minor variations. But the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied with that scanty sustenance. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle for centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength. A loose confederation could not be permanent; it must turn in one direction or the other, end either in a close and rigid centralisation or at last by a break-up of the loose unity into its original elements.

THE MISSING FACTOR

The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which will at once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to respect the principle of freedom. The religion of humanity seems to be the one growing force which tends in that direction; for it makes for the sense of human oneness, it has the idea of the race, and yet at the same time it respects the human individual and the natural human grouping.

But its present intellectual form seems hardly sufficient. The idea, powerful in itself and in its effects, is yet not powerful enough to mould the whole life of the race in its image. For it has to concede too much to the egoistic side of human nature, once all and still nine-tenths of our being, with which its larger idea is in conflict.

On the other side, because it leans principally on the reason, it turns too readily to the mechanical solution. For the rational idea ends always as a captive of its machinery, becomes a slave of its own too binding process. A new idea with another turn of the logical machine revolts against it and breaks up the machinery, but only to substitute in the end another mechanical system, another credo, formula and practice.

THE SOLUTION

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future.

By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system, one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development.

A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellowmen will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life.

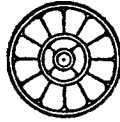
There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellowmen is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race.

A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves.

(Compiled by S. S. Jhunjhunwala from The Ideal of Human Unity.)

AUROVILLE



Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

8-9-65.

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY
PONDICHERRY, INDIA

AUROVILLE is a universal township for those who want to join and prepare for a better way of life.

It is an attempt towards a reorganisation and transformation of the present life in all its aspects.

It will provide a model for those who aspire for a better collective life everywhere.

Named after Sri Aurobindo, 'Auroville' literally means 'The City of Dawn'.

A most modern and beautiful township is envisaged. It will combine the amenities of living with artistic beauty. The planning and designing are undertaken by a leading architect of international repute, Monsieur Roger H. Anger, who is devoted to the Ashram. The assistance of members of the Society and friends who specialise in town-planning and construction engineering will also be available.

RESIDENCE

The township is being set up under the guidance of The Mother and is open to all who want to practise the ideals of the project and whom The Mother admits for residence there.

LOCATION

It will be in the State of Madras, about three miles onward from the main building of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. The site has three lakes on one side and the sea on another.

AMENITIES

Nothing necessary for life will be forgotten.

- (1) Electricity, Water and Sanitation.
- (2) Post & Telegraph Office and Telephones.
- (3) Banking.
- (4) Transport.
- (5) Shopping Centre : A market place with a departmental Store with home-delivery arrangements.
- (6) Restaurants and community kitchens where pure and wholesome food will be served.
- (7) Guest Houses and Hotels for visitors.
- (8) Education for children as well as adults, as necessary.
- (9) A collective Meditation Centre with a lecture hall and a library of the books by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.
- (10) A Club for games, sports, gymnastics, rowing, golf, gliding, etc.
- (11) Medical Care :

- (i) (a) An Allopathic Section with a Nursing Home,
- (b) An Ayurvedic Dispensary,
- (c) A Nature Cure Clinic,
- (d) A Homeopathic Clinic,
- (e) An Infirmary.
- (ii) A Veterinary Hospital.

(12) A Department of Hygiene will have the exclusive function of inspecting all public and private buildings to see that the most rigorous rules of cleanliness are observed.

OTHER FEATURES

(1) *A Colony For Employees* who at present have not accepted this new way of life but who have a general good-will, good character and conduct, and are honest and efficient in work. The colony will have clean houses, community kitchens, sports grounds, schools, a medical clinic, a family planning centre, a common crèche, a vocational training centre, etc. Here too the workers can choose the kind of activity that is most suitable to their nature and they will receive the necessary training. As finance becomes available, it is our intention to provide them all with the basic necessities so that, as in a family organisation, there will be no need of wages and remuneration.

(2) *An Artist's Colony* : The artists could have a colony of their own—with a centre for training in music, dancing, drama, painting, sculpture, cinematography and other arts.

(3) *An Old People's Colony* : With both common and separate kitchen arrangements, medical facilities, garden, library, etc. and facilities for suitable work. We feel that in this atmosphere the aged will find new inspiration.

(4) *Industry, Commerce & Agriculture* : An industrial estate, orchards, agricultural farms, dairy, nursery, etc. will be there for those who wish to progress and serve in the field of commerce, industry and agriculture. A dairy farm is already run by the Ashram but needs to be expanded.

(5) *Research* : Facilities will be provided for research and invention for approved proposals.

(6) *A Film Studio* : for producing educational and cultural films.

(7) *An Auditorium* with a built-in organ for concerts, dramas, film shows and conferences.

(8) *A Stadium* for various games and sports with Olympic standards.

(9) *An Exhibition of World Culture and Its Synthesis* : The cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here, not merely intellectually but also in architecture, painting, sculpture, music and decoration, and in the way of living too—houses, food, games, etc.

The idea is that every nation with a very definite culture should have a pavilion representing its culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of that country.

It will also exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural or manufactured, which best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation will thus find a practical and concrete interest in the cultural synthesis and will collaborate in the work by helping to build and maintain its pavilion besides helping the township in general.

Pavilions are also envisaged for the different States in India.

ALL CAN COOPERATE

We trust friends in each country will cooperate in building the pavilions of their own country and, if possible, the entire township.

Contributions to Sri Aurobindo Society qualify for tax exemption under Sec. 88 of Indian Income Tax Act.

We shall appreciate your support in whatever way you are inclined to extend it.

This is only a summary. Please feel free to send any query you may have to The General Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry-2.

AN EXPERIENCE

I WAKE in the night with a throbbing heart,
 In a world insecure I balance on the edge of a pit.
 And in that eyeless utter darkness I say Your Name
 And deep in my heart a lamp is lit.

A steady warmth pervades my quivering body,
 My racing heart slows to a calmer beat—
 The nameless vacuum in the centre of my being
 Reposes in your strength, and I feel heat

Suffuse each corner of my cold numb limbs.
 The darkness does not seem so dark,
 And the fear is a vague fading phantom,
 For tomorrow is Yours—Love's promising spark !

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

“THE MIND OF LIGHT” IN SRI AUROBINDO’S PHILOSOPHY AND YOGA

AN ATTEMPT AT A SCHEMATIC SUMMARY

1) “The Mind of Light” is a coinage of Sri Aurobindo’s, applicable not to all the levels of mental being where Light (Divine Knowledge) has open play in various degrees, but only to the human mental level—which we may designate broadly as the physical-mental—when its ignorance essentially ceases and it becomes a plane in which, even within all measures and limits, withholdings and gradualities, there is no obscurity at all : everything is a self-chosen process of Light.

2) Ignorance of the human physical-mental cannot essentially cease by the descent of the “overhead” grades of Spiritual Mind, which are—from below upwards—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. For, the descent of these grades, even of Overmind, can never be complete when made under their own power. The physical-mental always dilutes their Light. It dilutes it because of two factors. First, this Light is not absolutely sovereign, and ignorance itself has resulted inevitably by the lessening or, rather, by a crucial poise-change of Supermind’s Light which harmonises or fuses unity and multiplicity. In the grades of Spiritual Mind, multiplicity is in the forefront and unity, although not concealed as in the lower planes, is only in the background. These grades, therefore, are impotent to remove ignorance radically. On their own levels there is no ignorance as such, but under their own power they are bound to fail to reproduce completely in the physical-mental their own state of Light. What their descent can do is to prepare the descent of Supermind. The second factor making for dilution of the Spiritual Light is : the physical-mental partakes of the evolution from the Inconscient where everything arises out of a total submergence of Himself by the Divine for the stupendous experiment of self-manifestation from His own opposite, as it were. Nothing except the full Dynamic Divine which is Supermind has the competence to deal successfully with the clinging original darkness due to that submergence.

3) After Overmind has done its utmost by descent under its own power, Supermind descends. By its descent it brings about in essence the end of ignorance in the physical-mental, and the state it creates by that radical change is the Mind of Light. The Mind of Light is Supermind openly itself in human Mind-terms.

4) The first form the Mind of Light takes seems an added last rung of the luminous ladder of Spiritual Mind. It appears to stand below Higher Mind in quality of Light. But it is superior to all Spiritual Mind, even Overmind, if its quality of Light is compared to the quality the grades of Spiritual Mind have achieved in the physical-mental in their descended forms. It is in terms of descent and embodiment that a proper comparison can be made between the state that is this Mind and the

grades of Spiritual Mind. In such terms this Mind outshines them all from the very beginning, for it is the Supermind's own manifestation.

5) That manifestation develops a second and greater form, which is a completely descended Spiritual Mind—an entire embodiment by Spiritual Mind of itself which under its own power it could not achieve. The full conversion of the physical-mental into the Light of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind which these grades could not formerly bring about, is done now by them on the basis of Supermind's establishment in the physical-mental. This conversion constitute a mental Gnosis like what Spiritual Mind is in its overhead status, but with two differences. It is a mental Gnosis embodied. And it is a mental Gnosis which Supermind has assumed or put forth without a crucial poise-change as in Spiritual Mind

6) The third form of the Mind of Light goes farther than such mental Gnosis. It embodies the Supramental Gnosis free from any frontal appearance of Spiritual Mind. Not, however, all of the Supramental Gnosis, for the Mind of Light expresses that in the Supermind which is the divine counterpart of all Mind—"Divine Mind" as Sri Aurobindo calls it. It is specifically the third strand of the Supermind's three stranded unity. In this strand the projecting, confronting, apprehending power which the second strand brings forth is developed to its extreme, restraining still more without yet relegating to the background, the constituting, pervading, comprehending power which is the first strand and from which the second is a development.

7) Yes, the third form of the Mind of Light establishes in the body the third strand of the Supermind and prepares the establishment of the whole Supramental Gnosis, with itself in prominence as its inherent power of making pragmatic divisions and fixing pragmatic relations between seemingly independent centres. But we must not forget that all the forms assumed by the Mind of Light are a manifestation of the Supermind's third strand. What the third form does is merely to release to the utmost the supramental magnificence which was released a little by the first and more by the second. All are degrees of one and the same apocalypse of something in the supreme Truth.

8) The Mind of Light in its plenary form, leading on to the fullness of what we may call the Life-force of Light and the Body of Light, would constitute the Intermediate Race between the Human and the Supramental Races. The Supramental Race would be a directly manifested line of Divine Beings who have never gone through the process of earthly evolution: they would be the Supermind humanised by an occult means of materialisation, as differentiated from Humanity supramentalised by a natural means of spiritualisation. The two would be complementary aspects of the complete manifestation of the Divine upon earth—the crowning vision of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and the all-consummating goal of his Yoga.

K. D. SETHNA

LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

(Continued from the September issue)

THE OXFORD COLLOQUIUM : SEPTEMBER 15-25

(Continued)

THE discussion on the 20th about causation in ordinary life could have been much more interesting than it was if Mr. Hart had tried to get deeper into human psychology and given us some understanding of how a man decides or how conduct is caused. All predication about causation or about unrealised possibilities of conduct brings us face to face with many deeper problems of each being. The question is : how does a man decide ? Is he compelled or does he act freely ? It is almost certain that there are many possible choices presented before the human individual at the moment when he is faced with the problem of taking a decision and it is very interesting to know what exactly makes the man accept one possibility out of several and make it his choice or decision, and there are people who retrospectively, after the act, say "I could have acted otherwise" and there are others also who can say about a man that he could have won if he had tried or even acted otherwise.

The truth about the matter seems to be that there are many personalities in the human being. That is to say, there is not one "I" but, as Stephen Spender says in one of his poems, "There is I eating, I sleeping, and all these I's surrounding the real I." In fact, man's decisions are hardly of this real "I". Most often they proceed from the desire-self, the impulsive self, the craving self and so on, and probably the solution of how to make a correct decision might depend very much upon the growth of self-consciousness of the individual, so that if he is able to see or be conscious of the various parts of his being—and also their likes and dislikes, then he can exercise his will, or we may say choice, and allow his real "I" to act and make a choice. The meaning of the word "cause" could have been more profoundly sought. In fact, cause is not one particular event or occurrence. There is hardly one simple such cause even in the most ordinary phenomenon. Cause really seems to imply a complex of conditions precedent, and the result seems to be nothing more than a complex of conditions following. When we say the cause of a famine was the lack of rain or the failure of the Government to build reserves, what we really mean is that a set of conditions was responsible for a set of effects. Cause in the old sense was supposed to be the only one operative element that brought about the result but we see that even the simplest result is hardly due to such one operative cause; for, there is bound to be a number of factors active even when we do not see them or only one factor seems to be operative.

Two of the most interesting papers were by Dr. Price on "Belief and Half-

belief” and by Dr. Weismann on “Philosophical Argument”. During these two papers one felt that even at Oxford there were people who had real understanding of what philosophy has to do. Dr. Price argued that half-belief need not be a disqualification or a sign of weakness. Half-belief may be mild belief or inclination to believe and these conditions of belief and half-belief alternate in the life of man due to outer and inner conditions, not necessarily due to his weakness or indecision. It may be due to vagueness or uncertainty about validation or inability to answer an opponent. It may be due to split personality or divided loyalty. Half-belief may be a state which may be described as a state of growth towards either full belief or denial.

Everyone willingly suffered the infliction of dry logic-chopping and inroads into grammar and linguistics by the Oxford philosophers. But after four or five days it was found to be too much. The daily doses of discussions for four to six hours were too heavy and dry for many and for me were bitter. The arrangement for 13 days was to afford opportunities to all to make personal contacts.

Of the group two members, Dr. Julius Kraft and Dr. Mercier, managed to play the piano in the British Council office every day at 7.30 p.m. I joined them. They used to gather pages from books on classical music and I saw that they had real interest in and capacity for playing music. I even found that they were more interested in music than in philosophy. Dr. Kraft used to participate in philosophical discussion adopting the Socratic method—of which he was a great admirer and follower—with detachment and subtlety. But when he sat on the seat of the piano and moved his fingers along the keys he was a different person—his whole being used to vibrate with the beauty of the harmony of the notes. The degree of self-forgetfulness which he and Dr. Mercier could experience while playing music was never reached by them in their philosophical discussions.

I told them: “You have missed your vocation. Do not give up music; the hunger of your soul will be satisfied only by music.”

We had a good talk on art as expression of beauty, and on beauty as an aspect of the Divine. “Truth,” I told them, “is not confined to rational knowledge, nor is it its highest form. Art creates beauty which is equally an aspect of the Truth, perhaps higher than that created by the intellect.” I met Dr. Kraft again in the British Museum and wanted to meet him in his own adopted country U.S.A. in 1962 when I went there. On writing a letter to his address I got no reply—it came nearly after two months, from Mrs. Kraft to convey to me the sad news of his death by heart failure in the train while travelling in the month of December 1961. I had the satisfaction of meeting her and she was happy to have anecdotes from me about his stay at Oxford.

Dr. Mercier I met again at Berne, his own place, in November 1962 at a small gathering which he had arranged for a talk.

MEETING WITH K. D. D. HENDERSON : 20TH SEPTEMBER 1955

I had expected to find some living influence of Eastern philosophy and religion at Oxford as I knew that Mr. Spalding had endowed a trust for encouraging these studies at Oxford. The idea was to afford facility to the Western student to learn Eastern philosophy and religion in England just as the Indian student has about learning Western philosophy in India. He wanted to encourage the deep cultural interchange between India and Britain. And the first professor chosen was Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. But I was disappointed in my expectation to find some students interested in Eastern philosophy at Oxford. Oxford had retained very little of Dr. Radhakrishnan's influence.

My reading of the situation was confirmed as I came to know that the Spalding Trust had changed its objective and got converted into the "Union for the study of great religions".

I met Mr. K.D.D. Henderson, who is the Secretary of the Union and a very earnest seeker and a very good organiser. He ordered many books of Sri Aurobindo for the library of the Union. He has often to go to other countries and particularly to India for his work. I invited him to visit Pondicherry and he sincerely tried to comply with my request. But somehow the visit could not come about till 1964 when he came for a day.

MY PILGRIMAGE TO ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL,¹ LONDON : SEPTEMBER 26, 1955

The appointment with the high-master was fixed on the 26th of September 1955 at 2-30 p.m. through the British Council, after a protracted communication through the phone.

I came to 31 Queens Gate Terrace, finished my lunch at 1-30 and by 2 o'clock took the bus for going to St. Paul's. After some time I found the bus was going in the opposite direction. So I had to get down and, in order to keep the time of appointment, take a taxi.

As I was approaching the school I saw men and women walking on the road and my mind went back seventy years in the past and saw a shy, dark boy taciturn and yet firm in his mind walking on the same path. Pleasures and enjoyments of life, wealth, name or comfort had no attraction for him. He was interested in reading and acquiring intellectual knowledge. I reached St. Paul's five minutes before the appointed time.

¹ St. Paul's School was started by Dean Collect in 1509, near St. Paul's Cathedral. But it was burnt in the Great Fire. In 1884 it was brought to its present site in South Kensington. It is an old institution like the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The school had 12 teachers and 211 students and high-master in 1884. Dr Walker came from Manchester school as high-master in 1876 and worked till 1905 when he retired. The school has 153 scholarships.

I was taken to a room by the porter; the atmosphere indicated that it was not easy to meet the high-master. The lady secretary came and wanted that we should finish the preliminary inquiry about Sri Aurobindo and then the high-master would see me for a short time. But she said she could not locate Sri Aurobindo among the scholars. I produced the photo-copy of his record from King's College, Cambridge, where he was mentioned as a "scholar from St. Paul's." I volunteered to help her find the name; but she kept the register to herself.

Then the porter took me to the high-master, Mr. Gilkes, a tall lean man who received me kindly. He helped me to remove my overcoat and we sat down to have a look at the registers.

He gave me one; fortunately within three minutes I found 'Ghose Arabinda Akroyd' and showed it with great joy to the high-master. He thought that I was collecting material for his life. I told him that I was collecting the materials but that I was not sure of writing his biography.

I explained to him that I had come in the spirit of a pilgrim. Sri Aurobindo had spent 14 years of the formative period of his life here and had drunk deep at the fountains of Greek, Roman and Modern European cultures. "India," I said, "owes a debt of culture to England and so far as I can want to try to pay back the debt to England, —though he has more than paid it by showering his grace upon the English language."

While I spoke to him about Sri Aurobindo's vision of Life Divine, his grand synthesis not only of East and West but of Matter and Spirit, his conception of unity of mankind, I was intensely moved as I remembered the reference to his poverty while he was in London,¹ when he had no overcoat to protect him from the English winter and had to go without dinner at night. I also recollected the complaint of Dilip Kumar Roy who had argued in one of his letters that Sri Aurobindo was born great and that he could not have an idea of the difficulties of ordinary mortals like him. Sri Aurobindo replied: "What strange ideas again! That I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities! Good God! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities—from hardships, starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle; the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character." How often do devotees and disciples misread their masters!

The high-master was seriously listening to me when a teacher called him—as

¹ In the memorial which his well-wishers persuaded him to write there is an autobiographical note of deep pathos relating to his financial embarrassment "I was sent over to England when seven years of age, with my two elder brothers, and for the last eight years we have been thrown on our own resources without any English friend to help or advise us. Our father, Dr. K. D. Ghose of Khulna, has been unable to provide the three of us with sufficient for the most necessary wants and we have long been in an embarrassed position."—21 November 1892

his time to attend to some work was overdue. He simply replied, "Not today," and we continued the talk.

Then he gave me some of the books dealing with St. Paul's, registers, etc. and volunteered to show me round the school. We were going up when he said, "Sri Aurobindo must have so often gone over this and seen this very statue of Laocoon!" I remembered Sri Aurobindo's criticism of it in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. We came back to his office and he promised to give me all the help he could and provided me with the address of Mr. Cyril Bailey, who was Sri Aurobindo's contemporary at St. Paul's. Then we went to the prayer room; he told me Milton and Pepys had been students of this school. He requested me for an article in the magazine *Pauline* on Sri Aurobindo.

The interview had far exceeded the intended limits—it was nearly 4 o'clock. Before getting up to leave, I said: "I would like to read to you one of his poems so that you may feel how rich is his contribution to the English language." I read aloud in slow movement "The Rose of God." He was thrilled by the mastery of language and the grandeur of the vision. He asked me to sign the book of visitors. I did and when I was leaving he came to bid me goodbye at the gate. While we were going, boys marched past us in files of two. The high-master called out "Shah!" A young boy from Bombay, Vikram Shah, stepped out and saluted. The high-master said, "He is a clever boy." I told him: "Remember that in this school where you are studying great men of England and India have learnt; Sri Aurobindo was a student here." At the entrance he opened the door for me and bade me a very genuine "au revoir".

I felt that my visit to St. Paul's had really become a pilgrimage.

The relation thus begun went on increasing during my stay in England. I went and saw Mr. Cyril Bailey at his distant house in "Wantage." Mr. Bailey has been connected with St. Paul's for over 50 years.

I wrote to the high-master after my visit to Mr. Bailey. On 18th October 1955 I received the following letter, an invitation to lunch at St. Paul's:

I was delighted to hear from your letter that you had had a talk with Dr. Cyril Bailey. I know he will have been glad to renew his many happy memories of this school, and I felt convinced that you and he would get on well together...

I do not know whether you would care to pay another short visit to the school before you leave. If so I would suggest that on Wednesday, 26th October, you call here just before 12-30 p.m., that you face the ordeal of school lunch in a room where Sri Aurobindo used to have lunch....

Yours sincerely,

A. N. Gilkes.

I went to the school on the fixed day at the appointed time. In a large hall about 400 students were making noise with their spoons and forks and talking busily like chirping birds. The food served was spartan in its simplicity. I was given a place

on the dais with the high-master, his wife and teachers, from where we could see all the students. I was trying to take my lunch with the constant thought of a young boy taking his daily lunch here from 1884 to 1890 !

When my time for departure from England was fixed I wrote to the high-master about it. A letter dated 25th November 1955 was received :

Many thanks for your letter containing the article for the *Pauline* upon Sri Aurobindo; it is very good of you to do this, and I was delighted with the article itself; it will make a fine contribution to our next number, and I have shown Mr. Richards your letter, who will first of all write to you and send some copies of the *Pauline* containing the article, which will appear next term.

I am most grateful to you also for the books; you have done service not only to the school, but also for the mutual understanding between East and West. I shall not readily forget the pleasure and interest that my first meeting with you excited. I thank you for this great occasion, and I send with you the best wishes not only of myself, but also of the school community, to encourage you in your great work.

A. N. Gilkes.

(*To be continued*)

A. B. PURANI

KATHA UPANISHAD

VAJASRAVAS desired that he would give away all he had. He had a son named Nachiketas.

As the boy saw the gifts being given, his heart was filled with respect and devotion, and he pondered :

“The realm of undelight is his portion who makes a gift offering of kine that have drunk their last drop of water and eaten the last herb, have been sucked to the last drop of milk and have worn out their organs.”

