

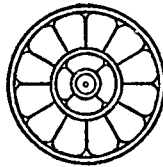
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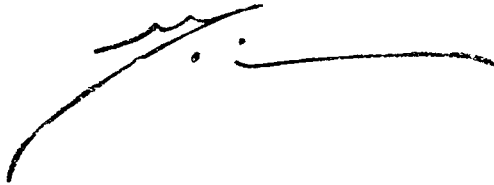


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. 3

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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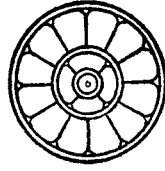
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In This material
world, for men, money
is more sacred than
the Divine's Will

~~my~~

UNPUBLISHED NOTES BY SRI AUROBINDO

(In the Calcutta journal "The New Review" of April 1943 Sri Aurobindo's book "On Quantitative Metre" was subjected to criticism by Mr. F. J. Friend-Pereira in an article entitled "Pitfalls on Parnassus". Sri Aurobindo was given a copy of the journal. Nirodbaran recently pulled it out from among Sri Aurobindo's papers and what has come to light is a series of detailed notes in Sri Aurobindo's hand in the margins—mostly numbered to correspond to the numerals he has inserted in the text. They make both lively and illuminating reading and, as Mr. Friend-Pereira passed strictures not only on Sri Aurobindo's views on quantitative prosody but also on his punctuation, English and style in some places, the rejoinders will interest the general reader no less than the literary specialist.)

PITFALLS ON PARNASSUS

SRI AUROBINDO'S NOTES

THE writer justly contends that Quantitative Verse has, hitherto, been misunderstood by English poets who have used it, because the constituent elements of such verse have not been correctly appreciated. These elements are accent, stress, and quantity. Accent is voice-weightage on a syllable: stress is voice-weightage on a one-syllable word (which may or may not be accented by itself) considered *hic et nunc* as a component part of a phrase, clause or sentence; quantity is this voice-weightage in poetry. The best (and the only true) Quantitative Verse is that in which accent, stress and quantity fall on the same syllable. English being an accentual language, poets writing in English have a natural bias towards accentual verse. The result is,

Not in my theory; stress occurs in English words of all lengths, not only in monosyllables.

This is not part of my theory, where accent is disregarded for metrical purposes (though it counts in the intonation and rhythm) except when it coincides with stress. On the other hand unstressed long syllables count as long and here

that they tend to regard quantity in verse as secondary, and by misplacing both accent and stress produce (when they venture into such fields) Quantitative Verse of unbelievable badness. This is written in a slipshod metre whose 'tread-mill movement' (p. 26) has been charged against it as an incurable defect. stress and quantity do *not* fall on the same syllable.

'A metre, (indeed), which cannot be read as normal English is read, in which light syllables are forced to carry a voice-weight which they have no strength to bear and strong stresses are compelled to efface themselves while small insignificant sounds take up their burden, is not a real and natural verse movement; it is an artificial structure which will never find an agreed place in the language.' (p.3)

Two main helps are suggested for the improvement of English Quantitative Verse, besides the (necessary) aid of 'modulation': no classical pre-conceptions of length being determined by multiple consonants after a vowel can be admitted; and the classical 'long-by-position' must find its counterpart in 'strong-by-internal-necessity' words in English. In the following lines, for instance, the value of *Come* is quantitatively different: in the first case it is long; in the second short:

- i) *Come* into the garden, Maud
- ii) *Come* out, *come* out, my
dearest dear....

All this is, assuredly, excellent in theory. But in practice, certain serious objections arise. If it be true,¹ as the author asserts that it is true, that only certain heroic themes can be treated in English hexameter (the most practised of the numerous types of Quantitative Verse), then the utility of the suggested adoption of verse based on quantity will be utility in name alone,² since the just claim of poetry at present to give not only airy nothing but everything a local habitation and a name, would be effectively quashed. If it be true, further, that because of the undactylic nature of English,³ the hexameter needs to be 'modulated' by bacchius, by lighter cretic, by the first paeon, by the choriamb or double trochee (similar variations to be used in the other quantitative metres), what remains of the fundamental metric of the original form? The verse so written would, doubtless, be something rich and strange:⁴ but would it be really hexameter,⁵ simply because it would (and then not always) have a dactyl in the 5th, and a spondee (or more likely a trochee) in the 6th? Would sapphics, with the changes advocated as a relief to monotony, remain genuine sapphics?⁶ And

1 This has nowhere been said; epic, pastoral, epistle, satire, familiar speech, poems of reflection have all been admitted,—only there must be either power or beauty.

2 This objection would arise if it were proposed to write quantitative verse *only*; that is not so.

3 The ground given is not the undactylic nature of English, but the natural tendency of English poetry to resort to modulation for the sake of freedom and variety. I have said that this device should be adopted in transferring classical metres into English, so as to create a natural English quantitative verse—not a rigid imitation of Greek and Latin models.

4 So much the better.

5 Why not? All that is necessary is that it should be a sixfoot verse with a sound and predominant dactylic basis.

6 Again, why not? The modulations are few

ionics, ionics? It would seem, then, that the learned author's scheme would amount merely to *some* sort of quantitative verse;⁷ this is native to English, as Langland, Hopkins and others have shown, and shown most successfully.

There are a number of other points, of more or less importance, to which attention must, in fairness, be drawn. The punctuation leaves something to be desired: on p. 5, line 8 from the bottom, there should be a colon or a fullstop instead of a comma; on p. 6, line 11, and p. 7, line 4, a semi-colon instead of a comma.^(a) Grammar is also defective, as in the following:

(i) '...they can seldom intervene or only if *it* is done very carefully' (p. 39) where *it* lacks a true antecedent.

(ii) 'All that is necessary is that artificial quantity...*must* be abandoned.' (p. 40) *Must* ought to be *should*.

(iii) 'A better statement may lead to a solution that *could* well be viable.' (p. 1) *May* or *might* instead of *could* would be an improvement.

(iv) On p. 2, line 13 from the bottom, 'they' lacks an antecedent, unless it be 'desire'!

(v) The order of words in 'He perpetrates frequently lines that are wholly trochaic' (p. 33) could scarcely be more un-English. *Frequently* should be the first or, preferably, the se-

and do not destroy the characteristic swing of the Sapphic verse.

7 If it is some sort of quantitative verse, rich and strange, and based on the recovery by quantity of its place in metre, that would be enough. Hopkins, I believe, wrote sprung verse—it is not entirely quantitative.

(a) No, that would disturb the connection and balance. The comma is intended to preserve the close connection of the two statements.

(i) "It" refers to the intervention; there is an unexpressed or implied antecedent. This is a liberty, but one that can be taken. Literary style can take such liberties sometimes with school-master's grammar.

(ii) "must" ought to remain "must". It is meant to indicate the nature of the necessity and its imperativeness.

(iii) No. "Could" has a different shade of meaning from "may" or "might".

(iv) Yes, there should be in the previous sentence "by many" after "vividly felt".

(v) The word can be where it is to give a certain effect.

cond word in the sentence.

(vi) What, one wonders, is meant by 'no insuperable impossibility' ? (p.40) If a thing is an impossibility there is no necessity to say that it is insuperable; if it is not insuperable, then it cannot be an impossibility. What the author meant was either 'no *apparently* insuperable impossibility' or 'no insuperable difficulty'.

(vi) On p. 30, line 3 from the bottom, 'verily evidently' is a misprint for 'very evidently'.

These are, however, flaws of little importance. More serious is the claim put forward on p.5 that Spenser, Tennyson and Swinburne were great geniuses. It would be nearer the truth to say that they were poets whose technical ability was considerable. And in a treatise on metre, one hardly expects to find the following :

(i) 'The way was long, the wind was cold'⁸ is referred to as iambic *pentameter* ! (p. 7)

(ii) We are told (p. 19) that the correct way to read the first line of the *Aeneid* is to place a stress on⁹ *que*.

(iii) In a detailed scanning of the speech beginning 'The lunatic, the lover and the poet' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of the lines is quoted as

'And as imagination bodies forth.' In all the editions of Shakespeare your reviewer has consulted, this line runs

(vi) "insuperable impossibility" gives a single idea, something that is impossible and therefore insuperable; it is not meant that there are impossibilities that are not insuperable.

New and strange opinions ! "My opinion" would be preferable to "the truth".

8 The "pentameter" is evidently a slip of the pen; it should be "iambic verse".

9 That is obviously a misprint, quite as obvious as the "verily evidently". The stress mark should be omitted.

‘And, as imagination bodies forth.’ In the second form, it is clear that *And*, followed by a comma, must be¹⁰ stressed : the line then has 5 stresses; therefore is regular. But its irregularity (without the comma and hence with only 4 stresses) is pointed out by our author. (p.9)

(iv) On p. 15, we find the following accentuations :¹¹

narrative; contemplative, incarnate, swift, abstract.

These are wrong; except the last, if it is a verb.

Moreover, when producing examples from prose to show that accent, stress and quantity do fall on the same syllables, and that therefore English ‘preserves the natural sound values’, (p.22), it might appear¹² to some readers that the author is out-Jourdaining Monsieur Jourdain. Nor is he quite certain whether poetic composition is¹³ conscious or unconscious (p. 27 and ff.) and he sometimes mars the utility¹³ of his criticism by taking refuge in such phrases as ‘the rhythmic rendering of significance’ (p. 38) and ‘the native utterance of things seen’ which ‘conveys by significant sound its natural atmosphere.’ (p. 10) The book is intended to show the possibility of writing in a metre that will ‘read as if it were a born English rhythm, not a naturalised alien.’ (p. 40) The words, that give the clue to the result, are, one feels, the words

10 Even with the comma (is it Shakespeare’s ?) it is an accentual inflexion that I should put on “And” not a stress.

11 The signs do not indicate accentuations, but natural long quantities. Accentually these “a”s are short because unaccented, but in quantitative reckoning they should recover their native value. The second “a” in “abstract” is a short vowel, but the 4 consonants* of the syllable can be taken as giving it quantitative force.

12 Why ? The idea that English prose is capable of scansion is not at all new or absurd.

13 Psychologically it is both, or let us say, partly conscious and partly subconscious.

14 Why ? These are not phrases in which I took refuge, but express a recognised fact, both psychological and practical, of poetic technique. Is it denied that either in music or word-music sound can convey significance or reproduce the natural atmosphere of a thing seen ? This is a constant experience of a sensitive reader of poetry.

* The 4 consonants are *tr* and *ct*, the word being syllabically divisible into “abs” and “tract”.—Editor

as *if*.¹⁵ Quantitative Verse, except what is written in Sprung Rhythm, will always masquerade in English as *if it* were in everyday garb : it will always be meretricious.

Is this book, then, one of which 'love's labour's lost' must be said ? By no means. There is in it a great deal of illuminating criticism on Longfellow, Clough and Kingsley. There are some extremely wise remarks on poetry, of which these are samples :

'It is evident that a crowding or sparseness of consonants will make a great difference to the total rhythm, it will produce a greater or less heaviness or lightness; but that is a rhythmic effect quite distinct from any imperative influence on the metre.' (p.20)

'A great deal of free verse is nothing but prose cut up into lines to make it look like verse.' (p. 28)

And one must admire the generous 'expense of spirit' that went to the writing of *On Quantitative Metre*, and acknowledge that Sri Aurobindo's poems are far more than mere illustrations of a poetic theory.

15 "As if" here refers to the fact that the hexameter is in origin an importation from Greek and Latin, but it must not read as such, it must not sound like a naturalised alien music; it must have a native English sound and for that it must follow the native rhythm of the English tongue. If it sounds "meretricious", the condition has not been satisfied. "As if" does not mean that it must be a false metre pretending to be a native one. The hexameter has not to pretend to be in everyday garb, for it is admittedly a new dress, but it has to fit perfectly the body of the English language. It may use the Sprung Rhythm which is also not an everyday garb, but a dress novel, reinvented and artistically fashioned. It seems to me that "meretricious" here means simply new and unfamiliar and therefore felt by the conservative mind to be foreign and artificial, just as blank verse first sounds when it is first brought into a language accustomed to rhymes; after a while it becomes quite natural, native, to the manner born—as has happened in French, in Bengali and other tongues.

In spite of being written in a false and artificial rhythm ? Queer !

CALCUTTA

F. J. FRIEND-PEREIRA

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 10, 1940

N : There is a letter from Dr. Manilal.

SRI AUROBINDO : I see. What does he write ?

N : He says : “*The Life Divine* must now be in the press. So Sri Aurobindo must be having time to do the exercise I have recommended.”

SRI AUROBINDO : Which exercise ?

N : Hanging the leg from above the knee-joint.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh! But my *Life Divine* is still hanging. I have two chapters still to labour at.

N : There's another letter—from Anilbaran—regarding the people of the Gita Prachar Party who are coming to visit the Ashram. Somebody wants you to answer the question : “Is there any effect of repeating a sacred Name and doing *kirtan* even unconsciously or unwillingly ?” Tulsidas says there is.

SRI AUROBINDO : If it had been so easy, it would have been delightful.

Here we all cited stories in support of Tulsidas. S narrated Ajamil's story.

N : What is the upshot then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It all depends on the psychic being. If the psychic being is touched and wakens and throws its influence on the other parts, then the Name-repeating will have effect.

C : Then mechanical repetition has no effect ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If somehow it touches the psychic being, yes.

N : In *kirtan*, people easily go into *dasā* (a kind of trance).

SRI AUROBINDO : There are other effects too—sometimes undesirable sexual ones. Very often the vital being, instead of the psychic, is roused.

EVENING

P : Some people conjecture that Hore-Belisha has resigned because of his difference with the Generals.

SRI AUROBINDO : But isn't it the War Ministry that directs the War policy ?

P : Lloyd George in his Memoirs has severely criticised the military technicians. He says that the Generals didn't want to attack Germany from the South because it wasn't the right technique.

SRI AUROBINDO : In the last war the Generals didn't come up to much. Only Foch and Pétain stood out. Napoleon had against him all the technician Generals of Europe. That is why he could defeat them all.

N : Have you seen the latest *New Statesman and Nation* ? John Mair condemns Huxley's *After Many a Summer* as a witty parody thrown into philosophical form.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then the criticism is not worse than Anthony West's. He doesn't admit even the wit. These people seem to dislike the present famous authors. Forster also, they say, is philosophical.

N : Like Tagore, they don't seem to like intellectual novels; but Tagore's own novels are intellectual too.

SRI AUROBINDO : Do people want stupid rather than intellectual novels to be written ?

P : Tagore in his novels analyses in detail the various psychologies which common people can't understand. Sarat Chatterji can be said to be a non-intellectual writer.

N : Yes, except for the *Shesh Prashna* (*The Last Question*)

SRI AUROBINDO : His last novel ?

N : Yes; this book is seen differently by two parties. One condemns it, the other praises it.

P : So far as I have read it, it doesn't appear to be very intellectual.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is not much of a thinker.

N : He seems to have pleaded the cause of Western Civilisation and made the arguments against it very weak. For instance, his heroine doesn't find anything grand in the conception behind the Taj Mahal.

SRI AUROBINDO : What is Western about this attitude of the heroine ? If there is one thing the Europeans like in India, it is the Taj.

N : I don't mean the architectural beauty. What the heroine ridicules is the idea of immortal love.

SRI AUROBINDO : Even from that point of view, the Europeans like it. Love has a great place in their life.

N : But love, in the sense of being faithful to one person alone, even if that person is dead—it is this that the heroine can't bear. Isn't this a European attitude ?

P : Sarat Chatterji advocates free marriage or no marriage. He is for free love, as far as I can understand.

SRI AUROBINDO : But why is free love European ? In Europe no one advocates such an idea except a few intellectuals. If you want to abolish the marriage system, then the Europeans will raise a hue and cry.

