

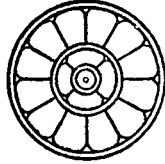
MOTHER INDIA

AUGUST 15, 1965: SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

Price: Re. 1.00

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

Mother India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVII

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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Edited by: K. D. SETHNA

Published by : P. COUNOUMA

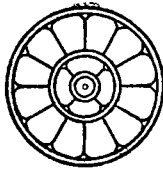
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY—2

Printed by : AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry—2

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No : R. N. 8667/63



Money is not meant
to make money; money
is meant to make the
earth ready for the advent
of the new creation.

A stylized signature or flourish consisting of several overlapping, sweeping lines that form a shape reminiscent of a large, stylized letter 'M' or a similar abstract mark.

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 18, 1940

N : We had once heard from you that Blake is greater than Shakespeare

SRI AUROBINDO : I didn't say that. It is Housman who says Blake has more pure poetry than Shakespeare.

N : What is meant by this ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It means : Blake's poetry is not vital or mental, it is not intellectual but comes from beyond the mind, expressing mystic or spiritual experiences.

N : Can one really compare Blake and Shakespeare ? They have two quite different spheres. But if Blake has more pure poetry, is he greater ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Shakespeare is greater in some ways, Blake in other ways. Shakespeare is greater in that he has a larger poetic power and more creative force while Blake is more expressive.

N : What is the difference you intend between "creative" and "expressive" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : "Creative" is something which brings up a convincing picture of life, sets before us a whole living situation of the spirit. "Expressive" is just that which communicates feeling, vision or experience. In Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven", for instance, you get a true creative picture. Blake was often confused and was a failure when he tried to be creative in his prophetic poems.

N : You wrote to X that, where life is concerned, Shakespeare is everywhere and Blake nowhere.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite true.

P : That is almost like Tagore's stand, his plea for variety, for covering a lot of life.

N : But can one compare two or more poets and decide who is greater ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How can one ?

N : You have said that Yeats is considered greater than AE because of his greater poetic style.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yeats is more sustained.

N : Then there is some standard ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What standard ? Some say Sophocles is greater than Shakespeare. Others favour Euripides. Still others say Euripides is nowhere near Sophocles. How can one decide whether Dante is greater or Shakespeare ?

P : It is better to ask what the criterion of great poetry is.

N : All right. What is the criterion ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Is there any criterion ?

N : Then how to judge ?

SRI AUROBINDO : One feels.

N : But different people feel differently. We say Nishikanto is a great poet. Tagore may not concede it.

SRI AUROBINDO : So can there be any standard ? Doesn't each one go by his own feeling or liking or opinion ?

P : Abercrombie tries to give a general criterion. One point of his I remember : if the outlook of a poet is negative or pessimistic, his poetry can't be great. For example, Hardy's.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't see why. Usually, of course, great poets are not pessimistic. They have too much of life-force in them. But generally every poet is dissatisfied with something or other and has an element of pessimism. Sophocles said, "The best thing is not to be born." (*Laughter*)

N : Our S here will like this.

S : There is no harm in being born after one has had liberation in the previous birth. But for people like Nirod and myself...

N : How do you know I had no liberation in my previous birth ?

S : If you believe like that, it is all right.

P : When Sri Aurobindo said that Y has a remarkable mind, N said : "I have a remarkably thick physical crust."

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*) : It is good to be remarkable in some way.

N : I fully agree.

P : N doesn't seem to be satisfied with your answers.

SRI AUROBINDO : সৰ্ব্বধৰ্ম্মান্ পৰিত্যজ্য (Abandon all *dharmas*, standards). (*Laughter*)

N : You don't complete the sentence.

SRI AUROBINDO : Because you haven't left all standards.

N : As regards poetry, I have. I want to know what your opinion is and I just abide by it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then why not be satisfied with what I have said ?

N : The trouble is that some of us are always comparing Nishikanta and J. One party says the former is greater because of his mastery of rhythm, expression and variety, while others say no such comparison is possible, because the two have different domains. J is as great in the mystic field : one has to see if J has reached as

great a height of perfection in that.

SRI AUROBINDO : All one can say is that Nishikanta has a greater mastery over the medium and greater creative force. Why not be satisfied with that ?

N : What precisely did you say about creative poetry ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There a complete picture of life is given. Thus "The Hound of Heaven" brings intensely before us the picture of the life of a man when pursued by God.

S : Thompson had some experience also of what he has written.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh yes.

N : It seems to me that Nishikanta is not quite a success in what is to be called mystic poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO : What do you mean by "mystic" ?

N : I can't define it—it is, say, Blake's poetry or J's.

SRI AUROBINDO : If you mean "occult", Nishikanta hasn't tried much in that line. But he has succeeded in what he has tried.

N : But is his work mystic ?

P : By "mystic", N means perhaps the expression of the essence of things hidden behind.

N : I mean the expression of the spiritual truth behind by means of symbols.

SRI AUROBINDO : Symbolic, then. There are various kinds of mystic poetry.

EVENING

N : It seems difficult to have creative force in mystic symbolic poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is difficult, but not impossible.

N : Is there any creative force in Mallarmé's famous sonnet on the Swan ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have forgotten the poem.

N : It is the poem in which he speaks of the wings being stuck in the frozen ice so that the swan can't fly.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no creative force there. It is descriptive and expressive. In lyrical poetry it is generally difficult to give the creative force. It is more expressive and interpretative. In sonnets too there is the difficulty; only in a series of sonnets can one build up something creative, as in Meredith's "Modern Love".

N : Then the creative force can come only in narrative poems ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In the epic and the drama also, and, as I have said, in a series of sonnets. But the modern poets say that long poems are "not poetry". Only in short poems you get the essence of pure poetry.

N : Some modern poets themselves have written long poems.

SRI AUROBINDO : By "long poems" they mean long like epics.

P : Thomas Hardy or somebody else has written some short poems on the French Revolution, which seem to have creative force.

SRI AUROBINDO : Poems on the French Revolution ? Who on earth is the author ?

N : I suppose Tagore will score highly in the matter of creative force. He has a lot of it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where ? Where has he created ? He is essentially a lyrical poet and has no more creative force in his poetry than in his drama. One of his long poems I remember, where a boy was thrown into the sea. It is very finely descriptive, but he has not created anything.

P : In *Balaka* and elsewhere he gives only a fine description of universal life and an interpretation of nature.

N : Is X creative ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't think he is; he is also lyrical.

N : In that poem of his, "Transformation of Nature", doesn't he give a creative force ? He first describes the aspects of ordinary consciousness and sees the utter futility of it and slowly by turning to the Divine the transformation comes.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the description of an idea. Does he enable you to enter into that state of consciousness, live in it ? Very few poets are creative.

N : But we have heard that people have been helped in their sadhana by reading his poems.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is a different matter. You don't understand what I mean. When you read *Hamlet*, you become Hamlet and you feel you are Hamlet. When you read Homer, you are Achilles living and moving and you feel you have become Achilles. That is what I mean by creativeness. On the other hand, in Shelley's "Skylark", there is no skylark at all. You don't feel you have become one with the skylark. Through that name, Shelley has only expressed his ideas and feelings. Take that line of his :

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

It is a very fine poetical statement. But it is not creative in the sense that it doesn't make you live in that truth or that expression.

N : But in poems of bhakti, devotion, you do feel the bhakti.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a feeling only. It doesn't create a world for you to live and move in. Feeling is not enough in order to be creative.

P : Abercrombie also says that a poem should reproduce the experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on what you mean by experience. An idea or a thought may be an experience; feeling is also experience.

P : In comparing Shelley and Milton, Abercrombie says that *Prometheus Unbound* does not have so great a theme as *Paradise Lost* and so it couldn't equal the latter in greatness.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not so great because Shelley doesn't create anything there. But the theme is equally great.

P : Abercrombie says that Milton has created living pictures of Satan and Christ.

SRI AUROBINDO : Satan is the only character he has created. The first four Books of *Paradise Lost* are full of creative force. But Christ ? I object to Abercrombie

there. Milton has not created Christ.

P : About Dante he says he has created Beatrice and her memory was always with the poet.

SRI AUROBINDO : What about Dante's political life in Florence ? I am sure he was not thinking of Beatrice at that time.

P : Abercrombie also says that a poet passes on his experience to his readers.

N : But there are poets who don't experience anything they write of; nor do they understand what they write. They are sheer transcribers. J has done that. I too have done it.

SRI AUROBINDO : Sahana also.

NIRODBARAN

ALDOUS HUXLEY ON SRI AUROBINDO

(Extracts from a letter from New York, dated June 16, 1948, to D. K. Roy)

I THINK I wrote to you about your *Among the Great*, saying how much I liked the section on Sri Aurobindo and how helpful I found it.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* I have not yet read but if I see Blum or Gide in France—and I expect to be in that country for a short time this summer—I will find out what is being done about the Nobel Prize recommendation and add a word of my own, if they think that would be of any avail, in favour of Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*, which I regard as a book not merely of the highest importance as regards its content, but remarkably fine as a piece of philosophic and religious literature.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE PSYCHIC BEING AND ITS ACTION

Q : It is said that if a disciple receives his Guru's touch or grace his difficulties disappear because the soul in him, the "psychic", takes charge.

SRI AUROBINDO : All that is popular Yoga. The Guru's touch or grace may open something, but the difficulties have always to be worked out still. What is true is that if there is complete surrender which implies the prominence of the psychic, these difficulties are no longer felt as a burden or obstacle but only as superficial imperfections which the working of the grace will remove. (26-6-1936)

Q : If a disciple's psychic is not very active should he not have recourse to mental knowledge ?

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

Everything is dangerous in the sadhana or can be, except the psychic change (2-4-1936)

Q : When I wrote that while reading your answers I experienced something coming out of my heart, you replied, "It depends on the nature of the movement. Something from the psychic ?" Well, it was something from the psychic. But how did it get connected with the answers ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The psychic can be connected with anything that gives room for love or bhakti.

It is the psychic contact with what is in or behind the answers—what comes out into them from myself. (26-6-1936)

Q : Just after making my Pranams to the Mother I experienced an unimaginable depth in the heart and a fire bursting out.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is of course the psychic depth and the psychic fire. (5-5-1936)

Q : When the sadhana is well on the way in an average disciple, does his inner being take long before it is psychocised ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It takes some time to be fully psychocised.

Q : Are my inner being, intellectual mind, middle vital and the emotional being psychocised ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't think it can be said definitely yet. There has been a change and growth of consciousness in these parts, but it has been due partly to knowledge and force from above, partly to the action of the psychic fire. It has not been done by the psychic coming forward and governing and guiding mental and vital which is a very distinct and tangible process. There has been a certain amount of psychicism, but subordinate to the growth of consciousness which seems to be the main movement. (18-6-1936)

Q : If the dynamic descent comes down into the heart, will it relieve the psychic being fully ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you mean relieve ? It can help the psychic to come forward, but it does not always do so automatically—it at least creates better conditions for the psychic. (27-6-1936)

Q : What is the difference between the love of the psychic and that of the higher spiritual planes ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The love that belongs to the spiritual planes is of a different kind—the psychic has its own more personal love, bhakti, surrender. Love in the higher or spiritual mind is more universal and impersonal. The two must join together to make the highest divine love. (27-6-1936)

Q : You wrote, "It must be that it is easier for the nature to open the psychic from above than directly." Is it not rather a defect in the nature not to be able to open the psychic directly ? There are people who simply concentrate on the heart centre and get a psychic opening.

SRI AUROBINDO : In using the expression "opening of the psychic" I was thinking not of an ordinary psychic opening producing some amount of psychic (as opposed to vital) love and bhakti, but of what is called the coming in front of the psychic. When that happens one is aware of the psychic being with its simple spontaneous selfgiving and feels its increasing direct control (not merely a veiled or half veiled influence) over mind, vital and physical. Especially that is the psychic discernment which at once lights up the thoughts, emotional movements, vital pushes, physical habits and leaves nothing there obscure, substituting the right movements for the wrong ones. It is this that is difficult and rare. More often the discernment is mental and it is the mind that tries to put all in order. In that case it is the descent of the higher consciousness through the mind that opens the psychic, instead of the psychic opening directly. 13-7-1936

Q : Cannot "the coming in front of the psychic" be brought about by a direct concentration on the heart ? Why should it be done necessarily by the higher consciousness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Nobody said it must be done necessarily from above. Naturally it is done direct and is most effective then. But when it is found difficult to do direct,

as it is in certain natures, then the change begins from above, and the consciousness descending from there has to liberate the heart centre. As it acts on the heart centre, the psychic action becomes more possible. 15-7-1936

The direct opening of the psychic centre is easy only when the ego-centricity is greatly diminished and also if there is a strong bhakti for the Mother. A spiritual humility and sense of submission and dependence is necessary. 15-7-36

From NAGIN DOSHI

LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

A PERSONAL RECORD

(Continued from the July issue)

THE OXFORD COLLOQUIUM FROM 15TH SEPTEMBER TO 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1955

OXFORD, like Cambridge, is an old seat of learning which has given leaders to England in many walks of culture. To literature, science, industry, politics, its contribution is outstanding. The Thames passes through Oxford and one notices here again how much the British people exploit their slender natural resources. One sees in the river here, as one sees in London, a number of white swans floating—a very fine sight in the morning. The Thames is between 30-50 feet broad; its banks are protected by cement planks. The people have managed to utilize the small stream for rowing purposes and for transportation. One can travel by the Thames from Oxford to London.

The population has increased almost 50%. Oxford has 32 colleges on old narrow roads. The British are conservative and believe in progress in keeping with their conservatism. For instance, in all the college buildings the material used is sandstone. In the climate of England it gets corroded in five or ten years. Consequently, the work of renewing the surface with new sandstone goes on throughout the year. The people here do not even think of using granite or cement. And in the Bodleian Library here the old part in oakwood is yet kept as it was, but we find telephone, lift, electricity, heating arrangement, all up-to-date equipment, in it.