So the boy said to his father, “To whom are you going to give me, father ?”

The father did not give an answer to the senseless question of his ignorant son. But the boy was insistent. He asked the same question again, and a third time. Finally, the father gave an angry reply, “I shall give thee to Death !”

In the simplicity of his heart, the boy argued to himself thus : “Among many I occupy the first place, with others I come second, so I am not wholly worthless. Hence what my father said must have a meaning, I must have some work to do with Yama, the Lord of Death.”

The boy went on musing on the subject of death, “Look, what has happened to those who were there before, and to those also who came after. Mortal beings ripen like the grains in the field and are shed, they come to birth again like those grains.”

This indeed is a mystery, a mystery to which the God Yama alone has a clue. That is why Nachiketas left for the abode of Yama and came and sat on the latter’s doorstep. There he lay in wait for three whole nights in the hope of getting a chance to meet Yama.

Even as the boys Dhruva and Prahlada had had a vision of God through their simple faith, so did the simple but stout-hearted Nachiketas too reach the abode of Yama and meet him.

The minions of Yama went and told him, “There has been a Brahmin lad waiting at our doorstep for three days in order to see you—a Brahmin and on top of that a guest; this is like playing with fire. You should go and greet him with all due ceremony. A Brahmin, as you know, arriving at somebody’s house and left to starve, means the waning of all one’s virtue and a grave risk to one’s worldly state.”

We should take the word “Brahmin” here in the sense given to it by the Gita : a Brahmin is one who is devoted to *brahman*, the Highest Reality; he is a seeker of the Spirit and serves It. A particular duty laid on the society of that age was to support and give due respect to this topmost class; for the true prestige and worth of a society depend not on its visible power or prosperity but on the richness of its inner growth.

Yama thereupon appeared, as if in a bit of a flurry. Or, perhaps he was putting

Nachiketas' sincerity to a little test. He offered Nachiketas a seat with all deference and, as if to atone for his earlier neglect, addressed him thus in a humble tone :

"You have been made to wait here for three days without food, a Brahmin and a guest. Accept my salutations, may all be well with me." This meant, in modern language, "Do be kind enough to pardon me." Yama meant to suggest through this eminently human attitude that he was, in spite of being Death, no uncultivated boor! He continued, "Nachiketas, since you have been waiting here for three nights, you should demand three boons from me." Nachiketas too accepted the apology with courtesy without another word, and asked for the first boon thus :

"My dear father must be getting anxious on account of my disappearance, thinking that I have been gripped by death and would not return. You please give him peace of mind, remove the feeling of displeasure he has about me, and grant that when I return from your abode a free man, may he recognise me and receive me with joy. This, then, O Yama, will be the first boon I desire."

Yama said in reply, "It will be certainly as you say. You will get back from here, your father Uddalaka Aruni will be able to see you as before, he will have his peace of mind on seeing you freed from the jaws of death, his annoyance will go, he will have good sleep at night.

Nachiketas went on, "It is said: there is no fear in heaven, you too are not there, nor is there the dread of old age, people live in great joy when, after crossing beyond both hunger and thirst and passing to the other shore of sorrow, they come to heaven. O Death, you know about that heavenly Fire, speak to me about It, I am listening with faith. The dwellers in heaven have gained immortality. Please tell me about this mystery. This is the second boon I desire."

The Lord of Death said in reply, "Nachiketas, listen then to the mystery of this Fire. I have knowledge of this Fire. The Fire takes one to the world of Infinity. The Fire is the basis of this universe. He is abiding in a cave, hidden within our secret being."

Yama explained to Nachiketas further, "The Fire is the beginning of creation." He also revealed the secret knowledge about the method of kindling this Fire, the number of bricks and their types needed in piling the altar. Nachiketas listened to all this with great attention, and repeated to the Lord of Death what he had thus learned.

Death was pleased and said to him again, "Nachiketas, I am much pleased with you, so I grant you another boon, namely, that the mystery of the Fire which I have revealed to you will be named after you; henceforth people will call it the Fire of Nachiketas. I also give this garland of many forms, take it." What this garland stood for was explained a little by Death, in the same language of symbols which he had used in revealing the mystery of the Fire. He said, "One who lights the three Fires is united with the Three, and goes on performing the three Works, passes beyond life and death. He then comes to know that adorable Deity who is born of the Supreme; knowing him he attains to the supreme Peace."

Yama went on dwelling on the same mystery, perhaps making it still more mysterious.

“One who has gained the three Fires of Nachiketas, one who has gained knowledge of the Three, one who has thus seen and known and mastered the Fire of Nachiketas has pushed away from in front all the bonds of death, passed beyond all sorrow, has enjoyed the bliss of heaven. This then is that heavenly Fire of Nachiketas which you chose as the second of your boons. Henceforth, all people will say, this is verily your Fire. Nachiketas, now you are free to choose your third boon.”

Nachiketas answered, “Well, there rises a doubt as to the beings who depart from hence: some say they continue to exist, others say they do not. I want to know the truth of this matter, you please give me this knowledge. This is the third boon I ask.”

This seemed to create a little difficulty for Yama. He said, “You see, this debate has been going on even among the gods from times sempiternal. This is a very subtle point, this knowledge is not easy to get, nor easy to grasp. You had better ask for some other boon, do not press me further on this point, give up this quest.”

But, as we have no doubt seen by now, Nachiketas was not to be put off like that. He exclaimed, “But this is strange ! Even the gods find it a matter for debate, you too are saying it is not easily grasped. But I am not going to have another like you to speak to me about this matter. And I do not consider any other boon worth having, as compared to this.”

Death too on his part tried to cajole the boy into forgetting about it, perhaps taking him to be a mere child. He said, “Nachiketas, choose sons and grandsons living to a hundred years, choose an abundance of cattle, horses and elephants, gold and jewels. Take as your portion vast stretches of land, live for as many years as you please. If, in addition, you consider any other boon equally worth having, ask for it; choose as much wealth as you like and life eternal. Or else, if you desire a whole kingdom, I shall fulfil your wish for all these desirable things.”

Yama went on adding to the list of desirable things, in the hope that perhaps in the end the boy could be won over. “All the desirable things that are hard to get on this mortal earth, you can demand exactly as you please. Charming damsels with their chariots and song and dance, than whom there is nothing more acceptable to men—all this I shall give you for your enjoyment at will. But do not ask any more about death.”

But Nachiketas was no mere boy or unripe youth. His reply was immediate, “All that you have named, O Destroyer, lasts only till the morrow. There is no organ or sense that does not get blunt in course of time. And even if it lasts a whole lifetime, that too is but little. Let yours, O Yama, be all those chariots and the damsels, yours the song and the dance. Man is not satisfied by riches, O Death. And here will be no dearth of wealth when I have looked upon you in person. I shall live as long as you like, but my choice is for that boon alone. You might yourself consider this. Once a mortal being dwelling here below in the grip of physical matter has felt

the presence of the unaging Immortals, gained the true knowledge, has realised the true nature of beauty and passion and pleasure, what joy can he have in this transient life? Tell me, O Death, more about this endless debate on what is or is not after the great annihilation. The deep secret of the beyond, it is this that I want to understand. Nachiketas demands no other boon of you.”

Yama did not find it possible to put him off any more. He went on expounding his secret knowledge to Nachiketas. He began with that secret Word which Nachiketas had already received and grasped all by himself.

Man has open before him two doors leading to two different paths: one is that of the good, the other of what is pleasant. The two lead in opposite directions. Nachiketas had renounced the pleasant and had chosen the good. On the basis of this choice depend, in the beginning and throughout at each step, the progress and upward evolution of man. He alone who can recognise and choose the good gains the Highest, the supreme Reality. Nachiketas too had made these gains, he had become foremost among spiritual men, *brahmistha*.

There is in this story an unsolved problem which in its turn might give rise to a “debate”. I am going to take that as my theme in what follows.

Yama taught Nachiketas about the mystery of the Fire as the second boon. The fruit of this knowledge, the gain it brings has been described. It is the winning of the heavenly world where one enjoys immortality; it is a world of delight where death itself is not, nor old age and fear and sorrow, nor hunger and thirst.

And what is this Fire? Fire is the Origin of the worlds, the realms of Infinity; in Its very nature Fire is the Beginning and the Infinite, Immortality and Delight. And where does It dwell? It lies hidden as in a cave. What cave this is will be discussed later. For the present, it will be well to remember that the Fire is a doer of the Triple Work, and It has knowledge of Him or of what is born of the Supreme.

The problem is : does not all this amount to what the Gita describes as “a mixed word”? Nachiketas desired to know, as his third boon, which of the two opinions concerning the state of the embodied being on his departure from here after death, namely, that he continues to exist or ceases to be, is the real truth of the matter. But has not the mystery of what lies beyond death been already revealed by what has been said, in connection with the second question or boon, about attaining the heavenly world, enjoyment of immortality, the companionship of the gods and so on? Where then is the point in asking the same question again?

As an initial clue to the problem, we must keep in mind that the heavenly world can be attained even without the death of the body, “by pushing away from in front the bonds of death”, as the text says, or as in the usual interpretation, before succumbing to death. Nachiketas himself had achieved this feat. The heavenly world has been conceived as just another neighbourhood or abode, a world of delight where there is no old age, death, or sorrow and suffering. But it does not imply any victory gained in a battle with death, any mastery obtained over death. All that seems to happen here is that death has been pushed aside, or evaded perhaps. There is merely an absence of

death here, it has not been brought under control. Death may not be present in this abode, but he is sitting in his lair and is free to go where he wills, even if it be within some limits. There has been no annihilation of death.

In his third boon, Nachiketas wants to know if there is beyond the physical death any surpassing of death. Granted that heaven is attained, but what happens after that, beyond the heavenly world? For, this too is sometimes said that the enjoyment of heaven is only for a time, no matter how long that time be; after the term is over, one has to come back to earth, death has to be encountered over again. In this view, if the soul of man be immortal, the immortality does not go beyond heaven, it is nothing more than the enjoyment of heaven.

In fact, the Upanishads speak of two kinds of immortality. One is temporal immortality, that is, living for ever, the other is beyond time, in the ultimate Reality or the supreme Truth; one is cosmic, the other transcendental. There are likewise two kinds of eternity and infinity. One is in relation to time, with time as its basis and inseparable from the progress of time, what in the ordinary view is described as "lasting as long as the sun and the moon". The other is beyond all creation or manifestation, poised above it in the supreme Status.

What Nachiketas desired to know was this. The gods are temporal beings. However big and mighty they may be, they who endure for ever with a life eternal and have no death, cannot know the secret of death. They may live beyond the pale of death and death is foreign to them. But they are ignorant of the Truth that is beyond time, that has to be reached through death and by passing to the other shore of death. That is why Yama says that the gods are full of doubts and puzzled about this matter. But Yama himself is in possession of this knowledge, he is aware of the Truth that lies beyond him, on the other shore. Nachiketas says to Yama, "Since I have been able to find you, I am sure of gaining this knowledge; there is none other so wise who can speak about it." The reason is that Yama has been called Vaivasvata, he is born of Vivasvan, the Sun-god, Surya Savitri.

Surya Savitri stands for the highest Knowledge, He is the Supreme Consciousness from which comes the creation of the universe. Yama is the Life-Force, the Ordainer of the worlds with their rhythms of life. He is here in this manifestation of the play of life the representative of Savitri, and Fire is his vehicle, instrument or symbol. Just as Surya is Vivasvan, the Supreme Effulgent One, Yama is likewise the Cosmic Being, all cosmic power and universal force are his. Surya is supra-cosmic, belongs to the Beyond. Fire is cosmic, belongs to our worlds. Or, to put it more exactly, Surya is the point of transition from the Beyond to these worlds; Fire is such a point from the worlds to the Beyond.

The mystery of the Fire that was revealed to Nachiketas by Yama would give him the mundane realisation, namely, the conquest over time past, present and future, the attainment of temporal immortality or heaven. The mastery thus obtained consists of a set of trios : it has three lines of fulfilment, it acts in three ways, in the three worlds, throughout the three divisions of time. The three worlds as we know

them are mind, life and body; all endeavour and attainment here on earth are concerned with this trio. The altar of the Fire here is provided by man's inner and outer frame; the bricks of this altar are his body, life and mind with all their activities; the multiform garland spoken of by Yama is this lower nature with its multiple forms. Fire is the symbol of the conscious power and energy lying concealed within the innermost depths of the mortal frame, it is the inner being's power of askesis.

By following the path of the triple Work, Nachiketas could achieve the temporal realisation. What he needed now was the realisation beyond time. This is what he demanded as his third boon. After the knowledge of the worlds the Knowledge of the Supreme, the transcendental realisation after the cosmic.

Fire has been described as the Origin of the worlds, He is the Beginning of the worlds, their Source. He is also the primeval World, for the earth-principle, this earth of ours, this physical universe is the place of Agni, His own abode and field of action. Underlying the gross physical is the Subconscient, and within the Subconscient, this Fire or power of askesis and conscious force keeps Himself concealed. It is under that secret Impulse that the creation moves. It is this Fire that gives Nachiketas his ultimate realisation. We may say, in the words of the Isha Upanishad, that first, by virtue of the second boon, he crosses beyond death by the knowledge of the Ignorance; next, by his third boon, he wins Immortality on mastering the supreme Knowledge. This is the fruit promised to him in the end.

Nachiketas gained this knowledge, the entire method of the Yoga as revealed to him in person by the Lord of Death. Freed from all impurity and the possibility of death, he attained the supreme state. Anyone else who would follow his path would likewise obtain this realisation of the Self, even as Nachiketas did.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

VISIT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION TO PONDICHERRY

DISCUSSIONS WITH DR. SAIYIDAIN

IN the last week of July, 1965, the Education Commission was making its direct contacts with educationists and institutions in Madras and then Dr. K.G. Saiyidain, a member of the Commission, accompanied by Dr. H.S.S. Lawrence, Principal, State Institute of Education, Madras, came to Pondicherry for contacts and observations useful to the purpose of the Commission. They arrived in Pondicherry on the afternoon of July 27 and left for Madras the next day forenoon. Their stay here was short, but the time was put to the best possible use and all concerned felt extremely satisfied and happy.

After meetings and discussions with the State educational authorities and visits to the 'Centre Pédagogique' and one or two other institutions, Dr. Saiyidain and Dr. Lawrence arrived at the Ashram Gate at about 5.30 p.m. That was just the time for our Physical Education activities and the guests were taken to the Sports Ground, Tennis Ground and the Playground, where they witnessed boys and girls carrying on their normal varied physical exercises. While they were going round, naturally many subjects came up as queries, which called for answers and explanations.

Integral Education, which represents the educational ideology of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, views physical education as a very important support of the mental, moral and spiritual development of the individual and is, therefore, much emphasized. It is sought to be made attractive through varied avenues of physical exertion and interesting programmes of contests. It is not imposed as a compulsory preoccupation, but practically all students join it.

The philosophy of integral education and the place of physical education in it repeatedly came up for discussions and, by the time we returned for a regular meeting with the staff and students, the guests had a direct experience of the boys and the girls particularly in the aspect of their physical capabilities and their general alertness as reflected in their sports activities.

At the meeting, which lasted almost two hours, a very close sort of contact easily came about between Dr. Saiyidain and the audience and an interesting discussion took place. In his introductory remarks he explained what the Commission had been charged with. He emphasised that the task was onerous, but they were going ahead with it hoping for a solution of the problem of a national education for the country. Our large numbers are our greatest problem, he said. How to provide for free compulsory primary education, as enjoined by our Constitution, to all the children of the nation ? Where are the teachers for this? How are they to be created ? And we cannot indefinitely wait for this. Similar are the problems at other stages

of education. He further said that while it would be wrong to call other nations unspiritual, yet India has traditionally had a special inclination for it. But what is spirituality and how is it to be incorporated in education? More pointedly, he said that he wished to know from us what we had to say on this subject.

He spoke for about ten minutes, but his talk was so clear and so free and spontaneous that the audience listened to him with rapt attention.

It was not easy to start a discussion after that spell of a speech and therefore one of us rather haltingly said that education was essentially a matter of change of consciousness, not really of literacy, much less of technological skills, even though they were all useful and needed. The expression 'change of consciousness' immediately came in for a big assault at the hands of Dr. Saiyidain, who exclaimed that a *mere* 'change of consciousness' may be all right for a mystic, who valued his own subjective experiences, but it was not *enough* for building up the life of the society.

Now the stage was set for a full-dress discussion on the relative merits and demerits of the two familiar approaches to life, viz., the physical and social or the external, on the one hand, and the yogic and spiritual or the internal, on the other. The former regards the physical reality and the social fact as the primary and determining values of life. The latter regards the inner nature of man and his consciousness as the primary and determining fact. In a simpler form, this opposition could be stated as the opposition of mind and circumstances, *i.e.*, does the mind create its circumstances or do circumstances create the mind?

Now the fact of the matter is that at the lower levels of human evolution, when the attitude is strongly external and extravert, the physical things alone appear as real. But as reflection grows and man learns to regard his thoughts and feelings and volitions as the originating factors of external changes then subjective facts acquire a primacy over the external and physical. It is then that we learn that circumstances are as we think them to be.

The teachers, young and old, of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, all more or less steeped in introspection and its realities, were hard put to a test to convey to Dr. Saiyidain that 'change of consciousness' was no airy stuff, rather more real than the hardest reality of the external world.

Regarding the attitude of judging education and culture by its usefulness to society, it was stressed by the teachers, one after the other, that human society was not the last fact of reality and, therefore, it could not be made the highest standard of judgment. Positively, it was urged that we must cultivate a sense and feeling for the supreme universal truth of which human society was a particular manifestation and judge all things of life and experience by reference to that ultimate standard. This was stated more precisely, too, in the terms that a Divine Consciousness was the essence of all existence and that these physical and social phenomena were expressions of the same. Thus consciousness was the essential stuff of reality and all changes in the universe or the individual were changes of consciousness. And to

stimulate the growth of consciousness in width, in depth, in height was the whole business of education and culture.

Dr. Saiyidain agreed that society was not the last fact of existence, but the debate was inconclusive, as such ones are, except that the phrase 'change of consciousness' stuck to the minds of all of us and we found some delight and some fun in repeating it. Dr. Saiyidain's contention, in this connection, however, was effective that subjective experiences must in the end return to the social situation and improve and enrich it.

However, next morning after a whole night's rest, when we met for breakfast, the phrase did not fail to turn up and when it turned up it enjoyed a relatively spontaneous assent, which was quite a surprise.

We must return to our evening discussions which held us quite for two hours. One young teacher was almost itching to ask Dr. Saiyidain a number of questions : What was the Commission doing ? What did they think of national education? How did they propose to reconcile India's genius with modern demands of life ? etc., etc. With unrestrained force he almost poured them out. But Dr. Saiyidain was in no mood to be put into the witness-box and smilingly he said, 'Sir, I am at the questioning end. I want to know from you, what is spirituality ? I seek to know it on the basis of your experience, not of texts old or new.'

However, the young teacher too was in no mood to get into the witness-box, but his colleagues came forward and we had another spell of interesting discussion.

Spirituality, it was stated, though differently formulated by different teachers, was essentially a matter of attitude. The normal attitude was egoistic, self-centred and self-appropriating. It was small, narrow and limited. On the other hand, there was the attitude of a sense of oneness with others and with all existence. It was one of self-giving, of large-mindedness, large-heartedness, of comprehensiveness, of inclusiveness. The former was a superficial attitude, the latter a deeper one. The former was of our mind and body, the latter of our soul.

Next it was stated that the whole aim of this educational work here sponsored and guided by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was to so bring up individuals from a young age that they developed in them the latter attitude. And our experience seemed to have been fairly rewarding. Our young people displayed in the quality of their personality the attitude of self-giving, of largeness, of wideness, of devotion to truth, of relative comprehension and oneness. This was our best offering and contribution to the Education Commission in their search to know what spirituality concretely is and that as living experience and no exposition of any texts.

This won from Dr. Saiyidain a remarkable assent and we were much gratified with it.

Naturally a number of minor issues, incidental and casual, also arose and they made their own contribution to the general atmosphere of exchange of ideas. But it is difficult to recapture them and essentially their value was for the moment.

Next morning at breakfast we were much fewer and more compact, but,

above all, surprisingly calm and contented. In the context, Dr. Saiyidain speaking pensively said that the values we emphasize here do appeal, but he wondered how to implement them in the concrete processes of education. His quest and difficulty and his earnestness to find a solution impressed everybody and all shared his attitude and feeling. Then came forth a reply too, stating that the difficulty was a very real one. But, it was said, the values we wanted to promote should be clearly borne in mind, in fact made more and more vivid by constant concentration on them. And if that was done, then the ways and means of implementation would tend to suggest themselves according to circumstances. It was also said that the difficulties of implementation should not be allowed to cause depression and make the aim less clear and vivid in our mind.

Dr. Saiyidain seemed heartily to agree to this and we had a most pleasant morning session of sharing of ideas and attitudes.

After breakfast a hurried visit was paid to an educational experiment of the Centre, where education was sought to be given, as much as possible, under the students' own desire to know and to learn. The teacher was really a guide with them, no instructor whatsoever. It involved a duplication of classes, but the results so far seen had been interesting. The students could opt for these classes or the normal ones. We hoped to draw more and more into this form of pursuit of learning.

Dr. Saiyidain and Dr. Lawrence were much interested to see this experiment and the system of work-sheets evolved in this connection. Dr. Lawrence had been all along an interested participant and we very much appreciated his presence and participation.

That brought our contact with the two guests to a close for the occasion and we heartily wished them 'bon voyage' and a quick return to their work in Madras.

INDRA SEN

A CENTURY OF ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

(1965 is the Centenary Year of the publication of this Children's Classic.)

TIME has changed since Alice found in Wonderland a bottle with a 'Drink Me' label on it and took care to "see whether it's marked 'poison' or not" because "she had never forgotten that if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later." Time has changed and if "all that glitters is not gold" happens to be a truth for all time, "all that is marked 'poison' is not disagreeable" is a contemporary truth. Who does not know the story of the unfortunate modern man who, utterly frustrated in a world of adulteration, swallowed pints of poison only to wake up afresh and know that the poison too was adulterated ?

And indeed, during the century between the first publication of *Alice in Wonderland* in 1865 and 1965, our world has experienced much and conceived much. Grand old things have been scanned in the light of novel conceptions, often embarrassingly. *Alice in Wonderland* too has undergone a Freudian interpretation, in addition to a conventional significance of allegory attributed to its characters. Happily, inspiring interpretations have only amounted to, as A. C. Ward points out, "exercises in laboured nonsense, which Lewis Carroll's own spontaneous nonsense dissolves into absurdity : '...if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be : but as it isn't, it ain't. That is logic.' said Tweedledee."