JANUARY 11, 1940

EVENING

P : One of the members of the Gita Prachar Party is a Sankarite. He asked me why we don't recognise Sankara's philosophy. I told him, "We recognise it but we also hold that it is not the only truth. There are other aspects of the Truth." He says, "Your Yoga is of surrender. Is surrender a *bhāva* (feeling) or a *kriya* (action) ?"

SRI AUROBINDO : You should have said, "It is *bhāva* and *kriya* and everything else."

P : He says there can't be *bhāva* without *bhāvuka*, or *kriya* without *kartā* (doer). So perhaps it is *bodha* (understanding). I said there can't be *bodha* without *bodhaka*.

SRI AUROBINDO : And there can't be surrender without a surrenderer.

P : I told him not to try to understand what this or that is, but to try to feel something here.

JANUARY 12, 1940

N. read out Nolini Sen's letter to Sri Aurobindo, wherein he has written that he can't remember anything he reads, etc. He is very elated to hear that Guru has called him an intellectual. He doesn't know how he is one.

SRI AUROBINDO : I have not used the word in the sense of intellectuality, neither have I made that statement by seeing his translation of his wife's letter. 'Intellectual' does not mean that one should be able to remember things. He is taking it in the sense of being educated. Nor have I used it in the sense of "clear mind".

N : Nishikanta says he has changed the rhythm of his poem and avoided the compound words as far as possible. I don't know who told him about it.

SRI AUROBINDO : He had used too many compounds making it appear like Sanskrit. (*To P.*) What is the name of that Indian whom Raman mentions in his address ?"

S : It is Dr. Krishna perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO : Perhaps. I don't remember the name. Raman mentions him as the first to experiment with the Cavendish Cyclotron.

P : Yes, it is he. He is a Dr. of Science of Madras University and was sent by Raman to England. There is a lot of research now going on in India; of course there is nothing epoch-making. In some places, they are going only into details. In the Punjab they are working on solubility of dyes.

SRI AUROBINDO : They can make some research on the beard too; what are the different varieties and colours and what makes it long or short, etc. or they may try to find out what is the cause of N's baldness. (*Laughter*).

N : The cause won't do.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? One must know the cause first.

N : Oh, they have found out many causes but no cure. That is what is wanted and I don't think they will find out any cure.

S : I read the story of a vendor of patent drugs on baldness. Somebody asked him, "Why then are you bald ?" He replied, "My baldness is to show the ladies how to get rid of the hair which they don't want because of short sleeves." (*Laughter*)

P : It seems Mahadev Desai has asked for a copy of *The Life Divine*.

N : For Gandhi ?

P : No, for himself. He doesn't think that in the strict sense Gandhi has any spiritual experience or knowledge. Desai has his own Guru.

SRI AUROBINDO : One won't get anything spiritual unless one recognises that one's ideas are only ideas.

EVENING

P : Nolini had a strange experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : What was it ?

P : D. brought a retired Bengali judge to introduce him to Nolini. The judge is one of the Gita Prachar Party. The man looked at Nolini for an instant and then suddenly embraced and kissed him; then said, "I have read your writings and I like them very much." Nolini was so surprised.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nolini didn't return the kiss ? He should have returned the compliment. (*Laughter*)

N : If X. were paid a compliment like that for his writings, he would be in ecstasy.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nolini could have said, "I am flattered by your reading my books."

N : There is again another hitch in Bengal between Congress and Sarat Bose over Bengal Congress Parliamentary fund. Rajendra Prasad has asked Bose to hand over the fund to the Congress Parliamentary Committee and to have the accounts audited by some auditing company employed by Rajendra Prasad. Bose takes it as an insult and as loss of confidence in him. He wants to know why they have suddenly taken that step.

SRI AUROBINDO : But, I suppose, Congress can do that because the money really belongs to their fund. They don't suspect that Bose will swallow that money. He has plenty himself.

N : No, they don't suspect that. I think they fear that Bengal Congress Committee may try to get that money. It has already passed such a resolution and Rajendra

Prasad has especially asked Bose not to hand over that money to Bengal Congress Committee. In any case, Bose is hurt because he takes it personally as lack of confidence in himself and especially now when they want to have the accounts audited.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? Congress regularly gets all the accounts of its branches checked by its auditors. Accounts have to be checked. That is the only way to keep the politicians straight.

N : Bose's point is that it is a method suddenly adopted by the President and it discredits the regular auditors of the Bengal Congress Committee and the whole thing has been done without telling him anything first.

SRI AUROBINDO : What is there to mind about it ? I suppose the Working Committee has the power to do such things. These people mix up social questions with politics.

P : I don't know why he should object to show the accounts. If you are sincere, the accounts will prove that. That was one strong point of Vallabhbhai. Whenever his enemies asked him to show the accounts, he was always ready.

SRI AUROBINDO : There has been a lot of misappropriation of money. A strong check is absolutely necessary. If Congress had not exercised it, its funds would have been in a much sorrier state.

NIRODBARAN

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

SURRENDER—WILL—ASPIRATION

Q : You have asked : "How can you surrender to the psychic if you are not conscious of its action ?" Can't I do it in the same way as to the Force above ? I am not conscious of the action of the Force.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is then a *saṅkalpa* of surrender. But the surrender must be to the Mother—not even to the Force, but to the Mother herself. 4-10-1936

Q : By the "Force" I mean your Force. But how shall I surrender to the psychic and to the Force simultaneously ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no need of all this complication. If the psychic manifests, it will not ask you to surrender to it, but to surrender to the Mother. 4-10-1936

There is no such thing as an inert passive will. Will is dynamic in its nature. Even if it does not struggle or endeavour its very presence is dynamic and acts dynamically on the resistance. What you are speaking of is a passive wish—I would like it to be like that, I want it to be like that. That is not will. 17-11-1936

Q : I miss badly the requisite energy to stand up against the opposite forces. Where lies my difficulty ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In the indolence of the will which does not want to make a sustained effort for a long period. It is like a person who moves slightly half a leg for a second and then wonders why he is not already a hundred miles away at the goal after making such a gigantic effort. 19-12-1936

You cannot expect a persistent inertia like that to disappear in three days because you made some kind of a beginning of effort to resist it. 19-12-1936

Q : You wrote, "One need not 'feel' a Force in order to use the will." By "feel" I meant there should be at least some force or energy to make the will work.

SRI AUROBINDO : The will can make itself work—it is in its own nature a force or energy. 11-1-1937

K : I have mentioned several methods available to me for dealing with my human nature. Which of them do you find best for me ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Whatever method is used, persistence and perseverance are essential. For whatever method is used, the complexity of the natural resistance will be there to combat it. 12-2-1937

If you are surrendered only in the higher consciousness, with no peace or purity in the lower, certainly that is not enough and you have to aspire for the peace and purity everywhere. 1-11-1936

If there is any identification with the vital demands or outcries, that necessarily diminishes the surrender for the time. 26-5-1936

The Force also produces no definite and lasting fruit unless there is the will and the resolution to advance in the sadhaks. 14-11-1936

One feels the Force only when one is in conscious contact with it. 15-11-1936

If there is a constant use of the will the rest of the being learns however slowly to obey the will and then the actions become in conformity with the will and not with the vital impulses and desires. As for the rest (the feelings and desires etc. themselves) if they are not indulged in action or imagination and not supported by the will, if they are merely looked at and rejected when they come, then after some struggle they begin to lose their force and dwindle away. 15-2-1937

Q : You wrote, "The helplessness is there because of not using the will. You can use the will obstinately enough when you want to satisfy a desire." It is true. But the difficulty is: I am not aware of using the will consciously while satisfying a desire. Would you kindly explain to me how to use it? If the process is known, I can employ it to overcome the wrong movements of the sadhana instead of satisfying desires.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no process. The will acts of itself when the mind and vital agree as in the case of a desire. If the desire is not satisfied, it goes on hammering, trying to get it, insisting on it, repeating the demand, making use of this person or that person, this device or that device, getting the mind to support it with reasons, representing it as a need that must be satisfied etc. etc. till the desire is satisfied. All that is the evidence of a will in action. When you have to use the will for the sadhana, you have not the same persistence, the mind finds reasons for not getting on with the effort, as soon as the difficulty becomes strong it is dropped, there is no continuity, no keeping of the will fixed on its object. 6-3-1937

Will is will whether it is calm or restless, whether it acts in a Yogic or unYogic way, for a Yogic or an unYogic object. Do you think Napoleon and Caesar had no will or that they were Yogis? You have strange ideas about things. You might just as well say that memory is memory only when it remembers the Divine and it is not memory when it remembers other things. 6-3-1937

There can be no persistence or insistence without will. 7-3-1937

Q : What is the will ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The energy which dictates the action or prevents a wrong action is the Will. 22-4-1937

Q : By energy is meant the life-force. If energy is the will why do we sometimes find the will without any power or energy ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Energy is energy, it is not the life-force.

I have not said that "energy is the Will." There is a whole qualifying clause there which you treat as if it were meaningless nonsense. 24-4-1937

It simply means that your will is weak and not a true will. Queer kind of will ! Perhaps it is like a motor car that won't go and you have to push from behind.

23-4-1937

I suppose it must be because you have not been in the habit of using the will to compel the other parts of the nature—so when you want it done, they refuse to obey a control to which they are not accustomed and it also has not any habitual hold upon them.

The will is a part of the consciousness and ought to be in human beings the chief agent in controlling the activities of the nature. 24-4-1937

The higher action does not preclude a use of the will—will is an element of the higher action. 24-4-1937

Q : Consciously I have not tried to develop either the consciousness or the will. If there was any particular leaning, it was, I think, towards the will.

SRI AUROBINDO : All the time when the sadhana in you was really active, the whole stress was on the consciousness not on the will. It is only recently you are giving more attention to the will. 3-5-1937

Peace is not a necessary precondition for the action of the will. When the being is troubled, it is often the business of the will to impose quiet on it. 21-3-1937

Is the will you are using all-powerful ? Does it succeed inevitably always and produce infallible effects ?

The mere fact that it is over the head does not mean that it is from the Atman : the mental being can rise there also, if the mind enlarges itself. 1-4-1937

From NAGIN DOSHI

SRI AUROBINDO, THE POET OF THE NEW AGE*

THE concept of the poetry of the future has no clear definition to the modern mind : it is something vague or intangible, perhaps something impossible to realise. It has no vision or direct perception of that great new truth of poetic utterance which cannot be made manifest by artificial effort but needs the calling down of a larger force of inspiration, a wider flood of poetic impulse. In reality, the poetry of the future embodies not only something definite that evolves, but something that is a truth of the spirit and reveals itself more and more in words and poetic speech. It is a vision. It is a manifestation of the deepest spiritual voice, the highest experience of Man and Nature and God. Thus the poet of the future would not be a juggler of words or of fancy phrases, who aims to give a start or a shock, but must be a seer, who sees the inner centre of events, things, their causes, their development, the vast course of the world-drama; a poet who is conscious of the words and their full psychological import and function, and capable of exploiting to the full their tonal qualities that echo the deeper, higher and wider spiritual vibrations; and lastly a Yogi who has seen and experienced all facets of cosmic and individual life, soul and mind. Also he must be conscious of the national trend of the language and its evolution and also conscious of its shortcomings and advantages, together with his own capacity, his position in the line and tradition of the poets. To sum up, the poetry of the future must solve "a problem new to the art of poetic speech, an utterance of the deepest soul of man and of the universal spirit in things, not only with another and a more complete vision, but in the very inmost language of the self-experience of the soul and the sight of the spiritual mind" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p. 398).

If these are our tenets, we shall find no poet fulfilling the conditions except at rare elevated moments. These elevated moments are wonders and high-water marks, but cannot be called the native conditions of the new age of poetry. They reveal the promise, but not the fulfilment in an actuality. At the same time, the heightening, deepening and broadening of the poetic expression and quality from Shakespeare to Tagore shows the coming of a new subjective age of poetry. We see the intensification of vision, of creative impulse, with occasional lapses, and hard outer objectivity yielding place to the subjective, life being replaced by the reason and reason in its turn being replaced by an intuitional outburst, first in life, then in mind, preparing the soul to be expressed in transparent clarity. The present shows a blind quest to break through the barriers of phenomenal existence into dream-states, or the dark or twilight worlds of half-truths and semblances. The trend is towards the occult; but the result is often bizarre, a meaningless chaos which is both incomprehensible and nonsensical.

* A speech delivered at the First Annual Conference of the New Age Association on 6 September 1964.

We cannot trace the thought-content, nor follow the symbolic ideation. There has been a series of revolts against the established tradition, which seem to come not for any greater creativity but only for the fun of breaking the tradition, or to give a shock, or even if the impulse for a larger creation is there, it is a veiled attempt, an unconscious quest. Such revolts have that occurred several times since the Victorian era, did not, however, fulfil the claim or further the cause of poetic growth. Hopkins and Eliot and others have given us an intellectual mode, symbols, ugly realism and have clarified their new standpoints but in themselves their own creations have been no guiding posts or a true revelatory poetry. Merely experimenting with new forms or quaint abstractions does not in itself start a new age. A deeper change is needed without lessening the quality, the tone, the creative intensity, beauty and splendour that are essential to poetry. Sri Aurobindo comes as the culmination of this hectic age, not by a blind revolt against any established authority, but by transcendence of the limitations and perversions of the materialistic era. He has also defined for us the evolutionary nature of poetry and has shown how the poetry of tomorrow is an inevitable process. He has analysed the nature of poetry, the spirit of form and substance, the source of poetic truth, the rhythm, the vision and the delight and beauty of poetic creation. But he is no mere arm-chair critic, for he himself has written and made manifest what he has defined earlier as the essence of poetics and poetic creation.

There is another factor: the factor of time. So long the spirit was veiled behind the shroud of materiality, vitality or mental formation. Certain preparations were necessary before it could emerge as the guiding principle. The Elizabethan age was capable of manifesting the vital exuberance, the vital intuition and the splendid fling of the life-force. The Miltonic era saw the curbing of this exuberance by the rational spirit. The Romantic age saw the emergence of the mental intuition and by its advent prepared for the age of the Spirit. For Reason by now had exhausted its capacity to give us something new and the poetical revolts were the outer signs of this exhaustion of the spirit of Reason. The present age is an age of passing values, of marking time when the emergence of the Spirit is imminent and man is not awakened enough or fully prepared to be able to answer to its full impetus. Sri Aurobindo here comes as the pioneer of a new age and makes possible the full descent of the Spirit in poetry. He is not an iconoclast, or a builder on the ruins of the past; rather he is a new creator who has taken a new leap into the kingdom of the Spirit. But he is not an eclectic; his synthesis surpasses the crude assembling of outer elements and takes into account all that was true of the past, ingathering all that could live or could grow and evolve. He does not wholly discard old forms or modes. He does not deliberately cast off old values. But these become reborn, renewed by his touch. At the same time he has thrown overboard the Victorian falsities, the Romantic exaggerations, the violences of the Elizabethans and the uglinesses of contemporary poetry. What is true lives in his consciousness and his vision. He refuses to descend to the gross objective plane; rather all things appear in a new light in his vision and his all-embracing consciousness.

The truth in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is not the fancy of the ideal dreamer nor the rational truth of the philosopher, nor the relative or experimental truth of the scientist; it is the Truth of the Eternal, the Creatrix of beauty, inspiration and delight. It is not limited by the factors of circumstances or conditioned by the divisions of human ignorance. From this height all is plenitude, harmony and although having many facets, all is a supreme unity. Here is a vision of supreme unity as revealed in *Savitri* :

She was Time and the dreams of God in Time;
 She was Space and the wideness of his days.
 From this she rose where Time and Space were not;
 The superconscient was her native air,
 Infinity was her movement's natural space;
 Eternity looked out from her on Time.

(*Savitri*, Book VII, Canto VII, p. 193.)

Sri Aurobindo does not sidetrack or attempt to veil the truth. The Sun of Spirit's Truth shines out clear in him. There is a vastness in his vision, a height in his experience, a depth in his sense of identity :

In the realms of the immortal Supermind
 Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
 Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
 In the stark structure of material form,
 Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
 Is Nature and the common law of things.