The life of the students is rather hard—one can see them going about with bags or books on their shoulders or riding on cycles—one has to be self-reliant. There is a

hierarchy of teaching staff—Tutor, Senior Tutor, Don, Lecturer, Professor, etc.—who have executive authority. The students learn discipline from the atmosphere. The food is spartan in its simplicity. The professors have their rooms in the colleges where they stay during terms. They go on with their work even if there are no students in their departments.

Almost all professors are specialists in their subjects and evoke in earnest students genuine devotion. I had an experience of this while I was in the steamer. There was a co-passenger, Mr. Ellingworth, an Oxford graduate, with whom I became familiar. Learning that I was going to Oxford he gave me the name of Prof. C. S. Lewis and wrote it on a blank envelope. On my asking him to give me his own name he had to use the same envelope. He did so with hesitation and said: "I am compelled to write my name on the same envelope but it does not mean I am his equal or that there can be any comparison with him." He had been a student of Prof. C. S. Lewis.

Wide green lawns is a speciality of all colleges here. The university maintains a department for the lawns. Universities are independent bodies and send their representatives to the Parliament. Almost 75% of the students receive scholarships. The universities furnish corps of soldiers and officers during wars. My objective was to participate in the Colloquium on "Contemporary British Philosophy" and to come in contact with leading thinkers. Two characteristics of the Colloquium may be noted. The sessions usually began at 8-30 in the morning and, as it was cold, all the doors had to be closed. Within five minutes of the beginning almost everyone used to begin smoking. The main speaker himself would begin to smoke within 15 minutes. Imagine a hall 25'- 25' in which about 50 to 60 persons smoke within closed doors! I had often to open the window for fresh air or go out to save myself from the smoke. I used to wonder at the inability of these philosophers to check smoking for about three or four hours during the session! At least one expects the main speaker to do without smoking during his address.

The other observation was that of a wide gulf between life and philosophy which existed in the life of those who participated in the Colloquium. This is not to say that one ought not to relax in life. But the way the whole company behaved in the closing "sherry party" brought to my mind in a very striking manner the contrast between life and philosophy. So long as the distance between them is not bridged I am afraid philosophy will remain barren.

THE OXFORD COLLOQUIUM

THE British Council was responsible for this intellectual event and I think it could be congratulated on the achievements of this conference. There were many from Oxford and quite a few scholars from abroad. The arrangements were as perfect as could be desired. Mr. Tomlin, Mr. Bach, Miss Tingley were unsparing in their efforts to make life and work as smooth as could be made. It could have served a double purpose if other schools than the Oxford school had been allowed to ventilate

their views. To an outsider it might almost seem as if it was mainly to put forward the Oxford school that this Colloquium was arranged; but perhaps it would be uncharitable to take that view. Besides the hours devoted to reading of papers and discussions there were many precious opportunities afforded for making useful contacts, which I believe is perhaps the most important result of such conferences. Looking round, one finds that of all the schools of contemporary British philosophy the Oxford school is the most dynamic, and vocal and is trying to occupy all important seats of philosophy teaching throughout the British Isles. Its leaders are Russell and Moore and there are as many as sixty men teaching philosophy more or less under this leadership, but with all this it must be said that the discussions were conducted on a high level and in a very friendly spirit.

It was a source of joy to see those who participated in the discussions free from all petty jealousies and meeting each other on a plane of intellectual detachment. It would also not be correct to say that there is unanimity of views on philosophy among all those who are working in the field at Oxford. There are internal differences of outlook. Prof. Price and Prof. Weisman are only two among several who hold different views—perhaps fundamentally different views on philosophy.

To me it seemed that after Bertrand Russell, Oxford has evolved a technique of its own and philosophers want to reduce all metaphysics to this technique. I don't know whether I am right in holding this opinion. But it was evident that there was a great pressure on all those who were present there to get this technique accepted. But, for one who does not belong to this school, to accept this technique would be to yield more than half the points, because this very technique requires consideration, examination and scrutiny. It is strongly supported by the scientific method. The greater part of its outlook is dictated by science. Victory of science all over the world and its expanding influence has in a sense, legitimately but to my mind more strongly than it ought, influenced its outlook and attitude. The scientific method contains a great truth but the question is not whether science has a truth or not, but whether the scientific approach—that is, from outside to inside—is the only way to philosophic thinking.

The Oxford school has, therefore, been trying to reduce metaphysics to common language; for according to them metaphysical problems (they call them paradoxes) arise because of the misuse, or the incorrect use, of language. So the philosopher's most important work is to find out the correct language or the correct way of formulating a question.

But this attitude itself amounts to taking up a metaphysical position and I believe one who does not belong to this school would be justified in asking for a justification of this position. He may legitimately ask whether the Oxford way of formulating philosophical questions is the only way and, in the last analysis, the best way.

The Oxford philosophers seem to have arrived at analysis and reconstruction, logical atomism, etc. In all these there seems to be an effort at trying to reduce metaphysics to science. It is believed that there are basic concepts like atoms in matter,

which can be known and can be formulated in simple language. Thus with the help of these "logical atoms" one could build up a system of metaphysics almost as one builds up the world of objects with material atoms. In such a simple scheme of philosophy there would be no need of so-called metaphysics which really is, according to the Oxford school, a result of incorrect or vague use of language. In fact they almost want to prove that metaphysics could and would ultimately be reduced to science. With this view they try to study ordinary language and ordinary expression but paradoxically when they have done that and give us their "analysis" and "reconstruction" they tend to move away very far from ordinary language. The same thing happened to the scientists in the last century. The scientists did not accept anything like soul or spirit but they affirmed and they accepted matter on the basis of sense evidence and they promised that they would give us a model of this material universe at the end of their researches. After about 150 years of scientific progress it was found that matter was becoming undefinable and far from giving a model of the material universe which the man in the street could understand the scientists ended by giving a mathematical equation which perhaps only a few experts in the world could understand. A similar predicament seems to have overtaken or is overtaking the Oxford school, for I do remember during more than one sitting learned professors coming and talking in a language so special that even students of philosophy found it hard to follow. There was no question of their being understood by the ordinary man. To what extent this extreme emphasis on "analysis" can take us can be seen from the fact that in one sitting nearly sixty of us devoted not less than four hours to the paper and discussion on "what is a word and what is a sentence?" If philosophy allows language to take precedence over thinking, insight, intuition and vision, then there will be very little left for the grammarian, the linguist and the sociologist.

Their objection to the old metaphysics was on the ground of vague use of language and flight away from life but with an effort at precision in language they do not seem to come nearer to life. Leaders of this movement, like Mr. Russell, try to relate their philosophy to life by persuading ordinary men, if they can, to adopt the scientific attitude. They plead for the rationalising of scientific discoveries as the means to solve all human problems, but it is forgotten that to demand such a change of attitude in the common man is to demand a psychological change in him, and we are left in complete darkness as to how this change is to be brought about.

(To be continued)

A. B. PURANI

INDIA, THE LEADER OF THE NEW WORLD

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

TODAY all the nations of the world are trying to arrive at a richer and completer development of which the natural outcome will be a life of harmony, peace and happiness. All the nations are struggling hard to arrive at some definite solution for a better life. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The present era of the world is a stage of immense transformations. Not one but many radical ideas are at work in the mind of humanity and agitate its life with a vehement seeking and effort at change."¹ The present state of affairs is most discouraging and frustrating. The existing evils of life, the loss of high and noble ideals and a still greater loss of values, with the increasing sense of insecurity and tension, have given rise to a sincere longing to create a new world-order based upon Truth, light and freedom. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said that in the realisation of this aim India is destined to be the world-leader. Why, one may ask, has India been chosen, been called upon to lead humanity to this aim? What special reasons entitle her to this choice?

Wild cries of protestation might arise against this choice from all parts of the globe. The materialist would come nudging forward, considering the choice of India to be the most fatal blunder in history, for to him India signifies nothing beyond the fact that it is a land of poverty and illiteracy, with a thronging multitude pressing for employment, fighting desperately for survival.

It is very true that materially India is no match for Europe and America who in comparison seem to be wallowing in wealth; but this deficiency does not deprive her of the greater store of inner wealth. Sri Aurobindo says, "The soul that lives in God is more perfect than the soul that lives only in outward mind or only for the claims and joys of thinking and living matter."² All the materialist's wealth put together will look like base metal or sound like the jingling of a few coins before the endless riches of the spirit. "India has constantly believed in worlds behind of which the material world is only the antechamber."³ This is what Sri Aurobindo once told the youth of India: "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything."⁴

Just as the materialist questions, the rationalist intellectual will also come forward to question India's capacity as a leader, for he considers that nation to be the fittest leader which has the most powerful and dynamic mind. Apparently the West seems best to fulfil this need for it has arrived, as Sri Aurobindo remarks, at "immense

¹ *Ideal and Progress* (Second Edition), p. 49.

² *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (American Edition), pp. 80-81.

³ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 81.

⁴ *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 13.

gains of the intellect, and the expansion of the mind, the modern many-sidedness of the reason and inexhaustible habit of inquiry, the power of endless generalisation and precise detail."¹ The West with so well-equipped a mind seems to possess the capacity to probe into the inmost depths of truth and plumb all its hidden secrets and mysteries. But in reality it has so long been dwelling only on a colossal illusion, an illusion it believed to be the truth. Today we can see its apparent shortcomings and make-beliefs that betray what Sri Aurobindo calls the "ill-disguised evidence of the uneliminated survival of the triumphant barbarian."²

The movement in the West was from below upwards, from outside in, and herein lies its central weakness. It has sought to change the surroundings, the circumstances rather than turning to its true self. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, it "seeks to renovate humanity by schemes of society and systems of government" and "to bring about the millennium by an act of Parliament".³

Mankind and the world today have arrived at a point—a crucial point—where things are taking the most dark, ugly and distorted of forms. The atmosphere looms thick with forces compelling a break-away from the old and a taking birth into a new mode of life. A choice is given to humanity either to grovel in the squalor of the present or leap into the unknown. Each nation is at the present juncture a battleground for these grim universal forces. Every nation is undergoing this crisis—this sense of a weighing insecurity.

Till now all eyes were turned to the West as the sole efficient guide but all the efforts of the West seem to be leading to what Sri Aurobindo calls "a slow combustion and swift explosion".⁴

The problems of the present-day world have grown so acute that an urgent remedy is called for and awaited by everybody. "No nation or community can any longer remain psychologically cloistered and apart"⁵ in this great attempt to save humanity.

So long there was a great tussle between two forces—the material and the spiritual. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "the most vital issue of the age is whether the future progress of humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of West or by a nobler pragmatism guided, uplifted and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge".⁶ But now the fight is resolved by man's awareness that so long as life and humanity are confined and governed by the physical, vital and mental, they will continue to move in the same old grooves of sorrow, anxiety and tension.

Today there has arisen a still greater awareness—an awareness of a possible light from Asia, and this mainly from India, who will one day kindle with her light the whole of the world. Years ago Sri Aurobindo had said: "A nation is building in

¹ & ² *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 33.

³ *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 5

⁴ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 28.

⁵ *Ideal and Progress*, p. 49.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

India today before the eyes of the world so swiftly, so palpably that all can watch the process and those who have sympathy and intuition distinguish the forces at work, the materials in use, the lines of the divine architecture."¹

India, as the Mother puts it, is to be "the Guru of the world" for she has made a good headway from the early stages of seeking and experiment. Her great and glorious tradition—a tradition that is the very life-breath of her whole being—has lent to her the maturity, strength and wisdom of a fully prepared leader. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "This nation is not a new race raw from the workshop of Nature or created by modern circumstances. One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth", she is "the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality."² Therefore she is fully equipped to light the way of humanity's future. She is fit not only to take us to the shores of a new world but also to help humanity to surmount and overcome its present insufficiencies and incapacities, for she holds the very key that unlocks "the modern riddle of the Sphinx."³ "India preserves the truth that preserves the world," says Sri Aurobindo. For the whole foundation and structure of India's existence and the pattern of her life spring directly from the truths of the Spirit. She has always sought "to find a basis of living in the higher spiritual truth and to live from the inner spirit outwards".⁴

It is her unassailable foundations, her deep and unfathomable roots that blossomed forth into a "mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience."⁵

Since her very birth India has had the clear discernment of and a deep insight into the purpose and meaning of her existence and her mission upon this earth. She is indeed a prodigy among nations to have seized at the very outset the Eternal as her central source, her guiding principle, and her sustaining power. This energy ran through every sphere of life, thought and activity. India's social system, her philosophy, her religion, her art and literature, in fact "her whole dharma or law of being" were founded upon this great truth.

But as Sri Aurobindo remarks, "Our sense of the greatness of our past must not be made a fatally hypnotising lure to inertia",⁶ a "determination to live only on our past cultural capital, to eke it out, small as it has grown in our wasteful and incompetent hands, to the last anna".⁷

"To live on our capital without using it for fresh gains", he says, is "to end in bankruptcy and pauperism."⁸ We must carry on the work of the past "and not make

¹ & ² *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 1.

³ *Ideal and Progress*, p. 49.

⁴ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 24.

⁵ *The ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 4.

⁶ *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 39

⁷ & ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 25.

of the past a fetish,"¹ or else we not only blot and efface our great past but sap the growth and outflowering of a greater future. "The past has to be used and spent," says Sri Aurobindo, "as mobile and current capital for some larger profit, acquisition and development of the future."² We have stepped out of the past because the past could no longer contain us and now we have to move "forward to a large repossession of ourselves in which we shall make a better, more living, more real"³ possibility for the advent of a still brighter and more glorious light. "We do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future".⁴

But then what must India do to rise "to the height of her mission and proclaim the Truth to the world"?⁵ The Mother says, "The number one problem for India now is to find back and manifest her soul."⁶ "It is when the soul awakens," says Sri Aurobindo, "that a nation is really alive."⁷

What must we do as Indians to help India in her great mission? "We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future. Our business is to realise ourselves"⁸ for "it is in the spirit that strength is eternal".⁹ As Sri Aurobindo tells us, "You must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire."¹⁰ India must then rise and say to humanity: "The time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper and wider life."¹¹

The task before India is to reconcile spirit and life and for this "we need to work out thoroughly in life what we have always known in the spirit".¹² It is in this that "lies the secret of the needed harmony between the essential meaning of our past culture and the environmental requirements of our future".¹³ India has to impart to the world this spiritual knowledge. By spirituality we do not mean a running away from life into the secret recesses of the spirit, for, in the words of the Mother, "True spirituality is not to renounce life, but to make life perfect with a Divine Perfection."¹⁴

India is destined to impart the knowledge of the Truth and thereby prepare a spiritual race. But what is meant by knowledge of the Truth? Here are Sri Aurobindo's words: "Knowledge of the Truth means for Indian thought not intellectual assent or recognition, but a new consciousness and a life according to the Truth of the Spirit."