Even so, as Freud believed that 'nonsensical combination of ideas must, all the same, make sense', the 'spontaneous nonsense' of Lewis Carroll, though above the scopes of Freudian severity and of search for allusions of immediate value, is charged with two permanent currents of significance, one of a liberal observation of the ways of the world and the other of a sportive incursion into the realm of reverie and, even beneath that, of the human self.

Insofar as the author's observations of the ways of the world are concerned, some among them have become simple truisms by our time. Indeed, how many dynasties have not behaved like a 'pack of cards' during the past hundred years ? And is it not a fact that in spite of academyfuls of lessons on human unity the ultimate knowledge that guides us is 'she (or he) is she (or he), and I am I' ? Or don't we often find ourselves, as Alice found herself physically, that either we are too big for or too short of an occasion ? And the fish-footman and the frog-footman and the baby that became a pig serve only to remind us Indians of our own mythological story of profound wisdom, where a blessed disciple obtained with his Guru's aid a new vision for a moment and found how most of the people he encountered in his worldly transactions, including his dear wife and children, were only animals of different species !

No wonder that the inhabitants of Wonderland—Crab and Caterpillar, Hatter

and Hare, Gryphon and Mock Turtle and many others—live together and quarrel just as we human beings do, because each honourable member of the esteemed human race accomodates a wonderland beneath his surface-self. Here we recognise the second current of significance underlying the book. The author belonged to a religious order and, a master in mathematics, he was a man of meditative nature, an introvert. In the moments of his inward sojourn 'down, down, down' within his own self, it is rather natural that he came across layers of fantastic subconscious which appear at times to have a life double that of the ordinarily conscious self. Nothing is absurd in that sphere—a cat with a grin or even a 'grin without a cat' ! Yet these spheres may only constitute a passage to a more tranquil state, a deeper experience of spiritual nature. The description of the 'loveliest garden you ever saw' with 'those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains' into which Alice longed to enter, is almost a prelude to that state, though the story diverted its course as the theme of the Royalty of cards emerged. The stress that has been laid on the 'curiouser' feelings Alice had with her body which became too small in a moment and too big in the next, either hardly enough left to 'make one respectable person' or 'opening out like the largest telescope that ever was', cannot just be whimsical fancy. The inconvenience felt by Alice may be the negative expression of the age-old urge to imbibe a greater plasticity in our body which could cope with the adventures of the spirit.

In his real life, the author of Alice, Rev. Charles Lutwige Dodgson, used to avoid the world of elders, whereas his *alter ego* Lewis Carroll led a little world of little ones, including Alice Liddell, the model for the immortal Alice. Shy to elders, he was extraordinarily jovial before children. Recently I read of his nephew recounting the story of Lewis Carroll's plight in a party, which I had read as a joke elsewhere, without Carroll being mentioned. Being invited to a children's party, he reached there a little late. He decided to amuse his tiny hosts and so, pushing himself through the door with suddenness, he crouched and made strange sounds imitating a friendly bear. But as the entire hall was hushed to an unusually prolonged silence, he stared and found that it was a women's party, the children's being in the hall behind !

We do not know what excuse the Reverend, the Lecturer of Christ's Church, Oxford, invented then. But following the common sense of psychology of dreams, he has put forward in the reflections of the sister of Alice the excuse of tinkling sheep-bells to account for the rattling tea-cups, the shepherd-boy's voice for the aueen's shrill cries, and so on and so forth. He has thus succeeded in presenting a little bit of rationalisation without disturbing the enchantments of the reveries of a golden summer-afternoon. But we shall do justice to him only when we have placed him far above any obligation for such rationalisations. He was a great visionary, one of those daring dreamers from whom humanity derives secret strength for progress through ages of gloom. For he says : "...you will one day see a brighter dawn than this—when lovelier sights will meet your eyes than any waving trees or rippling waters—when angel-hands shall undraw your curtains, and sweeter tones than ever loving Mother breathed shall wake you to a new and glorious day and when all the sadness,

and the sin, that darkened life on this little earth, shall be forgotten like the dreams of a night that is past !”

This is from his Easter Greetings to ‘every child who loves Alice.’ But who does not love Alice ? Hence he who loves Alice is a child. Right is Arthur Crompton-Rickett when he recommends that “all children from six to sixty may come to Carroll’s parties.” And it is the supratemporal child who declares through John Macy, a historian of literature, that to save *Alice in Wonderland* he “would gladly throw overboard a good deal of very important literature.”

MANOJ DAS

A PILGRIM’S SONG

O PILGRIM from the far-off land,
 Welcome to our sunny coast !
 Here warblers sing in eternal Spring,
 And the One Divine is your Host.

A golden boat with a silvery sail,
 Unfurled to the heavenly help,
 Will take you safe through the roughest gale,
 To reach your immortal Self.

O blessed pilgrim ! here for you
 Awaits all beauty’s paradise;
 Friends you will find of the truest kind
 That knows no earthly ties.

Free you are in your inmost soul,
 Now out for a playful pilgrimage;
 Onward you go to your destined goal,
 To gain your spirit-heritage.

Be welcome to our sunny coast,
 O traveller of eternity !
 Here you will sing in eternal Spring
 The song of the One’s world-melody.

SAILEN RAY

LATIKA'S NOSE-RING

A STORYETTE

THERE was a man who, on taking stock at the end of the year, found, that he had earned more than his expectations. So he purchased a nose-ring valued at Rs. 101 for his wife Latika. Latika liked the nose-ring very much. But what is the use of having a thing and other people not knowing of it ? So Latika began to advertise the fact of the purchase of the nose-ring and within 8 days of the purchase everyone in the town knew of the nose-ring of Latika. It so happened that on the 9th day Tulsidas the great saint came to the town and it was announced that he would do *kathā* at 8 p.m. in the evening. Latika was the first to arrive. When anybody came, she would look at the person, then make sure that he had been told of the nose-ring and if she thought that the person had not been told of it she would go to the person and tell him anyhow, and in this way all the people of the town, young and old, male and female, and even children knew about Latika's nose-ring. At the end of the *kathā*, an idea came to her : "Now all know about my nose-ring, but how will this poor *kathākar* Tulsidas know of it ? And it will be a great calamity for him if he doesn't." So she approached Tulsidas and said *namaste*. Tulsidas asked her whether she wanted to say anything. Latika said, "No, no, nothing, only this, see how your *bhakta*—my husband—spends money uselessly. He has purchased this nose-ring for me, without asking me and spent Rs. 101, a real waste of money. But see, is it not very fine?" Tulsidas at once understood what was in Latika's mind and the following couplet flowed from his lips:

O woman ! thou rememberest the one who gave thee the nose-ring,
Thou hast forgotten the *one* who gave thee the nose.

VALLABHDAS V. SHETH

A POET'S BAT

IN the field of inspiration,
At the crease of creation,
As I stand with a poet's bat
In wonderment tense about what's coming
Till the dim thing is quite on me
Clear and crisp—
• I swing each arrival into shape
And am in for the next—thus attempting
Soaring sixers of thought,
Rolling pentameter sweeps,
Couplet flashes of shots,
And, in between,
Some shorter-length cuttings,
Slick slippings—and even
Curt monosyllabic blocks.

But what is the score ?
The century's glare ? fifty's twilight ?
Often duck's darkness. For, I'm hardly a player:
A player should be one
Whose bat is an image that moves
In faultless tune
With the one archetypal Bat—
The master Bradman blade—
Which swings every minute somewhere
With an omnipotent energy of Love
Scattering bliss-balls of delight
All round in the universe-Field,
Chased lustily by men.

And to become an all-rounder
One must change
The poetry of batting
For the prose or fielding,

And the batting of poetry
For retired watching :
As a player-spectator excitedly,
Then off-pavilion as a passer-by
Uninvolved, seeing it through,
All passion spent,
The thrills not clinging home,
Carrying the essence of the game within,
Deeper and deeper—
Bringing back to the play
Fuller soul-energy and greater skill,
Birth after birth,
Till the grand Pavilion and its biding players—
Originals of the Earth's—
Descend,
Arriving at a perfect pitch
Down here.
Till then let me
Each season better the quality of my game—
And Oh, at length to belong !
Belong to the *n*th Eleven—maybe—
Of the radiant Super-Cricketers of the race.

NARESH

PRAYER FOR TRAVELLING

AROUND the couch of felicity,
in my greater dream,
there is in your Reality
a constant embracing stream.

Its rhythm trills the Atman lute,
its light a widening peace,
but in the silver song of night
is where it need increase.

Each vision is an imprint—
the experience is true.
But there in the vaguer bleakness
may I be touched by you!

The sum of notes creates a tune
But the melody is not the dance
until the fire of your embrace
has, in it, Presence—void of chance!

The summit peak—a glory
blessed by your lotus feet—
but may I have and see you first
on the God-forsaken street!

In all I hear you calling
and in all I lost my heart.
Guide me, but bless me—above all, this :
We'll never be apart.

GENE

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(Continued from the September issue)

Part Three: The Conquest of Food-Need

II. A SEMBLANCE OF VICTORY

Life was a search but finding never came.

(Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, Bk. II C. 6)

From food man was born. Verily, man, this human being, is made of the essential substance of food.¹

(Taittiriya Upanishad, II. 1)

If a person does not eat,...he has to give up his life at the end; on the other hand, if he takes in food again,—he becomes richly endowed with life.

(Maitri Upanishad, 6.11)

It is a common enough observation that a living body may sometimes *appear* to manage without any food intake, if not for all time at least for a short while, under some special circumstances such as fevers and consumptive diseases, starvation and fasting, hibernation and aestivation, and of course in the case of what has been termed 'suspended animation' or '*vie ralentie*'. Now, how does the organism manage to go without food and remain all the same a viable concern, albeit temporarily? Do these phenomena offer any clue to the solution of the problem we are grappling with?

The answer is an emphatic NO. For, as our study will presently reveal, the success achieved by embodied life in these instances of suspension of food intake is more apparent than real. For, as a matter of fact, the process of food-utilisation continues all the while with this sole difference that in these special cases external alimentation is replaced by the tapping of the reserve food already stored in the bodily system through prior food intake.

Indeed, one of the principal characteristics of a living organism is to strike a proper balance between what it receives from outside in the form of food-energy and what it has to expend through its multifarious activities, so that there may always be a reserve pool. Of course, we can conceive of "an organism which balanced

¹ Sri Aurobindo's translation.

its accounts from hour to hour, but never had much margin. There are such organisms which live, to use a homely expression, from hand to mouth. They are viable, going concerns, but they are trading on a very restricted basis of capital. It is plain that organisms could not have gone very far on such dangerous lines. They could not have survived any crises. There is obvious advantage therefore in *storing energy in potential form*, and this accumulation of reserves is fundamentally characteristic of organisms."¹

Thus the organic aliments that are usually taken into the body are not all used up immediately to meet the necessary metabolic needs : a part of these is stored in the body for future emergency uses, mostly in the form of *lipids* or fat deposits that are found in the viscera, under the skin, and distributed in tissues such as muscles and kidneys, and *glycogen* or animal starch.

Now in conditions such as starvation, when all external supplies are cut off, the energy-need for the various metabolic processes in the living body continues as before but the source of fulfilment is now the body's own reserves of fats, carbohydrates and, to some extent, proteins. This process of consumption of body substances, this 'self-devouring' or '*autophagie*', as it has been so well termed, cannot however continue indefinitely and obviously there comes a time when these reserves are exhausted or seriously depleted: it is then that death ensues.

The progressive loss of body matter due to this process of 'self-devouring' during the period of continuous food privation has been experimentally well established. Thus it has been found that at the very beginning of the period of starvation the glucidic reserves in the form of glycogen are attacked and used up. But at the end of four days the contribution of glycogen to the fulfilment of total energy need of the body falls to a bare 1 per cent and the rest has to be met by the mobilisation of lipid or fat reserves. After five days of starvation even the proteids, the vital building materials of all living substance, are called on to contribute their share (roughly 15 per cent) of metabolic fuel. But the body struggles hard through intricate physiological processes to keep down their consumption to a minimum. But as the period of fast lengthens and the fat reserves are totally used up, the ratio of protein degradation abruptly shoots up and the organism falls a prey to death.

The substantial loss at the moment of death has been statistically determined to be about 40 per cent of the body weight. But all the tissues and organs are not equally affected. The adipose tissues completely disappear, the liver loses 60 per cent of its weight and the muscles get diminished to the tune of 40 per cent. But the heart and the nervous system withstand all material loss. In fact, it is when the brain, the last line of the body's defences ("*ultime donjon de la défense*"), begins to falter and disintegrate that the animal dies.²

Mr. W. M. Smallwood has experimented with some fish and has been able to keep

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Ed. Hastings), Vol. 8, p. 3

² *Vide*, "Pertes de Matière pendant l'Inanition" in *Morphologie et physiologie animales* by G. Bresse, p. 438.

one without food for twenty months at a stretch ! But the inevitable result was that muscles of the piscine body became very much reduced and the fish was hardly able to move. A similar situation develops in human beings in the course of prolonged illness; the body becomes very much lighter and emaciated. And all this is due to the withdrawal and utilisation of the energy-stuff stored in the muscles of the body.

One encounters the same phenomenon of 'self-devouring' in the case of hibernation or aestivation.¹ It has been noted that hibernation and starvation are two closely allied phenomena. In both the instances the organism falls back upon its reserve pool and sustains itself by utilizing the energy stored in the body. In fact, "the hibernating animals possess between the two scapular girdles a many-lobed organ of brown colour. This organ otherwise called *hibernal mass* appears to play the role of a nutritive reserve.... This hibernal mass is indeed very rich in fat content...and its volume is considerably diminished in the course of a hibernal fast, only to be re-constituted during the next active phase of the animal's life."² A brown bat may thus lose 35 per cent of its body weight and a ground squirrel 80 per cent during a single winter.

But how, through what physiological mechanism, does the body contrive to utilize the stored food products in all the aforesaid instances of food privation such as starvation or hibernation or emaciation from sickness ? The prevalent theory is that it is the internal enzymes—those ubiquitous biocatalysers responsible for the efficient functioning of almost all the biochemical reactions in the body—that reverse the gear, so to say, whenever there is a demand for food-energy and attack the muscles in order to "release the food-energy that exists as muscle which thus freed is carried by the blood to such parts of the body as demand food to keep the organism living."³ It is interesting to note in this connection that it is because of this reversibility of enzymatic action that "a chemical examination of the blood of a starved fish and of one recently caught revealed the fact that there was about the same amount of food products in each."⁴

But it is after all beside the question to investigate the actual nature of *autophagie*. The essential point we have to note instead is that, in all the situations cited above, the body continues to make use of food if not externally and in a direct manner yet at least indirectly and in a more covert way. So these instances cannot be considered to illustrate how embodied life has achieved some success in tackling the problem of food intake.

But there exists a striking phenomenon that seems to prove that in some special circumstances the food-need of the body, whether external or internal, may be

¹ During periods of cold or during periods of drought when the available food is in short supply, certain animals enter a state of suspended animation called *hibernation* or winter dormancy and *aestivation* or summer torpidity.

² G. Bresse, *op. cit.* p. 740.

³ ⁴ W. M. Smallwood, *A Text-Book of Biology*, p. 62.

drastically curtailed or even altogether abrogated. We are of course referring to the phenomenon of suspended animation with its reduced metabolism.

The *metabolic criterion* is one of the two principal criteria of all manifestation of life, the other being the *reproductive criterion*. Indeed, a living body is the arena of a ceaseless process of innumerable biochemical actions and reactions of synthesis and degradation. Now all this metabolic activity requires the expenditure of energy and this energy is usually derived from the chemically potential energy of material aliments. Thus the more rapid is the rate of metabolic processes the greater will be the need for the consumption of food.

Now experimental studies have shown that this metabolic criterion may be altogether suspended in the case of seeds, in many bacteria and in a few small invertebrate animals that can be dehydrated by the process of freeze drying, in which condition *viability may remain for years* together. Some of the poikilothermic animals, even those quite advanced in the scale of organic evolution, such as the Fish, the Reptiles, and the Molluscs, may be exposed to very low temperatures (-30°C) and reduced to an inactive life without at the same time losing the capacity to come back to life-activity whenever they are de-frozen in a sufficiently slow and graded manner. Many lower organisms have been cooled in liquid oxygen to a temperature of -183°C and a few in liquid helium to -269°C , that is to say, to a temperature little above *absolute zero* (-273°C), and have still survived !

The explanation lies in the fact that the metabolic rate decreases with the fall in body temperature and life enters a state of quasi-static latency. It is through such a process of reduced metabolism and therefore through greatly curtailed food-need that many hibernating animals manage to survive the winter on the body reserves they possess. As the temperature of an organism progressively goes down, the speed of physiological processes gradually diminishes, the oxygen consumption is reduced up to one-hundredth of the normal, the heart rate goes down to a few beats per minute, the circulatory movement is practically suspended and the organism becomes lethargic or torpid.

But for obvious reasons this too cannot be the right solution from our point of view. For what we envisage as our ideal is a divinely dynamic outpouring of life and not the dormancy of the life-processes in the bosom of still inactivity. But in the prevailing conditions of the body, any increase in dynamism entails a higher metabolic rate and a correspondingly greater food-intake. "The enormous amount of extra energy required for activity is clear from the change in the metabolic rate of a humming-bird in flight"¹ which is thirteen times more than that of the same humming-bird at rest. "The increase in the rate of a man who performs work at his maximum capacity is also about 12 to 15 times his resting metabolic rate."²

Conversely, the metabolic rate for a dynamic living remaining intact, food privation is bound to reduce the dynamic play of life and seriously sap the physical-

¹ ² K. Schmidt-Nielsen, *Animal Physiology*, p. 34.

vital vigour of the being. Where lies then the solution to the problem ?

Here at this point we must turn our gaze to the other end of the scale and take cognizance of the significant fact that the problem of dynamisation of life-activity even in the period of a total fast has been adequately solved in some yogic siddhis.

It has indeed been practically demonstrated that it is possible, through the application of yoga-shakti, to prevent the inevitable energy-loss due to starvation or fasting and to replenish the living system with vital, mental and even purely physical energies drawn *directly* from the universal source and not through the cumbersome process of material alimentation. Thus Sri Aurobindo certifies from his own personal experience¹ that "it is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, *even those of the body*, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence."²

Is this then the solution that we have been seeking after ? Unfortunately it is not, for herein there is a snag that has not yet been removed; it is the ineluctable withering away of the material substance of the body in starvation. Thus, as Sri Aurobindo himself has warned us : "One thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance."³ And as long as this cardinal problem of preventing the disintegration of the gross material basis of life is not satisfactorily solved, "we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature,"⁴ for "as her basic means for maintaining and renewing the gross physical body and its workings and inner potencies Nature has selected the taking in of outside matter in the shape of food, its digestion, assimilation of what is assimilable and elimination of what cannot or ought not to be assimilated."⁵

We are thus back at the point from which we started and, indeed, the problem will always defy any solution unless and until the basic metaphysical question of Hunger and Thirst is previously solved. For, a little reflexion will bring home the truth that the body's hunger is only the outermost fringe and a physical symbol as it were of a much more profound and widely operative universal principle of Hunger and Thirst.

What, then, is the metaphysics of Hunger ?—the nature of the problem and its suggested solution ?

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ Consult for necessary details : A. B. Purani, *Life of Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 141-143.

² ³ ⁴ ⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, pp. 51-53

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

THE METHOD AND STYLE

(Continued from the September issue)

SRI AUROBINDO is no less a stylist than Milton. As there is character and personality in Milton's verse, there is a definite style in Sri Aurobindo's which is a departure from all contemporary poetry. This is all the more true because of the peculiar approach he makes. In Milton the verse becomes an expression of his dominant mind; in Sri Aurobindo it is the expression of his soul, the deepest and highest achieved by man's inner being. Milton manipulates consciously the word-patterns, the paragraph-settings, the tonal inflexions. But Sri Aurobindo allows a higher power, which has become a resident of his being, to dominate and do the work of creation. His mind stands aside. His life-parts enjoy the thrill of creativity. Thus he approaches poetry not so much for self-expression as for God-expression. The style and method are formed by this constructive superior power. He uses poetry as a vehicle for the highest Truth; he approaches it, as one approaches the presence of a deity, all still and calm to receive the inspirational outpour. He has no need to invoke the daimon of inspiration as Milton does. His silent opening works miracles.

If we study *Savitri* we can trace five characteristic elements, which are : height, serenity, wideness, grandeur, and delight. A greater scrutiny can elucidate others. But these are almost general. We shall examine each in turn.

Height is one of the chief characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Listen :

To marry all in God's immense delight,
Bearing the eternity of every spirit,
Bearing the burden of universal love,
A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls. (Book 3)

There is a sweep, a fulfilling vision, a height of spiritual experience. There is a spontaneous winging beyond the normal mode of existence. Or :

A great illusion then has built the stars ? (Book 6, Canto 2)

Or :

Man in the world's life works out the dreams of God. (Book 7, Canto 2)

In both these examples there seems a breaking of bonds, there is a release and an escape, a large and living height is here. Again :

A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
 Empowered to force the door denied and closed
 Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
 And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.

(Book I, Canto 2)

We feel in these lines a vibrant and intense altitude, a movement of supernatural wings, as it were.

Let us take a few more examples :

Alone amid surrounding crowds she dwelt,
 Apart in herself until her hour of fate. (Book 4, Canto 2)

Or :

Thy spirit's strength shall make thee one with God,
 Thy agony shall change to ecstasy,
 Indifference deepen into infinity's calm
 And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute. (Book 6, Canto 2)

Both these reveal some prophecy, some flight that throws open the doors of unforeseen heights by their word-rhythm, word-suggestion and symbols. Sri Aurobindo strikes keys that are seldom heard in English, those of rare and poignant visitations of the Muse. These lines convey a sense of height; we feel as if we were listening to enchanted echoes from the empyrean.

In Milton this prophetic element is absent. He has a breadth and a sweep. He rises by the strength of his austere force, but that cannot match the height to which Sri Aurobindo rises most spontaneously. This is because he cannot usher in that intensity, that freedom, that revelatory wonder with which we meet at every step in Sri Aurobindo. Milton's approach and method are too mental to allow such an act.

As there is sweep and breadth in Milton, there is a breadth and roll in Sri Aurobindo as well. For example,

A vision came of higher realms than ours.
 A consciousness of brighter fields and skies,
 Of beings less circumscribed than brief-lived man
 And subtler bodies than these passing frames,
 Objects too fine for our material grasp,
 Acts vibrant with a superhuman light,
 And movements pushed by a superconscient force,
 And joys that never flowed through mortal limbs
 And lovelier scenes than earth's and happier lives.