(*Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV, pp. 288-89.)

He informs the soul with the truth, the truth of all existence, the beauty of creation, the delight to be and the inspiration that is the guide of man's spiritual ascent. Here is no ethical aim; no mental attempt at a religious teaching or an abstraction that only confounds but never reveals. He does not use this great light for any lesser motives of creating a poem describing a passing event. On the contrary he asks this Sun to illumine his path in the manifestation of a divine drama of God's incarnation. A greatest light is used for a greatest aim.

Not only truth, but Life is also the aim of Sri Aurobindo's poetic creation. The life of the senses of Shakespeare, the life of the realist, the life of the philosopher or the scientist are in reality the shadows of this great source. Hence, instead of going to the lesser point, he goes to the source, the rhythmic voice of life, which is not partial or one-sided, but which is the self of things; as here :

A wide wave of movement stirred all the dim globe in each glad and dreaming fold;
 Life was cast into grandeur, ocean hands took the wheels of Time.

(*More Poems*, p. 43.)

Or,

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre !
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme;
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time.

(*Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. II, p. 302.)

He is conscious of the force, the ecstasy, the thrill of creative beauty; it moves like vast torrents, luminous like the divine Desire. This Life is at the root of his poems. For in spite of his rising to great ethereal heights, he never loses touch with life as the centre of his poetical creation. Not the life of passions or revolts, or harsh disfiguring desires, but life that is the "Mystic Miracle, daughter of Delight" and whose spans are the radius of eternity. Thus when he speaks of Nature, we feel a larger breath behind. Even when describing outer nature, he does not lose contact with this everlasting reality; as here :

A grandiose silence wrapped the regal day.
 The months had fed the passion of the sun
 And now his burning breath assailed the soil.
 The tiger heats prowled through the fainting earth;
 All was licked up as if by a lolling tongue.
 The spring winds failed; the sky was set like bronze.

(*Savitri*, Book IV, Canto IV, p. 36.)

He stands behind Nature, at the same time he is one with its breath. This dual movement of aloofness and identification gives the needed vision and overwhelming reality. He sees the ways of Nature not as a blind element, but as a god, for he can say :

I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
 Time is my drama or my pageant dream.

(*Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. II, p. 297.)

Life itself is not complete without the soul, the soul of delight that sees, feels and hears all things as the waves of beauty, the waves of utter sweetness. Life gives power, but soul lends a deeper secrecy of joy, of love, of inner essence that upholds all existence. Sri Aurobindo, as the poet of the future, does not base his poetical creation on mind or the senses although all have a place in his creation. The soul alone has access to the core of all human sentiments, all values, all living essences of nature and life, of reason and moods, of flux and status. It is not like the mind an impartial gazer or like life a violent wave of changing moods or dreams; rather it can enter into the very centre of things and, identified with the stress and surge, taste the 'Rasa' of movement and creation. But this identification is not a losing of its essential character of inner

poise. In whatever it touches, it discovers sweetness, intensity, delight and beauty; in all it finds the heavenly manna of divine enjoyment—be it in creation or in repose, be it in power or in love, be it in silence or in the titanic whirl of forces. All wear different masks of the one imperishable Ananda. The soul alone has the key to plenitude and harmony. Sri Aurobindo's creation, having the soul as the base of poetry, is always beautiful, and radiates undiminished felicity. Here is a sweep :

Heard the symphonies old of the ocean recalling the ages
Lost and dead from its marches salt and unharvested furrows,
Felt in pregnant hour the unborn hearts of the future. (*Iliad*.)

We hear the soul revel in the grandeur and roll of the Hellenic epic. Or take :

Nothing is hid from my burning heart;
My mind is shoreless and still;
My song is rapture's mystic art,
My flight immortal will. (*Poems Past and Present* p. 4.)

In this we witness the soul becoming the luminous instrument of the Divine. Mark the note of felicity running through the lines like a hidden stream. For in verity the soul is the instrument of the Divine, the Invisible Guide, it is the tool of the imperishable light. It was :

Infinite, coeval with the mind of God,
It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
A seed from which the Eternal is new-born,
A seed that cancels death in mortal things. (*Savitri*.)

And this soul went out to create not by mind or life or sense or outer physical impetus, but by the inner need of creation. But in the process it was aided and illumined by the Sun of Truth.

Sri Aurobindo reveals the emergence of the Spirit in all things in his poetry. This is the fundamental vision. We see, in other poets elements like destiny, fatalism, materialism or poetic justice that run like a subtle undertone in their work. But Sri Aurobindo is above all these lesser modes; instead he goes to the Spirit that is at the base of all things and, by evolutionary stages, is becoming more and more manifest. All matter, life and mind, nature and existence are expressions, modes, articulations of the Spirit. This is not a mere philosophical concept. This is an authentic experience and he makes poetry the vehicle of this experience :

A spirit dreamed in the crude cosmic whirl,
Mind flowed unknowing in the sap of life

And Matter's breasts suckled the divine Idea.
 A miracle of the Absolute was born,
 Infinity put on a finite soul,
 All ocean lived within a wandering drop,
 A time-made body housed the Illimitable.
 To live this Mystery out our souls came here.

(*Savitri*, Book II, Canto I, p. 93.)

On the background of the Spirit all assume a different turn, evolution appears as a vast godward unveiling instead of a chance occurrence. Man is seen as a living tool of the Spirit, long unconscious of his destiny. The Spirit is infinite :

Out of the still Immensity all came !
 These million universes were to it
 The poor light-bubbles of the trivial game,
 A fragile glimmer in the Infinite. (*More Poems*, p. 73.)

Also it is infinitesimal :

A tiny plasm on a little globe
 In the small system of a dwarflike sun,
 A little life wearing the flesh for robe,
 A little mind winged through wide space to run !

It lived, it knew, it saw its self sublime,
 Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time. (*More Poems*, p. 73.)

Sri Aurobindo reveals the many facets of the Spirit, its various modes of expression. In fact, in terms of the Spirit all things arrive at a sure coherence, a sure basis, an everlasting meaning.

How does this Spirit express itself? A novel form, a mere new vehicle—is it sufficient to express the Spirit ? The form does not produce the Spirit. It is the Spirit that conceives the form to be. It is the substance behind the breath underlying the outer measure of the verse that is all-important. If the language is ready, if the recipient instrument is plastic enough, living enough, it can sculpture its own form. But as a rule there is no fixed way of its working, for the Spirit being infinite can create infinite forms, according to the manifesting conditions. In Sri Aurobindo the lyric becomes an occasion for unveiling something occult, something true, something of the eternal fragment, the infinite movement, the eternal moment. The epic is not a mere narrative of the outer clash of powers, movements or circumstances but “a more and more subtle and variable inwardness and a greater fusion and living identity of soul motive, indicative idea, suggestive description and intensely significant speech and action.”

(*The Future Poetry*). Equally too, his dramas show not outer actions, characters or passions; these are only webs, the fashioning moulds for the revelation of the soul and its development instead of Karma, fate and life being the determinant entities. He goes behind and beyond life and becomings and interprets life and deeds, passions and growths in terms of soul's flowering. Thus he shows what forms and its possibilities are there for the future. To fulfil not in the ways of outer Nature but in the movement of highest possibility in man, his divine outcome—that is the goal, that is the immortal culmination.

Words themselves are to him messengers from the heart of the unknown. They are the seeds that are capable of awaking infinite resonances, echoes and vibrations of the Spirit, the hidden nature of things. Born in the highest self of delight, they come like flame-waves, radiant with intuitive gleams or the maskless illuminations of the overhead planes, making utterances the vehicles of lasting truth, beauty, and delight. So long we have had flashes of this utterance in English. The Vedic and Upanishadic lore are replete with this Mantric chant. It was for Sri Aurobindo to bring down this Mantric roll into English by exploiting to the full the psychological potentialities of the language, discovering its hidden sound-values, sound-significances and its soul of sound. The word is not a casual instrument of expression. Rather it has deeper roots, deeper possibilities, deeper truths of which our material nature is unaware. It is not only power, it is the ray of the Sun, the OM. If one can attune oneself to this sphere of consciousness, words can reveal immense possibilities, untold suggestions and untraced significances. Consider the lines :

Assailing in front, oppressing from above,
A concrete mass of conscious power, he bore
The tyranny of her divine desire. (*Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV, p. 293.)

Mark the roll of vowels, intercepted by a few hard consonants giving the lines a sublime power and endless suggestion. The significance of the words, their tonal value, have another intensity, another greatness and majesty. Or read how the Spirit

In its endless moment saw the ages pass.
All still was in the silence of the gods.
The prophet moment covered limitless space....
Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

(*Savitri*, Book XI, Canto I, pp. 334.)

Again—now about Nature :

Her gulfs stood nude, her far transcendences
Flamed in transparencies of crowded light.

(*Savitri*, Book I, Canto V, p. 81.)

We see the words are not used carelessly or with facile abandon; rather they become living agents, bearers of intuition and revelation. They open secret doors, usher undivined planes; they are the instruments of the Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo as the poet of the future gives us a prophetic vision of the coming age. This prophetic vision is not a mere Utopia, a dream dreamt by some escapist philosopher. It is the vision of a poet, a Yogi and a seer. And poetry becomes to him a radiant vehicle to express this vision, this experience. As the leader of evolution,

He sails through life and death and other life,
 He travels on through waking and through sleep.
 A power is on him from her occult force,
 That ties him to his own creation's fate,
 And never can the mighty traveller rest,
 And never can the mystic voyage cease,
 Till the nescient dusk is lifted from man's soul
 And the morns of God have overtaken his night.

(*Savitri*, Book I, Canto IV, p. 66.)

This is the vision, the experience and the truth behind his poetry. These mark the new age, the coming of a new consciousness whose first impact is manifest in his poetry.

ROMEN

ROMANTIC MELANCHOLY AND EXISTENTIALIST ANGUISH

(A LETTER)

If I were a historian of literary thought I should call your letter a connecting-link of tendencies between some moods of the nineteenth century and some complexes of the twentieth. In terms of colour, it is a creamy grey of uncertain aestheticism, joining the poetic pallors of those days to the philosophic blacknesses of our own. In terms of shape, it is a bridge between romantic melancholy and existentialist anguish—shall we say, a Bridge of Sighs, recalling those lines of Byron's :

I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand...?

Well, the word "palace" may seem odd as a description of the romantic melancholy. But a little consideration will resolve the paradox. For, this melancholy was something rich and splendid, a mood in which the poets luxuriated and which they exhibited to the world in a vivid grandiose form. When we speak of its pallors we at once think of the pale magnificence of marble. Indeed it stands before us like a palace.

The word "prison" describes the existentialist anguish very well. The Romantics were strangely happy in their unhappiness, the Existentialists writhe and quiver even in their pleasures. They do not—like Byron—trail all over Europe the pageant of a bleeding heart; they concentrate their bile, they gather their bitterness into intense packets and feel that their souls are caught in a severe constriction, pressed into a lightless prison. The Romantics lived in the presence of a supernal Mystery, in comparison to which this known world was a sphere of imperfection and sorrow. With their very tears went the blur of a Beyond that was all loveliness. In the eyes of the Existentialists there is no burning secret except of an internal fever. No beautiful Beyond beckons to them across the desert here : they live in the presence of no ineffable dream, they live in a sharp realisation that there can never be such a dream. Not a wonderful presence but a terrible absence haunts their yearning eyes. Man is for them dreadfully alone, unaccompanied by any God : he is locked within his own fearful loneliness and a mass of men is but a multiplicity of small solitudes and not a largeness in which the individual finds release. In fact, Sartre, the "prophet" of Existentialism says : "Hell is other people."

The Romantics also shunned "other people" at times; but when they withdrew into themselves they felt the friendship of the infinite Spirit—a friendship which did not transfigure their own world, as it would a true mystic's, but which gave them a spacious imaginative escape. The Existentialists meet with nothing except an abyss

when they are withdrawn from other people, for the most horrible fact, the deepest tragedy, for them is that in place of God they see a *néant*, a void, a nothing. Here they differ from the Dialectical Materialists who dispense with God because they feel no need for Him : God's "non-existence" is a matter of indifference to them. Not so to the Existentialists. They agonise under that "non-existence", that "absence" : they are people to whom it is a crucial experience whether God exists or not. In this the existentialist Man is the Man of Pascal, who is profoundly concerned about God. Only, this Man is the Pascalian Man inverted—he is religiously vibrant with God's devastating disappearance from his consciousness. That is one of the reasons why Sartre, for all his regrettable co-operation with the Marxists, can never be a follower of the philosophy of Marx or be psychologically in tune with Soviet Russia. A sociological delusion makes him join hands with the French Communists. (On a less intellectual plane I suppose it is the same delusion that led an extreme individualist and ultra-modern painter like Picasso to participate in the bogus peace-campaign sponsored by Stalin.)

The Romantics, of course, are doubly removed from the Dialectical Materialists. But we are not here concerned with their difference from the spawn of Marx. We are concerned with their difference from the brood of Sartre. Apart from the question of God's presence or absence, the solitude of the Romantics is never doomed to be so stark, so absolute, as that of the Existentialists. For, they believed in the old proverb that two is company and, while shunning the crowd, they hungered for the one beloved, representing on earth the Eternal Beauty. To quote Byron again :

Oh that the desert were my dwelling place,
 With one fair spirit for my minister,
 That I might all forget the human race
 And, hating no one, love but only her !

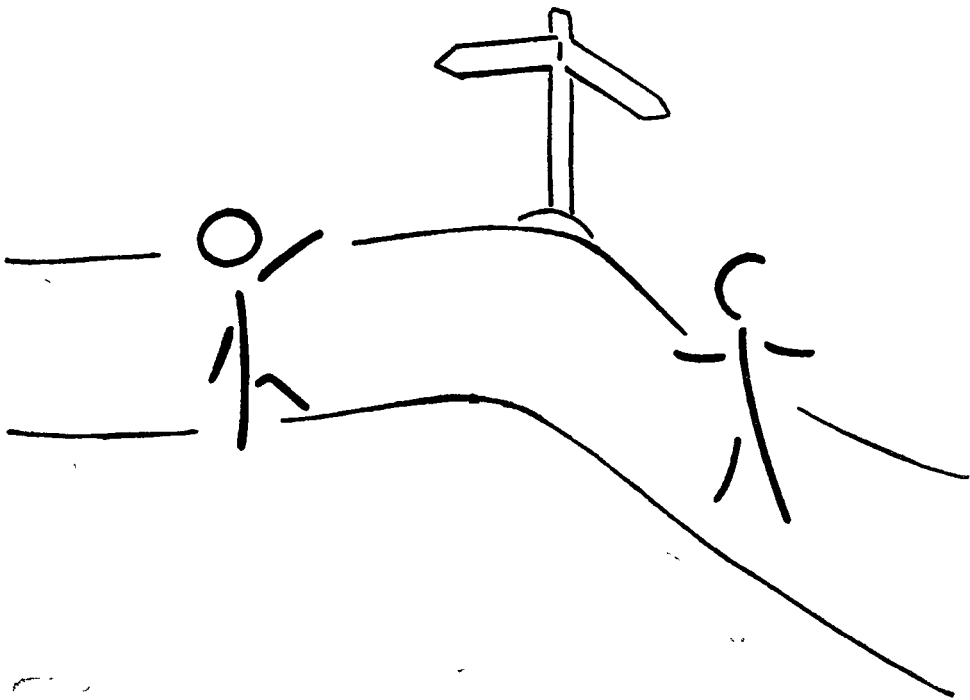
We cannot imagine an existentialist poet rhapsodising in this vein. He does have a sweetheart—like Sartre's own famous Simone de Beauvoir—but she is still "other people" and all her ministrations cannot reduce the philosophic sense he has of his own lonely Godlessness. The Romantic is temperamentally and emotionally a man of sorrow and solitude : the Existentialist is philosophically and intellectually so, and hence the sweetheart's embrace is at the same time a delight and a reminder that he is held tight as in a prison, the prison of his own self, the narrow absurdity of a finite that has not the Infinite for its ultimate ground and rationale.