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁴ *Essays on the Gita* (American Edition), p. 9.

⁵ *The Mother on India*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*, p. 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹ & ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹² *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *The Mother on India*.

We are all aware that we are on the brink of a new world—a new world pressing to be born, nay, born but compelled to wait for man's total acceptance which can come about only with a change of his consciousness, with his transformation. For,

Mortality bears ill the Eternal's touch,
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of that assault of ether and of fire.¹

This assault will dissolve in its blaze all earthly compromise and vain hypocrisy. The new world which in reality will usher in the supramental light and force can grow—I say grow because it is already born—only when the earth is ready, only when there is a simultaneous movement from below. A just and right movement from below can best be initiated by a change of consciousness. Such a change of consciousness, such a growth into brighter realms of truth and light “can only come about by a spiritual change of our being and a radical and fundamental change, an evolution or revolution of our nature”.² This can be done only by Yoga. So it is as the Guru of Yoga that India is rising today, not of the Yoga that shuns life but of the integral Yoga which draws all life and creation into its wide transforming embrace.

The problems of the world must be solved, its discords removed, the tensions eased and eliminated. But the external, the artificial and mechanical means in which the West has so far laid its entire trust cannot be far-reaching or permanent in effect. What the world needs is a sure light that can dispel the darkness. And this light burns in India. It has been there hidden in its secret recesses from times immemorial but now in this world engulfed in darkness it is blazing forth like a beacon. A few have pierced through the thick fog and caught a glimpse of it, others are aware of its existence but are still groping to find it. But the groping cannot be for long. The light is rising higher and gaining ground. The time has come when all must soon cluster round it and sing in a million-voiced harmony hosannas of a new world, which in reality is no other than the Supramental World of Sri Aurobindo.

TARINI

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book II, Canto I, p. 10.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, p. 75.

WORLD UNION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

DURING the Vedic period the Seers announced that all humanity is one family. The experience of ancient and modern spiritual lights has been that the deepest self in all beings and things is the Divinity within waiting to be manifest. The One has manifested as the Many and there is essential unity in this apparent diversity. Humanity must accept and realise this essential unity to fulfil its destiny.

For the last century or two, advanced thinkers of the world have been urging that service to humanity should be the highest goal and ideal for human beings and for this purpose one should exceed the boundary of race, religion, creed or nation. The idea of humanity as a single race of beings with a common life and a common general interest is among the most characteristic and significant products of modern thought and has helped to create a psychology for an international attitude and approach to human problems.

Religions have proclaimed again and again, though their followers have mostly failed to practise, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Owing to the discoveries and inventions of modern science and development of modern swift transport and system of communications, the world has practically become one. Humanity has become like one family.

Thus the ideal of human unity, one world, world union, demands our serious attention on many grounds. Humanity is at present passing through a difficult period of recurrent world tensions and dangers of clash and conflict and often there is a mortal fear of a catastrophe which may destroy a great part of the human race and bring a crash of civilization. In view of this peril of unprecedented destruction there is an urgent necessity not only to recognize the need for human unity, for some form of world union, but to strive in every possible way to make humanity conscious of its essential unity and to educate an ever-increasing number of people to live up to this unity in all their individual and collective life.

To reach this goal of world union an important and necessary step in the present conditions of the world is to establish the principle of a *cooperative* peaceful co-existence for governing relations between nations. Merely to maintain peaceful co-existence on a competitive basis, which some nations aim at, will not prove possible in the long run.

To establish firmly such a principle of cooperative peaceful co-existence it is essential that peaceful co-existence becomes an unchallengeable rule for governing relations between nations. Any nation which refuses to accept it as a guiding rule of international life should be branded as an enemy of humanity and adequately dealt with. This necessitates that all nations of the world should be free and, irrespective of their ideologies, should be eligible to become members of the United Nations. There should also be some form of effective sanction to compel every nation to observe

faithfully the UN charter, declarations and decisions.

Peaceful co-existence alone, without cooperation among the nations and peoples of the world, will not be a sufficient force to pave the way to an adequate world union or even a dependable international order wherein nations will be bound to observe international laws, conventions, customs and usages.

Thus one can easily realise how important it is for the governments and peoples of the world to observe the International Cooperation Year 1965 in a true spirit and with real enthusiasm. The idea of International Cooperation Year was proposed in the General Assembly of the United Nations in November 1961 by the late Prime Minister Nehru. He then said :

“We live in a world of conflicts and yet the world goes on, undoubtedly because of the co-operation of nations and individuals.... Even today, between countries which are opposed to each other in the political or other fields, there is a vast amount of co-operation. Little is known, or little is said, about this co-operation that is going on, but a great deal is said about every point of conflict, and so the world is full of this idea that the conflicts go on and we live on the verge of disaster. Perhaps it would be a truer picture if the co-operating elements in the world today were put forward and we were made to think that the world depends on co-operation and not on conflict.”

In pursuance of that proposal the year 1965 was designated as International Cooperation Year when the United Nations General Assembly passed an unanimous resolution for the purpose in November 1963.

It seems that in most of the nations of the world ICY has not been observed as adequately and enthusiastically as it ought to have been. Every opportunity should have been taken during this year to give very wide publicity to the story of the very significant international cooperation which already exists and the peoples of the world ought to have been informed and educated from the press, platform, radio and television, as to what has been done already and what remains to be done by way of cooperation. All organisations, institutions, projects and individuals engaged in international work should have been given increased recognition and public support. The governments and peoples of the world should have accepted genuinely and earnestly to work for peace and progress through world cooperation.

The world is recurrently informed of the defects in the present constitution of the UN and its many failures in the political field, which is often dominated by cold war controversies. But it is important to remember that the United Nations is the best instrument today which provides avenues for international cooperation and may slowly evolve into a world union of free and independent nations under the pressure of an informed world public opinion.

It is necessary and important that the world public know well the existing international cooperation and the need for its continuous extension. For this purpose it is advisable and useful to know the activities of the UN and its various organs and specialised agencies. Since 1945 the UN can look back on a record of substantial achieve-

ments. There have also been, of course, failures and disappointments and many problems are still awaiting a solution.

In a number of cases of potential conflicts the procedures of conciliation and mediation employed by the UN have helped in averting armed conflicts and in leading to settlements. It has played an important role in the achieving of independence by a number of UN Trust Territories and non-self-governing areas. It has set up multilateral technical assistance programmes to supplement the efforts of less developed countries for economic and social progress. There are more than three dozen organs and inter-governmental agencies related to the UN in which delegations of the member states meet and discuss problems such as atomic energy for peaceful purposes, refugees, Human Rights, solution of economic difficulties on regional basis, relief to children, international law and conventions for international conduct, disarmament, technical assistance, labour problems, world food and agriculture, educational, scientific and cultural matters, world health, agencies and organisations for providing financial assistance, international trade, emergency peace force, world telecommunications, world meteorology, rapid development of under-developed countries, and many other subjects—a most substantial and impressive roster of cooperative activities.

It is a formidable list of services and agencies, for which delegations of member states meet and regularly reach important and fruitful conclusions. This aspect of international cooperation should receive greater publicity and wider attention. Peoples of the world should know more of these many aspects of international cooperation. The tendency to give undue importance to areas of conflict should be discouraged.

The year 1965, designated as International Cooperation Year, did not begin well. Indonesia withdraw from the UN at the start of the year. A few nations are openly advocating constitution of a rival body to the UN. There are regions in the world where conflicts are in operation. Therefore it becomes essential that the year 1965 should be taken as only the beginning of an endeavour to increase international cooperation and the effort to replace conflicts with cooperation should be continued in all the years to come.

Indeed, if one International Cooperation Year has been a good thing, why not take steps to make the way of cooperative, rather than combative or competitive, coexistence the permanent pattern of the life of the world family of nations ?

A. B. PATEL

OCCULTISM—FROM THE SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT

IN the mid-winter of 1921 a curious incident took place for some time, day after day. Stones began to fall from mid-air at 41, Rue François Martin, the place where Sri Aurobindo stayed at that time. The phenomenon began at dusk and continued at first for half an hour, but daily it increased in frequency, violence and size of the stones. At first it was taken by the inmates to be a man-made mischief and the police were called. One of the constables himself was hit and the police left in panic. The centre of the attack was the boy-servant of the house. He began to be severely hit and was bleeding from a wound by stones materialising inside a closed room. Sri Aurobindo went into the room and, as it was becoming dangerous, something had to be done about it. The Mother had studied occultism in North Africa and she could understand the nexus of this attack because of her deep occult knowledge. The servant was sent away from the house to another one and the stone-throwing ceased.

The author of the mischief was a cook previously in the employ of Sri Aurobindo. Infuriated at having been dismissed the fellow had threatened that he would make the place too hot for those who remained there. He went to a Mussalman Faquir well-versed in black magic, and learned from him what to do. Then everything began. It all became clear when the cook's wife came running and threw herself on the mercy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Her husband knew of occultism well enough to see that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had hurled the force back and it would now recoil upon the head of the author himself. He was now desperately sick. Sri Aurobindo with his usual generosity extended his forgiveness and said: "For this he need not die." The magician recovered.

Such phenomena belong to the domain of occultism. What is occultism? What is black magic? Is occultism the same as black magic?

Literally the word 'occultism' means 'the doctrine or study of things hidden or mysterious'. And 'black magic' means 'the black art, magic by means of evil spirits'. Thus black magic may be said to be a part of occultism on the perverted side.

"Occultism," says Sri Aurobindo, "is the knowledge and right use of the hidden forces of Nature.... Occultism is in its essence man's effort to arrive at a knowledge of secret truths and potentialities of Nature which will lift him out of slavery to his physical limits of being, an attempt in particular to possess and organise the mysterious, occult, outwardly still undeveloped direct power of Mind upon Life and of both Mind and Life over Matter.... Occult science is, essentially, the science of the subliminal, the subliminal in ourselves and the subliminal in world-nature, and of all that is in connection with the subliminal, including the subconscious and the super-conscious and the use of it as part of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and for the right dynamisation of that knowledge."

True occultism is not a thing of formulas, although formulas, words, sounds, etc.,

have their place. There is the basic requirement of other fundamentals, viz. the capacity, the quality, the inner attitude and the inner gift to acquire the knowledge and make use of it.

The mantra's potency has been known through the ages. It is a part of occultism. The force is stated to work from the combination of the words and sounds. But the initiate knows that to make the mantra efficacious the necessity remains of a Master, a Guru, a person who can transmit along with the mantra his occult or spiritual power.

On the other side is magic, white or black, whatever it may be. The occultism here is comparable to the chemical or other formulas of the physical sciences. These formulas do not depend for their working on the capacity, gift, attitude or ability of the person manipulating them. But their power belonging to the lower level is subordinate, not only in the level of consciousness but also in the matter of strength, to the higher power of true occultism. That higher power comes as a result of the inner qualities and a long discipline and is given by the Divine Grace.

And when it comes, says the Mother, "There is nothing that can resist this power. This is well-known to all who practise magic, as they always take very great care, in all countries, but particularly in India, not to try any formula of theirs against a Yogi or a saint, for they know that these formulas which they send out with their small very superficial mechanical power would come to strike, like a ball against a wall, the true power that protects the person who has a spiritual life and their magical formula quite naturally will rebound and fall back upon them."

This rebounding of the formation from the Yogi's or saint's "atmosphere" works as an automatic protection for him. The very state of his higher consciousness and the inner power he possesses are the protective shields against the inferior attacks. That is to say, he has not to act to protect himself.

The Yogi or the saint has also the power to protect others against these formations. If he wishes to protect someone, he extends his own aura to the other person and surrounds him with it. This in its turn becomes a wall of protection for the other person and the ball of evil formation comes and rebounds against it. "But in this case," the Mother says, "the conscious will of the Yogi or saint or sage is necessary. He must be informed of the matter and he has to decide to intervene."

Occultism being the science of invisible forces and the power to handle them, its student has to enter the country of the invisible. And many a frightful thing and entity are there. The one thing essential here is that one should be fearless. Fear entails danger and fearlessness brings safety. In the old times the pupil had to pass through a hard discipline to get the requisite fearlessness before getting the initiation on the path.

The Mother was doing occultism even when she was 12 years old. She says, "But I must tell you I had no fear, I had fear of nothing. Here you come out of the body, you are connected with the body by the very tiniest, almost imperceptible, bit of thread, as it were. If the thread snaps, there is an end of it all, the end of your life,

So you come out into another world and begin to look about and see what kind of world it is. Generally, the first things you see, as I said, are absolutely terrifying. In your normal view, the air about you is empty; there is nothing—you see the blue of the sky or the white cloud or the sunshine and everything is beautiful. But when you have the other sight, the picture is quite different. You see that the whole atmosphere is filled with a multitude of small formations, which are the remains of desires and mental deformations and they crowd about you in such a way that the whole thing gives you a very disagreeable impression. Indeed, it is positively ugly more often than not. They come near you, attack you, press upon you and you fear and tremble. Then they assume formidable proportions. But if you are not shaken, if you can look with the eye of a calm curiosity, you will find then there is nothing so very terrifying. Things are not beautiful perhaps, but they are not frightful either.”