(Book I, Canto 3)

ere the sweep and breadth are magnificent. Sri Aurobindo pours out scenes of beauty, light, force and joy with ease, heaping joy on joy, revelation over revelation, bringing a greater and greater influx of magic word-images that are like bright and splendored enchantments. And before we have time to feel and absorb the beauty and the intensity, out comes another image and yet another in quick and revealing succession, till one feels intoxicated with the flow and breadth, the span and the sweep that carry us along, surprised and panting with the unceasing glory. And we have the sense that all this would never stop. In contrast here are a few lines from Milton :

Meanwhile, upon the firm opacous globe
Of this round world, whose first convex divides
The luminous inferior Orbs, enclosed
From Chaos and the inroads of Darkness old,
Satan alighted walks. (Book 3)

There is a flow; but the whole rendering is mental, and we miss the winging cadence that gives us the idea of breadth. There are longer passages, especially those of similes where there is a great sweep ; but that sweep is tied to material objects and to sense, hence they lack the overwhelming rhapsody of movement we meet with in Sri Aurobindo. In the latter the breadth is subjective, of the consciousness that thrills to inner touches, feels the impact of aerial substances and lives and moves in the spirit's pure air. That is why there is so much felicity, richness and intensity in his span. Let us hear him again :

He has learnt the inconscient's working and the law,
Its incoherent thoughts and rigid acts,
Its hazard wastes of impulse and idea,
The chaos of its mechanic frequencies,
Its random calls, its whispers falsely true,
Misleaders of the hooded listening soul. (Book 6, Canto 2)

This is the regard of the awakened man on the turbulent, eerie and mechanic device of the Inconscience. Here too we see the expanse of vision that grasps the totality of the inconscient world in one look. Such span of vision and penetration, such stretch of universal experience are only possible on that level of consciousness where one sees all things in their totality, yet not missing the differentiation, the different constituting factors, the different facets, possibilities, moods and patterns of existence. But Milton sees with the mind's eyes; he marks only the difference but misses the inherent unity which is known only by rising beyond the stature of reason. Whatever breadth he achieves is due to his mind's withdrawing from momentary things, his preoccupation with greater objects than merely those of sense and those closer to the soil than mind's native height. But he fails to go further beyond the impenetrable dome

of ethical thinking. Hence we get clipped utterances; we feel that he attempts to rise but the magnet-pull of the ethico-religious sentiment and thought drags him down

As Milton is noble, so Sri Aurobindo is serene. This harmonious serenity seem to be omnipresent in *Savitri*. Whether he rises to great power or intensity or sweetness or breadth or grandeur, the serenity is never lost. It runs through the epic like a magic harmonious stream flowing across the peaks of power, the spans of magnificence, rising into waves of beauty, deepening into seas of felicity. Felicity seems to be the connecting link, the very condition under which he writes. Here for example

He builds on her largesses his fortune's days
And trails his peacock-plumaged joy of life
And suns in the glory of her passing smile. (Book 1, Canto 4)

Or :

Repose in a frame-work of established fate,

and again :

Return sheer joy to joy, pure light to light.

We notice the note of serenity pervading these lines. There is an inevitable ease a natural sense of harmony, a consciousness that is steeped in the sun of spirit. Nothing seems to disturb its unmoving poise, its smile and its gladness. This joy is joy of existence, the joy of creativity and the joy of self-manifestation. Sri Aurobindo has it even while describing the Void :

This is my silent dark immensity,
This is the home of everlasting night,
This is the secrecy of Nothingness
Entombing the vanity of life's desires (Book 9, Canto 2) —

or while expressing Nirvana :

Empty of thought, incapable of bliss,
That felt life blank and nowhere found a soul...
That made unreal the world and all life meant (Book 7, Canto 6)—

or while picturing the sense of darkness :

Vast minds and lives without a spirit within,
Impatient architects of error's house,

Leaders of cosmic ignorance and unrest,
 The sponsors of sorrow and mortality
 Embodied the dark Ideas of the Abyss. (Book 2, Canto 8)

All these lines show that Sri Aurobindo never leaves his native altitude of serenity. Calmness seems to be the very basis of his poetical creation. All are panoramas before him, all are aspects of the same unchanging Reality. He is not ruffled by error or sin, nor overjoyed with rapture, nor heart-stricken with fate. Yet he does not forget to be one with his subject. He feels calmly the inner substance of all he describes or portrays. His serenity is not a withdrawal, that is, indifferent to the impact of the different facets of reality presented to him. Rather, he calmly enjoys all that comes before his vision or as experience. He shares the abundant flow that comes before him and his soul relishes the variations, the contraries, the struggle, the harmony, the moods, the surprises, the invasions of light and felicity, the descent or ascent as conditions, facets, masks of the one unique consciousness. His serenity comes from his total detachment from things or their modes. He has seen the single unalterable Reality. It is on that background of his experience that he sees and feels things and that too is the background of his expression. This in turn modulates his style. Perhaps this aspect cannot be readily grasped on a cursory vision. If one went deep enough and penetrated sufficiently, the serenity and poise would become apparent.

The fourth characteristic of *Savitri* is grandeur. Grandeur in power, grandeur in height, grandeur in joy and beatitude, grandeur in intensity. These are some of the aspects. Grandeur as we see it in Sri Aurobindo is the intensification, heightening, raising up of his native mood to its utmost fullness when it acquires a majesty of its own. It no longer remains an isolated facet of expression but becomes an almost cosmic entity reaching its loftiest status. Such intense passages in Milton are rare in this peculiar sense in which we are using the term. But in Sri Aurobindo there are numerous lines, passages, sometimes whole pages which are electrified with grandeur and nobility. For example :

A long lone line of hesitating hue
 Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
 Troubled the far rim of life's obscure sleep. (Book 1, Canto 1)

Here we hear the strains of grandeur in solemnity. The whole passage breathes of a measureless, a solemn vastness that seems to roll itself to eternity. Or :

A voice calls from the chambers of the soul :
 We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead's touch
 In golden privacies of immortal fire. (Book 1, Canto 4)

An occult grandeur is here. We seem to hear something that is intangible and ineffable. Not heights but depths seem to unveil themselves here. Again :

A paean swelled from the lost musing deeps,
An anthem pealed to the triune ecstasies,
A cry of the moments to the Immortal Bliss. (Book 1, Canto 5)

Or :

.....a sanctuary of youth and joy,
A highland world of free and green delight.

Again :

And the delight when every barrier falls,
And the transfiguration and ecstasy.

In all these lines we hear the intense and occult rhythms of felicity and sweetness. But what about power ?

I bow not to thee, O huge mask of death,
Black lie of night to the cowed soul of man,
Unreal, inescapable end of things,
Thou grim jest played with the immortal spirit. (Book 9, Canto 3)

Another example :

I am the living body of his light,
I am the thinking instrument of his power. (Book 10, Canto 3)

Yet another :

Eternity looked into the eyes of Death
And Darkness saw God's living Reality. (Book 10, Canto 4)

There is an unmatched greatness of rhythm, of substance, a grandeur of theme and inspiration, a wide outbreak of power in these examples. The words themselves seem to become the vehicles of unforeseen energy and passion; the rhythm and work-pattern seem to bear the load of strange and living waves of splendour. Each syllable resounds with vitality quite opposed to what we have listened to in our earlier examples. Yet this splendour is not outward or physical-vital; this force or beauty or joy or felicity is subjective; they are manifestations of some mystical and hidden

sweetness and rapture and power. Nor is this subjectiveness something vague or ethereal or too frail to endure the impact of physicality. Rather it seems living, true, self-existent and more enduring than the objective reality to which Milton's poetry ever recalled us.

There is a uniform height throughout *Savitri*. But sometimes there comes at frequent or infrequent intervals superb lines replete with sudden, vibrant grandeur. Sometimes it is one single line; at other times it is a passage or else it is only a few syllables at the close.

Now we come to the fifth and the last of Sri Aurobindo's poetical characteristics: that of delight. What we feel is his delight of self-expression. It has no cause to be or seeks nothing as an exchange. This is one aspect which is almost totally absent in Milton, for his ethical attitude veils all joy to be and he shuns delight because he is there to speak of man's awe of his disobedience and also because joy is something profane and sacriligious to the pious grimness of his Protestant spirit. Such a sentiment is absent in Sri Aurobindo. He takes delight as the cardinal principle of all existence and specially in a great poetical endeavour this comes as the foremost underlying basis, for creation born of sorrow is the creation of Ignorance. This delight is not extravagant or licentious. Neither is it shallow. These two qualities were the causes of Milton's not accepting delight as the basic creative principle. For he associated delight with sensuous joy, or joy born from a cause or as an effect and not as in Sri Aurobindo something which is causeless and eternally existing for itself. And had there been no music, austerity, nobility and chasteness, Milton's poem would have been the dullest in the English language. The case is the reverse in Sri Aurobindo. Had there been no other element delight alone would have carried along the sweep of his epic.

Awaiting the voice that spoke and built the worlds... (Book 2, Canto 5)

The voice that chants to the creative Fire... (Book 3, Canto 2)

And large immune entangled silences

Absorbed her into emerald secrecy

And slow hushed wizard nets of fiery blooms. (Book 4, Canto 4)

Compare these with Milton's

The golden sun, in splendour likest heaven. (Book III)

Now gentle gales

Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense

Nature perfumes and whisper whence they stole

Those balmy spoils. (Book IV)

- 、 If we read the examples of the two poets, one thing becomes apparent. While the one flows on lucidly on the stream of delight, the other moves amid physical realities devoid of the roll in the first. There is no joy or delight to lend its wings. Milton is afraid lest he should cross into the fairyland of delight and imperil his poetical doctrine. Whereas Sri Aurobindo has so made his lines and words infused with delight that, instead of feeling the outer inflexions and linguistic modulations caused by seemingly ignorant speech, we feel the cadence of Elysium, the wave-roll of the river of paradise. This transformation is caused by the presence of delight which is the true poetical creator.

He foundered drowned in sweet and burning vasts,
The dire delight that could shatter mortal flesh,
The rapture that the gods sustain he bore. (Book 2, Canto 2)

Or :

On the single spirit's bare and infinite ground. (Book 2, Canto 15)

Here each vowel and consonant represent the inevitability of a mood, a phase, a condition. This inevitability gives delight, the delight of poetic creation, the delight to be amid the perfection of tones, the harmony of colour or picturisation, of music and self-existence. This perfection and this harmony can come only when the source is felicity and the end is joy.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

“OVERHEAD POETRY”

Some years back there appeared in “Mother India”, under the above title, three instalments of a series of poems written by a disciple of Sri Aurobindo’s and critically commented on by the Master. They were meant to illustrate the most important element of what Sri Aurobindo has called “The Future Poetry”. This poetry would not be written from the usual sources of the world’s literature—the levels of consciousness which, according to Sri Aurobindo, may be classified : subtle-physical mind (as in Homer and Chaucer), vital mind (as in Shakespeare and Kalidasa) and intellectual mind or creative intelligence (as in Vyasa, Dante, Virgil and Milton). It would be written from those rarer levels whose voices have occasionally joined the expression from these sources to make the profoundest moments of past poetry. The rarest of those levels give birth to “overhead poetry”: they are “planes” whose afflatus comes as if from an infinitude of conscious being above our brain-clamped intellect. Sri Aurobindo broadly distinguishes them as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. In poetry, they can function separately or in combination—and the Overmind, which is the home of what the ancient seers named the “Mantra”, the Divine Word, the supreme revelatory speech of the Eternal, can lift up any of the grades below it and modify itself to form with the first and second as well as with the creative intelligence the “mental Overmind” or, with the intuitive plane added, the “Overmind Intuition”.

The Higher Mind displays a broad steady light of thought born of a spiritual and not intellectual consciousness. The Illumined Mind has a greater intensity of light and has direct vision rather than thought. The Intuition has clear flashes of an intimate sense of things : it deepens spiritual sight into spiritual insight. The Overmind not only brings the closest inner and outer grip but also moves massively with a luminous “globality”, as it were.

The initial instalment of the old series showed in their pure characters the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind and the Intuition at work in whole short poems. It further showed a play of mixed inspiration touching in various ways the mental Overmind or the Overmind Intuition. The next instalment and still more the last presented other blendings : the overhead poetry accompanied by or fusing with the creative intelligence, as well as something of the Inner Mind, that many-dimensional realm of a deeper look than the normal vision of the subtle-physical, vital or intellectual mentality. The innermost source is, in Sri Aurobindo’s terms, the psychic—the plane of the “soul” proper, with its poignancy of sweetness and light, whose indirect presence on the more outer planes may be considered the secret power which transmutes inspiration. There is occult poetry too, communicating from the inner consciousness a pattern of delicate or powerful symbols with mysterious suggestions and occasionally giving rise to a chequer of baffling beautiful surrealism.

We are now running from the work of the same disciple a new series of three instalments

in which, along with a mixture of the overhead planes among themselves, there will be a wider variety of interweavings and, for the sake of striking comparison, several examples of mystical and spiritual self-expression not only from the creative poetic intelligence but also from the inner-mental, occult and psychic ranges. Thus diverse shades of "The Future Poetry" will be illustrated, even while the main focus of attention will be on the overhead afflatus with its extraordinarily profound seeing and its tones at once of intensity and immensity rising towards the "Mantra".

The prime purpose of all the series, old and new, is to help the poets of the spiritual life to feel more vividly the new power set working by Sri Aurobindo and catch fire with it. It is also intended that literary critics should understand the expansion of possibility in vision and word and rhythm which it effects and develop a detailed perception of both the "heart" and the "art" of a poetry seeking to be vibrant—to quote a strikingly overhead verse from Sri Aurobindo himself—with

The lines that tear the veil from Deity's face.

EDITOR

I

(I want to produce something Upanishadic. But I get no glimmering at all of the sovereignly transcendent. The poem below almost tells me what I should do to solve my difficulty; but the manner in which it tells seems to drive home the fact of my being so far from what I want—the sheer stupendous "Mantra". "The way is long, the wind is cold," though luckily it is not true that "the minstrel is infirm and old.")

YOGA

"Torment not with intangible fulgences !

O master, to my hungry life impart

The nectarous truth of yon Sky-Spirit unheard

Whose sole revealing word

Is a touch of cold far flame upon my heart !

Of what avail mute mystic suns of snow ?"

"Banish from your dream-night

The burning blindness of earth-hued desire,

That scorching shadow masked as living light !

Then only can your misery's

Heart-hunger know

The multi-splendoured sweetness of truth-glow,

The embracing fire

Of His inscrutable omnipotent peace !"

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“I fear it is only eloquence—a long way from the *Mantra*. From the point of view of a poetic eloquence there are some forceful lines and the rest is well done, but—There is too much play of the mind, not the hushed intense receptivity of the seer which is necessary for the *Mantra*.”

(Does “poetic eloquence” belong only to the mental plane which you have called “the poetic intelligence” or, more generally, “the creative intelligence”? Can it be part also of “the Higher Mind” which is an “overhead” plane?)

“It belongs to the poetic intelligence, but as in most of Milton, it can be lifted up by the touch of the Higher Mind rhythm and language.” — “When Milton starts his poem—

Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree—

he is evidently writing from the poetic intelligence. There is nothing of the Higher Mind knowledge or vision either in the substance or style. But there is a largeness of rhythm and sweep of the language which has a certain kinship to the manner natural to what is above.”—

“Milton has very usually—in ‘Paradise Lost’—some of the largeness and rhythm of the Higher Mind, but his substance is, except at certain heights, mental—mentally grand and noble. The interference of this mental Miltonic is one of the great stumbling-blocks when one tries to write from ‘above’.”—

“Naturally, something from the higher planes can come into the poetry whose medium is the poetic intelligence and uplift it. That happens in such lines as [Milton’s]

Those thoughts that wander through eternity.”—

“The *mantra* (not necessarily in the Upanishads alone)...is what comes [as here] from the Overmind inspiration.”—“One has the sense here of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, but has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in Time ages ago and which returns into the infinite to go sounding on for ages after. In fact, the word-rhythm is only part of what we hear, a support for the rhythm we listen to behind in ‘the Ear of the ear’, *śrotasya śrotram*. To a certain extent, that is what all great poetry tries to have, but it is only the Overmind rhythm to which it is natural and easy as breathing and in which it is not only behind the word-rhythm but gets into the word-movement itself and finds a fully supporting body there.”—

“There is also an inspired selection or an unusual bringing together of words which has the power to force a deeper sense on the mind....Here and elsewhere the very body and soul of the thing seen or felt has come out into the open...Milton’s line lives by its choice of the word ‘wander’ to collocate with ‘through eternity’; if he had chosen any other word, it would no longer have been an overhead line, even if the surface sense had been exactly the same.”—

“Of course you must understand that the greatness of the poetry as poetry does not necessarily depend on the level from which it is written. Shelley has more access to the inner Mind and through it to greater things than Milton, but he is not the greater poet.”—

(On the expression “lofty region” in a poem of mine, with variants like “vasty” and “myriad” suggested for the adjective, you passed the verdict: “pseudo-Miltonic”. What exactly did you mean ?)

“By pseudo-Miltonic I mean a certain kind of traditional poetic eloquence which finds its roots in Milton but even when well done lacks in originality and can easily be vapid and sometimes hollow....An expression like lofty region, vasty region, myriad region even expresses nothing but a bare intellectual fact—with no more vision in it than would convey mere wideness without any significance in it.”

(With one line picked out almost wholly from my “Yoga”, I have started another poem. The closing image is also somewhat similar to the one in the earlier work. Still far from the Upamshadic goal, I am afraid, but how does it strike you?)

MAYA

A scorching shadow masked as living light,	1
Earth’s smile of painted passion withers now !	2
But is there hollow on black ravenous hollow	3
With never a gold core of love divine ?	4
How pass then reveries of angelic wings	5
Or sudden stabs of paradise through clay	6
Revealing the blind heart of all desire ?	7
Surely some haloed beauty hides within	8
The mournful spaces of unlustred limbs	9
To call with secret eyes a perfect Sun	10
Whose glory yearns across the drouth of hell !	11
Behind the false glow dreams the epiphany—	12
But like a face of night implacable	13
Save to the soul’s virginity, the unknown	14
White fire whose arms enclasp infinitude...	15

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

‘Exceedingly fine. I have marked the best lines [double-mark 1, 6, 8, 9, 15 : single mark 4, 12]. It is a very powerful poetic expression of the idea. It is the poetic intelligence, of course, but the last lines ‘the unknown White fire’ etc. reach overhead.’

GLOAM-INFINITES

Gloom-infinities of trance ! — but like a wound
 Of vacancy unto my mortal heart
 Came that aloof immeasurable peace.
 The ear—a cavern lonely, echoless—
 Waited in fear; then suddenly the spell
 Of unknown firmaments broke to a close
 Chirrup of some late passing bird, which drew
 All the void dark and dreadful mystery
 Into the music of one passionate kiss
 Upon my blinded dream. I woke to feel
 A human face yearning out of the vast.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“It is very fine. The first three lines are the Higher Mind rising into the Illumined and are very powerful. The rest is of the Higher Mind, except it may be the two before the last which are somewhat mixed with the poetic intelligence.”

PLEROMA

Nor first nor last, but in a timeless gyre
 The globes of Beauty burn—a hush made fire :
 Their colours self-secluded one by one,
 Yet sisters in a joyful union—
 Rhythms of quiet, thrill on gemlike thrill
 Necklaced around a Throat invisible...

When wearily I string word after word,
 I call your flame, O Ecstasies unheard,

To guide my frailty with some touch of you !
 Grant me a worship-glow that reaches, through
 My dreamful silence ere the musics throng,
 Your deathless silence at each close of song.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“Very fine. It is a vision of things from the Illumined Mind with the atmosphere of lights and colours that reigns there.”

TWO BIRDS

A small bird crimson-hued
 Among great realms of green
 Fed on their multitudinous fruit—
 But in his dark eye flamed more keen

A hunger as from joy to joy
 He moved the poignance of his beak,
 And ever in his heart he wailed
 “Where hangs the marvellous fruit I seek ?”

Then suddenly above his head
 A searching gaze of grief he turned :
 Lo there upon the topmost bough
 A pride of golden plumage burned !

Lost in a dream no hunger broke,
 This calm bird—aureoled, immense—
 Sat motionless : all fruit he found
 Within his own magnificence.

The watchful ravener below
 Felt his time-tortured passion cease,
 And flying upward knew himself
 One with that bird of golden peace.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“It is very felicitous in expression, and taking. The fourth stanza is from the Intuitive, the rest not from the Higher Mind—for there a high-uplifted thought is the characteristic—but more probably from some realm of the inner Mind where thought and vision are involved in each other—that kind of fusion gives the easy felicity that is found here. All the same there is a touch of the Higher Mind perhaps in the 2nd lines of the second and the last stanza.”

EACH NIGHT

Dream not with gaze hung low
 By love
 That earthward calls—but know
 The silver spaces move

Within your eyes when sleep
 Brings gloom :
 Then will your hush grow deep
 As heaven’s lofty room.

And in this chamber strange
 With blue
 A Love unmarred by change
 Shall ever tryst with you.

So, build Her each calm night
 A swoon
 That bears on outer sight
 The padlock of the moon.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“The inspiration is, I think, from the same place. An easy and luminous simplicity that is at the same time very felicitous.”

EVANESCENCE

Where lie the past noon-lilies
 And vesper-violets gone ?
 Into what strange invisible deep
 Fall out of time the roses of each dawn ?

They draw for us a dreamway
 To ecstasies unhour'd,
 Where all earth's form-hues flicker and drop,
 By some great wind of mystery overpowered.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“The simple revealing directness and beauty evoke without effort a pure sense of mystic truth. The opening stanza and continuation are exceedingly fine, full of magic suggestion. In the last two lines there is a mixture of the intuitive and the illumined, the rest is pure intuitive—[but] occult because it is from a province of the occult that the intuition of the substance comes. The last two lines have, I think, an equal poetic excellence with the rest, but it is not the same.”

(How do you find this poem? Is it very surrealistic?)

AGNI JATAVEDAS

(In the Rigveda, Agni, called “Jatavedas” or “Knower of births”, is the divine Fire visioned in various occult forms as the secret urge of our evolution towards the perfect splendour that is the Spirit.)

O smile of heaven locked in a seed of light—	1
O music burning through the heart's dumb rock—	2
O beast of beauty with the golden beard—	3
O lust-consumer in the virgin's bed—	4
Come with thy myriad eyes that face all truth,	5
Thy myriad arms equal to each desire !	6
Shatter or save, but fill this gap of gloom :	7
Rise from below and call thy far wealth down—	8

A straining supplicant of naked silver,	9
A jar of dream, a crystal emptiness	10
Draining through a mighty mouth above the mind	11
Some ageless alchemy of liquid sun.	12
Or bind us like a python-sleep of snow	13
Whose glory grips the flesh and leaves it numb	14
For soul to gather its forgotten fire,	15
A purple power no eagle's wing-waft knew,	16
A soar that makes time-towers a lonely fret	17
And all a futile victory the stars !	18
Work thy strange will, but load our gaze no more	19
With unexplorable freedoms of black air,	20
An infinite rapture veiled by infinite pain...	21
Lightning of Truth, God's lava passion—come !	22

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“Very fine poetry throughout, not exactly ‘surrealistic’, at least not in the current sense, but occult in its vision and sequences. I have marked the most powerful lines [1-3, 9-13, 16, 21].”