To characterise Existentialism I have suggested the Pascalian Man standing on his head. Perhaps a closer link with the depth of things would be in terms of an eastern religion. At the heart of Existentialism there is a Buddhism *manqué*, an unrecognised missing of Nirvana, just as at the heart of Romanticism one may discern a would-be Vedanta, the puzzled sense expressed by Shelley :

Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

Not awakening to the truth by which they are moved, both mix with the basic spiritual source a lot of odd matter : in the case of the Romantic the assertion of the individual—at the best the egotistical sublime—and the flight from hurtful actuality into flashing fantasy, in the case of the Existentialist the morbid isolation from the whole and the constant nausea at the sight of a fragmented world. Because the centrally moving truth is not wide-open to their gaze, their relation with the rest of their fellows is also somewhat falsified. They cannot avoid the relation, but it fails to show the right adjustment : what is wanting is the harmonious touch of the Vedantic equality and at-home-ness of the One Self that has become all beings and things, what is lacking is the Buddhist compassion for and service of the universal multiplicity that can find no rest until it forgets its own changeful surface existence and dissolvingly deepens into a fathomless featureless Unknowable.

K. D. SETHNA



"How do you know which is the right way?"

*"It doesn't matter. As long as I stay on the path
it will take me where I want to go"*

SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE

ON MATTERS PHYSICAL (II)

WHEN the Mother speaks of Beauty as the characteristic form in which the Divine manifests in the Physical World, it is not only Beauty in Form that is meant but also Beauty in Movement. Beauty lies in symmetry, in harmony of proportions, true; but it lies equally in the movements of what is so built. Hence, for a seeker of the Integral Yoga which aims to realise the Divine in each of His manifestations, it is not more necessary to cultivate and express a feeling for beauty in Form—in himself and in others—than it is to shape and perfect beauty in his bodily movements. In a word, he must observe himself and take steps to eliminate all that is uncouth and offensive to the aesthetic sense in his physical dispositions and at the same time develop movements that are elegant, graceful and can faithfully express the growing evolution of his soul in outer mobile forms of harmony and beauty.

It is commonly ignored, but a truth nevertheless, that our physical movements have a significance beyond their material figuration. They are, in fact, a projection, a reflex on the physical level, of the working of the many forces that are active on the subtler planes of our being, *e.g.*, our vital, our emotional being, our mind, etc. Each physical movement is the culmination of a series of stresses that are not visible and hence a reflection, a live symbol of the totality of forces that precipitate themselves in that form. Conversely, if we consciously make a particular movement it calls into action—whether intended or not—an action leading to the same play of forces that normally bring that movement into being. And that is after all the meaning of *mudrā* so commonly used in the Tantras, or for that matter in the rituals of all religions. Specific gestures are made with hands and fingers, and corresponding subtle movements are automatically set in motion. A *mudrā* or gesture of surrender made with full consciousness initiates a wave of self-giving; similarly a *mudrā* of call, *āvāhana*, does release a vibration or a series of vibrations, which go forth to invoke the Deity that is waited upon. Thus the *mudrās*, when performed in the proper consciousness, function as channels of communication and agents for effectuation.

It is not that these *mudrās* have meaning only in matters of ritual where special factors are at work. Even in our normal day to day life, certain gestures, certain postures do set in motion a particular activity of forces with the physical movement as their nodus. I remember having heard that Sri Ramakrishna once reproved someone (was it Naren ?) for sitting with his cheek on the palm of his hand. This posture indicates some worry, some mental tribulation; and it can also call into action movements that result in mental unease. So also there are certain postures of sitting or lying down which act like a magnet to forces of *tamas* and inertia. Each physical movement, like each mental movement, has a meaning and significance and it behoves the seeker

of the Integral Yoga to be very conscious in the matter and encourage only those movements that build up the forces of light, harmony and beauty. Those that are graceful, elegant and pleasing to the eye are indeed the elements that help to form the proper *milieu* for the manifestation of the Truth of Beauty even as the opposite ones repel its advent.

I was reading the other day a remarkable book by a thirteenth-century administrator-scholar of Persia, Nasir ad-Din Tusi, written at the behest of his superior, the Governor of Quhstan. In spite of its title,¹ it is really a treatise on Practical Philosophy of perennial interest. He makes a number of observations in the section on the education and regulation of children, which seemed to be relevant to the line of thinking which started this causerie. No doubt his approach is not from the spiritual standpoint. But it is in the right direction with aesthetic overtones and can very well prepare for a more purposive discipline.

Thus speaking on *Manners of movement and rest*, he enjoins : "In walking one should not move quickly or in haste, for that is a sign of frivolity, nor, however, should one go to exaggerated lengths in dawdling and slowness, for that is a mark of sloth. One should not strut like the arrogant, or move the shoulders in the manner of women and effeminate men. The dangling and the movement of the hands are also to be guarded against, equilibrium being preserved in all situations. When walking, a man should not much look behind, for such is the action of loutish persons. Nor, however, must the head be held constantly forward, for this is an indication of grief and overwhelming anxiety. In riding, likewise, equilibrium is to be preserved. When sitting, the feet should not be put forward, nor should one be placed on the other. One should kneel only in subservience before kings, a master, a father, or anyone comparable to these persons. The head should not be rested on the knees or the hands, for that is a mark of grief or sloth. One should not hold the neck bent, or play with the beard or the other members. Let not the finger be placed in the mouth or the nose, and let no noise be produced with the fingers, the neck or the other members. Yawning and stretching are to be avoided..."

On *Eating* :

"First, hands and mouth and nose should be cleansed, and then one may appear at table. When one takes one's seat at table, one should not proceed to eat directly, unless one be the host. The hand and the clothing should not be soiled, not more than three fingers should be employed in eating, and the mouth should not be opened wide. The eater should not take up large morsels, nor should he swallow quickly or keep his mouth full. Let him not lick his fingers. At the same time, he should not inspect the different varieties of food, or sniff at them, or make a selection from them. If the best dish be scant in amount, let him not fall upon it greedily, but rather offer it to others. Grease should not be left on the fingers; bread and salt should not be made damp. One should not look at one's fellow-diners, nor inspect the morsels they take,

¹ *Nasirean Ethicks*.

but eat with one's face forwards. That which is taken to the mouth (we refer to such things as bones) should not (afterwards) be placed on the bread or the table-cover; when there is a bone or a hair in a morsel of food, let it be removed from the mouth in such a way that no one else is aware.

“Let a man beware of committing that which he finds repulsive in others. . .

“A man should not withdraw his hand [from eating] some considerable time before the other guests; rather, if he feels himself satiated, should he while away the time until the others also finish. If, however, the assembly as a whole withdraw their hands, he should do likewise, even though he be hungry; an exception may be made where he is in his own home or in a place where there are no strangers present. If, in the course of a meal he feels the need for water, let him not drink it hastily so as to produce noises from the mouth and gullet...When he washes, he should not gargle or spit into the basin...”

On Speech :

“One should not speak much, nor interrupt the speech of another by one's own. Whenever someone is relating a story or a tale of which one already has knowledge, one should not reveal one's knowledge thereof, so that the person in question may complete his discourse. Let no man answer to a matter that is asked of another. If a question be put to a group of which he is one, let him not try to outstrip the others. If someone be already occupied with making answer, and he be capable of giving a better, he should be patient until that answer is completed, then give his own in such a way as to offer no affront to his precedent. Let him not plunge into any discussions being carried on by two persons in his presence; and if they should conceal their remarks from him, let him not try to overhear...When dealing with his superiors a man should not speak in allusions, nor should he keep his voice high or low, but observe a mean...When others are developing an argument before him, he should not take it upon himself to reply until the argument is complete. When he does speak, he should not make any pronouncement before first fixing the idea in his mind, ..in the course of his speech, let him not gesture with hands and eyes and eyebrows, unless what he is saying demands some delicate gesture, when he may perform it in the approved manner...”

“Slander, calumny, false accusations and lying are to be avoided : indeed, in no circumstance may one engage therein...”

“Listening should be practised more often than speaking : a wise man was asked why his listening exceeded his utterance, to which he replied : ‘Because I have been given two ears, but only one tongue’—that is to say, you must listen twice as much as you speak ! ”

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

PART TWO : THE CONQUEST OF SLEEP

VII. DREAMS AND THE DREAMLAND

None knows himself well who does not know his free activities of the night and no man can call himself his own master if he is not perfectly conscious and master of the multifarious actions which he performs during his physical sleep. ...Uncultivated fields produce weeds. We do not want weeds to grow in us, let us then cultivate the vast fields of our nights.

(The Mother, *Words of Long Ago*, pp. 37, 41)

We pass in waking into nescience of our sleeping condition, in sleep into nescience of our waking being. But this happens because only part of our being performs this alternaive movement and we falsely think of ourselves as only that partial existence : but we can discover by a deeper psychological experience that the larger being in us is perfectly aware of all that happens even in what is to our partial and superficial being a state of unconsciousness; it is limited neither by sleep nor by waking. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 513)

We have had occasion to mention more than once that our body's sleep by no means connotes the sleep of our whole being nor the total abeyance of all consciousness. As a matter of fact our inner being is always awake and it is only the surface physical mind's waking activity or its cessation that determines the waking or sleep of common parlance.

Thus, in ordinary sleep, when this activity ceases for a period, our physical body falls into slumber and only a subconscious residual consciousness is left in it. The rest of the being stands back and a part of its consciousness goes out into various planes and regions of existence. "In each we see scenes, meet beings, share in happenings, come across formations, influences, suggestions which belong to these planes."¹ When these experiences of the wandering inner consciousness get transmitted to the obscure layer floating over the deep subconscious in which our physical being seems submerged for the time being and our physical mind, in a state of sleep-wakefulness, receives and records and translates them more or less perfectly, more or less coherently, depending on the state of development of our being,—we are said to have dreams.

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 592.

When we come back to our waking consciousness at the termination of the period of sleep, we may sometimes retain the memory of these dreams and at other times not. But since the movement of our consciousness in the state of our physical sleep is ceaseless and uninterrupted except for that occasional and brief interregnum when our being retires into Brahmaloka—into “a sort of Sachchidananda immobility of consciousness.”¹—we are always dreaming at the time of sleep irrespective of whether we are mentally conscious of it or not.

In fact, what is sometimes erroneously called *dreamless slumber* is very often a state of dream-consciousness of which all record has been wiped away from the memory of the waking physical mind. And this obliteration may be due to any one of the following reasons.

Sachchidananda immobility : Given the most favourable circumstances, one passes in sleep through a succession of states of progressively deepening sleep-consciousness to reach at last “a pure Sachchidananda state of complete rest, light and silence”², a state of “*suṣupti* in the Brahman or Brahmaloka”³ and retraces one’s way, after a brief stay there, to come back again to the waking physical state.

Referring to this state of “luminous and peaceful and dreamless rest”,⁴ The Mother says : “There is the possibility of a sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immobility and peace in all parts of your being and your consciousness merges into Sachchidananda. You can hardly call it sleep, for it is extremely conscious. In that condition you may remain for a few minutes, but these few minutes give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep.”⁵ But The Mother warns that this state of Sachchidananda immobility of consciousness cannot be attained in sleep by chance, “it requires a long training.”⁶ We pass on then to the consideration of the second factor giving rise to the phenomenon of *apparently* dreamless sleep.

Turn over of consciousness : Our waking consciousness is ordinarily externalised and gazes outward while our inner dream consciousness has its eyes turned inward. Thus the transition from the sleep state to waking state is very often associated with a reversal, a turning over, of the consciousness in which “the dream-state disappears more or less abruptly, effacing the fugitive impression made by the dream events (or rather their transcription) on the physical sheath.”⁷ If the return to waking consciousness is more composed and less abrupt, then perhaps the memory remains of the last of the dreams or of the one that was the most impressive during sleep. Otherwise everything experienced in sleep recedes from the physical consciousness leaving a state of blankness behind.

Absence of link bridge : We have stated that in sleep our being passes through

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 578.

² *Ibid.*, p. 578.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 577.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 382.

⁵ & ⁶ The Mother, *Conversations*, pp. 27-28.

⁷ *On Yoga*, II, tome Two, p. 586.

a succession of states of consciousness. Now, so long as there is not the integral and synthetic awareness, these different states of consciousness appear each with its own realities, so much so that in our passage through them, from one state to another, the consciousness of the previous state of things slips away from us and its contents are altogether lost or, even when caught in memory, seem illusory and uncertain and hence forgotten in no time.

Also, there is the fundamental disparity between the recording surface subconscious left in the sleeping body and the deeper realms of our consciousness. Thus when we enter in sleep our subliminal mental, vital or subtle-physical, the experiences therein are for all practical purposes lost to our waking consciousness because of the absence of any active connection with the surface parts of us. "If we are still in the nearer depths of these regions, the surface subconscious...records something of what we experience in these depths; but it records it in its own transcription, often marred by characteristic incoherences and always, even when most coherent, deformed or cast into figures drawn from the world of waking experience. But if we have gone deeper inward, the record fails or cannot be recovered and we have the illusion of dreamlessness; but the activity of the inner dream consciousness continues behind the veil of the now mute and inactive subconscious surface."¹

Plunge into Subconscience: There is another and most usual blank state, the state "when one goes deeply and crassly into the subconscious."² This heavy and inert and altogether unrefreshing 'subterranean plunge' of our outer consciousness into the black pit of a complete subconscience is a state of "absolute unconsciousness which is almost death—a taste of death."³

These then are the principal contributing factors at the basis of the phenomenon of so-called dreamless slumber, and, except for the first one,—the Sachchidananda immobility,—which alone is a state of veritable dreamlessness and an achievement of profound value, the other three signify undesirable imperfections that must be remedied if we would establish a mastery over our dream-world. Especially so is the last one, the abysmal plunge of the body-consciousness into the torpid depths of the subconscience, and along with it its allied manifestation, the dream-wanderings of our inner sleep-consciousness in the dark and dangerous regions of our being where

There are occult Shadows, there are tenebrous Powers,
Inhabitants of life's ominous nether rooms,
A shadowy world's stupendous denizens.
The Titan and the Fury and the Djinn
Lie bound in the subconscious's cavern pit

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 381.

² *On Yoga II*, tome Two, p. 577.

³ *Conversations*, p. 27.

And the Beast grovels in his antre den :
Dire mutterings rise and murmur in their drowse.¹

As a matter of fact, apart from those vague incoherent and insignificant dreams that are occasioned by 'purely physical circumstances such as the state of health, digestion, position on the bed, etc.,' most of our ordinary sleep-existence is made up of dreams of which the subconscious is the builder. Now, as we have noted before, (Section III, *Mother India*, October 1964) this subconscious in us is the extreme border of our secret inner existence; "it is the Inconscient vibrating on the borders of consciousness, sending up its motions to be changed into conscious stuff, swallowing into its depths impressions of past experience as seeds of unconscious habit and returning them constantly but often chaotically to the surface consciousness, missioning upwards much futile or perilous stuff of which the origin is obscure to us".²

Now what happens ordinarily is that during the state of our body's sleep the surface physical part of us, which is an output from the inconscient, sinks back from the waking level and relapses towards the originating Inconscience. In this movement of retrogression it invariably enters into the subconscious substratum where "it finds the impressions of its past or persistent habits of mind and experiences,—for all have left their mark on our subconscious part and have there a power of recurrence."³ The effect of this subconscious resurrection on our waking self is simply disastrous. For, as the Mother has pointed out,

"All the desires that have been repressed without being dissolved,—and this dissociation can only be arrived at after numerous analyses demanding a comprehensive rectitude of a high order,—try to seek satisfaction when the will is asleep.

"And as desires are veritable dynamic centres of formation, they tend to organise in and around us an assemblage of circumstances most favourable to their satisfaction.