In this context the Mother gives an illustration. A Danish painter, a person of some talent, had come to Pondicherry during the First World War, when he met Sri Aurobindo and even made a portrait of his. He was interested in occultism. On his return to France he saw the Mother and began to learn this science from her. The Mother taught him the process of getting out of the body, maintaining control in that state, etc. One night he had a dream, or more precisely, he had consciously come out of his body. While trying to locate himself he saw a formidable tiger moving towards himself with unpleasant intentions. But he remembered the advice of his teacher, kept calm and quiet and maintained the feeling that he was under protection. As he continued looking calmly and fearlessly at the animal, the huge tiger went on diminishing and shrinking and in the end changed into a little cat.

The Mother told the painter that the tiger might have been a formation out of some anger or violent thought he might have cherished against someone during the day or at some other point of time. She explains the matter thus:

“...As in the physical world, so too in the occult world there is a law of action and reaction or return movement. You cherish a bad thought; it returns upon you as an attack from outside. So the tiger might have represented some bad thought or impulse in him which came back upon him, like, as it is said, a boomerang. It is exactly one of the reasons why one should have control over one's thoughts and feelings and sensations. For if you think ill of a person, wish unpleasant things for him, then in your dream you are likely to see the person coming to attack you, more violently perhaps than you thought of doing. In your ignorance and impulse of self-justification you say, 'Just see, was I not right in my feeling towards this man, he wanted to kill me!' In point of fact, however, the contrary is the truth. It is a common law in occultism that if you make a formation—a mental formation, for example, to the effect that an accident or some unpleasant thing should happen to a person and you send out the formation to do its work, then, if it so happens that the person concerned is on a higher level of consciousness, that is to say, if he wishes harm to none, is quite disinterested and indifferent in the matter, then the formation approaches him but does not enter into his atmosphere or touch him, it rebounds upon the sender. In that case a serious

accident may happen to the sender of the formation: if one wishes death to another, death may come to himself. That is *often* the result of black magic which is a deformation of occultism."

Thus, fearlessness, self-discipline and self-perfection are the basic requisites for learning occultism. The practice of this science is not safe for those who get frightened in their sleep and dreams, rather those who can fight well in these states are better adapted.

And without self-discipline and self-purification there is the danger of the practitant falling into wrong bypaths leading him astray from the beneficent utilisation of the powers of the invisible domain.

Then there is perseverance. Occultism is not a thing to be acquired in some prescribed period of time. For some the time is short, for some it may be long. Once the Mother related her own story;

"When I began to practise occultism, as I started working with my nights, making them conscious, I found that between the subtle-physical level and the most material vital there was a small region, very small indeed, that was not developed well enough to serve as a conscious link between the two. So what happened in the most material vital was not being accurately translated into the consciousness of the most subtle-physical. Something was lost in the passage which was however not quite empty but only half-conscious, not adequately developed. I knew there was only one way, namely, to go on working for the development.

"I started working sometime in February, I suppose. One month, two months, three, four months passed with no result. I continued. Five months, six months. Then in July or August I left my home in Paris for the countryside. I came to a very small place near the seaside and stayed with friends. There was a garden there. And in the garden a fine green turf and flowers and trees all around. It was a pretty little quiet place. It was very quiet, very silent. One day I laid myself down on the grass, flat on the face resting on my elbows (among the grass). Suddenly the whole life of this nature, the whole life of the intermediate region I am speaking of, which is most living in the plant and in physical nature, all this domain became all on a sudden, unexpectedly, without any transition, absolutely living, intense, conscious, wonderful.

"This was the result of the continuous activity of six months that did not give any result till then. I did not know it; just a little favourable condition and the result is there. It is like the chick in the egg. It is there for a long time but you do not see it. You ask doubtfully if there is any chick at all inside the egg. And then suddenly a crack, a small hole—the egg bursts and the chick comes out, quite formed and whole and entire. It took all this time to form itself. So it is like this. When you wish to prepare something within you it is like the preparation of the chick inside the shell. It takes a long time and there is not the least result. But you must not be discouraged. You must continue your effort, as before, regularly as if the whole eternity were before you, thoroughly disinterested in the result. One day the result bursts upon you, the whole result of all your work."

Precaution too is necessary. Once one is in the occult domain, one is devoid of the usual protection of the gross elements constituting the physical body. On the vital plane there is a multitude of beings, entities and microbes ever prone to do harm or mischief.

For example, in the case of going out of the body. When one goes out to even some extent, that is to say, even if mentally, what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body; what remains is the automatic working part, viz. blood-circulation, secretion, etc. At such an hour the vital microbes, etc., rush in and take possession of the automatic mentality and cause unpleasant happenings like nightmares, feeling of getting choked, etc. And when one goes out of the body in a material way retaining only a slender contact with it the "hostiles" may attack this thread of contact and prevent one's return into the body. This means death.

A long time ago the Mother was going everywhere, to other planets as well, in the subtle body. When she was practising occultism with Théon in Algiers she appeared to a circle of friends sitting in Paris and took up a pencil and wrote a few words on a paper. She did not develop this power further. Even the visits to other planets were only of secondary interest to her. She, of course, had to fix her attention on the earth for its transformation. An aspirant of spirituality and Yoga has indeed to be on guard that he does not turn to a display of occultism with all its fascinating 'miracles' of materialisation, etc.

That is to say, occultism has its place, but it should not be carried too far; particularly if one has the higher goal of Union with the Divine. The knowledge of occultism can assist us in several ways and be of immense use on occasions. There are occult ways and means of protecting oneself against hostile forces. To take an instance, one is advised by the Mother not to come into contact with a vampire, either by physical proximity or by letters, unless one has the occult knowledge to get protection against such beings. Similarly, there are occult means of controlling the effect which the vital projection of the energy of other beings may have on our movements.

To take an instance of a subconscious movement. A scientist in Paris wanted to know how far a man could control his reflex movements by the power of reason and conscious intelligence. He went to the zoo. He chose to present himself before the glass case of a ferocious serpent. It was meal-time and the animal was hungry. Somehow he succeeded in rousing the anger of the black serpent which sprang up like a shot and darted at the face of the gentleman standing on the other side of the glass. The scientist knew that the barrier of the glass was thick, sound and secure, and that no harm could come to him, but he immediately leaped back to avoid the blow as it were. And at each repetition of the darting by the snake the scientist leaped back simultaneously although he was repeatedly affirming the safety and security of his state.

Evidently, the human reason and conscious intelligence could not control the reflex movements. The Mother explains that the scientist did not have the occult

knowledge that the physical movement of the serpent was accompanied by a considerable amount of vital projection of its nervous energy and it was that which struck on him with an irresistible force giving almost a physical shock. To check and control, one has to learn the occult ways.

Medical science is discovering that anaesthesia can be replaced by hypnotism. Hypnotism is a part of occultism, one person imposing his will upon another. An experiment has been made to use hypnotism to make a graft of skin on a wound. It was required that the arm should remain for fifteen days tied to the thigh. The hypnotist simply ordered the patient to hold the arm in that position without moving, and she obeyed. No plaster, no bandage, nothing was used. The arm remained in the required position. And at the end of fifteen days she was told, "Now you can move", and she began to move. If the normal procedure of bandage, etc, had been used, weeks of treatment would have been needed to bring to normal the stiffened parts of the body and let her have her normal movements.

It is interesting to make the discovery that everyone is doing some sort of occultism at some point of time, though unconsciously. When a person thinks of another, something in him comes into contact with the other person, and if he adds to his thought a will that the person should be like this or like that, he should do this or that, he should understand this or that, well, it is a case of occultism. The result in each case depends upon the strength of the thought and the will put out. The difference with the occultist is that he knows what he does and also partially the how of it.

What will be the place of occultism in the supramental life ? Will it exist or not ? The Mother does not see why the supramental world should be deprived of the occult faculty more than any other. Indeed, in the supramental living, all the things that are possible will be there; thus there will be many more things than what the present creation has.

S. S. JHUNJHUNWALA

NOTE

The subject of occultism is of considerable interest and is also gaining some popularity in the West as well as the East. Comments from readers will be welcome and, if suitable, will be published.—EDITOR.

FOOD-OFFERING TO THE LORD

THE LEGEND OF GUNDERAO

A Short Story

THERE was once a Brahmin farmer. His name was Gunderao. He was completely illiterate. He never even moved out of his small village. He had accepted his lot and led a quiet life of contentment. There was only one member left of his family—his old mother. His wants were few and were within the easy reach of his capacity. Once a Sannyasi visited the village, and took up residence with this Brahmin farmer. The Sannyasi, having become the family guru of the farmer, was received with due honour everywhere. The whole village breathed an air of devotion and was brimming with religious activities. After a couple of days, when the Sannyasi was about to leave the village, the farmer and his old mother went to him and bowed their farewell pranam. The Sannyasi in his parting message said to the farmer, "Don't forget to perform Aradhana every day, and never take your food without Naivedya." The farmer could not grasp the meaning of the message as he knew nothing about religious rites. The Sannyasi smiled at his ignorance and explained what Aradhana and Naivedya meant—that God is the divine guest of our house and should be offered all the praise and presents including food.

Next day, when the Sannyasi was gone, the farmer resumed his daily work and went to his field. At noon he walked to the nearby river, finished his bath and placed his food before the Lord in a neighbouring temple. Five minutes passed, then ten ten minutes and even half an hour. "Oh ! today God must be very busy," reflected the farmer, "because He is the Lord of all the worlds and He has to manage things everywhere. All right ! I shall wait for Him some more time." And he waited. Another hour passed and seeing that He did not come he said, "If you do not come and take the food, how am I to take my meal ? I am getting hungry and there is work to do. ...Or is it that you are angry with me because I neglected you all these days ? But I am told you are all compassion and you forgive all our sins. So please forgive my negligence and come soon. Here on the spot I give you my word. I shall never again neglect you. I will never take my food without Naivedya."

A small voice spoke to him, "But can you wait for me ? I see you are already quite restless. I do not take your word seriously." The voice sank into the soul of the Brahmin farmer and he trembled. He could not speak. Tears came into his eyes, and he sat motionless. Another hour passed and the sun was slowly moving downward in the West. Another hour or two passed and the farmer opened his eyes. Evening was fast approaching. His heart cried out, "Lord ! I will wait—wait till the end. I will not take my food until you forgive me and take my offering of food. I have pro-

mised my guru, and I cannot go back." With this resolution in his mind he sat silent like a stone. A golden hush like a splendid robe of God enveloped the fields. With the song of the homing birds, and the soft rays of the sun, Mother Nature lulled to rest the day's labour of the fields. The night approached with its myriad star-splendour. A crescent glory in Heaven watched the spheres with a smile of benediction. The farmer sat, a marble figure on a "pedestal of prayer". He was awakened by a sudden touch of inexplicable joy in his breast. "Strange," he reflected, "I have not taken food. I was hungry like a dog. Instead of the pangs of hunger I am stirred by a nameless joy ! I do not understand. Tell me, what is this your game ? Oh! Lord!"

Then spoke a voice which was heard within the depths of his soul, "Now you are vexing me. All right ! I am here. Feed me." The farmer opened his eyes and saw that the "idol" was throbbing with life. He began to feed Him. "The food has gone stale. What can I do ? You are so late !". So he said, but when he touched the food he felt it was fresh and hot. He wondered. As with the joy of a fond mother, he began feeding the Lord. Soon he saw the idol close its mouth and stir no more. He understood that the Naivedya was over. So he turned to take his meal. The food was so delicious ! He said to himself, "Never in my life have I tasted such delicious food. It is Amrita indeed."

Food over, he went back home and slept a happy sleep. Early next morning he told his mother to prepare a special dish for Naivedya. His mother saw him with a look of surprise and said in a low inquisitive tone, "There is no special occasion, my son." The son replied, "I want to give Him a special dish. Prepare it. Though yesterday He kept me waiting for a very long time, I still am happy and I want to give Him a special dish today—occasion or no occasion."

The days passed into weeks and weeks into months. The life of our farmer Brahmin Gunderao flowed like a sweet and simple stream. He thought always of Naivedya. He worked and waited for the hour of Naivedya. Aradhana had now become the one inevitable centre of his life. Once his old mother complained of indisposition. So he himself prepared the food under her directions. On that day, while offering Naivedya, he said, "Today I have prepared the meal. I don't know how it is cooked. If you want to have delicious dishes, please don't make my mother ill. Now you have to be satisfied with the dish I have offered, good or bad." The food-offering having been over, the farmer began to take his meal. When he was taking it he heard a familiar sweet voice, "I liked your today's preparation. It was quite lovely. Yes, your mother will also be well. Don't worry. But don't forget to prepare a dish or two for me now and then with your own hands." Tears rushed into the eyes of the farmer and he fell into silent musing. "Oh ! Lord, my God ! How kind and sweet of you ! I have myself tasted the food, and I know its taste. Ah, your wonderful love ! ...That's it. It is the miracle that changes all bitterness into a celestial sweetness. Now for example see the change in me, me, the beast that I was. The marvellous fire-fingers of your grace are moulding my dust always, at each moment, even without my knowledge. Oh ! my dearest Lord! accept my utter gratefulness. I will obey your word with the

zeal and devotion of a faithful wife. Make me your slave. I would serve you always.”

Full with such sweet musings and prayers the slow months glided into a year.

A new year dawned and with it the visit of the Sannyasi was renewed. This time the Brahmin farmer Gunderao was the leader of the reception. He had developed a deep reverence for his guru. And it was natural. The next day the Sannyasi performed his Aradhana on a grand scale, with all rich and elaborate paraphernalia such as silver Mandapam and golden utensils of worship. Gunderao thought, “I shall also get prepared such wonderful Mandapam for my Lord and also the other things of worship. They are so grand. My Lord would be much pleased .. Yes !...”. He stumbled out of his reverie when the Sannyasi said, “Let the Naivedya be brought.” Gunderao rushed in and brought all the dishes and placed before the Lord. The Sannyasi sprinkled the sanctified water with tulsi leaf, muttering some mantra over all the dishes; and then he closed his eyes forming the name of the Lord on his lips and muttering “Svaha-kara”. Gunderao was very much taken up by the grand show and said to himself, “I must learn these mantras. If I learn and utter these mantras, my Lord will certainly be pleased more. I will request guru Maharaj to teach me some mantras.”