(Into what category of blank verse does this poem fall ? Has it any epic quality ? If not, how do you differentiate between the epic and the other kinds of poetic power ? What would you say of the styles of Victor Hugo, Marlowe, Dante ? I should think epic poetry has a more natural turn of imagination than the non-epic : it is powerfully wide or deep or high without being outstandingly bold, it also displays less colour.)

“ ‘Agni Jatavedas’ is a sort of violent sublime—ultra-Aeschylean perhaps. There are sometimes epic or almost epic lines, but the whole or most of it has not the epic ring. There is one epic line—

An infinite rapture veiled by infinite pain.

Perhaps the first three lines are near the epic—there may be one or two others. I don't know how I differentiate. Victor Hugo in the ‘Légend des Siècles’ tries to be epic and often succeeds, perhaps even on the whole: Marlowe is sometimes great or sublime, but I would not call him epic. There is a greatness or sublimity that is epic, there is another that is not epic, but more of a romantic type. Shakespeare's line—

In cradle of the rude imperious surge—

is as sublime as anything in Homer or Milton, but it does not seem to me to have the epic ring, while a very simple line can have it, e.g. Homer's

Bē de kat' Oulumpōio karēnōn chōōmenos kēr
 (He went down from the peaks of Olympus wroth at heart),¹

or Virgil's

Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,
 Fortunam ex alius,²

or Milton's

Fall'n cherub, to be weak is miserable.

What is there in these lines that is not in Shakespeare's and makes them epic (Shakespeare's of course has something else as valuable) ? For the moment at least, I can't tell you, but it is there. A tone of the inner spirit perhaps, expressing itself in the rhythm and the turn of the language. Dante has the epic spirit and tone, what he lacks is the epic élan and swiftness. The distinction you draw applies, no doubt, but I do not know whether it is the essence of the thing or only one result of a certain austerity in the epic Muse. I do not know whether one cannot be coloured provided one keeps that austerity which, be it understood, is not incompatible with a certain fineness and sweetness."

A disciple-reader wrote to Sri Aurobindo : "You have stated to Y about his Bengali translation of X's 'Agni Jāavedas': 'It is a splendid translation rendering the full poetic force and colour and substance of the original which you have followed with a remarkable exactitude.' But Y, I understand, writes from the subtle vital plane. If a poem is from overhead, would not its spiritual value be lost in a translation from a different plane?"

Sri Aurobindo replied :

"If you mean the spiritual substance, I suppose it would be lost. I was looking at the poetic beauty of Y's rendering which is on a par with the original. As for the subtle vital, the vital sublimated enters largely into X's poem, even if it is a sort of supervital."

¹ Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo has translated the line in a hexameter :

Down from the peaks of Olympus he came wrath vexing his heart-strings.

² Learn from me, youth, what is courage and what true labour,
 Fortune from others. (Editor)

A DIAMOND IS BURNING UPWARD

A diamond is burning upward
In the roofless chamber walled
By the ivory mind;
An orb entranced glows
Where earth-storm never blows—
But the two wide eyes are blind
To its virgin soar behind
Their ruby and emerald.

The one pure bird finds rest
In the crescent moon of a nest
Which infinite boughs upbear...
Flung out on phantom air
In a colour-to-colour race
Yet never ending their quest,
The two birds dream they fly
Though fixed in the narrow sky
Of a futile human face.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

‘It sounds very surrealistic. Images and poetry very beautiful, but significance and connections are cryptic. Very attractive, though.’

WHITE HORSE

White horse, white horse,
Deathlessly wake...
Out of the cavern of our sleep
Like laughter break

Into the moon’s pure flush
And the stars’ pale sheen !
How can thy magic colour mate
With grey or green,

The grey of drowsing soil
And the green of wood-gloom ?

Thy feet have wings : for thee was built
Heaven's wide room.

Soar through the silver deeps
On a passion of prayer
Until the lost dawn echoes thy love
From its gold lair !

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“Very good—a beautiful poem. Intuitive—intensely so.”

ORISON

A godless temple is the dome of space :
Reveal the sun of thy love-splendoured face,
O lustrous flowering of invisible peace,
O glory breaking into curves of clay
From mute intangible dream-distances,
That like a wondrous yet familiar light
Eternity may mingle with our day !

Leave thou no quiver of this time-born heart
A poor and visionless wanderer apart :
Make even my darkness a divine repose
One with thy nameless root, O mystic rose—
The slumbering seasons of my mortal sight
A portion of the unknowable vast behind
Thy gold apocalypse of shadowless mind !

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“That is extraordinarily fine throughout. But it is too fine for any need of remark
Lines 3, 4, 5, also 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, Illumined Mind with Overmind Intuition tou
—the rest Higher Mind suffused with Illumined Mind.”

(To be continued)

THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

(Continued from the September Issue)

V

The Anglo-Orientalist Controversy

IN spite of the views expressed from time to time by the Company's satraps and officials in India, the Directors of the Company in London were at first and for a long time rather hesitant on the question of Indian education. There was always the question of finance; indeed that has been the bane of India's educational policy throughout the period of British rule, for there was never any money available even when some kind of educational policy had been evolved and the main objectives set. An equally important consideration during the early years of British rule was the fear of offending the religious susceptibilities of the people. The Christian missionaries in England had been clamouring for permission to come to India and spread the gospel freely; they needed no other assistance from the government for opening their schools where English would be taught to the pupils and the Bible placed in their hands. Thus to attempt a tampering with the faith of millions of Hindus and Muslims seemed to the Christian Directors of the Company an act amounting to sedition. Would it not, they argued, eventually bring the government, so religiously established by law, into utter disrepute ?

During the later years of the eighteenth century, England had been passing through a revivalist phase, and the missionaries found a ready champion in the person of no less an important figure than Wilberforce. They broached the question in Parliament and got up sufficient strength to force the issue during the debates on the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1813. Permission had to be granted to the missionaries wanting to come to India, and the floodgates were thus opened for the new learning in India. The Company now sought to mitigate the evil by taking upon itself a part of the burden of educating the natives on right lines. It managed to get a new clause inserted in the Charter, which read as follows : "It shall be lawful for the Governor General in Council to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of the rents, revenues and profits arising from the said territorial acquisitions (of the Company in India)...a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the *revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India ..*" The interpretation finally given by Lord Macaulay in his capacity of Law Member in the Governor General's Council to the concluding portion of this clause (italicised by us) was

to decide the fate of the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy and lay down for over a hundred years the trend of government policy on education in India.

For nearly a decade from the passing of the Charter Act in 1813, modified as above, the Company showed a strange unwillingness to undertake any kind of responsibility in the matter. "We are inclined to think," says the First Educational Despatch (of 1814), "that the mode by which the learned Hindoos [be it noted, the Muslims are ignored here] might be disposed to concur with us in prosecuting these objects [set forth in the Charter] would be by our leaving them to the practice of any usage long established among them, of giving instruction at their own houses, and by encouraging them in the exercise and cultivation of their talents, by the stimulus of honorary marks of distinction, and in some instances, by grants of pecuniary assistance..." It was no doubt easy to find a few "learned Hindoos" deserving of "honorary marks of distinction". And the conferring of this particular benefit, coupled perhaps with a few hundred rupees by way of "pecuniary assistance", was found to be a sound economic proposition. But in the meantime, the missionaries had begun their work in right earnest. Schools where English was taught multiplied, without any pecuniary assistance from the Company. Indian leaders like Ram Mohan Roy took up cudgels on behalf of the new education. And many of the influential Hindus began sending their boys to the new schools so as to assure them a bright future.

In 1824, the Directors of the Company suddenly awoke to their responsibility. This was however no accident. The year 1823 had ushered a new era of reform in English history, beginning with the modification of the penal laws and ending with the great parliamentary reforms of the thirties. The Company likewise wrote to their Governor General in India, "We wish you to be fully apprised of our zeal for the progress and improvement of education among the natives of India, and of our willingness to make considerable sacrifices to that important end, if proper means for the attainment of it could be pointed out to us." It would not be amiss if we note here, even at the cost of departing from strict chronology, that in the year 1833, immediately following the first English parliamentary grant for national education, the sum of one lakh of rupees hitherto earmarked for the education of India was raised to the unprecedented figure of ten lakhs per annum; this was "considerable sacrifice" indeed!

The immediate result of the new policy was the creation of a General Committee of Public Instruction (for the Bengal Presidency alone and the allocation of the annual grant for education to this Committee for necessary action. As has been already mentioned earlier, the Committee was composed largely of avowed Orientalists, and its policy was accordingly to encourage oriental learning in preference to English science and literature. It set about its work by starting new oriental colleges in Calcutta, Agra and Delhi—the Calcutta Sanskrit College remains to this day the sole monument to their work. They also undertook the printing and publication of Sanskrit and Arabic books on a large scale, and they engaged oriental scholars in the work of translating English works into these languages. In this respect they seem to have

anticipated by some 150 years the work now being carried on under Government auspices in some of the States of independent India.

But the Directors of the Company were not impressed by this manner of spending the grant. They thought that the money was being spent on futile pursuits, and they wrote a rather pungent despatch on the subject. To that we shall revert when considering the Anglicist viewpoint. For the present we are concerned with the arguments advanced by the orientalist on the Committee.

The Committee claimed that they were fully in touch with the majority of public opinion in India. This led them to believe that the Hindus and Mahommedans alike had "vigorous prejudices" against the introduction of western learning. Even if it were a fact that the new learning had many votaries in India, it would be difficult to impart it on a wide scale just then. There was a great dearth of books and of qualified teachers who could give instruction in the European sciences. It was in any case impossible to suppose that the English language, still confined to a microscopic number, could serve as the medium of instruction. The only suitable media for the imparting of any kind of knowledge, whether European or oriental, were the oriental classical languages to which the higher mind of India had got accustomed through centuries of use. And it must always be remembered that the literature of these oriental languages was by no means negligible; it had a definite utility of its own, however misguided might be the opinions of incompetent men as to its worthlessness.

Some at least of these arguments seem to have weighed at the time with the authorities in London, and the Committee went ahead with its programme. One of the important considerations that the Directors must have taken into account was that whatever the Committee's views on the utility of oriental literature, their programme was certainly not going to cut deep into the Company's pockets.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

New Race. Vol. 1, No. 1, August, 1965. A Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad-7. India. Edited by V. Madhusudan Reddy, Annual Subscription : India, Rupees 10.00. U.K., 25 Shillings. U.S.A., 5 Dollars.

“What’s in a name ?” Thus demanded a character in Shakespeare, and her sentiment has found an echo in philosophers and writers through the centuries. As everybody knows, neither is the qualitative sanctity spoilt by harsh, cracking consonants, nor baptised chivalrously does a kit become a cub.

Yet, if names continue to influence us and entice us, it is because there are words which, though constituting only an archipelago amid the vast ocean of auditory delusion, justify themselves with the strength of truth behind them. Such a name is “New Race.” It is not a term of startling entrance into the race of novelty, not even an editorial accent to introduce a common elevated motif underlying a series of articles. New Race is an unalterable destiny. Hence the journal is the herald of a future which has elsewhere been prefaced by The Mother thus :

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.

The Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Human Study, the first number of *New Race* has been released in August, the month of Sri Aurobindo’s birth. It opens with The Mother’s Blessings and the following message :

Be
sincere in aspiration,
faithful in action,
persistent in endeavour,
and you will reach your goal.

The editorial declares that as the organ of the Institute, *New Race* “will interpret the emergence of human life on earth and the fulfilment towards which it moves.” This declaration is immediately solemnised, as the very first article, a signal specimen of brevity, a most spontaneous synthesis of the spiritual vision and the revelatory detections of modern science, stresses “an awakened dynamic spiritual reality which awaits and is working for its supreme and inevitable destiny.” This article, entitled ‘Man’s Destiny’, is by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

That destiny is in the making. Great is the power which is working it out, and She who embodies the power walks on the razor's edge. Amazing is the experience in regard to this power recorded by M. P. Pandit's article 'New Creation', a communiqué of certitude and a monitor of caution.

What would be the character of the new age, the mode of life then ? A. B. Purani's article is a seeking after the answer to this question. Western readers could commence reading the journal from this article.

The thrill of a sense of unity, which dawns upon a man when he dives beneath his surfac-self of tumult and turmoil, is perhaps the refreshing secret where the very best of Psychology ultimately leads. Indra Sen's 'Oneness and Unity: The Truth to Come' conveys a sensation of the twilight of the second self at the termination of the labyrinth of mind.

'Bharata—The Integral Man' by V. K. Gokak is a free, melodious rendering of a portion of the great Kannada poet Ratnakara's epic. The other article by the same author, 'Narahari, Prophet of New India' is an absorbing treatment of a daring theme.

'Sri Aurobindo : The Supramental Avatar' is by V. Madhusudan Reddy. It is the first chapter of a work where quantity and quality belong to the same abode. Further comments naturally await its completion. 'New Man' is a poem by V. K. Gokak and 'A New Birth' is by D. R. Bendre. Their fine forms apart, they breathe of a weather within.

Then, what could be more opportune than to conclude this review with only a reference to three sonnets by K. D. Sethna, upon which glow 'Congratulations' from Sri Aurobindo ?

MANOJ DAS

Gita-Vijnana, Compiled and translated by Sri Keshavdev Acharya. Published by Divyajivan Sahitya Prakasan, Pondicherry-2. pp. 432. Price Rs. 10.50.

There is no scripture in the world which has such an immense sweep as the Gita. It has woven into its composite texture the basic truths and principles of almost all contemporary schools of Yoga and philosophy in such a way that the result is not an enlightened eclecticism, but a perfect synthesis. But most, if not all, of its renowned commentators, relying on their individual experiences and intellectual prepossessions and equipments, have singled out one or two of its constituents and used their erudition and exegetical ingenuity to invest them with the supreme importance and relegate the rest to a subordinate position. Some have regarded its teaching, in spite of the directness and objectivity of its language, as an allegory of the struggle between virtue

and vice, good and evil, raging in the mind and heart of man, and read into its supra-ethical spirituality a gospel of ethical perfection. All this seems to be an unjustifiable treatment of a synthetic Yogashastra which, for the first time after the Upanishads, holds up the ancient ideal of spiritual realism. If the Gita has any vital message for the humanity of today and tomorrow, it is its dynamic and pragmatic spirituality. There is no support in it of the passivity, quietism, and escapism which have been the prevailing note in many of the Yogas, religions and philosophies in India for a pretty long time. It is action of all kinds, *sarvakarmāni*, and continued action even after liberation, *muktasya karma*, that the Gita persistently inculcates for the purpose of holding together the peoples of the earth and stimulating their evolutionary efforts towards spiritual perfection.

Besides its synthesis and dynamic spirituality, the Gita is creatively original in that it throws out certain new concepts of great psychological and spiritual value. For instance, the concept of Brahmakarmasamadhi (Chapter IV.14) and Para bhakti (Chapter XVIII.54) are seminal ideas, furnishing a new perspective and betokening a global vision of human life and its salutary activities.

In Brahmakarmasamadhi the traditional connotation of samadhi (trance) has been given the go-by and a total, waking concentration on divine work or Brahmakarma is taken as samadhi. Samadhi does not mean in the Gita a state of consciousness withdrawn into the depths of the being, plunged in their stillness and silence, and dead to the existence of the external world, but a thrilled, dynamic state of Yogic action, *yuktasya karma*, springing out of a complete concentration on and identification with the Divine. Parabhakti is, likewise, given a novel and highly illuminating connotation. It is that supreme state of love and devotion for the Divine, for Purushottama, which comes after the yogi has attained liberation and become one with the Brahman, Brahmabhutah, and not before. Mukti and bhakti are thus shown as co-existing in a mysterious blend in that blissful state of divine Union.

Concepts such as these vindicate the originality of the Gita's gospel—originality not only in its epochal synthesis, but in its opening up new vistas of an integral self-fulfilment for mankind.

In the book under review, the author has translated and expounded the Gita in the light of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation as set forth in his *Essays on the Gita*. He has tried to be faithful not only to the spirit but to the very letter of the interpretation. Those who want to understand the synthetic and dynamically virile teaching of the Gita, which has a revolutionary message for the world today, are advised to peruse its pages with care.

The get-up of the book is fine, and it is hoped that the printing errors will be corrected in the second edition. The book is expected to serve as a competent guide to all Hindi-knowing seekers after spiritual perfection.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FIFTH SEMINAR

8 August 1965

THE fifth quarterly Seminar of the New Age Association was held on 8 August 1965. The Mother chose the following subject for this Seminar :

How to turn one's difficulties into opportunities for progress.

The following ten members of the Association participated as speakers :

Shobha, Rukiya, Rose, Romen, Oscar, Mona, Mita, Brajkishore, Bibhash, Amita.

The Seminar was held in the New Hall of the Centre of Education from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.

At the commencement a short piece of the Mother's recorded music was played. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman of the Seminar, made the following introductory speech.

Friends,

The subject which the Mother has chosen for this Seminar appears at first sight to be like a paradox, for it is quite contrary to our common conception about difficulties. Usually, difficulties, whether in ordinary life or in yoga, are considered to be obstructions in our way which prevent our progress and bring about downfall and defeat. How can they be a means for our progress ? How can a hindrance be a help or an obstacle an aid ? But what appears paradoxical to a superficial view is not necessarily so to a deeper inner vision. And in yoga one of the most fundamental requirements is to acquire this inner clairvoyant perception of things and events. When we have that perception we find that a large number of our commonly accepted notions undergo a profound change, often amounting to a complete reversal. Things and events appear not only different from our ordinary view of them but often reveal an altogether opposite character. The subject of this Seminar is a most significant example of this change.

This will become quite clear if we probe into the fundamental cause of difficulties. Why do difficulties, obstacles, sufferings, calamities, ordeals arise on our path ? Why

do they constantly recur, even increase and refuse to yield in spite of our endeavour to overcome them ?

Usually we put the blame for our difficulties and troubles on other persons or on external circumstances or, in any case, upon factors for which we are personally not responsible. But in the deeper truth of things, if we are frank and honest to admit it, the real cause of our difficulties is not outside but within ourselves. In fact, we ourselves are responsible for our difficulties; it is always some defect or weakness or obscurity within us that creates the difficulties and often even draws upon ourselves the external circumstances that bring misfortunes, disasters and catastrophes. No difficulty can come upon us if there is not something somewhere in us which invites or opens to it. As Sri Aurobindo says : "No misfortune can come, the adverse forces cannot touch or be victorious unless there is some defect in oneself; some impurity, weakness, or at the very least, ignorance. One should then seek out this weakness in oneself and correct it."¹ He also says : "When one does sadhana it is constantly seen that so long as there is an important defect somewhere, circumstances so happen that the occasion comes for the defect to rise until it is thrown out of the being. If one can take the coming of these circumstances clairvoyantly as a call and an opportunity for conquering the defect, then one can progress very quickly."²

For this reason "difficulty cannot be overcome by your running away from it"³ for "the difficulty is truly inside, not outside. Outside circumstances only give it the occasion to manifest itself and so long as the inner difficulty is not conquered, the circumstances will always crop up one way or another."⁴

This is the deeper truth about difficulties; they are pointed reminders of the weak points in our nature and occasions for overcoming them and progressing forward on the path.

The extent and intensity of difficulties are not only a measure of the progress we have to make but also a sign of the progress actually made. Contrary to our common conception, the nearer we arrive to our goal, the difficulties too become more numerous and intense; and just at the last point before the final victory they become most formidable and overwhelming. The night is darkest before the dawn.

This is true not only of the individual's sadhana but of the collective sadhana as well. The forces that oppose the advent of the Truth upon earth become more and more furious in their opposition as that advent draws nearer, and at the last crucial moment they raise up the worst possible difficulties. That is why the Mother has been saying recently that after the manifestation of the supramental Truth in February 1956 the adverse vital forces have precipitated upon earth with an extreme intensity to obstruct and destroy that Truth. To put it in her own words : "It would seem that all the adverse anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world have descended upon earth,

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 717.

² *Ibid.*, p. 769

³ *Ibid.*, p. 770.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 769.

using it as their field of action and at the same time a spiritual force, highest and most powerful, has also descended upon earth for the first time to bring a new life here. That makes the struggle all the more acute, violent, visible, but also, it would seem, definitive and that is why one can hope to arrive at an immediate solution."¹ Sri Aurobindo also has said : "At the present time Falsehood and Darkness have gathered their forces and are extremely powerful; but even if we reject the assertion of the mystics and prophets since early times that such a condition of things must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach, yet it does not necessarily indicate the decisive victory—even temporary—of the Falsehood. It merely means that the struggle between the forces is at its acme. The result may very well be the stronger emergence of the best that can be; for the world-movement often works in that way. I leave it at that and say nothing more."²

These are most reassuring words of Sri Aurobindo and we should always bear them in mind at the present moment when there is an unparalleled uprush of dark anarchic forces in the world atmosphere. Even the legendary Kali Yuga seems to pale into insignificance before the chaotic world-condition at present. It is as if the dark inconscient ocean at the base of life is being powerfully churned up. And the worst may still be waiting to come.

But instead of getting disheartened in the face of these perilous circumstances we should perceive their true significance in the light of Sri Aurobindo's vision, and realise that however distressing they may be, they are in reality the sure signs of the imminent victory of the Truth that is arriving to establish its permanent reign upon earth. They are the birth-pangs of the New Age. In the womb of the great Mother the Golden Child is fully grown and it will soon be born. The birth-pangs are inevitable but they are only passing inconveniences. So instead of being distressed by the present darkness we should rather look beyond to the fast approaching Truth and, rejoicing, salute its advent.

Difficulties are a part of the game we have to play, but in spite of all the hurdles they raise up on our way we are sure to win. We have only to remember and repeat the mantra Sri Aurobindo has given us : "Difficulties come and difficulties go, but, She being with you, the victory is sure."³

I have mentioned only a few points concerning the subject of the Seminar by way of an introduction. There are many more issues relating to it into which I cannot enter. It is for the other speakers to explain them and give us a clear understanding of them.

After they have spoken I shall read out to you some extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which are exceedingly helpful to grasp the full significance of the subject. The Mother herself has seen them and permitted me to read

¹ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, August 1958.

² *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 706.

³ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 723.

them out to you at the end of the Seminar.

This time we have changed our usual arrangement regarding the order of the speakers. Instead of following the alphabetical order from A to Z we shall follow it in the reverse direction, from Z to A.

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After this speech the 10 speakers were called to deliver their speeches. These speeches are reproduced below.