"Thus is destroyed in a few hours of the night the fruit of many efforts made by our conscious thought during the day."⁴

Faced with this unpleasant situation of nightly falling down of consciousness below the level of what one has gained by sadhana in the waking state, seekers of self-perfection are sometimes impelled, in a mood of desperation, to effect a drastic cut in the hours of sleep and keep awake at night. But this is a highly inadvisable procedure, the suggested remedy proving worse than the malady. For, unless and until our body becomes altogether transformed in all its functionings, a sufficient

¹ *Savitri* Book VII, Canto II, p. 545.

² *The Life Divine*, p. 499.

³ *The Life Divine*, p. 380.

⁴ *Words of Long Ago*, pp. 34-35.

but not excessive amount of sleep, in the same way as the intake of food and water, is absolutely essential for its proper maintenance. Hence the injunction of the Gita to eat and sleep suitably—*Yuktāhāraḥ Yuktanidraḥ*—when one does sadhana, also that of the Upanishad to take a moderate quantity of easily digestible food and satisfy the body's indispensable need of sleep, *samāpayya nidrām sujīrṇālpabhojī*.¹

In fact, scientifically conducted experiments on the subject of sleep privation have shown that after about 60-90 hours of enforced wakefulness, the most prominent effects observed were "muscular weariness, . . . irritability to the point of irascibility in normally even-tempered subjects, and a mental disorganization, leading to dreaming while awake, hallucinations and automatic behaviour, occasionally bordering on temporary insanity."²

In any case, the suppression of the needed sleep ration makes the nerves morbid, weakens the brain, strains the physical system and renders it unfit for the necessary concentration during the waking hours. And since the body and the nervous envelope form the twin plinth of our sadhana, the prospect of their decay and degeneracy through ill-advised deprivation of sleep cannot certainly be nonchalantly viewed.

But what then is the solution to this insistent problem of nightly fall, what the procedure to counteract and annul the subconscious wanderings of our consciousness during the period of our body's sleep?

As we shall see a little later on, in the prevailing conditions of our untransformed body and physical being, the right way is not to suppress sleep, the great restorer of our energies, but to transform its character. And this can be done only by becoming more and more conscious *in sleep itself*. "If that is done, sleep changes into an inner mode of consciousness in which the sadhana can continue as much as in the waking state, and at the same time one is able to enter into other planes of consciousness than the physical and command an immense range of informative and utilisable experience."³

This last possibility opens up before our view a great line of the movement of our consciousness,—other than the subconscious one,—during the period of our physical sleep. This subliminal exploration of the inner planes of our being provides us occasionally with dreams from these planes,—or should we not rather say dream-experiences?—for these are transcripts direct or symbolic of what we actually experience in us or around us while in those subliminal realms of our existence.

The subliminal in us, as we have mentioned before (Section III, *Mother India*, October 1964), is our concealed inner being comprising an inner mind and inner life and inner physical with the soul or psychic entity supporting them all. It "is

¹ *Soubhagyalakshmi Upamshad, Kandika II.*

² N. Kleitman, "Sleep", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 20, p. 793.

³ *On Yoga, II*, to.me Two, p. 573

not, like our surface physical being, an outcome of the Inconscient; it is a meeting-place of the consciousness that emerges from below by evolution and the consciousness that has descended from above for involution....(Thus) the subliminal has the right of entry into the mental and vital and subtle-physical planes of the universal consciousness, it is not confined to the material plane and the physical world; it possesses means of communication with the worlds of being which the descent towards involution created in its passage and with all corresponding planes or worlds that may have arisen or been constructed to serve the purpose of the re-ascent from Inconscience to Superconscience.”¹

Now, sleep is one of the means—the other two being ‘inward-drawn concentration’ and the ‘inner plunge of trance’—that give us an access to this large realm of interior existence that ordinarily functions behind the veil and thus remains mostly unknown to our waking consciousness. Although our dreams are very often constructions of our subconscious, when our inner being develops by sadhana and we live more and more inwardly away from the madding to-and-fro run of our surface existence, a larger and richer and nobler dream-consciousness opens before us and our dreams take on a subliminal character.

When the subliminal thus comes to the front in our dream consciousness, “dreams would then take on the character of precise visions and, at times, of dream revelations. Then onwards it will be possible to acquire useful knowledge of an entire order of important things.”²

But to gain this mastery of the sleep-world, to tap the resources of our subliminal dream-realms, to make our nightly sleep-existence as profitable as our waking one, what should we do and how should we proceed ?

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *The Life Divine*, pp 382-383.

² *Words of Long Ago*, p 45.

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

I

THERE was a time when I was constantly travelling. It was a very special period when I freely came in contact with Sadhus of diverse followings. With some I became very intimate and, what was more, I had the true taste of what can be called joy, ananda. Now I am going to speak of an Abadhuta¹, unseen and unheralded by the public, whose birth, work and life of dharma were extraordinary and resplendent with a very superior light. I met him at Prayag (Allahabad); from the day of meeting him I accompanied him to many places for nearly two months. During our travels together, I had the whole story of his birth and life from his own lips; I am relating it in my own words, exactly as I heard it. I shall try later to speak of his wonderful spiritual life.

The time of the story is not more than a hundred years ago. To most centres of pilgrimage then the only means of transport was by boat, where there was a waterway, or on foot. Navadvip, too, was accessible then by boat. It was the month of Falgun (March), the festival of 'holi' was on—innumerable Vaishnav devotees had assembled at Navadvip to celebrate 'holi' there. Famous Kirtan singers from various Vaishnav centres had come; in the temple of the Mahaprabhu (Sri Chaitanya) Kirtan-singing and the reciting of Bhagavat were in full swing. All along the road there were fairs. In sum, the small town of Navadvip of those days was resounding with peals of joy.

One morning at that time an amazing occurrence took place on the bank of the Ganges.

A merchant from Dacca, in East Bengal, used to come to Navadvip, during those festivals, with his entire family. He was renowned as a rich and God-fearing man—a very good Vaishnav, his name was Brindavan Saha. He had extensive business here, and a big house to live in. Every year for nearly four or five months he used to live in Navadvip. Daily, very early in the morning, he used to stroll on the banks of the Ganges, then at sunrise after the customary puja he used to visit the Gouranga temple before returning home to his affairs.

Now, one morning during the holi festivals Brindavan, as was his habit, had come to the riverside. Dawn was breaking in the East, the sun was still not up, the trees and the shrubs were still clothed in darkness.

In those days the river had not shifted so far as to-day and the sandy beach was

¹ Abadhuta means a realised Yogi fully liberated

not so wide. Brindavan, as he was strolling, was merged within himself unmindful of his surroundings, when all on a sudden his reverie was broken in by the unmistakable cry of a new-born babe from somewhere quite close at hand. He stood still and listened, looking anxiously on all sides of him.

It still was not so bright, but it seemed to him that he saw something wrapped in a white cloth lying a little way in front of him. Approaching still nearer he could clearly discern the cry of a new-born babe and slight movements in the bundle as well. He felt a bit frightened but his surprise was greater. Whence had this new-born child come at this hour?—he thought, although he knew that during the festivals many people came there with various intentions. Shame often forces a sinner to destroy a child born out of wedlock, throw it away in the Ganges or even bury it in the slopes under water. Having thus got rid of their bundle of trouble, unperceived by men, they depart obliterating all signs of their misdeeds. He had often seen jackals and dogs dig up these unfortunate babes and devour them. This was no news to him.

Brindavan stood rooted at the spot thinking as to what was going to happen to this forsaken child, deprived of the affections of its parents, crying for refuge under the open sky. He was quite undecided for some time. What was that great sin that had forced the parents to deny their own child, to forsake it so cruelly to an unprotected existence! The pain of this thought in his breast was intolerable. What would be his place in society, if he took the child home, a society under the stern rule of the brahmins, he a Hindu and more a Vaishnav? These thoughts coming pell-mell raised a tempest in his brain.

The child must have been left there just then, or else the jackals and the dogs would have left nothing of it. Its parents must have come while the dawn was still dark, just a few minutes before, or it may be, seeing him approaching from afar, they had escaped. How could he now leave it in this condition? Since Hari, the Lord, had preserved it so far and had brought it to his notice so palpably, he could not leave it hoping that someone else would come along:—to leave it where it lay would be, indeed, a great sin.

All these thoughts led Brindavan to the resolution that he it was that had to save the life of this orphan, a Krishna's jiva; he would not bother about the opinion of others—he would adopt it and bring it up. Then, whatever Fate had decreed, let that happen. When this resolve became very firm in Brindavan, he heaved a deep sigh of relief and clearly felt within him a tangible divine inspiration suffusing his heart with a great delight.

By that time, the day had considerably brightened. A few bathers were beginning to arrive and collect. Many, even, started to discuss the matter, but they hardly made any move to save the life of this child in distress nor did they feel it an urgent necessity. While they were busy discussing the problem, the elderly merchant quietly but firmly approached the child and without taking off the cloth, still smeared with blood, took it up in his arms. The child felt heavy and he saw

that even the umbilical cord was still there. He looked neither to left nor to right, when with the child in his arms he rapidly strode towards his house, creating amazement and consternation in the minds of the spectators.

Let us not tarry over the unpleasant remarks that issued forth from the spectators seething with a useless rage on account of the unseemly behaviour of the merchant. Brindavan Saha was not only a wealthy man but had many dependants and aids. As soon as he reached home, he sent for a midwife and had the child cleaned and bathed—a supremely beautiful boy of the gods revealed himself. Brindavan, too, accepting the baby as a gift from the Divine, took it in his arms and, handing it over to his wife, felt relieved.

Thus an unknown infant found a niche in the house of the Saha family. After a stay of four months at Navadvip, Brindavan Saha with his family left for East Bengal. He felt strongly attracted to the child but spoke to none of it.

In his heart, never for a moment was there any hatred or scorn due to its unusual birth. His was a heart remarkable for nobility, generosity and love.

II

Brindavan named the boy Kudanram, or Kuda in short, meaning a foundling.

Just as Kuda's birth was somewhat extraordinary, his growth in the lap of his foster-mother, and the development of his physique, were also something very special.

Brindavan's wife, Sulochana, was not the supreme mistress of the house, because Brindavan's aunt and an elder sister, both widows, also lived with him. In those days any such older member of the family, wherever found, was considered the mistress of the household. Two sons were born to Brindavan, when he was fairly advanced in age, Chintaharan, the elder, aged five and Govinda aged three. The last to be born was a girl, who died within a few days of her birth; this was just before the arrival of the family at Navadvip. The milk in Sulochana's breast had not yet dried up, and this was fortunate for Kuda. But unfortunately Sulochana did not look upon him with eyes of love.

Brindavan, a man of character, of few words and a grave demeanour, commanded a great respect mixed with a little fear from his wife. Moreover, Sulochana coming from a poor family considered herself very fortunate to have a husband rich and powerful in society, a divine dispensation. Thus when her husband placed Kuda in her arms as a gift from God, she was powerless to raise any objection. She was after all a mother, and as such who could affirm that the beautiful face of this helpless boy did not kindle in her heart the deep maternal affection? Thus, from that day a conflict, between her affection and the idea that she did not know of what race or caste the boy was, made her rather restless, but she was careful never to give vent to her feelings. She, however, was never miserly in giving all that was necessary for his proper growth.

A year later, Kuda himself gave up his nurse's milk and began to walk. Gradually, as he could walk out of the inner precincts of the house by himself, the slight and feeble maternal affection of Sulochana too gradually evaporated from her heart.

In this way, two or three years went by. Even from those early days the uniqueness of Kuda's nature, observed by all, was that he was totally fearless, of a grave disposition and not at all a talkative boy. He seldom sought the company of the women-folk of the family, and loved to spend his time outside the house. The two sons of Brindavan were healthy boys of darkish complexion, whereas Kuda was really fair. His bright large eyes at once marked him out as an intelligent and straightforward boy. A lovable child with a beautiful face, a head full of darkglistening hair, he attracted the love of all. He was endowed with a phenomenal memory, never forgot what he once saw or heard. Singing and dancing were his joy—alone, he was often seen dancing and singing to himself. He had a lovely voice, too. When he used to sing imitating Kirtans or the songs he had heard at any operatic play, no body who heard could fail to be charmed. Kuda was ever joyful. Seeing him always happy with himself, Brindavan used to feel for him a very great affection in his heart. There was another reason why in Brindavan a great and lofty respect was born for Kuda. The reason was, that his advent had brought great prosperity to his business, his wealth had increased immeasurably. It seemed to him that his luck was closely related with the boy.

It did not escape Brindavan's notice that Kuda used to cleverly avoid his two sons, of whom the elder had inherited all his mother's secret hatred. Brindavan had a very faithful servant named Buda, a great favourite of his. There was no secret of Brindavan that Buda did not know, even the key of the safe was kept with him. He, too, was very fond of Kuda and took great care of him. Kuda was well aware that Brindavan was the master of the house and Buda was his only friend, ally and relation. He was very much attached to Buda, used to follow him everywhere, even slept with him at night. Buda too felt a great love for this orphan boy. The conversation of Kuda, in bed at night, was very lively with his sole friend Buda.

Kuda was now nearly six years old, when, as was his habit, Brindavan came to Navadvip with his whole family. At the beginning of the month of Falgun, Navadvip was crowded as usual with visitors come to celebrate holi. Kuda, too, was very happy with the celebrations.

After the full-moon festivals were over, the house of Mahaprabhu (Sri Chaitanya) was full oto overflowing, to hear a famous band of Kirtan singers who were going to sing the whole night through. Brindavan with his entire family was there at the temple; Kuda was not forgotten, either. He loved music and specially Kirtan. Brindavan was holding his hand, lest he should get lost in the crowd. The crowd was great; consequently, the noise was very great too, and they were on the increase. Everyone was busy trying to find a seat as close to the singers as possible.

It is difficult to say when, but suddenly Brindavan noticed that Kuda was no longer holding his hand. He looked all around him but could not find him. Then for

a long time they all looked for him everywhere, but, strange as it may seem, Kuda was nowhere to be found.

Brindavan was hurt and alarmed at this unexpected happening, he thought that there must be a divine intention in this. Buda was also as unhappy as his master. It seemed as if Kuda had disappeared into thin air.

(To be continued)

PRAMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the author's Bengali)

A SURGEON LOOKS AT THE CRUCIFIXION

THE historicity of the Fourth Gospel is still a matter for discussion, and this article cannot venture an opinion on that issue, yet there are certain pieces of information in the Johannine description of the Crucifixion which are of considerable interest in the light of modern medical experience. Modern surgery and the growing complex of knowledge gathered from practical studies of cardiac resuscitation¹ and anaesthesia may have a contribution to make to the interpretation of at least one part of the Gospel narrative. It is intended in this article to analyse the incident recorded in St John xix. 34, "Howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water," and to see what explanation follows from a consideration of the medical facts, since modern medicine enables us to view these matters from a new and objective angle.

Crucifixion as a punishment was borrowed from the Carthaginians by the Romans for use in dealing with criminals of non-Roman origin. Generally, slaves and the "submerged tenth" were the victims, people in whom little or no interest by relatives or friends was, or could be, shown. Rome, while not actually legislating upon this procedure, observed certain usages in connection with crucifixion which are of importance.

The accounts of actual crucifixion vary greatly in their details, but judged from the anatomical and surgical point of view, the Romans seemed to have evolved a technically satisfactory convention for the infliction of this barbarous punishment. The efficiency of this technique was demonstrated whenever crucifixion took place on a large scale, as, for instance, in those cases following upon various Jewish uprisings.

¹ "Cardiac Resuscitation," W.B. Primrose, *Brit. Med. Jour.* September 21, 1935, p. 540.