“Everybody there, come in for Mangalarti,” came the loud call of the Sannyasi Maharaj. The call knocked down the simple farmer from his sweet dream. He opened his eyes and saw to his great surprise that no dish of the Naivedya was touched by the Lord. With great hesitation he said to the Sannyasi, “But I see the Naivedya is not over. The food is not taken by the Lord !...” The Sannyasi, with a blissful smile on his face, replied, “Yes ! my boy, the Naivedya is over. God is not like men. And he won’t eat food physically.”

Gunderao : “But He eats !”

Sannyasi : “Stupid fool that you are, you know nothing about our great Shastras. How can I explain to you?... This is Kalyuga.”

Gunderao : “Excuse me. I have been feeding Him... Yes ! Since you told me last year.”

Sannyasi (raging with righteous indignation) : “It is a lie, a blasphemy. That is written on your face. The Lord to eat the food from your dirty hands !”

Gunderao (with great pain visible on his face and in a broken voice) : “Guru Maharaj ! Don’t you believe me ? I am now unable to believe my own ears. It is a fact, Guru Maharaj, a bare fact true and simple. I have taken my food all these days only after the Lord’s Naivedya.”

Sannyasi (with bitter mockery) : “You have, have you ? Be pleased to perform your miracle before me and before all of us. Would you ?”

Gunderao (with extreme pain and in utter humility) : “It is not a miracle, Guru Maharaj. It was my daily act. And I have to do it now before you all, because I cannot take my food keeping my Lord hungry.”

With these words the simple unsophisticated Gunderao sat down, with folded hands and closed his eyes streaming with tears, before the Shrine. A silent prayer

like a steady flame was rising high. All was silent. "Would you not come today of all days ? Would you prove me a liar and a hypocrite before my Guru, friends and relations ? If you do not come, well, I will kill myself. Better to die than to live a life of utter disgrace. If you love me, come, and take my offering and prove that I was not telling them a lie...." Thus he went on, the poor soul, with his arguments and persuasions and prayers.

Sometime later he heard the voice so familiar and yet so strange, "Oh ! Stupid fool ! You have betrayed me today. You are calling me not because you love me but because your honour is in danger. Nobody wants me. All these people want just to see a *tāmāshā*. Well, today is the end of our year-long relationship. I will take the food today to save your splendid honour. From now onwards live with your honour..."

Gunderao was shuddering at each word in a state of utter dependency. He could not speak a single word. The agony of his soul was unbearable and he fell senseless on the ground.

Meanwhile with utter surprise and wonder the Sannyasi and the people gathered there saw the food being eaten by the idol of the Lord. Everyone with folded hands prostrated before the Shrine. The Sannyasi went near the Brahmin farmer and with a rush of emotion clasped him in his arms. "You are my guru, Gunderao. Forgive me. You are a Mahatma. I did not know it in my foolish pride of knowledge. Forgive me, Gunderao. Forgive this fool of a Sannyasi..."

Gunderao lifted his tearful eyes. He was unable to see or hear anything. Everyone went to him and bowed at his feet. The utter agony of his soul had blotted out his senses. He could make out nothing. He burst into loud weeping. "I have betrayed my Lord. Woe to me ! I loved my honour more. Ah ! the wretched rotten beast that I am.... But can I live without Him ? Impossible. I shall force Him... I will go to any extent, life or death." Thus muttering to himself he ran away from the place like a mad man. Where he went nobody knew.

I was told, the people of the village erected a temple of Mahatma Gunderao; and each year a special Aradhana is offered at the Shrine with great pomp.

VENKATARANGA

A POET, A POEM AND A COMMENTATOR

(A LETTER)

MY delay in acknowledging and estimating your commentary on my poem, "A Poet's Stammer",¹ must have led you to think: "How cold and ungrateful are poets—they don't care how much labour critics spend on appreciating them." But that would be a mistake.

Poetry is not everybody's pet and a poet knowing how much "life's clamour" tends to drown his small silvery voice is hardly likely to miss valuing the few leaps of the heart to his tune, which he finds about him. If there is any neglect by him, it is due to other causes than coldness and ingratitude. Often the work he turns out is so intensely dedicated to what Graves calls the "White Goddess" (none other than Homer's "Thea" and Milton's "Heavenly Muse") that he feels nothing more is necessary to be done about it. Praise or blame seems irrelevant. At times even publication appears to be pointless. All that the poem, if it is really good, requires or demands after it has been offered at the inner altar is—another poem equally good! For the White Goddess is Infinity calling. She is the endless Creatrix and from each creature of hers she asks also endless creation. Or else the sequel she desires for every living poem is the poet's living out of its perfection. And this may mean either an attempt by the poet to draw himself inward into a silence where the fragments of his fallen nature get composed into "one entire and perfect chrysolite"—or an endeavour on his part to go beyond great words into great actions where all his limbs work to compose patterns of a dynamic truth that is a silent beauty, rather than

¹ My dream is spoken
As if by sound
Were tremulously broken
Some vow profound.

A timeless hush
Draws ever back
The winging music-rush
Upon thought's track.

Though syllables sweep
Like golden birds,
Far lonelihoods of sleep
Dwindle my words.

Beyond life's clamour,
A mystery mars
Speech-light to a myriad stammer
Of flickering stars.

the poet's significant forms, his patterns of an eloquent beauty that is a static truth.

To come down a little from this somewhat rarefied plane of Art's semi-mystic philosophy, I may add that frequently the seeming coldness and ingratitude is due simply to the fact that the poor poet was up to his ears in the irresistible tides of an enormous urgent undertaking that had nothing to do with mysticism or philosophy, even if it still had something to do with Art though not without a mixture of the service to God with that to Mammon.

I am afraid I am still writing with the Mantle on. Let me quite come out of it and "talk turkey", as they say in the States. For the last month or so I have been at my typewriter for nearly 8 hours every day. I'll briefly tell you why. The firms of MacGibbon & Kee and of Panther Books had announced a prize of £ 3,000 for the best book submitted of any kind before 31 March. I thought: "Why not have a go with my most recent work?" A perfect copy had to be prepared in a race against time. So I set about the race and now at last it is over. I have tried to do my best; but the Gibbon and the Panther in the names of the firms concerned are none too happily suggestive to a lifelong lover of Plato. Plato long ago spoke of the difficulty of dealing with the ape and the tiger in man. But let me not be led away by a poet's sensitivity to sounds. An Aurobindonian poet should be mystic but not pessimistic.

This brings me round very naturally to your "explication" of *A Poet's Stammer*. Your first two pages are unexceptionable. When we come to the third I find your point about "the urge to communicate" a little difficult to accept. You say: "The urge to communicate is so powerful that the pattern of the dream is threatening to break ('tremulous' having the suggestion of shaking and being shaken). The temptation to speak (when one has taken the vow of silence) is irresistible." I smiled when I read the last sentence. No doubt, every poet has something of the feminine in him but surely not so much as to make him incapable of containing a secret and to render the forbidden the most tempting for him? The poet is not impelled to speak just because he has taken a vow to the contrary. Rather, when he is impelled to speak, it is as if he were breaking a sacred silence to which his soul is pledged. The impulsion does not threaten to break the pattern of the dream; perhaps the reverse would be true to say. The pattern of the dream has the power to break the impulsion—it constantly works to absorb the poet's inner consciousness and that is why he feels a "tension" in the act of speech and a breaking of some vow to remain plunged in the profundities of the Beyond. The tremulousness is not in the dream-pattern as a result of the poet's urge to communicate: it is in the poet's own communicating movement as an effect of the pull which that pattern has on him. This word prepares the final metaphor of the "flickering stars". In fact all the stanzas prepare it in one way or another. What "tremulously" does here is done in the second stanza by "draws ever back" and in the third by "dwindles". And there is a concrete reason for it. But before I give the reason let me make a remark on the puzzling "dwindles".

At present this verb is used in the intransitive. But I am reviving an old transitive form of the late seventeenth century, a form which is more rare than obsolete: it means "to cause to shrink, to make less, or to bring low". The first and second senses apply here.

To return to my point. In the days when this poem was written, inspiration used to come mostly with the last lines of a poem flashing first into the mind. A poem would be felt as pressing for birth when suddenly, while reading or looking at things or reflecting or aspiring, a small shock would be felt in the core of the being (which would be something midway between mind and heart). It was like a shining seed, a packed pulsation, an intuitive thrill, without yet any clear knowledge of what had been intuited. As soon I had this experience I was sure that a poem was on the way. But what would emerge first was the climax of the thing that was piercing through the inner into the outer. The culminating revelation would crystallise and the job then would be to trace the process leading to the crystallisation. To put it another way : I would find myself standing on the peak of the poetic moment and I had to discover the way by which I got there without my knowing how. And the success of the writing lay in disclosing correctly the process and the passage. It was as if the whole poem were already waiting behind, showing me its *grand finale* of a tail or, if one likes, its ultimate crown of a head. As in a super-detective story, my job was : "find the body." It could very well happen that a poet would tag on to the part in his hand a body not quite belonging to it. The work might be compared to a modern palaeontologist's, the reconstruction of a prehistoric animal from one bone-fossil. Or we may think of the Latin saying : *Ex pede Herculem*—From the foot, Hercules.... Anyway, with a hushed inner receptivity I would try to get slowly the entire poem whose crest or conclusion I had chanced upon. Here also there would not always be a proper order of emergence. Not always did the first stanza spring out first. Even middle portions would appear. And I had finally to recognise what should stand where. *A Poet's Stammer* was born in this fashion—the two ending lines forming the actual historical beginning. I suppose such paradoxes are to be expected when it is Mystery that becomes History.

Another feature of my poetry in the old days was that a certain basic image would be variously worked out—facet after facet but in spite of different reflections the same central vision. Here "a myriad stammer / Of flickering stars" is the heart of the imaginative insight. And everything preceding this expression would in diverse modes and manners anticipate it so that when it does come it would bring the sense of a flaming all-fusing fulfilment, the white inevitable seal in which all the visionary colours would come to rest.

Perhaps this feature of the inspiration is what determined the hysteron-proteron fashion in which the poem took birth. The central image broke forth at the end of the poem and gave the clue to the remainder of the piece to be drawn out. It set the poetic consciousness along a certain track, it provided a guiding light by which I might be prevented from drifting along false paths of seeing and feeling. Here I

had to ask myself whether the new stanzas answered in their vision to the fundamental flickering-stars image—an image in which there was the sense at the same time of a far light, a tiny light, a tremulous light, a vast scatter of such lights against an infinite background of fathomless secrecy. If you keep this image steadily in your mind you will find a key to the whole creative movement of the poem's symbolism, thought-scheme and sound-design.

Yes, even the sound-design. For the peculiar stanza form adopted is also expressive of the basic vision. And this brings me to your question : "I shall be happy if you can explain to me the significance of the inversion in the first stanza."

There are several points here to be marked. The inversion makes for suspense and a final focus on "Some vow profound" which in the inner imaginative experience serves to balance the speaking of the words and to explain why this speaking should be such as it is pictured in the poem. The inversion also induces a feel of the breaking that is mentioned : the regular order of the phrases would not correspond to the shape of the significance, the posture of the meaning, the gesture of the semantic action. Again, the natural non-inverted sequence of the language—

My words are spoken
As if some vow profound
Were tremulously broken
By sound—

would make the second line a trimeter and the fourth a dimeter in contradiction of the metrical lengths disposed in the rest of the poem's stanzas, and create an initial dissonance in the spelled harmony intended. It would thus spoil something of the mysterious atmosphere and suggestion which are the true life of this kind of utterance from what Sri Aurobindo calls "the intuitive mind". There would, further, be a marring of the musical mysticism which lies in the stanza-structure. For, two trimeter lines—the second and the third—would stand together and make a somewhat heavy mass and not be so effective rhythmically as the present form in which there is a pattern of jet-jet-gush-jet, a sort of subtly stammering movement.

As for the symbolism and the thought-scheme, you must have now got an answer to your query. The golden birds (with vibrant wings) prefigure the star-image, while themselves symbolising truth-gleams, song-awakening, ethereal elevation. The speech-light is of course the manifesting power, but this power gets worked upon by the tremendous Ineffable of ultimate Reality and what gets manifested is not the full infinity of this Divine Darkness but a boundless wealth of intense pin-points, between which the mute Mystery still holds sway. The speech-light is at once let loose and held back : hence the dwindling of the revelatory words. The lonelihoods of sleep are the depths of God-trance which are behind all creation. The true poet is, as it were, in touch with them in the profundities of his being and is constantly being pulled into them in the very act of expressing their locked light,

their truth-secrets. The visual correlate of these lonelihoods is, as I have already hinted earlier, the night-sky.

Your whole last page of interpretation is original. I had no conscious notion of all this series you set up : (1) sound, (2) winging music-rush, (3) syllables sweeping, (4) words, (5) flickering stars. Your exposition here is ingenious but brings out, I think, some genuine complexity of implication. It is a fine piece of reading between the lines or, more appropriately, behind the scenes.

The third page is, on the whole, weak. If you pep it up with more of the *paśyantī vāk* of which you speak, you will have a well-knit texture of interpretation.

16-3-1965

K. D. SETHNA

P. S. Soon after writing this letter I fell to turning the pages of *Literary Criticism in America*, edited with an Introduction by Albert D. Van Nostrand. Opening in the midst of Emerson's essay on the Poet I struck on the following passage which has an interesting general relation both to what I have said and what you have. (The italics are Emerson's own.)

"Doubt not, O poet, but persist. Say 'It is in me, and shall out.' Stand there, balked and dumb, stuttering and stammering, hissed and hooted, stand and strive, until at last rage draw out of thee that *dream*-power which every night shows thee is thine own; a power transcending all limit and privacy, and by virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity..." (p. 72)

K.D.S.

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Second Annual Conference

THE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 1965, AS FIXED BY THE MOTHER. THE PROGRAMME OF THE CONFERENCE WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 1965.