HOW TO TURN ONE'S DIFFICULTIES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

I

The subject chosen by the Mother for this Seminar reminds me of these most exquisite lines of Sri Aurobindo on the present human stage of consciousness : "Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped."¹ Maybe, this is the cause of all our difficulties. We are still so hard, so crude that without difficulties, without blows, we fall back into inertia and refuse to progress. Therefore God, using human difficulties as means, leads us towards a luminous future.

But what is the origin of these difficulties ? Why do they arise ? The difficulties arise from the clash of ego, from the limitations of our nature. So long as there is ego, personal will, so long as there are desires, impulses, passions, attractions, preferences or repulsions, difficulties are bound to be there. We form at every instant a fixed set of ideas about things, about persons, which are nothing but *our* own mental constructions, *our* experiences, *our* studies. They may be absolutely incorrect. We live in mental constructions with an innate, spontaneous, almost unshakable conviction of the absolute value of *our* mode of thought, *our* observations and we are so used to our own imperfections that these mental constructions act in our being automatically, without any conscious reflection on our part, by a sort of habit. The same thing occurs with others also. Each individual, however imperfect he may be, gives an absolute value to his own way of looking at things. This rigid mental construction, this crude way of sticking to our own imperfect vision, this obstinate way of justifying our impure nature is, I think, the origin of our difficulties.

But how to turn our difficulties into opportunities for progress ?

¹ Thoughts and Glimpses, pp. 36-7.

Before we try to turn our difficulties into opportunities, we must be sure of two fundamental things. Firstly, do we really want to progress ? Have we got that unquenching thirst to surmount all difficulties and march forward, forever forward, towards undreamed-of masteries and future revelations ? Secondly, are we ready to “shun all lowness, narrowness and shallowness” of our nature and change our consciousness to be “wider than the widest horizons and loftier than the highest Kanchanjungha ?”¹ Well, that should be our aim. When difficulties arise we should try to withdraw ourselves from the outward consciousness and find in peace the necessary indication for change. As ego is the centre of all difficulties, we should try to be more and more egoless, free. A wider vision of things, a spontaneous plasticity towards change must be acquired with vigilance and sincerity.

We must, by constant effort and practice, try to secure a quiet and sustained power, which will be greater than our difficulties; a power capable of calling down the higher Force which will transform our limited, egoistic movements, enlarge them to such an extent that difficulties will serve us as useful means to overcome defective parts of our being. Difficulties are, as the Mother says, “like walls that try to obstruct our way.” But we must also know that to face a difficulty means to face the possibility of realising something new in the consciousness. If by a still more accentuated, sustained, obstinate effort and concentration, we can pass through this obscure, stubborn wall of difficulty to the other side, there will come to us a new consciousness, a new force, a new power, a new procedure that will take us further on and on till at last we arrive at a state of consciousness where there will be no circumstance, no force, no action, no movement that is not the expression of a deeper, higher, more abiding reality. It will be a state where, in the Mother’s words, “all was gold and gold and gold, a torrent of golden light pouring down in an uninterrupted flow and bringing with it the consciousness that the path of the gods is a sunlit path in which difficulties lose all reality.”²

SHOBHA

II

Difficulties are universal; none can escape them. Even Avatars are not exempted from them. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have had theirs too.

But the nature of difficulty varies. A student might have difficulties in studies, an ordinary man struggling to earn his livelihood has problems in that sphere. Again, a man trying to lead a spiritual life has difficulties of another nature—conflicts within him, inability to conquer his weaknesses or to change his nature, and so on.

Now, what are generally the reactions of people when difficulties come in their way ? Some start grumbling and cursing their fate, some become pessimistic and find life hollow and meaningless, and some others take them philosophically with a pinch

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 16.

² *Words of the Mother*, p. 210.

of salt. But there are some few who face them with a smile, and this is the first right attitude, for the Mother has often said to us, "A smile acts upon difficulties as the sun upon the clouds—it disperses them."¹

And is it not the best thing to face all troubles with a smile and to turn them into opportunities for progress? For mere grumbling and cursing one's fate will not lessen or lighten them.

We can often console ourselves by thinking of great men who have had to undergo innumerable difficulties and strivings. The moment we think of Sri Aurobindo and his hardships and struggles, all our difficulties seem as small as pebbles compared to the mountains of difficulties which he had to surmount. This gives us hope and often helps us in taking the right attitude. When difficulties besiege us, we can say to ourselves, "These difficulties have befallen me to give me a stimulus; they have come to push me forward towards my goal. Perhaps I was lingering behind, perhaps I was in a slumber, and they have come to awaken me and to hasten my progress."

If one can take this attitude towards difficulties, it becomes easier to accept them as chances for progress. All circumstances, both favourable and adverse,—for life always consists of ups and downs—should be taken as helpful means towards our progress. And, specially, difficulties fall upon those who take up the path of yoga because here we have undertaken to transform our nature, which is indeed the most difficult of all tasks and in which one meets with all sorts of obstructions. Many people, coming from outside and faced with difficulties here, get shocked and they exclaim that they never expected to have so much trouble and so many obstructions and hindrances. But it is precisely this that we should expect here. For here the difficulties have a special significance. Every obstacle, every blow that comes has a direct sanction of the Divine and may point to some defect, incapacity or weakness in us; they come, or rather are sent by the Divine to change us, to make us move in the right path. And often, through them, the Divine tests our faith and confidence and endurance; and we have got to go through this ordeal. As the Mother says :

"All depends on what you want.—If you want Yoga, take *all* that happens as the expression of the Divine Grace, leading you towards your goal, and try to understand the lesson that circumstances give."²

And this is one solution to our problem. When the difficulties come, why not take them as an expression of the Divine grace which leads us towards our goal, and try to understand the lessons which they bring? This attitude alone can help us to turn them into stepping-stones to progress.

In one of her answers the Mother has said :

"Whenever one wants to achieve something in life, difficulties come—take them as discipline (Tapasya) to make you strong and you will more easily overcome them."³

¹ *Words of the Mother*, p. 210.

² *Mother India*, May, 1964, p. 5.

³ *White Roses* (Enlarged Edition), p.40.

One thing we must always remember when faced with difficulties—for it will give us faith and courage to overcome them. It is this: the difficulties come to us only in the measure of our capacity to bear, and our strength to overcome them. Nobody can have difficulties out of proportion to his capacity to bear. And the greater the difficulties, the greater the capacity somewhere within us to surmount them. And if one takes them in the right spirit of considering them to be the expression of the Divine Grace and the quick means towards progress, this very attitude, if it is sincere, holds in itself the power to turn them into opportunities for progress. One has only to feel, "Well, these difficulties are given to me by the Divine and I must accept them willingly and make the change required, for they have not come just by accident but have some purpose behind them."

So, when they come we should not worry but try to remain calm and quiet and pray to the Mother for her help and guidance and to throw light upon them. We should try to stick to the right attitude that they have come as a boon from the Divine. With this courageous attitude and full faith in the Divine, even catastrophes can be turned into smiling victories.

RUKIYA

III

This can be said to be a major problem in the path of yoga requiring solution. "This yoga," says Sri Aurobindo, "is a spiritual battle; its very attempt raises all sorts of adverse forces and one must be ready to face difficulties, sufferings, reverses of all sorts in a calm unflinching spirit."¹

The whole life, as it is at the present day, can be said to be a honeycomb of difficulties on all fronts. Sorrow and suffering, disease and distress, and a hundred other setbacks and inconveniences rule over life; chaos and confusion are the order of the day. And this is the same with regard to the individual as it is with the society, or the nation, or the world at large. We are all steeped neck-deep in difficulties and discords from the mental down to the most material.

In order to turn our difficulties into opportunities, we must know why the difficulties arise at all, what purpose they serve in our life. Well, this will take us as far back as the story of evolution and involution. Our life, as it is, springs out of the great inconscience, our nether origin. We are born, in fact, in the very midst of ignorance which is the cause of all our suffering and misery, our manifold tragedies that constitute the copious difficulties or hurdles in our life. So we can easily envisage that the cause of our difficulties lies very deep-rooted. Sri Aurobindo writes, "The spiritual change which yoga demands from human nature and individual character is, therefore, full of difficulties, one may almost say that it is the most difficult of all human

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 717.

aspirations and efforts.”¹ And their purpose is to weigh and measure our real worth in the terrestrial existence; they put to test our sincerity and faith, our inner strength and courage, our equanimity and tranquillity, and all the hidden potentialities yet to manifest. So, plainly speaking, difficulties are not only inevitable but also indispensable since without their hammer blows again and again, we cannot be sincere or conscious enough to adequately respond to the call of the spirit, the deepest need of our true self. The Mother says, “...each one has the difficulties that suit him for his total realisation.”²

In the ordinary life, men blindly grope in the darkness; they are crushed, as it were, under the heavy pressure of difficulties, being unable to find any way out. In the life of yoga, a conscious effort is made to steer clear of the recurring difficulties of life, to make them subservient to our need and progress, in a bid to transcend them and finally triumph over them.

The difficulties are usually considered as obstacles in the apparently smooth and unruffled flow of our life. Ordinarily, they seem to constitute the barriers in our way to progress and development. Well, looking superficially, it is so. But if we learn to look at them from quite a different angle of vision we shall perhaps reconsider our view regarding the existence of difficulties in our life. The Mother tells us, “If you observe yourself closely you will indeed see that you carry in yourself the contrary of the virtue that you have to realise....You have a special purpose, a special mission, a special realisation which is your own, and you carry in you all the obstacles necessary for making that realisation perfect....All the difficulties are there exactly in order that you might learn to transform them into the truth that they hide.”³

Real miseries may visit us unheeded in the garb of the so-called pleasures and successes of life, just as the real opportunities may present themselves in our life in the guise of suffering and difficulties. In fact, we generally fail to recognise the Divine’s Grace and Help, Love and Compassion behind the difficulties of our life; and we are blind at the same time to realise the lure and attraction of the devil behind what we normally consider as the opportunities of our life. We must cautiously move in life. Everything depends on how we regard the difficulties, on our attitude and inner reaction towards the difficulties and reverses of life.

Of course, we should not invite difficulties when they can be avoided; that is certainly not desirable. In the present state of things, however, the difficulties cannot be totally averted, inasmuch as they are the outcome of our own imperfections, and they are the pointers to the innumerable defects and disabilities of our own nature and consciousness. So the total abolition of the difficulties will mean a total or radical transformation of our being and consciousness. It is the difficulties, therefore, that press on us the need to transcend ourselves. And till that is effected, they are inevitable.

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 701.

² & ³ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, August, 1957.

Since we thus know that we will have to confront difficulties, it is no use giving ourselves up in complete despair and despondency, no use condemning our fate as the inexorable decree of Providence. That will neither help us in any way nor reduce the difficulties by a whit; that will, on the contrary, add to our misery. And that is the defeatist mentality which is not befitting the children of the Divine Mother. The Gita tells us—

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्वणचेतसा (Gita, Chap. VI, Verse 23).

“This yoga is to be resolutely practised without yielding to any discouragement by difficulty or failure.”¹ After all, we ourselves weave the pattern of our own destiny, by our own deeds and acts—good as well as bad.

We must, under all circumstances, learn to take the very right attitude. Once we are in front of the difficulties, there should be no turning back, no hesitant step, no defeatist look. It is futile to try to run away from a difficulty since it is a necessary and unavoidable step in the course of our integral progression. We should face the difficulties with courage and fortitude, with patience and endurance, humility and calm resignation. Our right attitude itself will greatly minimise their intensity. So the presence of difficulties demands of us to acquire these qualities which are most needed in the path of yoga. Sri Aurobindo says, “The difficulties that come are ordeals and tests and if one meets them in the right spirit, one comes out stronger and spiritually purer and greater.”²

And instead of trying to find the cause of a difficulty elsewhere, we should go deep within and look into ourselves. After a calm and dispassionate probing, we are sure to discover its hidden meaning, its veiled significance in our life. This will require us to grow more and more conscious of ourselves as well as of our environment. For this again, we should gradually try to develop our capacities of concentration and deep reflection which can slowly and steadily lead us to the threshold of self-discovery. The difficulties, thus, make us conscious of the higher realities of our life, and provide us with the key to turn inward, to live within, to reorientate our life in the light of the spirit. And viewed in that light the difficulties will lose their sting and, instead of barring our way as hindrances, they will serve as real opportunities for our progress. To quote Sri Aurobindo, “...in the unseen providence of things our greatest difficulties are our best opportunities. A supreme difficulty is Nature’s indication to us of a supreme conquest to be won and an ultimate problem to be solved.”³

The difficulties constitute a veritable challenge to our life and existence. In fact, from the very first appearance of man upon earth, and throughout, it is the difficulties that goad man to outgrow himself both materially as well as inwardly; it is again the

¹ *Message of the Gita Two*, pp. 101-102 (Anilbaran Ray).

² *On Yoga, II*, Tome Two, p. 717.

³ *On Yoga, I*, p. 10.

difficulties that provide occasions for varied discoveries within and without. Our whole life is, after all, an adventure of the spirit for self-finding and self-expressing.

The overcoming of each difficulty imbues and fortifies us with renewed will and vigour for crossing still more difficult hurdles ahead, for fighting yet fiercer battles of life. The difficulties act as the stepping-stones in our gradual 'ascent to the Truth'.

The difficulties of each one are the yardsticks to measure the amount of effort and progress one has yet to make. Each difficulty is thus the forerunner of a decisive victory to be won for the Divine. A great difficulty is the promise of a great victory to be scored in the course of yoga. "The greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty,"¹ says Sri Aurobindo. So instead of being dejected and dispirited in the face of an intricate situation we must rise to the occasion and prove ourselves equal to the task. We must go on fighting till we conquer. Sri Aurobindo says, "One must take it as a trial of strength, a call for gathering all one's capacities of calm and openness to the Light and Power, so as to make oneself an instrument for the victory of the Divine over the undivine, of the Light over the darkness in the world-tangle."² All our victories are, in the long run, the Mother's victories in and through us. And the gain from each conquest will far excel the pain that a difficulty may impose on us. In fact, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "Pain is the key that opens the gates of strength; it is the high-road that leads to the city of beatitude."³

So, if we ponder over the fact deeply, we come to realise that the difficulties and reverses basically play the role of opportunities in furthering the cause of our spiritual progress and upliftment. Behind all the struggles and strifes of our life there is always something much greater and profounder that seeks to emerge from within our depth. Behind all our outer discord and disharmony there rings a deeper note revealing to us distant vistas of peace and quietude, of harmony and beauty, of light and power and supreme felicity that further transport us to the realm of the spirit. The Mother writes, "How close is he to the summits, who awakes in the depths ! For the deeper the abyss, the more the heights reveal themselves."⁴

As for us here, it is much easier to transmute our difficulties into opportunities because of the direct Presence and Guidance of the Mother and the Master, their constant Help, Love and Compassion sustaining us in all our difficulties, and guiding us through all the vicissitudes of life. If we are truly sincere and have unshaken faith and trust in them, their Grace can work miracles. And the difficulties which otherwise might prove to be unsurmountable by our personal effort alone, will be made much smoother and easier to overcome by the intervention of the Divine's Grace. "A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers....Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering

¹ *Thoughts and Glimpses*, p. 38.

² *On Yoga, II*, Tome Two, p. 805.

³ *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 83.

⁴ *Words of Long Ago*, p. 57.

strength,"¹ observes Sri Aurobindo. And if we wish to profit fully by the action of the Grace we must try to rise above all our petty desires, perverse egoism and vain self-glory. We should constantly open ourselves, in all humble self-giving and silent gratitude, to the Mother's Force and Light, to her Love and Protection, aspiring all the while to feel ever closer and closer to her inwardly. And the difficulties will gradually lose their hold on us and will be found to be our collaborators.

In fact, as we find, all our difficulties taken in the right attitude and viewed in their proper perspective can be converted to corresponding opportunities, with the active help and support of the Divine, to contribute fully towards our spiritual self-fulfilment.

ROSE
(MANJULA SEN)

(To be continued)

¹ *The Mother*, pp. 17-18.

‘THE TOWER’ BY YEATS

Questions :

1. *Explain the title and its meaning.*
2. *What is the theme of ‘The Tower’ and how is it developed ?*
3. *What is the resolution that the poet finds for the problem of old age ?*
4. *Examine the images and the work they are given to do in the poem.*

‘The Tower’ was written in 1926. The Tower was Yeats’s own house and home restored for himself and his wife. It was his ambition in his early years to purchase the tower at Ballyle and live there. He chose that place for its symbolic value. He had found in Milton, Shelley and Count Viliers de L’Isle Adam the use of towers as symbols of the search for wisdom, carried on in solitude by the lonely student. He too saw the tower as a symbol of the pursuit of wisdom, by the mind looking in upon itself.

This ambition was realised when in the year 1917 he purchased Thor, Ballyle, for thirty five pounds and put it in order. In the years that followed Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize and he also became a senator. He had thus become free, happy and prosperous. Life had grown exciting; but there was the bother of old age. The poetry of the Tower volume, notably ‘Sailing’, ‘The Tower’ and ‘Dialogue’...expresses most clearly the struggle and the extremes of a varying attitude to life in the years 1924-1930.

It is the problem that determines the limits of the poem. The problem again can be understood only in terms of the character of the speaker. And so let us see the

kind of old man Yeats would have us take him for. He cannot be a simple raging sensual old man. Such a man has no problem. He just lives a life of self-indulgence. He cannot also be an old man who has reconciled himself to old age. He would then be contented like Sophocles at eighty and so he too will have no problem. Here is an old man who can never be contented and who yet sees the absurdity of living the sensual life of the young. He therefore wants an ideal permanent solution to the problem. In other words, we have here a character conscious of the loss and capable of conceiving a true solution—an old man feeble and tottering, but not in spirit, not in the real man, the Blakean “imagination which liveth for ever”. In fact his imagination seems to be growing stronger and stronger as this foolish body decays. He must do something to reconcile these two and his attempt to find a solution is crystallized in the poem.

Section 1 states the problem. The poet is old physically but his imagination is powerful. In fact he has now an imagination more excited and fantastical than that he had when as a young man he used to angle on Ben Bulben. He would like to shake off this old age which is tied to him as an old kettle to a dog’s tail. But he cannot. His rage is futile. He is pathetic. He is grotesque—the imagery helping us to see the ludicrous old man raging impotently—as helpless at the onset of old age as a dog raging to escape the tin can or old kettle tied to its tail.

The poet therefore decides that it would be proper for him to become philosophical. Otherwise he would be funny and the first section ends with a pious resolution to subdue his imagination into interest in abstract things—the philosophy of Plato and Plotinus.

He would, then, consciously raise himself to a lonely eminence (private and exalted) like Milton’s contemplative man. And section 2 describes the tower and its neighbourhood. He would think of the many persons who lived in and about the tower, recall them and ask a question of them all. This involves the use of his imagination and the details presented prove the increasing strength of his imagination.

He recalls Mrs. French the aristocratic lady who could have the insolent farmer’s ears clipped with the garden shears and brought to her in a little covered dish. He remembers Mary Hynes the peasant girl who was so highly praised by the blind poet Raftery in a song that the farmers jostled one another at the fair to catch a glimpse of her and in the effort one of them got drowned in the great bog of Cloone. And yet she was not really so beautiful. For, says the poet, it was the song which conferred that beauty upon her. The supreme power of imagination which could create what was not there leads him on to talk of Homer who created Helen and finally of himself and Maud Gonne—the movement from one to the other is at once subtle and economical. As yet the imagination (the brightness of the moon) is depicted as supreme only in its own world. In the daily world (the prosaic light of day) it can even be a nuisance or worse.

Music had driven their wits astray.

And one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone.

But the poet would go farther and give the imagination greater authority.

O may the moon and sunlight seem
 One inextricable beam.

For this purpose he calls for advice upon Hanrahan who was mostly his own invention; and turns to the inhabitants of the Tower—the bankrupt master of the house and the ghost of the great men-at-arms who played at dice. (All these characters are partly historical and partly imaginary creations—(memories and images, what has been and what may be. They may be able therefore to reconcile 'the moon' and 'sunlight'.) He would ask all the inhabitants—for they are all involved as essential characters in it—the question :

Did they in public or in secret rage
 As I do now against old age ?

This simple question soon leads him to another more difficult and more personal question; and dismissing all but one of the ghosts—namely, that of Hanrahan—he asks of him a final question :

Does the imagination dwell the most
 Upon a woman won or woman lost ?

(Yeats not only felt the onset of old age but like Hanrahan in his old age could still be in love....) Hanrahan, being an image and unalloyed by actual experience, may know the secrets of existence. The answer to the question, he implies, is that the imagination dwells on the woman lost. And he wants the lecher Hanrahan to admit that he turned aside from a *labyrinth* (from *His exploration of a woman's heart*) and thus deprived himself of the illumination that he could have gained for vain inadequate reasons that the memory of such a loss blots out the sun's reality to substitute for it lunar insanities. In other words, he preferred *actuality* and lost *reality*.

He thus tries to harness his imagination in the interest of lofty contemplation and realizes that it has not been subdued to the service of the intellect. He would now go back to the movement at the end of section 1. If he cannot give his imagination that kind of work, the next best thing he can try is 'renunciation' (or deprivation). In section 3 he resolves to bequeath to young upstanding men his faith and his pride. But as he describes these very qualities he realizes the superiority of creative imagination over abstract reality (e.g., the picture of the dying swan as an image of Pride). He mocks Plotinus's thought and cries in Plato's teeth. It is man's soul that creates everything out of its bitterness. There is no pre-existent reality of which we are only shadows. We do create out of our experiences our paradise as the mother bird at the loophole her nest. He would again, after this praise of man's bitter soul, resolve to leave both faith and pride to young men and learn to deal with the miseries of old age, bodily weakness and death of friends and lovers. His soul shall be compelled to study until the miseries (his death included) seem but an illusion of the evening.

The poem is but an affirmation of Yeats's theory that the only thing real is the creative imagination. The main problem of the poem is the contrast between his young Muse or imagination and his old age. And his resolution emerging from the antinomy is to devote himself entirely to philosophic wisdom. But the resolution is

only stated. The attempted stoicism is not very convincing. The more he asserts the value of intellectual abstraction the more we see the weakness of over-protestation. Plato and Plotinus become mere emblems of abstraction. He derides Plotinus and challenges Plato and successfully merges all things into night-time images created by human imagination. He may praise Plato and Plotinus in lieu of the Muse in the first section but he veers to the opposite extreme and ends up with a dramatic cry of defiance against those who would denigrate man or subject him to abstractions like death, life, Heaven or Hell. Torn between passionate regret for the waning of physical strength and the desire to make his soul with things of the mind and spirit he would erect man as not only the measure but also the creator of all things. And the poem becomes a symbol of that paradise created out of bitterness.

V. S. SETURAMAN

WALLACE STEVENS

I. STRESS ON THE AGENCY OF THE IMAGINATION

WALLACE Stevens (1879-1955) had an inconspicuous career at Harvard. Then he went to New York Law School and practised for a few years with much success. He became one of the richest poets in the United States. He was a double personality; he kept two separate lives, the commercial and the literary. Both sides were equally developed in him; he lived a satisfactory life with either one of them. He was a connoisseur of modern French painting. Among poetic influences on him Mallarmé's was significant; but Stevens was not an academic poet like Mallarmé, he did not possess the metaphysical passion and the emotional intensity of the French Symbolist.

"In recent years Stevens has come to be regarded as an American poet of the rank of Eliot. It is unsafe to compare these two farther than in terms of their skill. Their idioms, themes and major interests are sufficiently dissimilar to discourage any explicit comparisons. Both poets are concerned with the nature of poetry and the role of the poet or artist. Both are concerned with belief, ideals and morality. But the major theme in Stevens by which these concerns are organized is the nature of imagination and its relation to 'reality', while the major theme in Eliot is the need for a stable society, having traditional religious and cultural forms and values" (William Van O' Connor). Further Stevens is completely impersonal unlike T. S. Eliot who writes in a moment of insight.

In "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words", an excellent critical essay, Stevens says that we in the twentieth century are the victims of an obsession. We

pride ourselves on being willing to face the facts. With Bertrand Russell, we, as free men, take a cold, ironic pleasure in living in an alien universe. If our 'naturalistic' literature and our tendency to read 'escapism' for imagination are indicative of the contemporary mind, we seem determined not to allow the imagination either to help reconcile us to the facts or to transform them. Stevens does not shy away at the mention of romanticism. Therein, he says, may lie our salvation. On closer examination we find that Stevens' concern with the place of imagination does not deny the presence, nature, and importance of "things-as-they-are". However far removed we may be from the world of things as they are, in our search for integrity and order we have to come to terms with it; we have to accept the society and the region we know. One cannot afford to write too many 'tragic testaments'. Therefore, instead of mistrusting the imagination, if we grant it certain freedoms and learn how it creates, it can create for us a style, one informed by exuberance, aspiration and a resilient spirit, which at once sustains and expresses human dignity. So our problem is to recover the imagination 'that we spurned and 'crave'. We must, through the agency of the imagination, impose order on the wilderness, just as the jar in "Anecdote of the Jar" imposes its order :

ANECDOTE OF THE JAR

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
 And round it was, upon a hill.
 It made the slovenly wilderness
 Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
 And sprawled around, no longer wild.
 The jar was round upon the ground
 And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
 The jar was gray and bare.
 It did not give of bird or bush,
 Like nothing else in Tennessee.

"This is one of the best poems that Stevens wrote. It is a kind of parable : that Art brings order in chaos. Nature surrounds us in a resenting, in a meancing way; and the imagination imposes an order on the wilderness. 'I placed a jar in Tennessee', the poet informs us grandly; he 'placed' it high on a hill, and the 'slovenly wilderness' found some order for the first time. The jar, 'tall and of a port in air', dominated the landscape, 'no longer wild. That is the burden of the first two stanzas. The third, however, after telling the jar 'took dominion eveywhere', jolts us in a

terse sentence, the shortest of the poem : 'The jar was gray and bare.' And then the two closing lines follow with another abrupt, deliberately awkward shift :

It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

"These knotty negatives seem to make the jar something less than the wilderness after all. Everything else in Tennessee is of nature's world and is alive in that fact; not so the jar, which is but artifact. This outcome is implied in the first stanza in two ways not especially noticeable on first reading. For one thing, there is the whimsical, self-mocking tone of the opening line. 'I placed a jar in Tennessee' is oddly pretentious; and besides, it sounds like the beginning of a humorous folk-song rather than a poem of intellectual import. Secondly, each of the two sentences in the first stanza ends with the word 'hill', calling attention to the jar's immediate location rather than to the jar itself. The unconventional structure reinforces this emphasis: the repetition of 'hill' gives the poem its only identical rhyme, and the short fourth line, 'Surround that hill', breaks the fourstress pattern sharply. If the jar, by contrast and example, imposes an order on wilderness, it nevertheless depends on the wilderness for a context and a source of possible meanings. So the two perspectives, that of a world given formal pattern through man's imagination and that of the blankness of art not informed by the living proliferations of nature, are advanced side by side, the latter gaining precedence by the poem's end. Thus Stevens affirms an interdependence of art and nature. Both nature and the imagination are unceasingly creative, but the former is the controlling element. The limits of art are determined by the ultimate range of resemblances in nature. All relationships really come under the heading of 'resemblances', since by a simple extension, we can say even opposites resemble one another in being contrasting aspects of whatever principle puts them into opposition."

(Rosenthal)

V. SUBBIAN

THE POET AND THE KING

(Potana, the great creator of *Srimad-Andhra-Maha-Bhagavata*, would not dedicate his work to any but the Lord. A story is often told to explain this by an early disappointment. Early in life when the poet was face to face with a king, it is said, he was asked to hymn the king's concubine. he, it is believed, composed, much against his will, *Bhogimidandaka*. The story says how greatly he regretted his meeting the king and how he decided thereupon not to have anything to do with kings. His king would be the King of Kings to whom he would offer all his work.

Scholars do not see much evidence to prove that *Bhogimidandaka* is Potana's. The story may not be based on any element of truth. Hence the liberty taken here in the presentation of the details. Such conversions, as of the concubine here, are not very rare in life or letters.)

POET

You cannot make me richer than I am.
I rule a greater kingdom in my heart
Than all the greatest kingdoms in the world.
Your baits are weak, O King, to fish my soul.

KING

I cease to offer my poor paltry things.
May I turn beggar to you, King of Kings.

POET

Beg only of Him who is true King of Kings.

KING

But, Sir, I beg of you to stay with me
And sing to me the glories of the Lord
That you may help my fickle mind to turn
To that eternal Source of all our wealth.

POET

Away from my own hut I cannot stay.
It's there alone that I must live and sing
The endless glories of my loving Lord.

KING

I cannot tempt you nor can I deceive
To keep you by my side to please my heart.

But having brought you here may I not win
 The wondrous joy of listening to your voice?
 Break forth into a song upon a theme
 Near and dear to my silly heart.

POET

Name the theme, O King, and I will sing.

KING

You promise ?

POET

My heart within me bids
 That I shall sing upon your chosen theme.

KING

Then sing the glories of the fairest face
 Whose presence here lends light and grace.

POET

Is it Her Majesty I am asked to hymn ?

KING

Her Majesty indeed ! She is the queen
 Of all my heart. She is my concubine.

POET

Your concubine ?—to sing her praise ?...O Lord,
 May You forbid that I should prostitute
 Your sacred gift !

KING

There is the promise, bard !

POET

Your concubine ? to sing in *praise of her* !
 And yet, why not ? Listen, then, King, I sing.

(SONG)

Mother, when I behold Thy face so fair,
 Great and rare,
 I see the Hand that made the Sun and Moon,
 O Heaven's Boon !

In thy ruddy lips I see the dawn
 I thought had gone !
 Thine are not eyes but stars that twinkle bright
 As those at night.
 Those lovely tresses, black and wild,
 O Heaven's Child !
 Are the Ocean's waves that woo the sky
 When night is nigh !
 All the splendours of our Heaven and Earth,
 O Glorious Birth !
 All the marvels of both night and day
 In manner gay
 Meet and fuse within thy divine face
 With all their grace.
 My salutations, O my Mother fair,
 Great and rare !

LADY

Who are you that thus wake my slumbering soul ?
 Where am I now and what is it I see ?
 I seem to shake myself off from a dream
 And open eyes unto the Truth of Life.
 Master, Guru, I bow in gratitude.
 I leave the palace now to seek my God.

KING

What have you done ? O Poet ! Ah ! my Queen !

LADY

Your wedded queen is even there by your side.
 Forget me, King, I now have found myself.

KING

O wretched poet ! What have you done to me ?

POET

I have done what you bade—Oh, no !
 What my own Master bade within.
 Unwilling at first to praise a concubine,
 I had to yield to a mandate from above.
 O Lord ! what wonders You may do
 In ways that we may never know !

THE AIM OF THE LANGUAGE-TEACHERS AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

THE language-teachers seem to have fallen into disrepute—in the eyes of some of our educationists—from the time the Mother said She did not want literature to be taught to children (“surtout pas de classes de littérature”). Here are a few jottings which might help to clarify the point—*i.e.* understand the Mother’s remark from the language-teacher’s point of view.

On the one hand, the term “literature”, as usually understood, means study of an author—which includes his work, his thought (good or bad) on life and may involve coming under the influence of a mind and a vital being which need not always be healthy for a child; on the other hand, this study has to be completed by that of the chronological development of thought and art as expressed through the literature of the country concerned.

Now, such a training is not stressed upon in our Centre. Even in the Higher Course where literature classes are held, the main idea is to give the students an outlook in keeping with Sri Aurobindo’s way of dealing with the subject (plenty of material is available in Sri Aurobindo’s own words, by way of comment or appreciation, on various English writings and several pointers as to how to deal with the subject in general). The works and the authors to be studied are very carefully selected so that they may convey the best from our point of view. The development of literature is also studied on the lines given by Sri Aurobindo, that is to say, attention is drawn to the planes of consciousness which these writings touch. And this is not the only type of work done, there are creative composition, classes on the works of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo, etc., etc. However, we are not directly concerned with the Higher Course classes here : let us look at the other work done.

In the lower classes the aim of all the language-teachers who work with Sri Aurobindo’s ideas in view is to perfect the mental training of the child. Here language-classes can play a part peculiarly their own and not in any measure less important than other subjects.

As with all subjects, the proper learning of languages clarifies thought. You have to think clearly if you want to express clearly. The characteristic of language-study is that it can help the child become conscious of himself because he has to say how he, as an individual, thinks or feels. This also is an occasion to become aware of the senses. In fact, in the early stages, sense-training and language-teaching go hand in hand. In later years the student may be called upon to describe precisely events including an observation of several senses active at the same time—as, for example, an appreciation of a film seen, where vision, word, sound and emotion blend. Thus language-teaching can help to develop a complete awareness of the child’s personality.

It enriches and increases the child's comprehension. By coming in contact with thoughts and feelings on varied subjects directly concerned with the life and the world around and within us, the mind widens and is forced to quit, for moments at least, the limited concern of its little self. Of course, simply reading or letting the child read is not enough, the teacher has to make the pupils think on what they have read—"it is by thinking, understanding, receiving mental influences from his intellectual superiors that man's mind develops." The teacher has to check up that the students have caught the finer suggestions, check therefore their "understanding" so that they may receive in the right way the mental influence of their intellectual superiors—here, two-fold, that of the author and of the teacher.

The analytic faculties of comparison and contrast, so encouraged and appreciated in scientific studies, are not less important in the domain of languages though their application is on a growingly different plane. At first the comparison of different observations on the physical plane, involving the perception of the senses or elementary mental alertness, developing a precise vocabulary and clear arrangement of composition; but later, the same faculty has to be applied to feelings, characters, thoughts.

This naturally leads us to artistic appreciation of things. The mind is made conscious of the balanced composition, the mode of expression and the quality of the work it studies. Indeed, true appreciation can come only if a deeper sense is awakened but mental and emotional refinement have a large part to play in making the understanding rich and precise. In the appreciation of beauty "the business of the intellect is to analyse the elements, parts, external processes, apparent principles of that which it studies and explain their relations and workings; in doing this it instructs and enlightens the lower mentality which has, if left to itself, the habit of doing things or seeing what is done and taking all for granted without proper observation and fruitful understanding". The intellect can "help to remove the dullness and vagueness of the lower mind which prevent it from seeing beauty or which give it false and crude aesthetic habits....What is farther needed is the awakening of a certain vision, an insight and an intuitive response in the soul". The teacher, specially at the higher secondary level, has to lead the students through a graded training that will at least achieve the first stage and with some inspiration he may also be able to communicate to some of them a taste of the second.

The language-teacher has to try and inculcate this aesthetic awareness in his students so well that even when they are reading or seeing something on their own they should find it natural to judge in the right way. This will improve their taste and they will be able to choose rightly what to read, the different types of things to be enjoyed, and what to make of the things they read or see around them.

This is a rich enough programme for the language-teacher but it is not complete if he has not understood that all this has to lead to a conscious effort to develop another faculty in the child, which Sri Aurobindo calls "a most important and indispensable instrument": the imagination. Sri Aurobindo divides the function of the imagination into three parts :

- i) the forming of mental images,
- ii) the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images,
- iii) the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world.

The language classes offer a vast field of application and development of these qualities.

It is again the language-teacher who can apply today the ancient Indian method which Sri Aurobindo praises, that of training the student "to be receptive of illumination from within". This can be actively "effected by the triple method of repetition, meditation and discussion. *Avritti* or repetition was meant to fill the recording part of the mind with the *shabda* or words, so that the *artha* or meaning might of itself rise from within : needless to say, a mechanical repetition was not likely to produce this effect. There must be that clear still receptivity and that waiting upon the word or thing with the contemplative part of the mind which is what the ancient Indians meant by *dhyān* or meditation..." The language-teacher has the possibility to try this on illuminating texts, as those of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, with doubtless success. Of course, the level of the class and the right choice of material are important.

The language-teacher's task is then a complex one : he has to deal with the subtler parts of the training of the mind. His subject itself demands a greater mastery over his own self, a wide comprehension of conflicting ideas, a clear understanding of the ideal...so that he may not limit the students' growth by his personality or mould them according to his individual likes and dislikes. He has to rise above his ego and sense the Truth and be moved by the real Beauty in things. Then his very presence, his reactions to what is studied or his reading of a text will communicate more than words can explain. In short, the language-teacher has to *be* what he holds up as ideal or all his discussions will be mere juggling with principles; he has to be deeply touched by Beauty so that a similar chord may be moved in his students.

So we see that language teaching is not necessarily the study of literature in the technical sense of the term. Nor is it merely a furnishing of a medium so that other subjects—history, geography or the sciences—can be learnt. It has a function of its own which helps to organise the mind and coordinate the different types of knowledge it receives; it increases the power of understanding by bringing us in contact with great minds and giving us scope to think on a variety of subjects; above all, it can awaken in us the search for beauty which is "only in its beginning a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulses and desires. It is only in the middle a satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of the perfect process and harmonious combination. Behind them the soul of beauty in us desires the contact, the revelation, the uplifting delight of an absolute beauty in all things which it feels to be present... When it can get the touch of this universal, absolute beauty, this soul of beauty, this sense of its revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event,

a human life, an idea, a stroke of the brush or chisel or the scintillation of the mind, the colours of a sunset or the grandeur of the tempest, it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied”.

The ideal before us is high. But the last stage cannot be reached at one stroke. It has to be intuitively and also logically built up. Teachers at different levels, though each working in his own way, will have to contribute to achieve the goal by understanding the requirements of their respective levels of class, and their place in the whole. Everything has to come in its time and in language-teaching this includes as much the student as the teacher. However, over-stressing on spiritual themes or going off at a tangent and only amusing the students are two extremes that we may well avoid. Sri Aurobindo has given us various indications in different places which can serve as useful pointers to language-teaching. The basis of the practical application of his ideas could be summarised in one of his own paragraphs which will also serve as our conclusion here :

“The mental faculties should first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas. Our dealings with language are too perfunctory and the absence of a fine sense for words impoverishes the intellect and limits the fineness and truth of its operations. The mind must be accustomed i) first to notice the word thoroughly, its form, sound and sense; ii) then to compare the form with other similar forms in the points of similarity and difference, thus forming the foundation of the grammatical sense; iii) then to distinguish between the fine shades of sense of similar words and the formation and rhythm of different sentences, thus forming the formation of the literary and the syntactical faculties. All this should be done informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set-teaching and memorising of rules.”

“Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy...he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him...”

AMITA

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEAD— GUESS WITH WHOM ?

(Continued from the September issue)

5

(We publish here a few dialogues written by the English teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education for the cultural programmes held on Saturday afternoons. They are imaginary conversations between inquiring minds of today and great personalities of the past. Most of them were acted by the students in a Quiz programme.)

A batch of young students harassed by the idea of studying pages of history for a Test express the desire of seeing those they read about, and as if in answer to their wish these figures appear one by one.

The dress suggested the place and time to which the character concerned belonged.

The names of the various X's are given inverted at the end of the whole group of conversations. The student-reader is invited to exercise his mind and then check with the correct answer.)

EVERYMAN : You are a sage, a superior man who lives in a higher world of harmonies. Where do you come from, noble Master ?

X *points to the East.*

EVERYMAN : From the East ? Further east from India ?

X *nods.*

EVERYMAN : Will you not teach us some of your wisdom ?

X : Not to act from any personal motive, to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them, to taste without being aware of the flavour, to account the great as small and the small as great, to recompense injury with kindness : that is the way of the Tao.

6

EVERYMAN : Who art thou, holy Spirit ? For whom are these flowers and fruits, this incense that slowly mounts to heaven ?

X : For God, my child. It is for Him I wait. For Him, I have shivered in the rain and been scorched by the sun. For Him I have wandered through youth and wrinkles and old age, looking for flowers and 'bel' leaves to lay at His feet. And one

lay He will come. My father, Rishi Matanga, told me so and the word of an Aryan Rishi never proves false.

EVERYMAN : Art thou then the daughter of great Matanga ?

X : His soul-child, yea. For it was as a low-born outcaste that I came here, to this leafy hermitage on the banks of the Pampa. Here, where the lasting qualities of head and heart were held more dear than the mere accident of birth, here I was accepted. The Rishi gathered me unto himself and I grew in the shelter of his vast love. He gave me "shiksha", he gave me knowledge. And even after his body had passed away from this earth, he still taught me devotion. I have learnt to wait and pray, joyously and gratefully, for the day when the Lord will receive my homage.

EVERYMAN : But do you never feel disheartened or discouraged, after having spent so many fruitless summers, here in this solitude ?

X : Disheartened ? Nay, child, you do not understand. The way to God is not easy. To see Him for a moment and touch His feet I had to purify myself through a life-time of tapasya..., I have seen the golden Sun-god and his radiant smile, and yet I cherish that joy of waiting in days of sunshine and days of rain to weave my thoughts in a garland of love, to throw my life into those ardent flames which rise up to Heaven and call down the Lord...

7

EVERYMAN : Why do you, lady, thus gaze at the stars ?

X : I look for the secrets they hide, for the mystery that is in them.

EVERYMAN : Are you then a poetess, has their magic captured you so ?

X : Mine is the path of truth, not beauty, though in the end, they are both one. I seek reality, the true fact behind things, the real meaning behind the sun and moon and stars. These stars...they guide our lives, it is said... Is it so ? But why ? And how ? That I would know. And I would know what they are, these bright sparklers in the sky. And though they seem innumerable, they surely are not, for nothing there is in this finite world that science cannot fathom.

EVERYMAN : Were you ever on this earth ? Did you ever grace the world of men ?

X : Yes, I was born in this holy land of India.... I calculated the number of the stars in heaven and fixed their positions in the sky. Thus my woman's mind ranged higher than the stars.

And yet these same stars told me that because I was a woman I would fall. Man-made customs and the narrow laws of society would not allow high public fame to touch a woman, a wife in a Brahmin house. My name for a moment rose, my voice proclaimed the truths I had found and King Vikramaditya chose me as the tenth jewel of his court ..but that was not to be.

They cut my tongue so my thoughts would never be known to men. Through me, once again, knowledge was sacrificed to blind social customs. I did not live any more. And yet I see the final triumph of truth, and I do not grieve.

8

EVERYMAN : Who is that glorious being, wandering alone through the garden of youth.

Is she a goddess come down from heaven ?
How forlorn she looks, yet how regally proud!
Hush, she speaks !

X : I bade him farewell. I sent him away from me...and to what fate ? Yes as a Kshatriya, he had to go. He could not linger here, in this garden of bliss, while the honour of the motherland was being trampled beneath the hooves of marauding Musalmans. He, my ever brave one, had to answer the call of freedom.... How many stories about his chivalry and courage I had heard when still a child, and how I worshipped him since that young age ! For him, I willingly made my home and my father aliens...Oh !

I can still feel the red flush of anger mounting to my face as that day, long ago I entered the Swayamvara hall to look amid all the eager princes for that one face and lo ! I saw only a hideous mocking statue. I flung the nuptial wreath around the stone-king and became a rebel in my father's house.... What consternation and shock....And then, god-like and sudden, the beat of flying horse-hooves and, as I wished-for violence, I was torn, consenting, from the midst of many armed men !...Oh ! memories, memories !

EVERYMAN : She passes by, tears of mingled pride and sorrow on her face, although she knows what awaits her husband, her country and herself.

And yet, "see, how high she holds her head !"

X : Yes, I hold my head high. I have added to the glory of Indian womanhood I have stood for beauty and courage, for love and self-sacrifice, for all that is noble in the human race.

9

X : Guten Abend, mein Herr ! Warum haben Sie mich gerufen ?

EVERYMAN : Er...excuse me, could you repeat that in English, please ? You see my knowledge of German doesn't go beyond "gooden morning !"

X : That's quite all right. I merely wished you good evening and wanted to know why you had called me.

EVERYMAN : Well, to tell you the truth we did not call anybody in particular. We were only trying to establish contact with the world of the Spirits.

X (*angrily*) : Gott in Himmel ! Why did they have to send me, then ? When my whole being was drinking in the health-giving, life-giving sunshine, they have to send me to this damp, disease-ridden earthly atmosphere !

EVERYMAN : Please, Mr. Spirit, whoever you may be, please don't be annoyed. Since you are already here, do tell us something about yourself before you go.

X : About myself ! But my life-story is now common knowledge. Everybody knows about me—every slinking weakling who calls himself man. Your stupid sychologists seem to have even analysed my mental make-up, and, poor fools that they are, they say that my great philosophy of Will to health and life and power was direct outcome of my diseased digestive system and weak eyesight ! Ignorant worms ! Do wonder I sometimes wished my Superman to crush them under his feet !...

EVERYMAN : Your Superman ?

X : Of course, my Superman! He is my dream, my only inspiration. He is the embodiment of all the virtues that emanate from strength, power, heroism, nobility, riches, beauty and dangerous health !

10

EVERYMAN : And thou, fair youth who hast the body of a hero and the face of an Olympian god, what proud country, what distant clime, could have given birth to thee ?

X : I was born centuries ago in a land that rings ever rich with glory. My gods were the mighty Olympians and my aim to conquer and rule.

EVERYMAN : Thou art a Greek then, a warrior and a king.

X : Thou sure knowest the champion of knotty issues ? I am he.

EVERYMAN : O thrice great hero, blessed be thy name ! When still a lad thou didst sway mighty armies and rule proud nations. Pray tell us where thou didst acquire that greatness.

X : Greatness, friend, is not acquired. It lies within. Give it time and it shall break into blossom.

EVERYMAN : But are there not certain qualities, certain virtues that are the rare possession of conquerors ?

X : Self-confidence, keen observation and the ability to take swift decisions are, to my mind, their greatest attributes. For he who would ride an untamed horse must needs be first a keen observer. Then he must have self-confidence, that is faith in himself and, last though not the least, courage. Given these, what can stop him ?

EVERYMAN (*with a significant smile*) : Nothing perhaps but the smallness of the world !

X : Fear not. You moderns will never suffer from that !

10. Alexander the Great.

5. Laotse. 6. Shabari 7. Khana 8. Samyuktta 9. Nietzsche

(Concluded)

Compiled by AMITA

A NEW LAMP IN A 'NEW WORLD' UNDER A 'NEW LIGHT'

(A TECHNO-SPIRITUAL TREATISE)

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.

(29th February-29th March, 1956)

THE MOTHER

ONE of the latest phases of development in the field of filament lamps is a novel and tiny source of light termed the Quartz Tubular Lamp employing the "Iodine Cycle" to eliminate tungsten darkening. Lamps of these characteristics provide several features having unique applicational advantages. These features are :

- (1) High wattage in small volume bulbs;
- (2) Good luminous efficiency with practically no reduction in lumen output throughout life;
- (3) Efficient operation on high volt as well as on low 120 volt circuits; and
- (4) Increased life without the usual accompanying reduction in filament temperature and efficiency.

The first application of a quartz lighting lamp was in connection with wing-ti lighting on jet air-planes. Here the requirement was for maximum light in minimum space and a 150 W-28 volt lamp was used. Three unusual lighting installations have also been undertaken using quartz lamps. These involve :

- (i) air-port runway flood lighting;
- (ii) air-port runway-taxiway marker light; and
- (iii) an oxygen regenerative cell.

In the air-port runway, the system is to floodlight the runway without introducing excessive glare in the eyes of the landing pilots. 200 W-6.6 Amp. quartz lamps had been used to reduce the filament's axial length.

In the air-port runway-taxiway, a new semiflush unit known as "pancake marker light had been designed to guide the pilots while they were landing and moving their ships on the runways and taxiways at night and at times of low visibility. The small size of 45 W-2 inch quartz lamp is a major contribution for this kind of service.

As regards the use of quartz lamps in an oxygen regenerative cell, something should first of all be said about the world situation obtaining since the last half of the last decade which started from the year of Grace 1950 when Sri Aurobindo made a tremendous and undreamt-of sacrifice for the earth and humanity by throwing

off his glorious body charged through and through with the Supramental Light and Power.¹

The descent of a "NEW LIGHT" (now known all over the globe as the Supramental Light or the Light of the Supermind) which has given birth to a "NEW WORLD" has ushered in an era of a never-ending series of almost miraculous breakthroughs in practically all the diverse spheres of our mundane, mechanized existence and has brought in an unprecedented and incredible development in the domain of thermo-nuclear science and rocket technology. Recent advances in naval and space-travel technology have provided means of cruising under the oceans for long periods and have opened before the vaingloriously proud, egoistically arrogant, quarrelling and fighting human race almost unlimited possibilities of exploring the appalling immensities of the physical Universe lying beyond our atmosphere and of zooming through the colossal interplanetary spaces. It is quite true that man, with his inventive genius coupled with his engineering skill has made 'machines which behave like men and men who behave like machines' but it is also equally true that he has made intercontinental ballistic missiles and super-bombs with which to annihilate himself and his mother earth on which he takes birth and has his being, simply because his unregenerate animal nature and propensities remain as impure, imperfect and unchanged as ever; he is undeniably the inventor of artificial external light sources but he has yet to find the true Light within himself. This incapacity born out of an utter lack of spiritual activity and callous indifference with a sugar-coating of so-called "Secularism" has made his entire existence a cruel and farcical paradox and has severely limited his adaptability to things, beings, happenings and surroundings. The only way to get out of this self-created mud, this venomous and vicious circle, is: either he must find some means to transcend his mentality thereby giving way to a higher and freer form of Truth-Consciousness or, if that appears to his limited and shackled physical intelligence—based upon an inert and massive rock of Inconscience—to be too remote, idealistic and utopian, then remaining as he is—if of course he is permitted to so remain by the evolutionary pressure acting from above and below—he must carry along or create his atmosphere and food in order to survive. A means of regenerating his atmosphere and growing his food seems more feasible than carrying food with him. One method being investigated is actually to carry in each submarine or space-ship a small portion of a regenerative device creating PHOTO-SYNTHESIS,—the life-sustaining phenomenon of Nature, the MATERIAL MOTHER.

With space a premium of each type of vehicle, a compact photo-synthesis system utilizing the most efficient and compact plant life and equipment must be used. In the preliminary investigations a photo-synthesis gas exchanger of about one

¹ Those interested may please go through the booklets 'The Passing of Sri Aurobindo - Its Inner Significance and Consequence' by K. D. Sethna (also known as 'Amal Kiran'); 'A Call from Pondicherry' by Dr. Prabhat Kumar Sanyal, author of *Diagnostic Surgery*; and *I am Here! I am Here* by Dr. Nirodbaran who was one of the personal attendants to Sri Aurobindo.

cubic-foot size which theoretically can provide the oxygen requirements of one or two men in a space-ship was used. Six 1500 Watt quartz lamps were used as an artificial "Sun" and a newly developed high reproductive strain of algae was employed *since light-energy density of quartz lighting lamps for equal volume is one thousand times better than that of mercury lamps and three thousand times better than that of fluorescent lamps*. Apart from higher output these lamps were chosen because of their small size and desirable spectral qualities reducing the volume of algae to one-twentieth of that formerly considered necessary. Thus this new lamp in combination with oxygen-regenerative equipment may enable man to travel in outer space or beneath the oceans for an indefinite period of time.

I started this article with a quotation from one of the messages of the Mother, let me quote here another :

"The Manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality. It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious and even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it."
(24-4-1956)

This message was issued in 1956 and it may not be at all irrelevant to mention here that in the very next year (on October 4, 1957, to be exact) the whole world was startled by the launching of the first-ever space-ship termed 'Sputnik' from a region which is supposed to be 'God-less' and as such 'muddy' according to orthodox views and misconceptions—but it won't do for us to forget that in this world of paradox and seven-fold ignorance the LOTUS,—also known in Bengali as 'Aurobindo'—blossoms with its full harmony and beauty in the midst of filth and mud and that is why it is also termed 'Pankaja'.

This unprecedented physical phenomenon which took the entire world by storm is to me, and I am sure to many others, nothing but the physical symbol of the ushering in of a new era just as the sun is the blazing 'symbol of the Divine in physical nature' or as the 'Star of Bethlehem' was the physical symbol of the advent of Jesus Christ amongst us and guided the Magi to his feet. The present symbol is man-made simply because the evolutionary *msus* has become conscious in man to a point of complete and radical self-transformation. This unique achievement is at once a concrete proof of man's inherent capacity to break all barriers and a pointer calling his immediate attention to the fact that the time has now come for him to transcend his earthly mentality if he is at all to survive here in a world of helically progressive locomotion.

One may call this age the space-age or rocket-age or nuclear-age or whatever age one likes, but 'what's in a name?' In the ultimate analysis, in the eye of all-revealing Truth, it shall surely be looked upon and shall surely go down in history in letters of gold as the SPIRITUAL AGE when truth shall prevail in the long run

('Satyameva jayate'), when Spirit shall conquer Matter and establish its kingdom permanently upon earth.

MALAYA KUMAR SINHA,
B.E.E. (I.HONS), A.M.I.E. (India)

Acknowledgement : Technical informations regarding the 'new lamp'. collected from the "Journal of the Illumination Engineering Society of USA",

MAITHILISHARAN GUPTA : A HOMAGE

VERY recently death has plucked away some of the loveliest flowers from our literary garden. Among them, one whose fragrance will never fade was Dr. Maithilisharan Gupta or "Dadda" as addressed affectionately. It is quite right that President Radhakrishnan should describe him as the "Doyen of Hindi Poets". There was no exaggeration also when someone called him "the Modern Tulsidas". Indeed, he deserves to be our National Poet.

The Medieval Tulsidas—the author of the famous *Ramcharitmanas*—was born some five hundred years ago at the peak of Islamic culture and religion. This modern Tulsi was born just a year after the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 when the British rule was at its zenith, and the English language and culture were in flower on our sacred soil. Sri Ramcharan Gupta, a well-to-do businessman of Chirgaon, in Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh, was deeply absorbed in Lord Rama. Poetry in Brajbhasa took birth in him as a gift of devotion. Maithilisharan, the second son of Sri Ramcharan, inherited two paternal qualities—devotion for Lord Rama and the poetic faculty.

Of course, his poetic achievement was not realised till there came to his aid Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi. This has been well told by the poet in the preface to *Saket*. His début in the realm of Hindi poetry was with a small composition "Hemant" that appeared in the esteemed pages of *Saraswati* in 1903 with his preceptor's blessings, though earlier his prose contributions had been published.

But among the most inspired creations which limelighted the poet first is *Bharat Bharati*—an epic filled with the Indian spirit to the brim. It was his first offering to the Nation. He invokes in it the soul of the Indian race and calls on God to preserve it for all time. Its verses sharply strike at the roots of British Rule in India and of all that is alien to the Motherland. The popularity of the poem can well be judged from the fact that a saint committed it to memory long back in 1915 on the banks of the Ganges.

Maithilisharan's literary life, stretched over sixty long years, has grown through three different tendencies—the nationalist, the legendary and the spiritual—but all of it is steeped in the traditional Indian style.

These tendencies are nothing but kindred expressions of the poet's inner beauty. *Bharat Bharati*, *Kishan, Raja and Praja* represent the first one, while *Jaidrath Vadha*, *Jai Bharat* the next category, and *Yashodhara*, *Saket*, *Vishnu Priya* the final. Besides, there are many minor but valuable works from the historical angle, such as *Rang me Bhang* and *Sidharaj*. And there is a yet wider range of translated works like *Virahini Vajrangana*, *Virangna*, *Meghnad Vadh*, *Palasi Ka Yudh*, *Omer Khayyam ki Rubaiyan*, *Swapna Vasavdutta*, *Tillottama*, *Chandrahans*, *Shakuntala*, *Patravali*, *Hindu*, *Tripathaga*, etc.

The huge and splendid edifice of Gupta's creation could be imagined as raised on two solid foundations, *Bharat Bharati* and *Jaidrath Vadha*, with its dome ending in *Saket* and *Yashodhara*, supported by the beautiful pillars of *Dwapar*, and *Panchvati*, and decorated and lamped by *Swadesh Samgit*, *Gurukul* and *Jhankar*.

The poet of the *Ramcharitmanas* is usually taken as a saint devoted to his Lord. His expositions are based on the ideals of his devotion for Rama, whereas, this modern Tulsi was a humble householder. To him, the teachings of Tulsidas were living truth. He lived them in his life and in relation to his family and society till the end. Modesty, novelty, precision of thought and sweetness of heart, respect for the Indian tradition, *Sanatana Dharma* and 'Woman' as mirrored in his vast works oblige one to rank him among the foremost figures in Hindi letters. His respect for neglected and tortured women like Urmila, Yashodhara, Vishnupriya and Ratna is certainly a severe blow to all those who minimise the value and sacrifice of these women.

That virtues like purity and simplicity are his unique dowry is a very common feeling in his readers. Conversations between Kunti and Karna in *Jai Bharat* and *Rashmirathi* of 'Dinkar' are shining examples of the two different motives. Karna says to Kunti, "Give me the dust of your feet though I could not fulfil your wishes, Mother!" And Kunti replies "Alas, my child! now there remains nothing but ashes. Whatever the attitude you may have, convey my affection to Radha. I am, like broken Devaki, your same mother, Yashoda."

The style of his poetry fuses the typical Indian and the modern. He prefers always to open with a hymn to his beloved Rama or other deities as evidenced in the following couplets :

*"Manuj-manas me tarangit bahu vicharsrot
Ek ashraya, Ram ke punyacharan ka pote."*

"The human-mind, haunted by various thought-fountains, has only one refuge—Rama's sacred feet-boat."

*"Namo Naran Namo Nar-Pravar Purush ketu.
Namo Bharati Devi, Vyasa, Jaike hetu."*

“Hail to Thee, hail to Man, the emblem of vigour.
Hail to Saraswati, hail to Vyasa for the sake of victory.”

On the other hand, he never lags behind his time. In fact, he is one who, in the light of his preceptor, moulded, refashioned, chiselled, adorned, dignified and gave a classical touch to the early twentieth-century Hindi literature. *Saket*, particularly in its ninth chapter, is remarkable from the viewpoint of characterisation, simile, poetic spontaneity, delight, ideation and beauty of language. Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, suffers the pangs of separation immeasurably during the latter's exile. The whole world and its objects like the azure sky, the stars and the moon, the hills and the mountains, the flora and fauna, the rivers and all the six seasons share her sorrow. Even amidst this suffocating situation Urmila has a word of consolation:

“Love grows on either side, Friend ! The moth and
the lamp both are burning equally.”

*“Dono or prem palta hai !
Sakhi, patang bhi jalta hai, Ha ! dipak bhi jalta hai !”*

BRAJ BIHARI SAHAY

LINES FOR LEENA

STUNG in the back, dear Poet !
'Twas your fault : had you approached
With harmlessness, the bee
Would certainly have brought you honey.
And if on grandiose language you insist
And like the eagle soar
Clean out of sight into the Infinite—
Do not forget, the little nightingale
Nests on the earth
And yet most sweetly sings of all !

MORWENNA

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

No. 9

September 1965

1. *Education Reform*

Britain and the U.S.A. are not the only countries where discussion about educational reform rages. It is a world phenomenon. Among the changes that are of great interest are those that have already taken place in Sweden, for example, the institution of the "common" schools. There are significant changes coming about in the Finnish experimental schools headed by Dr. Gösta Cavonius and Mr. Reijo Virtanen, where technical progress and international cooperation on an unprecedented scale demanded wider knowledge in many fields.

The report presented by a special commission in 1959 reveals a thorough knowledge of how schools are organized in many other countries including America, England and Sweden and suggests a new school system for Finland. Some of the main features of this report are : (a) that there should be no selection test at all for grammar school places, (b) that the middle school should be incorporated in the primary schools and (c) that separate technical schools and sixth-form colleges (*gymnasier* leading to the university after a three-year course) should be set up.

Finnish psychologists are hard at work looking for suitable objective attainment tests in main subjects but they advise giving *more importance to the teacher's assessment*, in spite of the awareness of a possible subjective bias.

2. *China's Two Roads to Education*

After "Liberation", a struggle began for stewardship over China's education. On the one hand were the schools, teachers, materials, methods and objectives inherited from the past. On the other hand there was the idea that socialist education requires more than a simple shift from the 'classics schools' to the new 'part-work part-study schools'. The concept of the established system presumed a gulf between theoretical and applied science. By 1959, however, the 'new' idea of education emerged in concrete form. The Party's policy was officially stated in that year : "Education must serve proletarian politics; education must be combined with productive labour."

3. *Hongkong*

The new Marsh-Sampson Report by the Government resulting in a White Paper begins as follows :

“The final aim of any educational policy must always be to provide every child with the best education he or she is capable of absorbing, at a cost that the parent and the community can afford.”

4. *Ghana's T.V.*

Free viewing posts are to be available in the rural areas when Ghana's Television goes on the air in August. Dr. Nkrumah states that its paramount objective is to be education. It will not cater for cheap entertainment or commercialism.

5. *News—India*

According to a report just released by the Registrar General, India has 15 million children under the age of 15 working. Over 10 million are engaged in cultivation or as agricultural labourers. In urban areas they are mainly domestic or personal servants.

Comment : The above is a bare statement of statistics but it would be well for us to remember that most of the millions of so-called illiterate are probably quite well versed in stories from the Puranas and know by heart endless folk songs of simple but penetrating wisdom.

6. *News—Pakistan*

The Government, perturbed at the degree of juvenile delinquency and irresponsibility among students, is launching a pilot scheme to run for five years and establishing several social centres throughout East Pakistan in an effort to bring about a better sense of values.

No. 10

October 1965

1. *The Bilingual Child*

The student with a foreign language handicap presents a very real problem in relation to the language background necessary for successful reading. Research has shown that bilingual children entering the first four years of the elementary school have difficulties with the meanings of words in text books and readers. The child is encountering new English words and phrases and must have an understanding of these words if he is to cope with all the subjects with any measure of correctness. The child with such a language handicap enters school with an English vocabulary of from 1,800 to 2,000 words fewer than the vocabularies of English-speaking children. Before the child with a foreign language handicap can begin to read successfully, he must have an English vocabulary at his command based on the interests of his age group. Educators should realize that the bilingual child's I.Q. cannot be accurately measured. Unless the I.Q. administered is culture-free, it should not be counted as a true I.Q. Even the Stanford-Binet non-written test is not certain as there are a number of English idioms used that present a language block.

If, however, the bilingual child has instilled into him a sense of prestige and

accomplishment in knowing more than one language, this will certainly stimulate his educational efforts in general. It is agreed among most educators today that three languages, and in some cases four, can be learnt by most children at the kindergarten level if the right climate of learning is afforded.

2. *Report on Schools in China*

The new educational ventures in China have still many major difficulties to solve. To limit classroom hours, courses must be streamed to stress fundamentals. Work-study schools have had to drop foreign languages until new books are prepared. Senior middle-school mathematics, physics and chemistry include college courses, but give insufficient drill on basic knowledge.

Grammar and classics have been played down and more emphasis has been put on handwriting, "spelling" and composition. In political study open discussion is replacing much of the lecture-memory work routine.

3. *Educational Hypnosis*

The Japanese are making many experiments in the field of hypnosis as an aid to learning and as a means of coping with the stresses of modern life. For example, sixteen ten-year-olds, obedient and unfrightened, relaxed without a fidget on the classroom benches, were rapidly hypnotized for a lesson in memorizing the plains and rivers of the country. At the branch of the local advisory board in the working class Adachi district, some sixty children, from five to thirteen years of age, were attending twice-weekly sessions after school hours. At the same branch ten teacher adepts were practising the methods in their schools.

4. *The Cause of War...?*

It is said that the cause of war is the constant substitution of pleasure for happiness because pleasure-seeking entails possession out of desire and such possessiveness leads to conflict and war.

5. *Host—Guest—Enemy?*

The word 'guest' comes from Old English 'gest' and is allied to the German 'gast' and the Latin 'hostis' which meant a *stranger* or an *enemy*. A 'host' is, of course, one who entertains a stranger or a guest at his house. But a host is also a *multitude*, an *army*, an *enemy*—one who is *hostile*. 'The Host', in pagan times, was 'the sacrificial victim'. Now in Christian times it is *the consecrated wafer of the eucharist*, eaten by the communicant. Anyway, whether it is an enemy or a guest that comes, there is something wrong with our World-view if we continue to say : 'the sun rises in the east.'

No. 11 & 12.

November-December 1965

1. *Educational Research*

It has already been mentioned in previous Newsletters that the status of Re-

search, especially Educational Research, has changed throughout the world, wherever educational development is a major concern of the people and their government. We can no longer relegate research to post-graduate studies alone as an academic pandect. Research today has to be implemented at the earliest stages of educational awareness, where only the teacher working close to the student is in a position to assess any true comparative development. And as the roots of education are so often entwined with a parent relationship it is only the teacher again who can forge a positive link between the parent and school work and the environment. Any research that is to be of value to the student, present or future, must take full cognisance of the *teacher's* assessment rather than the more artificial measurements of a test or examination.

Where certain Free Progress Classes have made experiments, allowing students the freedom of subject and the choice of what time and how much of it they should devote to any particular subject, and where the teacher is more of an observer and guide than a dominant instructor, it has been universally shown that certain groups of students emerge into a surprisingly imaginative and creative 'cell' of activity which was completely dormant when the same students were asked to 'show' their capabilities through test or examination.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, that remarkable human being who was at the same time a Jesuit Father and a distinguished palaeontologist, says in his *The Phenomenon of Man* :

"...we have now to ask : *along what lines* of advance...are we destined to proceed from the planetary level of psychic totalisation and evolutionary upsurge we are now approaching ?

"I can see three principal ones in which we see again the predictions to which we were already led by our analysis of the ideas of science and humanity. They are :

- the organisation of research,
- the concentration of research upon the subject of man, and
- the conjunction of science and religion.

These are three natural terms of one and the same progression."

The concentration of research upon the subject of man will be the basic requirement for the future teacher, for the teacher is the obvious person in the one position to be able to do the job with any degree of success and progressive constancy, if he is trained and prepared for it. Educational research must be pursued in depth if we are to be true to the inner demand which now calls to the Man of the Future, and which is an echo of what was once heard in Vedic India as through the corridors of the Greek Temples long before the time of Socrates :

MAN—Know Thyself

2. *Energy and Research*

Do we often stop to think for a moment of the proportion of human energy which today we devote to the pursuit of truth? If we glance at the percentage of a nation's revenue allotted for research to investigate clearly defined problems whose solution would be of vital consequence to the world, we see that less is provided annually for all the pure research all over the world than it costs to build *one capital ship*.

3. *Guatemala and The Will to Learn*

Guatemala's literacy campaign began in 1959. The nation, with 72 per cent of its adult population unable to read or write, is the most illiterate country in Spanish America. In 1963, more than 70,000 adults wanting to learn how to read and write attended 3,268 training centres throughout Guatemala. An indication of the difficulties they encountered is that fewer than 5,000 of them successfully completed the course, which generally takes from five to nine months. Almost all of the centres are run by volunteers, men and women—many of whom have never completed primary school.

There is a curious debate around the literacy programmes of undeveloped countries; there are those who say it is a prerequisite to meaningful social change and should be given immediate priority. Opposing this is the argument that literacy is vastly overestimated as a means of national development and that energies would best be directed elsewhere. Finally there is also a powerful group which includes many people in the State Departments of 'democratic' countries, who view literacy primarily as a dangerously volatile element extremely difficult to control, and thus, in the interest of stability, to be avoided. It is not so hard to understand, therefore why the programme has yielded such poor results in countries like Guatemala. But in spite of man, man will labour to the stars and indeed looks like reaching them in the not so far distant future. For, what he does today was echoed in the heart of man down through the ages as we can evidence in the optimism of a twelfth-century schoolmaster who wrote :

The animals express their brute creation
By head hung low and downward looking eyes;
But man holds high his head in contemplation
To show his natural kinship with the skies.
He sees the stars obey God's legislation,
And learns the laws by which mankind can rise.

We are reminded of some of the last lines in Sri Aurobindo's *The Supramental Manifestation* :

"The secret truth that emerges in Supermind has been there all the time, but now it manifests itself and the truth in things and the meaning of our existence."