The original method of fixation to the cross had been by nailing : this method was retained but modified to the extent that the nails were no longer driven through the hands and feet, but between the bones of the forearm above the wrists and similarly above the ankles in the case of the legs. In the first case the change was adopted because the tissues of the hands often could not support the weight of a heavy body for any length of time without being torn through by the nails : in the second case, even as a surgical procedure, it is extraordinarily difficult to drive a nail through the foot unless it is supported below by some rigid body such as a block or sandbag. These are the principal reasons why accounts mention the use of ropes to hold the victims up on the crosses; the use of little seats; and much more commonly, the use of a central arm projecting from the middle of the upright of the cross (rhinoceros horn, Cicero) upon which the victim was straddled. These were all means of relieving the hands of the weight of the body¹. The foot-rests were to allow of the nails being driven through the feet. The Roman convention eliminated all these difficulties and proved most efficient, this being a major consideration with the practical-minded administrators of Judæa. Any sentimental notion of providing the victim with any kind of comfort or of amelioration to his misery was foreign to the fundamental conception of crucifixion which was torture, barbaric in the extreme, maintained as long as life lasted, which was often to the third day in the case of resistant subjects if left undisturbed.

It may be mentioned at this point that the actual injuries produced by nailing in this manner, while causing great pain at the time, especially at the wrists, were not in themselves of great importance. The wounds were rapidly made with sharp nails (blunt nails would never be of any use in penetrating soft tissues). The muscles in the localities mentioned have nearly all given place to tendons which are separated and not lacerated by the nails. Bones thus escaped injury, as did also the nerves and important blood vessels, owing to their anatomical distribution. Such wounds would ordinarily heal by "second intention" as a certain amount of sepsis would be present in the process; and there might afterwards be little disability. It is the use of this convention that permitted the fulfilling of the prophecy that in the case of the Messiah, there would be no bones broken at his crucifixion. While dealing with gross surgical injury, another point may be mentioned and that is the "breaking of the legs."

In the ordinary process of crucifixion, however, the victims, if not claimed for burial, were left to die from exposure and exhaustion; their bodies might be disintegrated by natural conditions including birds of prey, and more particularly, by the packs of wild dogs which roamed the land at night. These would tear the bodies from the crosses and devour them. Death thus came rapidly to the victims. The efficiency of this method of disposal was one of the reasons why the sites of crucifixion had to be beyond the walls and well away from the city proper.

¹ The late C.S. Jagger's realistic bronze rood in the chapel of the Society of the Sacred Mission, Kelham, embodies these features. *Vide, Liturgy and Society*, A.G. Hebert, Plate XV,

The attitude of the Jews to crucifixion was one of loathing.¹ When, therefore, it came to the day of preparation for the Sabbath, the Jews objected to crucifixions being prolonged beyond sunset as their Sabbath was thereby desecrated, even by the upstanding crosses. In such circumstances it was usual for the Jews to appeal to the authorities to bring the crucifixions to an end, and the appeal was usually granted, soldiers being detailed to go and break the legs of any victims still alive, which was usually the case. Far from being a concession to the victim as hastening death of itself, it was a device to prevent the victims from leaving the place where they were thrown when taken down from the crosses which were then removed, for with the night came the wild animals.

Crucifixion was preceded by scourging. The physical effects of scourging were of much greater importance in this drama than were those produced by the spectacular nailing to the cross. Scourging was carried out by two kinds of implement, the official flagrum and the birch or staves. The victim was stripped of clothing and scourged at the official whipping post to which he was secured *facing* the multitude. The scourging was mostly across the front of the body. The use of the flagrum, which was a whip-like instrument having three chains each with a metal button, produced extensive subcutaneous damage with much bruising, giving a bloated appearance to the body later on. The skin might be cut where it covered a subcutaneous bone. The important feature of this beating is the inflammatory reaction quickly set up by the body around these areas of damaged tissue. This leads to a considerable elevation of body temperature accompanied by a febrile sweat strongly charged with the ammoniacal substance known as urea which is normally excreted by the kidneys. It has been known for the sweat of torture to produce a fine down of crystals of this substance on the foreheads of victims before death. This inflammatory process is well advanced and is possibly at its height in six to eight hours after the scourging. Apart from this, there is some shock from the kinetic energy imparted by the flagrum, and this shock may be out of all proportion to the visible extent of the violence inflicted as is often seen in modern war casualties where a bullet is stopped by striking a bone. It is of interest to note that flagellation was carried out by the Jews according to Deuteronomic prescription whereby the number of strokes with a single lash was restricted to forty, two-thirds of which had to be across the back. In the case of the flagrum, thirteen strokes would be allowed. It is likely that some observance as to number of strokes was made in deference to this order, for the flagrum, if used excessively, might quickly produce collapse from shock and so interfere with the procession to the site of crucifixion.

The use of staves or birches in scourging produced quite different effects. Here, the immediate effect was the production of intense pain with remarkably little damage

¹ The Jewish code, as instanced by the care with which flagellation was administered so that the victim might not be humiliated by uncontrolled movements of bowel or bladder in the sight of his fellows, contrasts strongly with the barbarity of crucifixion.

to tissues or organs, even where the abdomen was the part principally thrashed. There are sound anatomical and physiological reasons for this. There is, as a rule, no damage to abdominal viscera; otherwise, in the case under consideration, there would have been internal bleeding of such a nature that the writer of the Fourth Gospel could not have reported that "water" was seen issuing from the spear-wound. The shock arising from the use of the staves is due to the severe pain inflicted and develops rapidly as "primary surgical shock." This, with care and comfort, would pass off in a few hours; otherwise, it would add its effect to that produced by the flagrum which develops later as "secondary surgical shock" which is progressive and is so often dangerous to life.

The "water" mentioned by John is the result of the nervous upset of the blood vessels locally due to the overstimulating effect of the scourging by staves. Certain individuals are very sensitive to such stimulation and the capillary vessels supplying the underlying tissues and membranes become paralysed and so allow the blood *fluids* which they convey to escape, rendering the various tissues œdematous or water-logged. Where a membrane lines a cavity as in the general abdominal cavity, the seepage of fluid from the vessels takes place into that cavity gravitating to its lowest part. The fluid exuded in this way is clear and of pale straw colour, the red cellular part of the blood being retained in the undamaged vascular system. This process of exudation increases rapidly for five or six hours and then slowly subsides as is well seen in the case of a knee-joint injured by a violent knock. In this time a considerable amount of blood fluid or serum can be exuded into the abdominal cavity floating the intestinal contents upwards. According to the Gospel account, Christ collapsed about three o'clock in the afternoon, more than six hours after the scourging, within which time about two pints of fluid appear to have been exuded into the abdominal cavity.¹ In the average case this amount of fluid cannot be spared from the general circulation without producing weakness and collapse. It is knowledge of this fact which governs the technique of the withdrawal of blood for transfusion purposes, the quantity being limited to one pint on any occasion. We may suppose that, with this in view, the spear-thrust was made somewhere on the lower and more protuberant part of the abdomen, probably on the left side. There would be an initial rush of "water" which, for anatomical reasons, would quickly stop and it would be tinged with blood issuing from a small vessel opened by the spear. The vessels in this locality are all somewhat small, and with the very low blood-pressure prevailing at the time, one vessel would contribute only a streaking of redness to the outflowing "water." If this is what was seen, then the observer could only have been a *few feet away* from the Cross of Jesus, observing all things very intently.

Surgically, this penetrating wound of the abdomen is unimportant in itself as penetrating wounds in this region so often are : wounds of this kind tend to heal

¹ Such a condition of dehydration resulting from the withdrawal of so much fluid from the general circulation is always accompanied by thirst. John xix, 28 reveals this symptom in the case of Christ,

rapidly, and if there is no septic infection, this one would cease to attract attention in a day or two. Contrast this with the wound some six cms. long described and pictured as being on the right side of the chest, the wound into which Thomas could put his fingers in the post-Resurrection appearance described (John xx. 27.) It may be suggested that this wound lay over the sixth rib approximately and was due to the splitting of the skin and tissues over it by the flagrum. This wound would take longer to heal. There appear to be sound surgical reasons for stating that this obvious wound could not be that produced by the spear, for a penetrating wound in this vicinity would certainly pierce the lung (presenting the signs peculiar to such injuries) with every chance of a fatal outcome. Also, the chest is peculiarly unable to secrete fluid in the same way as can the abdomen under the influence of very strong stimulation such as thrashing, a very common form of punishment. We may therefore conclude that the wound presented to Thomas was not that caused by the spear-thrust.

The principal reasons have now been given why a physically normal person (as Christ appears to have been) should have become unable to drag his cross to Calvary. The primary surgical shock had, by this time, developed fully; and when it was further increased by the nailing to the cross and the setting up of the crucified body in the vertical position, the total shock was so increased that Jesus collapsed after six hours of crucifixion.¹

Early collapse on the cross was most unusual, which accounts for Pilate's surprise when he heard the report of his centurion that Christ had died (Mark xv. 44). This brief survey of the wounds inflicted in the course of this particular crucifixion shows that there was at no time anything likely to produce so early a death. The actual nail-wounds were surgically trifling as compared with injuries generally from which recovery is the rule. There were no sequelæ from the spear-wound; and the other wounds, caused by the carrying of the cross on the right shoulder, the blow upon the side of the face, and the crown of thorns do not call for comment here. Christ did not have his legs broken and so was spared the shock attendant upon this injury. He was also removed from the cross—a procedure more painful than the crucifixion itself—under complete anæsthesia (since the spear-thrust elicited no active response to the pain), so that there was little additional shock from this cause. Hæmorrhage from the various wounds was very limited.

To those present the appearance presented by Christ after his collapse suggested that death had taken place and there were no reasons for doubting it. It is, however, commonly known that the generally accepted appearances of death might not satisfy

¹ Such considerations lead us to suppose that Christ, in comparison with others suffering the same fate, was very susceptible to surgical shock, both primary and secondary. Such susceptibility bears no definite relation to bodily physique. The most robust may go down fatally under the acute depression of the circumstances. Josephus reports that he interceded with Titus for three of his acquaintances who had been crucified for some hours only, but two of them died upon removal from their crosses in spite of all the medical treatment that could be given them.

a medical jurist who would insist on evidence of completely arrested circulation, and we seem to be faced with the carefully recorded evidence that after the spear-thrust *some circulation was still present, since active bleeding and secretions generally stop with the cessation of the heart-beat which alone is death.*

Such conditions of low vitality are well known to the anæsthetist of to-day; further, the nervous mechanism by which such a low-grade circulation is maintained (often for a long time under toxic or other conditions of acute depression) is well understood.¹ It often requires close observation to detect its activity and to realise that life is being continued with the possibility of recovery once the threatening condition is removed. These medical considerations have, therefore, a direct bearing upon the accounts of the Resurrection.

With everyone satisfied that Christ had died when he collapsed, little further interest was shown by his enemies. His own friends and relatives could do little in their bewilderment: it would also appear that none of them had the influence or the means necessary to claim his body for orthodox Jewish burial; and burial, even of criminals, should take place on the day of the death. This situation was, of course, relieved by Joseph of Arimathæa who was able to approach Pilate directly and get permission to have the body removed for burial. This, and the procuring of the essentials for burial, appear to have taken the best part of two hours, leaving very little time for the ritual before sunset—about six o'clock. The need for haste led to considerable shortening of the ritual when the body was removed from the cross. *The body was not washed* as it should have been, and there was no time to use the herbs and the bandages which kept them applied to the body. Instead, the shroud was spread with an ointment or paste of aloes and myrrh to "cleanse" the material. The body was then laid on one half of the shroud, the other half being folded over the body from head to feet. In this condition Christ was conveyed on a litter to Joseph's own tomb, where John and the womenfolk saw the body deposited. They then departed to prepare for the burial which they fully expected to take place on the morning of the third day. Entombment allowed of this delay.

The weather conditions on this particular day were those usual for the time of year: warm and sunny during the day with very cold nights. The darkness that occurred in conjunction with a mild seismic disturbance does not appear to have been accompanied by stormy atmospheric conditions, in which case the air would become warm and sultry. From this we may suppose that Jesus, practically nude on the cross, did not lose much body heat during his state of shock and collapse. When, however, the body was placed in the much cooler tomb, the difference of temperature would soon show a vital loss of body heat. With the change of decubitus from the vertical to the horizontal, some recovery would be expected to take place and an early sign of this would be a rigor or shivering fit as the initial muscular effort to produce more body heat. In a person so very exhausted, this would take a little

¹ "Natural Safeguards in General Anæsthesia," W.B. Primrose, *Lancet*, August 11, 1945.

time. If such rigor did not take place before John and the women folk had left, it must have happened very soon after, and showed Joseph that Jesus was apparently not yet dead, and was in a state of incipient revival. Medical knowledge would lead us to suppose that Christ could not have spent any length of time in the tomb, certainly not much more than one hour; it would have been impossible for any one in his condition to survive even a night in such a place covered only by a linen sheet.

If we allow ourselves to follow the conjectural reconstruction of events as set out for instance by Mr. Robert Graves and by various other writers, we find ourselves with yet one more non-miraculous explanation of the Resurrection. But this is a matter on which each reader will wish to form his own convictions, or to hold yet more firmly those already received. Judged, however, by the purely medical evidence provided in the Gospel accounts, it would appear that such evidence is not sufficient to pronounce (in the light of modern medical knowledge) with absolute certainty that Jesus was actually dead when his body was removed from the cross. This may seem to be a negative conclusion, but it is of great importance in any interpretation of the Resurrection appearances.

Some supplementary evidence seems to be provided by a brief consideration of Paul Vignon's scientific analysis of the Holy Shroud of Turin (See Paul Vignon, *Le Linceul du Christ*, Paris, 1901).

This religious relic, only occasionally exhibited, shows, as it were, in the form of a photographic negative, the "outline" of the body it covered, both back and front, in quite remarkable detail. When the shroud was photographed, the negatives revealed the images in positive and these appeared very much as Western art has pictured Christ since the eleventh or twelfth century.¹ The blood-stains on the shroud show quite clearly that the nail wounds were not through the hands and feet, but where we have already shown them on medical grounds to be. The wound on the right side of the chest is considered by Vignon *not* to be the spear-thrust. In this we have concurred, but upon more anatomical and surgical fact than he was in a position to use. As already mentioned, there would be very little blood or exudate from the actual spear wound at the enshrouding, and so no visible impression would be made by it upon the cloth. Vignon analyses the bloodstains and the image very carefully and shows that all have depended upon the fact that the body was not washed before being enshrouded. In this condition, with the sweat of torture heavily charged with urea that was still being produced owing to continued life, the latter substance, aided by the moist and warm atmospheric conditions, together with the inflamed condition of the body, evaporated in upwardly moving currents of air under the shroud where they proceeded to act upon the resinous matter of the aloes paste, and in such varying concentrations that a photographic image resulted in which the anatomical features are all *normally proportioned*. Any

¹ D. Talbot Rice, Dept. of Fine Art, Univ. Edinburgh (by correspondence).

impression produced by direct contact with the shroud could not do this.

In view of the foregoing, it is possible to suggest that Jesus may not have died on the cross although he suffered the experience of dying, his higher faculties disappearing as vitality gradually failed to support them. The Resurrection followed some time later, a definite interval of time separating the two phenomena of "death" and revival, the somatic activities having been maintained at a very low level from which recovery took place as soon as conditions came to favour this.

From the scientific point of view there is little of note to criticise in the accounts of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, unless it is the want of detailed observation and precise meaning. Everyone concerned in this drama seems to have acted in a manner consistent with the experience of a great tragedy and a great mystery, a mystery which twentieth-century medical knowledge may venture to elucidate.

W. B. PRIMROSE

M. B., CH. B., F. F. A. R. C. S., D. A.

(With acknowledgments to "The Hibbert Journal")

INSPIRATION

COME to us now in words of power,
New-molten images of transmutation.
No longer symbols of the ignorance
Haunted by old pain
Blindly searching for significance
Where none is.

But in tongues of flame
Out of the cave of human consciousness
Draw the initiate Soul
Into transparency of
A Magic Dawn.