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

(A Prayer)

THE years begin to murmur
Songs of the past,
But the soul has heard the rumour
Of stirrings vast.

The little that is much
Can hold no more
This life; Thy wondrous touch
Breaks finite's door.

A turning of the way
Confronts the soul,
Thy will it must obey,
To clasp the whole.

Dissolve the ego's knots,
Weed out desire
By sweet-eyed luminous thoughts
Born of Thy Fire.

In a silence of the mind
Where no thought is
Ascend, my soul, to find
The true release.

Wander not in the mazes
That thoughts ever weave;
The Time here swiftly races,
In God sole live.

3-6-1965

PRITHWISING NAHAR

O FIELDS OF INNOCENCE!

LET me return to forgotten innocence :
To the scent of roses and the wild mountain thyme,
To the woods in spring and their bluebell opulence,
And the running brook that flows through measured time.

Let me forget the deserts of today;
The arid trek across vast wastes of thought;
The journeyings, that puzzle and dismay,
To worlds of make-belief that end in nought.

I have bathed in the ocean of the nether god;
I have walked through the valley shadowed by Death's wings;
I have roamed the foothills where the saints have trod
And gazed upon the peaks of unborn things.

Now let me lie upon a grassy slope
So what is pure within may rise above
To fields of Innocence and Seas of Hope
That once were fashioned from a heart in love.

July 1st. 1965

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

THE DIVINE ON EARTH

STONE floor, cool and glossy to the touch,
Rubbed clean with the sitting of devotees—
Long hours of meditation in semi-darkness,
Away from parching suns the coolth of trees !

The Face is familiar and dear to us,
Illumined by a glowing white light
Whose brilliance is pale compared to the radiance
Of those eyes—a magnificent sun on a mountain height !

Steadily the eyes scan deep our conscience,
Our secret troubled inner being.
We are lost in bliss in the welcome darkness
Till that intense gaze relaxes, seeing

The fervour in our face, upturned;
Eyes meet eyes and almost a smile is born—
For an instant the Divine is on the earth,
And down the insurmountable barrier is torn !

MINNIE N. CANTENWALLA

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

(Continued from the July Issue)

9

RICH men in those days used to engage pundits for the education of their sons. These studied at home; Kuda, now a healthy and cheerful boy of twelve, did the same along with Chintaharan and others; he never went to school. He had a very keen intelligence and was very diligent too, he was ever the top boy of the group. All the members of the Saha family were always praising Kuda and were much attracted by his qualities, but all this used to annoy the mistress of the house a great deal. Kuda, as if to the manner born, kept himself aloof from all grudges against him; his simple nature was his shield against all danger. He came to the inner parts of the house only twice every day, at meal times in the morning and evening, the rest of the day he used to remain in the outer portions of the house or on the playing fields. He ever ignored Chintaharan's envy of him. His frank and simple behaviour endeared him to all; also the fact that he never gave anyone cause to be annoyed with him. Kuda could never imagine anyone to be his enemy. When he addressed Chintaharan as Dada and Sulochana as Ma, these, too, when they heard him call could not feel any aversion towards him, at least at that moment, and ever responded with a very pleasant expression. For a long time after, they too could harbour no grudge against him.

Sulochana's father lived twenty miles away from Brindavan's village. Though there was a footpath joining these two villages, yet as they were on the same river the usual means of transport was a boat. Now, on the occasion of the ceremony of giving a name to the new born child of Sulochana's brother, she was going to her father's place taking with her Chintaharan and Govinda, her two sons. Buda, the old servant, was also going as their attendant. Kuda, extremely fond of a boat ride, insisted on going as well.

Brindavan was quite aware of his wife's attitude towards Kuda, but in this case could not object to his going because of his great eagerness; Sulochana too raised no objection. Brindavan particularly asked Buda to take care of the boy. His firm belief that Kuda was ever protected by the Divine reassured him, he knew none could do any harm to the boy.

The next morning Kuda got on to the boat with the others, feeling very happy. The journey was a short one, of three or four hours only. When they had come half way towards their destination, he was standing outside the cabin, leaning against it,

observing the banks that were gliding past. He saw and observed the villages surrounded by trees, there were temples and many other objects; he saw people working on the banks of the river and many young boys and girls who had come for a bath with their mothers; just then Chintaharan, who was in the cabin, came out and saw Kuda standing observing things very keenly. "What are you gazing at?" said Chintaharan and gave him such a push that it was impossible for Kuda, who was quite unprepared for it, from going overboard. With what intention Chintaharan pushed him off was not understood by anyone. However, although Kuda could swim well yet as he fell rather awkwardly he went under, at first. Buda, as soon as he saw it happen, plunged in just where the boy had fallen, while the rest of the boatmen raised a clamour; Chintaharan was standing among them laughing in a disconcerted manner.

In a short while both came to the surface and Kuda was pulled on to the boat. He was only a little out of breath.

Sulochana was standing waiting to see what turn the affair would assume. The boatmen felt relieved when Kuda was taken inside the cabin and after a change of clothes made to lie down. Then everyone began to blame Chintaharan. Sulochana could hardly bear it and said in a loud voice, "The boy is not dead, so why are you all raising such a clamour about it?" Then she cautioned Buda not to say anything to the master, knowing full well that Buda was certain to tell the master all about the happening.

The boat reached its destination at about mid-day. Buda, on his way back, wanted to take Kuda with him too, but all his efforts were in vain as Kuda refused to return. Sulochana had planned to remain there for ten or twelve days.

The ceremony was over in a couple of days. Sulochana's family was a small one comprising her aged father, her brother and his wife and a widowed sister. Her mother had died twenty-two years earlier.

The homestead consisted of three huts around an old seemul tree in the courtyard. In one hut lived the old man with his widowed daughter, the next one was used as a store full of many odd things. The hut on the south was given to Sulochana's brother and his wife, both of whom, however, left immediately after the ceremony. Now Sulochana came into this hut with her son. Kuda, too, was given a separate corner here to sleep in.

Kuda, in his new surroundings, was enjoying himself very much, having made friends with all the young folk of the village; most of the time that he was awake he spent with his new companions. Chintaharan and Govinda, the two boys of Sulochana, hardly ever went out as they were under the strict vigilance of their mother.

Sulochana's old father suffered from asthma. Occasionally when the attacks were more severe he used to suffer a lot. This time, soon after the ceremony, the attacks came and were increasing. Thus Sulochana could not leave as she had planned but decided to wait a few days more to see her father's recovery. But unfortunately

as the malady increased daily in intensity she was rather worried because there were no adults in the house except her two sons and Kuda.

The Kaviraj, the doctor, lived in another village two miles away. So Sulochana, weighing things up, sent Chintaharan to fetch the Kaviraj. A village boy accompanied him to show the way.

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The physician arrived in the afternoon and after examining the patient gave the necessary prescriptions.

As the physician was aware of the financial status of the family and as he was a very kind man, he offered to furnish some of the ingredients himself saying, "If someone would come with me with a small marble bowl I could send the necessary things."

Now, the question was : who could be sent ? Evening was fast approaching, and it would be night before the return journey could be accomplished. Moreover, dark rain-clouds had gathered in the West; it was the month of Vaishakh well-known for the evening storms and torrential rains. Sulochana was reluctant to send Chintaharan again, Govinda was too young and was not keeping fit. So after much deliberation it was decided that Kuda should go as there was none else to choose from.

The Kaviraj stood up to go, behind him came the ever cheerful Kuda with the bowl in hand. He was very pleased as this would give him the chance to visit another new village, he would see many new things and he loved to see the darkening sky. When they came to the fields beyond the village the sky was overcast with clouds, leaving no gap, the wind had dropped and there was a great stillness. The physician said, "Come, let us quicken our steps." They both hastened forward; Kuda was delighted at the prospect of a heavy downpour. Meanwhile, back at the village, after a lot of trouble one ingredient was found but even after a lot of rummaging through everything the next one remained undiscovered. The widowed sister then told Sulochana, "Sister, I cannot find anything else." Then she decided to ask her neighbours and went out with Sulochana's younger son, Sulochana insisting that they take a lantern with them. In the house the sick old man, Sulochana and Chintaharan were left behind awaiting the arrival of those that had gone out.

In a short time, there arose a great humming noise coming from a great distance; with the sound arrived a tremendous storm in all its fury. The roar of the wind was terrifying, as if Indra riding on his great elephant Airavat were out to crush the Asuras in a mighty battle, aided by the nine and forty mad hurricanes, the cohorts of the wind-god. The earth trembled; and with the first onslaught of the fierce Godhead of storm the roof of the kitchen was torn out and blown away. The second assault was so terrible, ruthless and cruel that even to think of it one would be on the verge of losing one's senses. The huge, ancient seemul tree swaying from side to side crashed with a great noise on the very hut where the sick old man was. Everything crumbled under its tremendous weight, the roof, the walls, nothing remained; and it was im-

possible to say what happened to those who were inside. The infernal play of the storm and rain continued far into the evening; then as night fell, the wild dance of the destructive forces of Nature subsided. To the inhabitants of the village this storm of only an hour seemed to have brought in its wake the Great Destroyer's wrath upon them.

In the village the roofs of many houses were blown away; some houses were even totally razed to the ground. Many villagers lost everything they had, and came out on the streets utterly destitute.

The aunt and niece, who had gone out in search of the other ingredient, stood shivering under a tree. The aunt said, "Who knows what's happening at home?" The niece was quite annoyed, getting thoroughly drenched out of doors, and said without any effort at hiding her feelings, "What can really happen? They are quite comfortable within, only we are getting wet in the open." The aunt, however, was very anxious as she knew that their huts were rather old.

The Kaviraj and Kuda had crossed the field and entered the village when the storm burst. They took shelter in the verandah of an acquaintance of the physician.

Kuda was not allowed to return that night. Next morning when he returned he could hardly recognise the place at first. The huts were gone, the big Secmul tree was no longer standing and the old man too was gone, dead, only Govinda standing amongst the ruins with a countenance pale and terror-stricken. His aunt standing close to him was crying her heart out. Kuda, too, was overwhelmed to see them in that state. He saw that the tree in falling had covered a bigish area and some villagers were pulling out the occupants and many things from under it.

Kuda went on observing what he had never seen before, and even then was disinclined to believe what he saw. First, Chintaharan was dragged out in an unconscious state; one of his legs was so badly broken that it was dangling, held by the skin. Then the dead body of the sick old man was brought out; he would no longer suffer the agonies of his ailment. Still, the widowed daughter began loudly to mourn his death. Then when Sulochana's corpse was brought out, Kuda could no longer restrain himself, tears in rivulets were coursing down his cheeks. Govinda, too, felt like crying but an excess of fear seemed to have dried up all his tears. On that dreadful evening those who were outside lived and those who thought themselves safe indoors were killed; as if an inexorable Fate bent on saving these lives had forced them out of doors during the catastrophe.

God alone knew how Brindavan did bear this terrible blow. But after this it became impossible for him to stay in his village. He lived in Navadwip the remaining years of his life.

(To be continued)

PRAMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Twenty-First Number, 1965. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price Rs. 6.00.

For twenty years past, the annual anthology of articles under the name of Sri Aurobindo Circle has been like a barometer (to record our comprehension of the "absolute magnitude" constituted of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given to us). And commendable is the distinctness and accuracy of service the instrument, that is The Circle, has rendered.

The twenty-first Number of Sri Aurobindo Circle (1965) has not only been a worthy addition of one hundred and fourteen pages (excluding one extract from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, three latest messages from the Mother and two new pictures of her) to this series of about three thousand pages of literature written by devotees and scholars during the past twenty years, and compiled from the words of the Master and the Mother, but has also been a book of marked merit by itself. This is due to the clear evidence of attempts to scale new horizons in the new spirit. As we know, there is seldom a niche in the labyrinth of life, knowledge and culture, which has not flashed in the splendour of the Mother's and the Master's comments. Thus a passing reference by Sri Aurobindo to "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" in *The Synthesis of Yoga* or his notice of the play *Saint Joan*, when duly pursued, may bring about a revolution in the conventional assessment of Wordsworth and turn turtle the sacred attitude towards the world of Shavian wit. Such is the power of the manifold observations made by the Mother and the Master that a clue from them makes gloomy rocks of dubiety lucent and transparent. So it is interesting to note that the volume under review contains articles covering the domains of various lores. Apart from the Mother's messages and a prefatorial extract from Sri Aurobindo, there is the continuation from the previous Number of "The Supramental Perfection" compiled from Sri Aurobindo's works, with neatly arrayed sub-titles like "The Supramental Knowledge", "The Supramental Vision", "The Supramental Thought", "The Supramental Speech", "The Supramental Range of Knowledge" and "The Supramental Time Vision".

Kishor Gandhi's article "Humanity at the Cross-Roads: Are you Ready?" is not only a salient analysis of the crisis in current life, but an earnest effort to stress the towering significance of some of the Mother's messages in the background of the process. Declared "an evolutionary crisis" by Sri Aurobindo, the present crisis is destined to be succeeded by a revolutionary transformation, even more than revolutionary, because, to quote the author, "In all the periods of crisis through which humanity has passed in the past the change that was demanded of it never required its exceeding of the human consciousness itself. Even the most revolutionary transfor-

mations in human history have been transformations of its life within the present bounds of the human consciousness. None of them have attempted a radical breach in those bounds; none have endeavoured to lift up humanity beyond its human nature."

Often one is led to believe that somewhere in the sealed spheres of his knowing, man is already aware, though vaguely, of the utter futility of the present mode of his existence. One is led to wonder: is there not a strange psychological resignation to the awful prospect of a total annihilation, in the utter callousness with which humanity tolerates the ghastly nuclear destructives? Is it not a fact that the sum-total of mankind's will-power, even when tacitly expressed, is capable of mending its own follies, and that such a will-power is simply absent? Then, if one may be bold enough to suggest, is there not hidden a complex of impotence and even a subconscious collective death-wish (Soul's knowledge of immortality apart) in theories such as Huxley's Positive Eugenics, a sense of guilt at fulfilling the obligation to father the future humanity?

Symptoms no doubt reveal a gloomy and doleful state of things, to alter which no religion or morality, no philosophy or culture has the power. The alternative lies deep beneath what has yet been generally believed as the finale. In his article, Kishor Gandhi makes his readers aware of a great call from that deep—the supreme command—to "avert the catastrophic destruction which looms close over humanity's head and open for it the portals of the New Age, the Age of the Supramental Truth."

"Death is the question nature puts continually to life and her reminder to it that it has not found itself." These few words of Sri Aurobindo's constitute a complete revolution in the customary and seasoned attitude towards death. In Sri Aurobindo's vision of the conquest of death is justified the very existence of Life; Life there is commanded to realise itself. Jugal Kishore Mukherji's "The Physical Conquest of Death in the Seer-Vision of Sri Aurobindo" is a product of sublime quest and a thesis of an exalted order. Moreover, this provides a dignified prelude to extensive pursuits yet to be made in the realm of epistemology.

"The Literary Genius of Sri Aurobindo" by Sisir Kumar Ghosh is yet another attempt to introduce a scholarly order into the study of Sri Aurobindo. Further, the author has stressed the amazing ease with which Sri Aurobindo used to change his style from book to book. Ghosh's observation, while discussing receptivity to Sri Aurobindo's Literature, that to accept it one "must be not only sensitive but spiritual, not only spiritual but sensitive" deserves to be remembered as an epigram of verity.

The other discussion on Sri Aurobindo's Literature is "Vasavadutta: A Study" by Prema Nandakumar. It is a worthy academic work on a play which, of all the plays of Sri Aurobindo, is, according to the author's words, "nearest to us; it is a page from our epic India, the India of Mahabharat." The legend, the plot, the story and the play, influences and characters, all such vital aspects have been discussed with competence.

A very interesting treatise in this number is Sri Prithwindra Mukherjee's "Music

of the Coming Age.” His interpretation of the current state of Western music speaks of an enlightened understanding. According to him the very “chaotic” Western music “carries with it a tremendous possibility, the promise of a glorious future; and the present ‘horror’ in the music appears to be but a phase of psychological purification, a sort of perverted form of man’s eternal cry for Light, Freedom and Progress. Somewhere in that wild and primitive and vital rhythm there seems to ring a note of surrender ! Harmony is the very essence of this vitality; it craves to be harnessed by the divine clairvoyance of a proper melody”.

In the world of music (and the music of the world) the author proposes a synthesis, the practical aspect of which being left to the citizens of that world, the boldness and inspiration therein can be appreciated by all. It is the boldness of the certainty of the fundamental harmony.

“The Hindu Doctrine of Man” by Aurobindo Basu is a brilliant summary of the approach of Hindu schools to determine the nature of man. He ends with Sri Aurobindo, “the latest view in Indian Philosophy of man—creature ignorant, impotent, struggling, fallen—yet greater by his fall.”

V. K. Gokak’s “Spiritual Education” is a concrete and anxious invitation to his own world of education to realise the “integral conception of spiritual education.” His comment on secularism, the pet word with many today, is significant, “Secularism should be dynamic and positive, not merely a negative affair. To throw all religions to the winds is not secularism. Rather, dynamic secularism consists in choosing for assimilation the psychological and universal values, around which each religion is fashioned and in disengaging them from the exoteric, dogmatic and sociological layers which have been deposited into the amalgam that each religion is.”

The last article in the volume “The Sunlit Path” is a study in symbolism and the symbol of Light in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, by Edith B. Schnapper. Indeed, the study of symbolism is not merely fascinating, but indispensable in regard to everything of a higher value. In spirituality, the highest of all things, the question of symbolism can never be overstressed. From the Vedas to Sri Aurobindo the application and interpretation of symbols constitute a luminous world by itself, a glimpse of which is provided by this interesting article.

The appearance of a Number of Sri Aurobindo Circle is viewed by many a “watcher” as a new “planet” swimming into his “ken”. Limitless is the expanse of the sky of spirituality, and planets with revelatory messages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will always be luminous !

MANOJ DAS

THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

III

ENGLISH MAKES ITS HOME IN INDIA

AN inevitable result of the occupation of India, first by the Muslims and later by the British, was the introduction of two foreign languages on a wide scale. Both Persian and English came to be used, first as the language of officialdom and later as the medium of polite communication among a large section of the people. This meant a serious rupture with the past and it had important repercussions.

The Prevalence of Persian before English

The Muslim dynasties which founded an empire in India were all, with the negligible exception of the Lodis and the Surs who ruled for brief periods, of Turkish extraction. The reason why they did not introduce the Turkish language here and patronised instead the Persian and the Arabic tongues is one of the accidents of history. Very soon after they had established themselves securely on the throne of Delhi, they had to deal with a large number of refugees from western Asia—Persian scholars, poets and saints and Arab theologians and scientists—who had been driven from their homelands in Iran and Iraq by the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. The rude semi-barbarian rulers of Delhi considered it a privilege to give these refugees all assistance. Many were given positions in court, in the civil service and in the army. Some were provided with generous endowments and encouraged to devote their time to learned or spiritual pursuits. A considerable number found employment as Imams of mosques and became *ex-officio* headmasters of the elementary schools (the *maktabs*) that come to be attached to these mosques; the more educated among them were placed in charge of higher seats of learning (the *madrasas*) in the big cities. These newcomers used mostly Persian as their medium of communication. Hence Persian became the official language as well as the medium of instruction. The Mughals continued the earlier tradition and Persian continued to be cultivated.

By the middle of the sixteenth century when the Mughals came to power, Persian had already made a headway in India in many branches of literature—belles lettres, theological and historical writings,—as well as in law, medicine and astronomy. Some of the Indian works, especially in medicine and astronomy, had been translated into Persian under the direct patronage of the Sultans. And the influence of the language was beginning to be felt in the writings in Indian vernaculars, notably in Hindi and Punjabi : witness the works of Kabir and Nanak. But there is little evidence that as yet many Hindus had taken to the new learning. The intolerant religious policy

of the Delhi Sultanate had alienated the Hindus, and avenues of decent employment in the government service were barred to them.

With the accession of Akbar, Persian gained a new impetus. He threw the highest posts open to Hindu and Mussalman alike and encouraged the more forward spirits to learn the Persian language, by doing away with all religious bigotry. Many of them rapidly gained a proficiency in the language and thereby secured admission to places of honour in the court at Agra as well as in the civil and military departments of government. It is difficult to estimate the actual number of Hindus in government service under the Mughals, but their numbers must have been considerable, at least in the lower ranks of the Mansabdari system, and particularly in the revenue department. It is interesting to note in this connection that when Aurangzeb sought to undo the good work done by Akbar, and decided to turn out all Hindus from his government departments, he had to offer special concessions to attract new recruits from the Muslim community. All this shows that by the time the Mughal had ceased to reign, the knowledge of Persian must have become fairly wide-spread, especially among certain sections of the Hindus, like the Kayasthas of north India who took readily to service under the Government. A seventeenth-century list of works usually forming part of the curriculum for Persian studies includes some model letters written by one Chandra Bhan Brahman. This throws an interesting sidelight on the situation.

After the Battle of Plassey : The Spread of English

When the British found themselves masters of eastern and south India after the battle of Plassey (1757), Persian still enjoyed a large vogue. Sanskrit too was a living force, and the lawbooks of the Hindus which regulated their civil law were in the keeping of the Pandits. The early administrators like Clive and Warren Hastings were hesitant to injure Indian sentiment by a sudden imposition of a wholly alien tongue. On the contrary, they made a politic gesture by founding two seats of higher learning, the Sanskrit College in Banaras and the Madrasah at Calcutta, to promote the study of the two Indian languages. Persian continued to be used in official correspondence, and British judges were assisted in their work by Hindu Pandits and Muslim Ulema who were to expound the law. High Government officials like William Jones and James Prinsep showed a keen interest in the ancient language and literature of India, and for a time it seemed that neither Sanskrit nor Persian was going to be dislodged from the position they once occupied.

This hope was soon to be dashed to the ground. Cornwallis came to India with the avowed intention of "anglicising" the entire administrative system. By the end of the 18th century, it became clear to anyone with eyes to see that the English language was henceforth to be the only language used both in official work and in the management of big business which the Britisher soon began to monopolise. There now began one of the most curious stampedes in history. Immediately it was discovered that Persian had no more any future in India and that the only chance of get-

ting any employment under the British ruler and merchant was through a smattering knowledge of their tongue, the more well-to-do classes in British India began to arrange for an English education for their sons. Christian missionaries flocked to India in ever increasing numbers and opened their schools. Orthodox Hindus swallowed their pride and sent their wards there to be brought up on Biblical teaching. The pupils disappointed their masters in the matter of religion, but they turned out to be diligent scholars of the English language. The contagion spread and eminent citizens of Calcutta and the other important towns vied with one another to endow private schools of a non-denominational character, where English was to be the medium of instruction. Ram Mohan Roy is still remembered as a pioneer in this line.

Ram Mohan Roy Pleads for English

The Government authorities, both in India and in England, seemed for a time a little uncertain as to the attitude they should take. It was imperative that English should be taught to the Indians in order to ensure an adequate supply of suitably trained clerks and other low-paid officials. On the other hand, they were loth to give offence to Indian sentiment by showing a too pronounced bias in favour of the alien tongue. They decided to go slow. As early as 1813, a beginning had been made by allocating a sum of a lakh of rupees every year out of the public revenues for public instruction in British India. A controversy arose about the best way to spend this money. Men like James Prinsep who were avowedly Orientalist in their attitude were placed in charge of the Department of Public Instruction, and they pleaded in favour of continuing the old system of Pathashalas and Madrasas, on the ground that the English system of education would not suit the needs of India. There was a lurking fear that a liberal education of the type would be detrimental to the future of British rule.

The issue was soon joined by a powerful group led by Macaulay who argued strongly in support of English. Ram Mohan Roy petitioned the King on behalf of the people, and pressed for an early decision in favour of English. They came to be known as the Anglicists, and the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy remained a live issue for nearly two decades. The issue was finally settled in 1835, when the Governor General, Bentinck, published his famous Resolution making English the sole medium of instruction in future and allocating the Government funds wholly to the promotion of English learning. Bentinck had been moved to take this step largely in view of Macaulay's Minute on the subject. Modern India was to be shaped to a considerable extent by this solution of the Anglicist-Orientalist dispute. The arguments advanced on either side will bear a close study for our present purpose.

(To be continued)

JOTINDRANATH*

“THE snake indicates an Energy—it is in Jotindranath’s case an Energy of the higher ranges of mind (yellow) and its spreading its hood indicates that on these ranges he will get siddhi.”

17-7-1933

SRI AUROBINDO

This was written to me when I narrated a vision of mine to Sri Aurobindo. I saw Jotinda with a very bright body doing meditation in his room (of the old Bakery). A very bright yellow snake was behind him spreading its hood over his head.

Jotinda joined the Ashram in August 1932. I do not think there are more than 40 persons now in the Ashram who came earlier. I have the privilege of having worked first with him and then under him when our former in-charge left us in 1935. I have always admired how a man of his spiritual status devoted all his energy, time and devotion to the single cause of serving the Mother for years and years, suspending all other activities for a long time. It is he who has organised the Bakery and given it its present shape. The old Bakery without machine, without servant, without scientific knowledge, dirty and with poor management, was nothing in comparison with the present one. As regards the Laundry he has founded it. Out of an old and tottered house he has built up as a present for the Mother a first-class, scientific and hygienic Laundry of which any big institution could be rightly proud.

This is only the outer expression of his service to the Mother. Inwardly he is much more than most of us—one of the chosen few who, we believe, have got even the highest experiences of the Overmind. We have always seen in him our elder brother, not only in age but also in every field: vital-physical capacity, sadhana, discernment, knowledge and above all character. To manage two most important departments with so many heads is an impossible task for ninety-nine per cent of us.

I wonder how he managed to master French, read and study the voluminous works of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and possess a considerable knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads. I sincerely hold he is one of those children and disciples of the Mother and the Master, who have taken birth for no other purpose than serving them and helping and fulfilling them in the world. He belongs to the inner circle of intimate associates who accompany God when He descends as Avatar in times of need to make the descent of a particular Truth possible.

HRIDAY

* Jotundranath passed away on July 5, 1965.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FOURTH SEMINAR

25th April 1965

HOW TO MAKE ONE'S STUDIES A MEANS OF ONE'S SADHANA

(Continued from the July issue)

III

STUDIES are that complex set of activities of reading, writing and thinking that develop the faculties of the mind. There is in the concept an idea of a quiet, steady, rational pursuit of knowledge.

By sadhana is meant a process of self-discipline and self-development that leads to the realisation of any aim, and more particularly to the realisation of self or of God. Associated with this process are cultivation, practice, constant endeavour, and even severity. And in the particular connotation of yoga-process, we have in addition the idea of sacrifice and offering. In this aim of the discovery of a truer self, the first requisite is the recognition of the falsity of the ego. Only then can follow a gradual decentralisation, until the ego dissolves in a truer self. The realisation cannot come until the ego is sacrificed. And one of the most direct means is the offering of all action as a service to the Divine.

Thus we see that studies and sadhana do not exclude each other. In fact, in ordinary life, studies would seem closest to sadhana, since they are free from the sense of immediate utility and give more steadiness and stillness than the rest of life. Also, by their stress on mind, they offer the possibility of seeing oneself detachedly.

Yet, often, studies with their attention on self-development resulting in social superiority have seemed contradictory to sadhana, which has its primary stress on self-giving and service. Also because the knowledge they bring is only pragmatic, not giving the satisfaction of the grasp of any absolute reality.

But in a sadhana where the whole self has to be made worthy of being offered, no instrument can be left fallow. Mind has its function in the organisation of the works (that are indispensable to the realisation of Divine Life) and in the conscious perception of order and harmony in the universe.

Thus in the process of self-perfection, studies of some kind as a means of mental development deem indispensable, even if our outer work does not demand a direct use of what we learn.

But studies can be considered a means of conscious sadhana only if they are done with the aim of developing the instrument for serving and expressing the Divine.

Why do we then fail to make it a part of sadhana?

Many of us have been seen falling into a routine-consciousness in which the unrelenting cycles of weeks weigh upon us and kill the sense of wonder in studies.

Another error is the dragging on with studies in spite of having lost all interest in them, because they give us a sense of aristocracy or an illusion of security and because the effort to attend most of the classes is not too exacting.

There are others who have taken up too many things and cannot concentrate on any.

All these causes take away from the intensity which alone can make of studies a means of searching. An activity that is lifeless or blind or mechanical cannot be sent up as a sacrifice.

So that studies may become a means of sadhana, we must utilise all the opportunity they offer of disciplining ourselves. We must utilise them for developing the faculties of the mind, instead of fulfilling merely the outer conditions of an institution. The responsibility is more with ourselves than with the institutions, which are no more than opportunities.

Our studies might not remain a burden that they are, if we could dedicate the work before we start and after we have done it. And while we are at it, let us look for perfection, in the parts and of the whole. For that is sadhana. Then perhaps our studies, instead of being repetitive, can become creative, living, beautiful, worthy of the altar.

BRAJKISHORE

IV

Friends,

The first words in that most remarkable and soul-provoking of booklets, Sri Aurobindo's "Thoughts and Glimpses", are :

"When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar".¹

This aphorism tells us that it is only when we have ceased to be occupied with knowings and surpassed them that we shall arrive at Divine Knowledge. Studies, therefore, cannot intrinsically be of value in one's sadhana; they have to be consciously made a means for that purpose.

If we engage in studies sincerely, yet without being totally engrossed in them, we can derive considerable benefit from them from the point of the sadhana. For, as the Mother has said,

¹ *Thoughts and Glimpses*, p.3.

“Concentrating on studies is one of the most powerful means of controlling the mind and the vital; that is why it is so important to study.”

So the Mother has assured us that if we study diligently, Her blessings will always be with us.

It is essential to have the right spirit in one’s studies, as in everything else; it would be futile to study in the spirit that the majority of students have and to expect the studies to help in the sadhana. Sri Aurobindo wrote thus concerning this point:

“I see no objection to his going on with his studies,—whether they will be of any use to him for a life of sadhana will depend on the spirit in which he does them. The really important thing is to develop a stage of consciousness in which one can live in the Divine and act from it on the physical world. A mental training and discipline, knowledge of men and things, culture, capacities of a useful kind are a preparation that the sadhak would be all the better for having—even though they are not the one thing indispensable.”¹

Thus while in themselves studies can have little value, if done in the true spirit they can be made a valuable aid to one’s sadhana.

Further, we can also profit from studies rightly pursued because they develop our intellect as well as our capacity for correct and sensitive expression, both of which can assist the sadhana. For if we have worth-while ideas, our powers of expression can be very useful, something on the lines of the maxim “The pen is mightier than the sword.” The Mother says :

“Certain ideas have the power to transform the world. It is these ideas that ought to be expressed; they are the guiding stars in the firmament of the spirit, it is they that lead the earth towards her supreme realisation.”²

And this, surely is the aim of our collective sadhana.

As for the intellect, it can be equally a hindrance or a help. Sri Aurobindo says, however, “Even when fully trained and developed, the intellect cannot arrive at absolute certitude or complete truth, but it can arrive at one aspect or side of it and make a reasonable or probable affirmation; but untrained, it is a quite insufficient instrument, at once hasty and peremptory and unsafe and unreliable.”³ One can well understand the value, nay, the importance of studies conducted in the right spirit and the right manner.

One must not study for the satisfaction of one’s ego or its ambitions or desires. Always and ever, one must offer one’s studies to the Divine, just as one must offer everything else to the Divine. And one must do the best one can in one’s studies so that they be a fit offering to Him. For in truth, it would be vain to make artificial distinctions between studies and sadhana. The Mother says :

“In the Integral Yoga, there is no distinction between sadhana and the outward

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 376.

² *The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations*, II.

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 347.

life; it is in each and every moment of the daily life that the Truth must be found and practised".¹

These words of The Mother leave no doubt as to the attitude we should adopt towards our studies to make them a means, a part of our sadhana.

PRAKASH

V

To study, in its essential meaning, implies the raising of our mental capacities, enlarging our intellectual horizon, and giving coherence to our thinking. Study, used in its most derogative form, is for economic and social gain or mental pride. Even the aim of the philosopher or the scientist, to attain knowledge for the sake of knowledge, is not the highest. Because there is possible a higher type of study. By a higher type of study I do not mean a more advanced form of external study, but study which transcends its formal limits, and becomes the vehicle of a greater self-becoming and development. Study usually is either boredom, or the spring-board of ambition, or perhaps the filling up of some unfilled vacant hours. But it can become also in its own terms a way of our sadhana.

Before I proceed, let me explain the meaning of the term 'sadhana'. It was considered that there were only certain well-defined paths by which one could pursue one's sadhana. But now the age-old tradition does not apply in our times, when, by the descent of the supramental Light, each mode, each way, each sincere effort can become a way of sadhana. Sadhana also means discipline, method, a way of working for the realisation of Self and God. Sadhana is the accelerated process of divine realisation. This being so, our study can very well become a means of progress, knowledge, of the discovery of our central inner being. The next inevitable question that rises is: how can this be done ?

Study, essentially is a process of learning some branch of knowledge. This is a process of concentration, memory and a successful expression of the subject studied. The whole is a mental process. It is possible, as a first step, to remember that this mental growth and acquisition is not for the benefit of the narrow mental self, but is essentially a process of self-dedication through the medium of study. By practice this remembrance shall become part of the student's consciousness and study shall become indeed a sacrifice. Then, he must learn to see that study, though it opens intellectual horizons, has a deeper purpose: to transcend mental limits and to open to the heights of intuition.

Study thus changes from an objective course of knowledge to a larger subjective way of perception and knowledge by experience. The student would discover that the actual thing of study would have for him a wider grasp, a deeper seizing and he would need a lesser mental effort to understand a fact, a sequence, a pattern, for, by

¹ *White Roses*, Enlarged edition. p 33.

now, he would have acquired the intuitive perception by which he would automatically enter into the core of the matter without any mental effort and the knowledge acquired be a permanent portion of his memory.

Also there is greater joy in studying as a work of dedication. There is no great happiness in working for one's own benefit, or for some ambition which only brings unrest or momentary elation or frustration. But studying not for one's gain brings greater peace, joy and fulfilment.

But this study as a means of sadhana is not for all. It is for those who are called to the path. It is specially for us here who are studying in this Centre of Education. For, it is not our aim to turn out great scholars, philosophers, scientists or masters of branches of study for their own sake, but students who have made study a way of self-dedication. The world is producing great scholars by thousands every year—surely we do not want to fall in the same blind groove. A dedicated student who has made study a means of reaching his soul and higher realities is surely to be preferred here. For, we must remember that our institution is a spiritual one; here we can not allow a lesser goal to spoil our essential aim. That the way may appear very arduous is no cause that we must leave the effort. Ours is not an easy path. Study, as a sacrifice, is the true study. Here all the activities including studies are opportunities to open and communicate with the Divine.

In fact all things that are done here have their goal, the goal of sacrifice. Sacrifice is our existence. So study too falls into the same spiritual pattern. All things have their meaning and fulfilment in sacrifice; sacrifice is the back-bone of all we are and shall be. Before I conclude let me explain about the term sacrifice. It is not a physical process but an integral psychological process by which we lift up all our actions, thoughts, ideas, moods and becomings to the highest godhead in us or above us. It is a concrete process, and if we do it selflessly, seeking no reward, we can attain the greatest possible spiritual realisation. As Sri Aurobindo says: "He is God, the Divine, the Puroshottama. To Him we offer everything as a sacrifice; into His hands we give up our actions; in His existence we live and move; unified with Him in our nature and with all existence in Him, we become one soul and one power of being with Him and with all beings; with His supreme reality we identify and unite our self-being. By works done for sacrifice, eliminating desire, we arrive at knowledge and at the soul's possession of itself; by works done in self-knowledge and God-knowledge we are liberated into the unity, peace and joy of the divine existence."¹

ROMEN

(To be continued)

¹ *Essays on the Gita* (American Edition), p. 111.

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

No. 8

August 1965

1. *Change of Name*

Because of the increasing need to make available information to both teachers and students on all subjects from the files of this department, it has been decided, with the written approval of The Mother, to change the name of the department as in the above heading.

2. *Programmed Instruction*

Some teachers are sceptical, some are interested but many have asked the question, 'What exactly is programmed instruction ?' Space does not allow anything like a comprehensive reply in this newsletter but the essential elements are as follows :

- i) an ordered sequence of stimulus items,
- ii) each item requiring a specific response,
- iii) the student's response is rewarded by immediate knowledge of results,
- iv) the student progresses, step by step at his own speed,
- v) because of this progress he makes few errors, practising mostly correct responses.
- vi) an immediate relationship is forged between what he knows and what is within him to what he is supposed to learn from the programme.

Most authoritative programmes today are designed by Skinner, but all depend for their effect on some type of psychological conditioning, although whether it is Skinner's operant conditioning, Pavlovian or classical conditioning, or Guthrie's contiguity learning, or a combination, depends on the programme.

Although programmed instruction has within it a potential to turn the attention of education and educational research more intensely and productively than ever before to the process of learning, there is little indication as yet that it is being used to enlighten the teacher in the method or process by which he conducts his class.

3. *History*

There have been repeated enquiries as to what are the most significant periods of human history. For a brief answer it can be fairly clearly stated that there are only four profoundly significant periods which could be set forth as follows :

- 1) The Promethean epoch, when languages were born, tools were invented, and

fire was discovered and put to use. This period could be any time between 100,000 to 10,000 B.C.

2) The Neolithic Revolution. Between 8,000 and 3,000 B.C. there emerged, in Egypt, Mesopotamia and on the Indus, and perhaps a little later on the Hwang Ho in China, The Great Cultures—*islands of enlightenment* which were to permeate the whole of human cultural activity.

3) Around 500 B.C. was established the firm basis of the development of the human intellect which arose independently in India, China, Persia, Palestine, and Greece. In India there were the Upanishads, the Buddha and a host of philosophical theories. In China it was the time of Confucius and Laotse. In Persia Zarathustra was preaching the struggle between good and evil. In Palestine there arose the prophets from Elijah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Josiah. In Greece Homer was alive, also the philosophers Heraclitus, Parmenides and Plato. The mass of knowledge and belief suggested by these names, each group ignorant of the others, made up a truly formidable search for the meaning of the World and Man so as to create indeed the word History.

4) The fourth profoundly significant period of history must be, of course, the advent of the techno-scientific epoch which had its beginnings in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages; intellectually constituted in the seventeenth century it became widespread from the end of the eighteenth, but only reached its supersonic speeds of development in recent years.

One might pose the question : "What is the ultimate goal of history ?" Is it the attainment of final happiness? the Unity of Mankind ? or... ?

4. *Future Education*

The speed and impetus of man's thought and progress is such that it is not sufficient to be merely concerned with immediate problems of education. To keep in step with progress one has to look straight ahead. What looms on the horizon of the future appears to take more and more a definite shape and synthesis. It seems increasingly clear that future education has to evolve into some form of ecology whereby the relationship between one subject and the others finds a true basis of correspondence. One factor which stands in the way of implementing classes devised for such experience learning is the cutting up into snippets the hours of study available to the student. Another factor which would have to be resolved would be the confusion which now obtains with regard to the role and function of reading and what reading is. It is, of course, of the first importance that teachers appreciate the concept of reading as a dynamic one which has always guided school practice. Reading today has assumed an increasingly wide range of activity in social life as its range in school activities has multiplied and as research has made clearer the nature of the basic processes involved both factually and psychologically. Where reading was formerly thought to be a single process relating to word perception it

is now recognized as a complex series of mental activities relating to all aspects of interpretation applied to written or printed symbols.

Research into the skills and attitudes involved in all types of reading has found four interrelated essentials which are, (1) word perception, (2) recognition and interpretation of meaning, (3) critical evaluation and appreciative responses, (4) assimilation, or integration with previous experiences of ideas acquired through reading. It is of great importance that all four of these basic aspects be cultivated as early as possible in school life.

5. *Research in the Classroom*

Professor Paul. C. Burns of the University of Tennessee says: "The importance of a research approach to improving classroom instruction is being recognised increasingly by teachers and educators. Teaching by traditional approaches is not sufficient in terms of current knowledge—teaching needs to be influenced by the classroom implications of research. The most effective teacher is one who keeps his planning and instruction in tune with the useful and constructive findings of educational research."

6. *News—India*

Dr. D. S. Kothari, Chairman of the Education Commission, has stated that the Commission would submit its recommendations by the end of March next year. The Commission has visited eleven states so far and is to be in Madras from the end of July.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

JUST TO OBLIGE A LADY

(“She remarked that the poets in the Ashram seemed to be busy with ‘Golden Light’, ‘Blue Sky’ and ‘Infinite’. ‘Why do they not write about the bee, the flower and the ant ?’ she asked.”—*Mother India*, July, 1965, p. 14)

SIGH no more, Lady,
'Neath the trees most shady.
Here is a little sonnet
With a bee right in its bonnet !
And in the plants
Romp some little red ants,
And tho' I feel a horrid sting
I smile and sing Hey-Dinga-Ding,
And chant aloud the praises,
Of Buttercups and Daisies;
Then tip-toe through the Tulips,
To sip the dew from Cowslips.

Alas ! Alack ! a Bumble Bee
Stung me in the vertebrae.

LEENA

ANNOUNCEMENT

In view of the educational thinking stimulated by the Educational Commission of the Government of India to evolve a proper National System of Education for the country, there will shortly be a special issue of *Mother India* devoted to the subject as well as to the problem of education in general in the world-context.

As the special issue will have articles of interest to educationists and libraries, we intend printing more copies. So those who are interested are requested to book their copies now.

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