MARGARET FORBES

CROSSING THE PARK

CLEAR forms of beauty passed before my eyes
While just beneath, the agitated dark
Met each new wonder with a shocked surprise,
Its rule abruptly broken in that park.

Though clouded mind refused, the eyes would see,
The soul insisting on its beauty rights :
Though knowledge lagged behind, soul would be free
To claim for sense true figures of delight.

Each tree, each shrub in certain firm display
Imposed its form of beauty on the sight.
The wraiths of doubt danced wildly in dismay—
Forms fearful made grotesque within that light.

A blessed working this, a Mother's way,
To wake her child by beauty in the night—
Dissolving thus depression's shadow play
By bodying forth substantial forms of light.

CHARLES A. BORTZ

SANSKRIT

LIKE Ganga springing forth from Siva's head
Down on the mighty Himalayan mounts,
Thence flowing on with a majestic mien
Enriching the whole earth it cuts across,
And pouring forth itself into the widths
Of endless waters mirroring the skies,
Sacred Sanskrit links the silences
Of two Infinities with perfect speech.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

BRIGHT ANCIENT FLAME

FLUTTER up, bright ancient flame from the caves of the being !
Awake thyself silent and unsleeping in the Night's sleep,
When all seems treacherous or dead and devoid of seeing,
Defying all adversity, faithfulness to the All-Friend keep.
Even through the dangerous and dark-clustered rocks thou leap,
And into the sun-fields of Splendour adventure thy fleeing
And with a hero-lift and the vastness of a Lightning-sweep
Plunge all foolish falsity into Her Love's glorious freeing.

Where was it said that the passage is velvety and tender ?
Not at the cliffiness or cloudiness pointing thy finger
Hum a coward's weakness and failure of courage, but render
Obeisance to the Mother of Mightiness and Gracious Starkness;
Bonfiring all delusive tangles of Unfaith and Darkness,
Stretching both hands to Her Love-robe, lovingly cling Her.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

TWO MOVEMENTS

OFFERING

BURN, burn
Sweet-dire
Like this !
The heart's moth-right
To ache for the light,
To yearn
And singe its soar
For the bliss
At the core,
By the fringe of the flame—
To nurse the thirst
Of the spark for a burst
Of fire—
Make thy one claim.

AWAY FROM THEE

In this far nook my days
I hushed into night
To be lulled by the sight
Of the kin star-souls
And the Moon of my sky
So nigh.
But now that vast too rolls
Inly self-drawn,
Nearer my gaze,
No bigger than the rose
Of Dawn—
The spell of a Face
That beats into my hour
With the sting
Of an ever-new Now,
Around my place
The ring
Of an Everywhere.

Each dawn glows now,
In the ruddy flower
On the azure bough
Of space,
Sheer Grace-view soul-tense, bare.

NARESH

BUDDHA AND AFTER

I

DARKNESS had fallen upon the earth :

The Sun of the Vedic and Upanishadic Seers
was covered up by the sombre clouds
of religious misbeliefs and ritual conventions;
the fountain of life pure and sublime
was blocked up by the thick growth of moss and sedge.

The time is ripe : (it's strange how the earth calls down Heaven's bounty !)

Love and Compassion must now overflow the world :
And lo ! a figure of Light
walks the earth,
serene, poised and benign.

Not the Death-Garland, not the Bow and Arrow, not the Flute,
nor the Lightning and the Frown, nor the Cross
he carries,
but with a Heart stupendous and as wide as the sky
he embraces the world,
and men and beasts alike find in it a soothing refuge.
He brings the earth the magic of his healing dispensation,
and it is unclouded of its misery
and has a beaten track leading to Nirvana.

The placid Sun has risen in the East;

five hundred years hence
the Moon shall rise in the West and shine
with a softer and gentler light—though the people under it may fret and clash—
a steadfast Reflector of the East as it shall be.

II

Weary and long two thousand five hundred years have since passed :
the earth has undergone many a great change and revolution,
new and wonderful and staggering discoveries have been made—
the inner space of the inner world become a chimera.

Now Man, with his vaunted science, Man statistics-haunted, reigns supreme,
and with his native enquiry asks :

“India, ‘the land of Light and Truth’, ‘the Mother of all Learning’,
where stands She now ?

Her suffering millions die unfed untended uneducated unhealthy !

Should the result of Truth and Light and Knowledge
come to such a pass, adieu ! to dreamers and their tall talk !”

III

Because the Sun is eclipsed,
does the Sun exist not ?
“Was then the Sun a dream because there is Night ?”
Will it never shine again ?
It is the Sun that makes even the eclipsing powers shine,
it is still his unseen and ungrudging light.

IV

The East is afire with the red of the dawning Sun—
the genial blood of new birth and hope and day.
The West is aglow with the endearing melancholy of the dying Sun—
the promise of a death-in-life and a life-in-death.

V

The moss and the sedge are cleared ;
the fountain must spring yet higher

For the very earth is set on the sunlit path.
For Man has housed Space and Time and World in his room ;
And he now understands Humanity is One, all men Brothers,
though blind he was and may be for sometime more.

For the Death-Garland, the Bow and Arrow, the Flute, the Enlightened One,
the Lightning and the Frown, the Cross, East and West,
in one embodiment must come,
is come.

Let's wait and dream : it's the hour exquisite, the Dawn-fraught darkest hour :
the Time
when man must outgrow himself,
acquire new wings,
become god or super-man or whatever you will.

For a New World with a new and vertiginous locomotion moves
quickenning the creation of newer and sunnier beings
who shall attain the Impossible.

FORWARD WE MARCH

(Written on the night of February 12, 1965)

FORWARD and onward
Ever we march !
Who dares to defy,
And hold us in bonds ?
Heaven's Light is our guide,
Truth immaculate is our might,
Love's bright sword
Flashes in our hands.
—We march onward and forward.
Time is our companion;
Right's own golden standard
We have unfurled
Over this wide world.
Nothing can daunt us—
Nothing can make us tame,
For, we are the children of
God's undying flame !
Over rocks of Nescience
And gulf of Hell's wrath,
We march forward and onward,
They fly from our path.
To the New Horizon's rim
Our vision is fixed forever,
Nothing can make it dim.
We march Heaven smiles;
The Sun and the Moon greet !
Fate trembles helpless,—
As we march with surest feet.
We march—the hordes of Darkness
Whimper and sigh !
We march onward always,
And Death we defy.
The inevitable goal
Has entranced our soul,
Forward we march !
The children of Light we are,
We move like the morning star !
For we march onward,
We march forward.

KAMALAKANTO

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Mother of Love (Vol. I) *By M. P. Pandit*, Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pages 256. Price : Rs. 7.00

THE key-note of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the transformation of human life into the life divine so that the ascent to higher planes of consciousness has to be completed by a descent of the higher consciousness, "for transmutation of the base and the dark into the luminous and the true, for transmutation of the ugly and the wrong into the beautiful and the right."¹ This has been the single aim of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the last fifty years or even more. Theirs is not an ascetic withdrawal from the world but a taking up of all the activities of human life; and, as a consequence, all the problems that have 'vexed and perplexed' man have to be faced, truly diagnosed and then resolved into a divine harmony. As Sri Aurobindo says : "Life, not a remote silent or high-uptifted ecstatic Beyond—Life alone, is the field of our Yoga".² So much so that for the Mother, "The true change of consciousness is that which will transform the physical conditions of the world and make of it a new creation."

All the problems of human life have to be solved and their number is endless—there are accidents, strokes of hard luck, ill-health, frustrations at baulked desires, lack of restful sleep—in England alone 6,000 persons die every year because of over-dosage of drugs that induce sleep and so on. M. P. Pandit's book will fulfil a great need of the modern man who has little time to spare for abstruse or cryptic spiritual volumes. He has arranged all the topics in an alphabetical order and devoted brief space to each in a simple and straightforward style.

The book comprises three parts. In part one the author gives us an account of how the Mother stands to the disciples of Sri Aurobindo, as the embodiment of Divine Ananda, Divine Consciousness-Force and Divine Truth and even beyond these the Supreme Creative Power, all these being summed up in the mantra given by Sri Aurobindo's

Om ! Anandamayī Caitanyamayī Satyamayī Parame.

How should we chant it so that its sounds carry by their vibrations into the substance of our own consciousness the experience of these higher planes ? Pandit devotes some pages to this but I shall quote only what he writes about Om. "To repeat this sound-vibration that is embodied in Om is to set into action a subtle movement that reaches out and calls the Truth of Brahman to manifest. It is a power. In the very act of being spelled out, it clears the air of dross and impurity, chases out the elements that obstruct and creates an atmosphere favourable to the insurge of the Presence that is sought for".

¹ *The Hour of God*, by Sri Aurobindo.

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

Having dwelt on Her different aspects as the Mother of compassion who comes to soothe and solace us in our anguish, the Mother of Might who fills us with heroic strength and the Mother of Knowledge who leads us infallibly and unfalteringly towards Truth, Light and Immortality, the author gives us a number of personal experiences bringing out Her endless patience and inexhaustible *Love* with which She deals with the sadhaks and children gathered round Her so that each one is uplifted.

In the second part the author gives us the substance of the Mother's writings addressed to the disciples or given in the form of talks. All these are arranged in an alphabetical order. The subjects are presented succinctly but clearly and effectively, and, what is more, simply and grippingly. Accidents—how they can be avoided by an inner equilibrium, how energy inexhaustible can be tapped by a spiritual opening, the conquest of fear of death, illnesses and how to cure them, and then there are the problems facing the spiritual seeker such as meditation and concentration, sacrifice, self-giving and sincerity, why all progress is pursued by pain, etc.

The third part contains gems of the purest ray serene from the Mother's own words. About the Mother's writings the author remarks, "She goes always to the heart of the matter, in every field with an unerring perception and unravels the mystery, disentangles the threads and presents the problem in a nakedness that is staggering and its solution in an utmost simplicity. Her statements are plain, direct presentations of truth inherent with the light and power of the consciousness that offers them."

We shall give some random specimens to show how Her words fully bear out the author's observation. In the letter 'A' we find the entry *Age* and here is what the Mother says, "Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years." Schweitzer, Nehru and Churchill are standing examples of this. Is it possible in human life to enjoy good fortune perennially? Well, this is what She says under *Best Happenings*, "Be always at the summit of your consciousness and always it is the best that will happen to you." Are the *circumstances* of life merely fortuitous happenings or are they meant to serve as eye-openers? This is what She says, "Always circumstances come to reveal the hidden weaknesses that have to be overcome;" so the next advice is, "Change yourself and the circumstances will change." Does *courage* lie merely in facing dangers and our human enemies? No. "A noblest courage is to recognise one's fault." How to iron out our *difficulties*? The first step is not to expect them. "To anticipate difficulties is to help them happen." But when they are staring at us face to face? "A *smile* acts upon difficulties as the sun upon the clouds—it disperses them." Or "To conquer the difficulties there is more power in a smile than in a sigh."

There are a hundred and odd pages alphabetically presenting the Mother's illuminating advice on the various problems of life. Usually spiritual books demand a sustained effort and much leisure but this is a book that can be read with life-long profit in buses and railway trains and can fill also the droning vacuity of an air journey.

Skipping through the pages of this book I recall these lines of Francis Thompson :

Short arm man needs to reach to heaven
So ready is heaven to lean to man.

R. KHANNA

Sri Arvind Sahitya—Ek Jhanki (Hindi) by *Narayan Prasad Bindu* : Publishers, Sri Aurobindo Society, 2, Brabourne Road, Calcutta-1, and Pondicherry-2. Pages 76, Price Rs. 2.

“Know thyself” is the word of the Rishis, to be above mutations of Prakriti and be the true Purusha within, and in our own recent times has rung another thunderous and prophetic voice from within the walls of a lunatic asylum,—“Transcend thyself”, says the famous German philosopher Nietzsche, and be the lion-man. A very pregnant voice but tragically misguided and dangerous. ‘A divine life in a divine body’—this is the new formula that glitters from the calm avataric Personality of Sri Aurobindo, with the promise of a Satyayuga and the Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth, or the Kingdom of ‘the One’, as says the Mother. All the writings of Sri Aurobindo are an index-finger to this one culminating Peak, to this pyramid-point of evolutionary ascent. His integral grasp of all life and its multifarious and confusing problems include in its all-comprehending sweep everything in a vast and luminous synthesis and give each aspect its proper place.

Narayan Prasad Bindu has done a very commendable work in gisting for the Hindi public the salient features of Sri Aurobindo’s major works on the Foundations of Indian Culture, the Veda Philosophy, the Life Divine, Integral Yoga, Evolution. Poetry and its Future. It fulfils a long-felt need to present to Hindi readers some literature which might be easy to understand and give in a short grasp Sri Aurobindo’s vast writings. In his pleasing and brisk and crisp style the author gives a bird’s-eye view of most of the main subjects dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in his works. It is a tempting window for those who might not get the opportunity of going through them and would know something about their bond-breaking and transporting contents that force one’s vision and will towards the coming era of the divine life on earth.

It is indeed a feat that the writer should have succeeded in gathering so many facets of Sri Aurobindo’s literature in so small a mass of less than 100 pages. It is a pleasant and refreshing journey to go with him, to be taken round, up and down, to see vividly the many landscapes and dimensions, the glory and glimmer, the plateaus, the old road of the Eternal Way and the new sunlit Path, the greatneses and short-comings of the past, the promised peaks and dawns of the future. Although there is no picking and choosing and the whole book must be read and enjoyed, the chapter on Sri Aurobindo’s poetry will be most keenly appreciated by lovers of poetry.

The book is well-printed and well-bound in a fascinating cardboard cover.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

THIRD SEMINAR

14 February 1965

THE third quarterly Seminar of the New Age Association was held on 14 February 1965 as directed by the Mother. She gave the following subject for this Seminar :

“How to discriminate between Truth and falsehood in the impulses of action.”

12 members of the Association had given their names to participate as speakers, but owing to the disturbance that occurred on 11 February 1965, 3 of these members could not come. The other 9 who read their papers were :

Amita, Brajkishore, Manoj, Mita, Prithwindra, Romen, Rose, Rukiya, Selvi.

The Seminar was held in the New Hall of the Centre of Education from 8.30 to 10.00 a.m.

A short piece of the Mother's recorded music was played at the commencement. After that Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman of the Seminar, made the following introductory speech :

Friends,

The question that the Mother has put in the subject She has given for this Seminar would naturally remind us of the New Year Message She has given this time : *“Salute to the advent of the Truth.”* That Truth is the Supramental Truth, *Satyam*, whose reign upon earth will create the New Truth Age, the *Satya Yuga*, in the life of humanity. That Truth was born upon earth some nine years back, but it was an inner birth of its initial power in the earth's subtle secret layers. But since then it has been continuously growing in its plenitude and potency, and now it is emerging from that inner secrecy and is coming increasingly nearer the earth's outer physical plane to openly manifest and establish its reign in the external conditions of life. So the Mother has asked us to salute its advent.

But this salutation to the Truth, if it is to be sincere and effective, requires first and foremost its clear recognition and acceptance not only in our inner consciousness

but also in all the actions of our life. For that it is indispensable that we should learn to discriminate precisely between the impulses of that Truth and the promptings of falsehood that largely impel our actions at present.

For the aspirant of the New Life this is not merely a speculative theoretical question but a very practical urgent problem confronting him constantly in the concrete situations of life. At every moment he has to decide which particular course of action he shall adopt out of the several alternative ways that present themselves to him. That he can only do if he gets a distinct inner indication enabling him to clearly discriminate between the various impulses to action that come to him and the sources from which they originate. Unless he develops an assured faculty to have this true discernment he may be misled in spite of his right intentions.

The aspirant of the Truth-Life would wish to follow in his actions not the obscure promptings of his desires and passions, nor the half-lit indications of his groping ignorant mind, both of which can be agents of falsehood, but only the impulses of the Truth-Consciousness. For it is imperatively necessary for him to thoroughly cast away all falsehood from his consciousness and life if he is to be totally transfigured in the Supramental Truth whose advent upon earth is now so visibly and concretely close that the Mother has asked us to salute it. That salutation, if it is not to be merely a formal insincere greeting, but a whole-hearted acceptance in his entire life, making that Truth a real and effective power initiating and governing all his actions, needs as its indispensable condition a precise discrimination between the impulses that come from it and those others that come from falsehood. How shall he do it ? This is the most urgent and practical problem confronting him at the present moment, when the issue between the forces of falsehood that have till now reigned upon earth and the New Powers of Truth that are emerging to vanquish them, has reached its acutest tension. Each one has to make his choice, for on it depends his and humanity's destiny.

The nine speakers at this Seminar will tell us what way they have found most helpful for this purpose.

After they have spoken I shall read out to you what reply the Mother gave when She was asked for Her own answer to the question She has given for this Seminar. I shall also read out 3 letters of Sri Aurobindo which provide precise answers to the same question. We had sent these letters to the Mother asking Her permission to read them at the end of this Seminar. After seeing them She wrote : "This is simply marvellous and answers most perfectly the question. Nothing more is needed."

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*

After this speech the 9 speakers were called one by one in the alphabetical order of their names to deliver their speeches.

These speeches are reproduced below.

HOW TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN THE IMPULSES OF ACTION

I

This is really a very difficult problem, so much that seekers in the past have often avoided it by refraining from action altogether. To be able to distinguish Truth from falsehood in the impulses of action one has to be a real yogi, not attached in any way to the action or its result, but conscious of the source from which the impulse comes and therefore undertaking it simply because it has to be done.

Of course we cannot hope to sit in meditation half our lives and achieve this aim as soon as we get into action after that. This is something that has to grow with our consciousness and like everywhere else we must be ready to face innumerable failures and half-successes, because the perfect end cannot be reached till the whole consciousness is changed. Every unregenerated part likes to have its own way, thus throwing its dark drag on any impulse to action, however true it may be. But we have to act keeping in mind our aim and trying to be sincere about it; then we shall learn. As Sri Aurobindo says, "By action, by works, not by inaction comes the knowledge and the release".¹

First we have to learn to step back from the stream of action. Each one finds his own way to do this. For people who are active, capable and eager to do something on their own, one way is to tell themselves, and really understand, that even without them all the work they are doing would have been done—and perhaps better!—if it is something that really needs to be done. Another way is to feel that external action is not the only thing we are on earth to accomplish: there is a deeper being we have to discover and live in, a greater Power we must know and submit to, or we shall be lost in our doing.... Then, we have to decide, once for all, never to act on lower impulses, never to act under a stress of emotion because at such moments our judgment is clouded and we can never be at our best.

As a third step, which need not come after the other two but rather grows along with them, we must try to trace the source or really at first the motive of the action. For, usually at the beginning we do the thing and look back at it. We have here to differentiate between the various parts of our being and to distinguish their vibrations. Gradually we learn to stand back quietly before undertaking anything and get first the inner sanction. When we are sufficiently developed within we simply follow the fine perception in the heart which discerns the right from the wrong.... But if this is the only way at our disposal it is a very tricky one. Because until we are absolutely sure of our contact with the Soul we cannot be certain of our judgment. Misinter-

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 239 (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education Collection, Vol. III).

pretations are bound to come, coloured by our mental notions, vital desires and ambitions, physical and collective habits.... Luckily, along with this, a simpler verification is open to us: to judge by the Mother's presence and guidance, in all sincerity to abide by the rule She Herself has given us, "Never do anything that you cannot do in front of Me without feeling embarrassed, never say anything that you cannot repeat to Me without difficulty."¹

No rigid moral or mental rule can be set because each individual's law of action and requirements are different. To try and discover what that dharma is seems to be the first pointer to true action for an individual. All that helps to work out that aim of our being will be the true action for us, whatever it may be by human standards. We have simply to fulfil, in an ever-growing inner and outer perfection, the role we are to play in this life. The result we must leave in the hands of the divine Director who will guide us through the play with the right cues and the apparently unforeseen action. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "Care not for time and success. Act out thy part, whether it be to fail or to prosper."²

There is one sign which helps in this judgment : if we act under an impulse which is not right we feel concerned, restless and oppressed by the responsibility of the result which seems to be ours; but, whenever we do something prompted by a true impulse we are filled with a joy deep, pure and elevating, an inexhaustible energy flows into us widening our consciousness and making us do the action more as an instrument than as the doer.

AMITA

II

When we look for the motive-force in ordinary human life, we perceive only a certain automatism. All seems to be driven from below, by the million-rhythmed impulse of Nature, as if imparted at the beginning of creation. And no one knows to what pastures she is driving life. Truth has no meaning here, apart from what habit gives it. In a life whose motives are shifting quicksands, where truth is a word-mask worn by all that is merely hunger, devouring, satisfaction, where shall we hope to find a meaning to the word ?

It is only when, fed up with this double-faced Nature that cheats and laughs, we look for a path that may lead beyond her, to a point that is steady in all that is revolving, that the word "truth" begins to acquire a meaning. For, then among the actions, we do distinguish those that draw us closer to the path, nearer to the central point, however dim, and those that draw away. Hence, for him who follows the way, every act may be significantly charged with "right or wrong", "real or unreal", "true or false". Of course, we soon discover that it is not the act in itself that is true or false, but the attitude with which it is done. If we have to remain on the path, we have to be very sincere to ourselves. For, truth and falsehood will

¹ A free rendering of the Mother's original in French. See *Quelques Paroles, Quelques Prières*, p. 54.

² *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 44.

appear in a million ways one, when egoism and desire blind us. The greater part of us that belongs to Nature still responds to impulses without knowing their purpose. They lead us astray and we lose sight of the ideal.

Impulses have almost always a blinding effect. We cannot discriminate while acting under an impulse. Of course, we know the truth or falsehood retrospectively, by the result. A true action brings peace, strength, happiness, confidence; while a false one frustrates and weakens the will. If we have to discriminate before an impulse has wrought its havoc, so that the knowledge is effective, we have to know our nature and the forces that move us. If we recognise a false vibration at a distance, by the uneasiness, fear or sudden depression it might cause, we have to stop it there, and reject from within us all that could respond to it. We have at the same time to train ourselves to reject all fear, because it invites the very object it dreads.

If we recognise the false vibration (by its possessiveness that weakens, nervous tension, feeling of emptiness or sinking or disintegrating) after it has invaded us, we must suppress with our conscious will all temptation to express it in speech or action and wait until the storm passes. This "tapas" will soon turn into force and quiet understanding. It will give us the perception and strength to reject it better the next time. The first few seconds are very important. The temptation comes in the form of the false impulse justifying itself as true. But if we have held well, it is easier to perceive its falsity and to reject it than we imagine. There can be certitude of truth in an action only when it radiates from the central being. That act alone brings delight and freedom. If we are sincere, we can always perceive as to what we should do. When such indication is not clear, we must silently wait, instead of fretting or jumping to an impulsive movement. These can be the most fruitful moments of preparation and gathering.

A constant vigilance is required on our part. The possibilities of error dog all along the path. They are magnified in moments of crises and upheavals. This happens not only in the life of the individual but also in collective life. Forces that have not had an opportunity surge up, churning the masses of men, spouting and foaming and frothing, challenging with the ghost-figures of ideal and justice that fill the sky. The mere power may confound even those that stand for truth. It is mistaken for inspiration that leads men and masses to their destiny.

Yet there is a fundamental difference between the two. That which surges from below is always a force of disintegration. It works for all that is opposed to order. Whereas when Mahakali with her Truth-Force possesses men, she cannot lead them to their perdition even though her action is temporarily destructive. She not only enforces her will, but leaves the touch of the infinite and the vast. There is a classical sculpture of Shiva destroying the Asuras. On his lips can be traced not wrath, but a serene smile, proceeding from the stillness of his trance.

One who is seeking to master Nature cannot let her impulses drive him. If man has to fulfil his divinity through Nature, he has to discover another status from where he can act upon her. In order to break away from this impulsive life, certain

disciplines used to advocate inaction. But that did not raise the instrument, it only put it aside. Periods of inaction could certainly help to observe our own nature. But parallel and more positive must be the regular stress of a steady will upon the instrument.

BRAJKISHORE

III

Friends,

I would first like to draw your attention to a small orthographic consideration which I am sure has not escaped your keen scrutiny. The Mother in the subject She has given us for this seminar ("How to discriminate between Truth and falsehood in the impulses of action") has written 'Truth' with a capital T. Now it is of capital importance that we understand first what this Truth (with a capital T) is; for then, and only then, can we judge if a certain impulse of action is true or false, that is to say, if it is in accordance or not with the Truth.

Obviously the Mother is not referring to any social, moral or metaphysical truth. Indeed it would seem that the Divine delights in going, more often than not, counter to all notions of morality. Did not the Lord on the battlefield of Kurukshetra command Arjuna, when seized with an all too apparent pious intention of refraining from all slaughter, "Arise, slay thy enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom" ? One might well speculate on what the Gita would have to tell us if Gandhiji were to be Arjuna's charioteer. But speculations apart, the point we have to bear in mind is this that what is proposed to us is a way of life based on a spiritual truth and not on any moral, social or metaphysical truth. Sri Aurobindo categorically says :

"It is equally ignorant and one thousand miles away from my teaching to find it in your relations with human beings, or in the nobility of the human character or an idea that we are here to establish mental and moral and social Truth and justice on human and egoistic lines. I have never promised to do anything of the kind. Human nature is made up of imperfections, even its righteousness and virtue are pretensions, imperfections and prancings of a self-approbatory egoism... What is aimed at by us is a spiritual truth as the basis of life, the first words of which are surrender and union with the Divine and the transcendence of ego. So long as that basis is not established, a sadhak is only an ignorant and imperfect human being struggling with the evils of the lower nature."¹

We would do well to remember in this connection that the spiritual truth which we are seeking here is the highest that has yet been realised upon earth; about the nature of which Sri Aurobindo says :

"First of all, there is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1964, p. 14.

for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever in any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean simply that we cannot appreciate and explain.”¹

Friends, it would seem that we are put in a quandary. For so long as we do not realise the Truth how shall we discriminate between Truth and falsehood? Or are we to suppose that we can do away with all notions of morality since we profess to be bound by none? We should then be like the person Sri Aurobindo describes in his incomparable humourous style in the poem ‘Self’² :

He said, “I am egoless, spiritual, free,”
 Then swore because his dinner was not ready.
 I asked him why. He said, “It is not me,
 But the belly’s hungry god who gets unsteady.”

And when the poet questions further,

He answered, “I can understand your doubt.
 But to be free is all. It does not matter
 How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,
 Making a row over your daily platter.

To be aware of self is liberty,
 Self I have got and, having self, am free.”

Well, I am afraid that the Mother would not have free souls of the above type around Her for the great Change She is working out in the terrestrial evolution. She bids us rise *above* all morality and not sink below it, and for this a greater self-discipline is required. She asks us to follow the soft voice of the psychic which, being in constant relation with the Truth, can alone lead us by the Right Path, *ṛtasya panthā*. In Her own words :

“The voice of the ordinary consciousness is a moral voice which distinguishes between good and bad, encourages us towards the good, forbids us to do the bad. This is very useful in ordinary life, until the moment when one can be aware of one’s psychic being and allow oneself to be entirely guided by it, that is to say, raise oneself above the ordinary humanity, free oneself from all egoism and become a conscious instrument of the Divine Will. The Soul, itself being a portion of the Divine, is above all moral notions, it bathes in the Divine Light and manifests it,

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, American Edition, p. 4.

² *Last Poems*, p. 34.

but can truly rule over the whole being only when the ego has been dissolved.”¹

Before I conclude I would like to quote a few lines from the *Prières et Méditations de la Mère*. The Mother says :

“Il est impossible que dans toute action terrestre il n’y ait pas un bon et un mauvais côté. Même les actions qui expriment le mieux la loi d’Amour la plus divine contiennent en elles quelque chose du désordre et de l’ombre inhérents au monde tel qu’il est actuellement....

She further says :

“Puisque tout est mélangé forcément dans la manifestation actuelle, le plus sage est de faire de son mieux, en s’efforçant vers une lumière toujours plus haute et de prendre son parti de ce que la perfection absolue soit pour le moment irréalisable.

Avec quelle ardeur cependant ne faut-il pas aspirer toujours à cette inaccessible perfection!...” (23 Mars 1914.)

Let us therefore call to our aid Agni, the divine Will-force, and like the Rishi of the Upanishad invoke :

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठा ते नमउक्ति विधेम ॥

“O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity; remove from us the devious attraction of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose.”²

(To be continued)

MANOJ

¹ Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, February 1963, p. 19.

² Isha Upanishad, Verse 18, Sri Aurobindo’s translation, See Sri Aurobindo, *Eight Upanishads*, p. 17.

**SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

NEWSLETTER

No. 4.

April 1965

1. Education's True Purpose

There is much criticism over the plethora of text-books that flood the market, eighty per cent of which, it is said, are of no use to sincere students if not downright harmful. The goods purchased are always subject (in value) to the knowledge of the purchaser. The flood of text-books on the market is perhaps rather a healthy sign that education is always seeking something new and it will not find it unless it is allowed the freedom of experiment. This is, of course, precisely what education does not have in many of its fields of operation.

Sri Aurobindo says : "The free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness; for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive." This urge for freedom in education, even up to the point of revolt, open or covert, is the sign of the imperative change that is to come about in this important field of human endeavour. It cannot be put back any longer and those Governments that do not recognize the importance of this imperative urge for change will miss their place in the future progress of their country.

2. Research Scientists

In view of the growing demand for machine time by research scientists in the School of Physics Department in the University of Sydney as well as by other university departments and other Australian universities, it became imperative to examine the possibility of replacement. The new computer finally chosen which is faster and much larger was the English Electric-Leo-KDF9 computer, which was installed in February 1964 at the cost of £400,000. The new machine is one of the most advanced computers in the world with a production rate equivalent to a hundred thousand skilled personnel.

3. Research Medical

Future surgical methods, such as the transplantation of large organs, seem to require work at lower temperatures for much longer periods of time. Research in Britain has reached the stage where it is now possible to halt circulation of blood in the body for one hour. This is done by cooling the body by bloodstream cooling. Blood is removed from the body, cooled and returned to the body, which is cooled to 15 degrees centigrade quite rapidly. The method is complicated and expensive, but it does allow some otherwise impossible operations to be performed. Research into ways of cooling the body to even lower temperatures is continuing.

4. *Teaching Kits for Secondary Schools*

Mr. A. C. Travis, an inspector of secondary schools for New South Wales Department of Education, recently paid a four-months' visit at the request of Unesco to Pakistan during which he visited more than a hundred educational institutions in widely separated areas and advised on the setting up of science teaching facilities in Pakistan Government schools. Science is now a compulsory subject for secondary school students in Pakistan, as is craftwork. Mr. Travis has since developed kits for science and manual arts subjects, with particular concern for the requirements and facilities of the schools in Pakistan as they are at present; reference books for teachers on the best way of using the equipment are being supplied with the kits.

5. *Asian News*

An important Australian-Asian association has recently been formed: the Asian and Australian Society of Neurological Surgeons. Its members include distinguished surgeons from Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Japan and the Philippines.

6. *Post Bag*

There have been several inquiries since the death of T. S. Eliot (January 1965) as to (a) whether his work will survive and (b) whether his work will be used much in education. It has been said that Eliot will survive in the same way as Ben Jonson; that is, as a distinguished monument in the history of intellectual taste, but little read by other than scholars and academics. *The Waste Land*, though written over forty years ago, still strikes one as novel and radical, yet at the same time a classic. Editors tell us that every year new readers discover it, are excited by it and imitate it.

Eliot was a revolutionary who survived his own revolution, and as Helen Gardner wrote of him fifteen years ago, 'He has by now created the taste by which he is enjoyed.' Few poets in English literature have done this.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT