

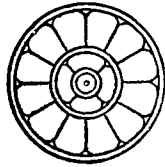
MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY, 1966

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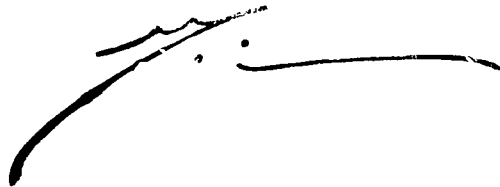


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVII

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE MOTHER'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE	... 5
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 6
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 7
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	
The Action of the Higher Force	<i>From Nagin Doshi</i> ... 12
LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY	<i>A. B. Purani</i> ... 15
SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS ASHRAM	
From an Address delivered at Durham, England	<i>Hon. Mrs. Monica Parish</i> ... 21
THE HUMOUR OF SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Jyotana Nath Mallik</i> ... 26
THE BLOOM OF PEACE (Poem)	<i>Naresh</i> ... 31
TWO POEMS FROM THE TAMIL	<i>Translated by Sitaram and Mahalingam</i> ... 32
TWO POEMS FROM THE BENGALI	<i>Translated by Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> ... 33
THE DESTINY OF THE BODY	
THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherji</i> ... 34
ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>Romen</i> ... 40
“THE HEART OF HINDUSTHAN” :	
A Review-Article	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 44
WHOM GOD PROTECTS :	
The Life Story of a Spiritual Adept (<i>Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri</i> <i>from the Bengali</i>)	<i>Pramode Kumar Chatterjee</i> ... 47
A. B. PURANI	<i>Punjatal</i> ... 52

CONTENTS

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION : FIFTH SEMINAR, 8 August 1965 : "How to Turn One's Difficulties into Opportunities for Progress"—Speeches by Romen, Mita, Brajkishore <i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	... 56
TO MORWENNA...WITH LOVE (POEM) <i>Leena</i>	... 63
WALLACE STEVENS 2. THE DOCTRINE OF 'CORRESPONDENCES' <i>C. Subbian</i>	... 64
A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS <i>Prahlad Agarwal</i>	... 66
THE BODY NATURAL (Based on a Talk by the Mother : first published in the <i>Advent</i>)	... 68
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION : DEPARTMENT OF INFORMA- TION AND RESEARCH : NEWSLETTER <i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	... 70

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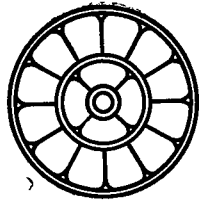
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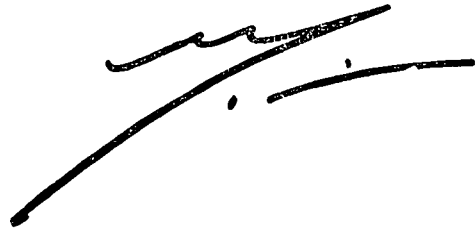
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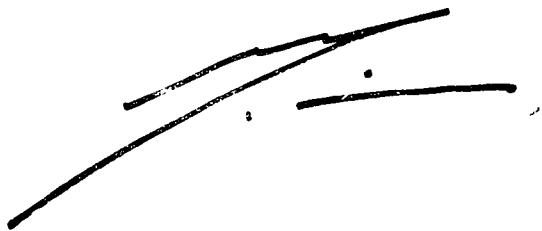
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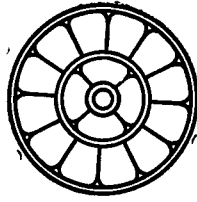
Au service de la Vérité



1966

Let us serve the Truth





WORDS OF THE MOTHER

*Toute la création
parle du Divin
à celui qui sait
entendre dans son cœur*

8-12-1965

The whole creation speaks of the
Divine to him who knows how to listen
in his heart.

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. Manlal, 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 23, 1940

N : Nishikanta asks why at times he is seized with a repugnance to writing poetry. He has burned a lot of his works at Santiniketan during such seizures. Here also the attack comes on occasion and he questions himself, "What is the use of writing after all ?" And this hampers his work, he says.

SRI AUROBINDO : These moods come to many people. They are a kind of *tamas* (inertia) which should not be indulged in.

N : Nishikanta says that it would be useful not to write if instead of doing so he could meditate or think of the Divine. This he can't do. "Then why not write ?" he argues, but the feeling of repugnance comes all the same.

SRI AUROBINDO : It has to be rejected.

P : Somebody from Gujarat has written that after you took your first few lessons in Sanskrit the teacher found that you were going on with extreme rapidity and there was no need of the teacher any more.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't remember having any teacher in Sanskrit. I think I learnt it by myself. Many languages, in fact, I learnt by myself—German and Italian, for instance. In Bengali, however, I had a teacher.

C : Did you learn Gujarati in Pondicherry ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. I picked it up in Baroda, as I had to read the Maharajah's files.

N : Nishikanta was asking if you would write an appreciation of his book.

SRI AUROBINDO : For publication ?

N : Yes. I replied that you would never do it. He argued that you had done it for Dilip. I asked : Where ? And I added : "Sri Aurobindo has given only his opinion poem by poem as he has also done in your case. If Dilip published the opinions, it was his own doing."

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so. I cannot write a public appreciation for a member of my own Ashram. Tagore has given his appreciation. That should be enough.

JANUARY 24, 1940

MORNING

P : Jinnah has threatened the Viceroy that if the Congress came back to power there would be a revolution in India.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Congress, once it has resigned, can't come back to power even if it has a majority.

P : Jinnah says that Gandhi is making a compromise with the Viceroy and will then crush the Muslims and other minorities. He won't tolerate this.

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose Jinnah means : "Make me a king or..."

P : "I will kick up a row."

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

P : Different people have given different solutions regarding this one problem. Professor Saha says, "A Constituent Assembly will succeed." Sikandar Hyat proposes a committee of some 17 persons...

SRI AUROBINDO : And let them be shut up in a room until they are able to come to a settlement. (*Laughter*)

EVENING

Some Professor N. N. Das Gupta reviewed Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* in the *Hindustan Standard*.

SRI AUROBINDO : Who is this Das Gupta ?

P : It is Naren Das Gupta of Feni College, in Noakhali.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, he was Bejoy's friend.

P : Here, in Pondi ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No—when he first came to Calcutta.

P (*to N*) : Have you read the review ?

N : Yes, and S also has seen it.

S : The reviewer has found out an important coincidence.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

P : What coincidence ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The *Arya* came out just at the beginning of the last World War and *The Life Divine* at the beginning of the present one.

S (*to N*) : How is it that the *Hindustan Standard* has put the review on the leading page ? I thought it was a Socialist paper supporting Subhas Bose.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is a Leftist paper. But Subhas Bose has a corner in him which has a respect for spiritual things. He is not an ordinary atheist Socialist.

N : Nishikanta has bucked up. He says. "After all, Sri Aurobindo pressed me to publish my poems. So whether they sell or not is not my look-out." He believes that you gave some Force to Tagore which made Tagore change his mind about Nishikanta's poetry. I also believe this.

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean I put my Force on him ? Anybody who has poetic feeling will appreciate the book.

N : But did you put your Force on Tagore or not ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling a little*) : In a way. Has the book been sent for review ? If it has, the monthlies are sure to notice it.

JANUARY 25, 1940

P : Mahadev Desai has advised poor people to wear paper if cloth runs short.

N : Why wear anything at all ?

P : He has got this idea from Gandhi. Once Gandhi was putting a piece of paper in between the two folds of his loin-cloth. People say that paper will be short now.

SRI AUROBINDO : Doesn't matter. Was it not Gandhi's idea once not to wear anything ?

N : In that case, life's problem becomes very much simplified, and for food one can take grass like that English barrister.

SRI AUROBINDO : Thus two problems of life are solved. But what about the third : shelter ?

P : People can sleep under the stars.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not possible during the monsoon. Even Sannyasis have to seek for caves.

S : If one could really simplify life, things would be so much better. Even if as Yogis we accept life, simplification is necessary. If one makes life complex, complexities increase and increase. The Europeans, having accepted life, have increased its complexities enormously.

SRI AUROBINDO : But to what extent to simplify ?—that is the question. The Sannyasi's standpoint is to accept only what is necessary. This is understandable. But the Sannyasi does not quite accept life. If you do accept it, how far will you simplify ?

S : If you don't simplify drastically, you have to accept life as the Europeans do—with complexities multiplying.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not necessarily. The Europeans have accepted life in the wrong way—that is, along with its disorders.

S : Some people in India, no less than in Europe, have wanted to introduce nudity. But it is hardly necessary in India.

N : All the same, it would be rather comfortable, I think.

SRI AUROBINDO : A Frenchwoman went to Germany to study the nudists. When she came back she wrote an article in a paper : “Des bonheurs de nudité”—“The Happiness of Nudity”. Blake also wanted to establish nudity as the rule of life. He succeeded only in taking some promenades with his wife in his own garden. (*Laughter*)

N : By the way, some people are going to celebrate Bejoy Goswami's birth-centenary at Calcutta.

S : Are there no translations of his works ?

N : I haven't seen any.

SRI AUROBINDO : I have read neither any translation nor his original work. During his time, there was quite a strong cult of him.

N : Brahmosamaj ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. He was Brahmo at the beginning only. The three nationalist leaders of the day were his disciples—one, I forget his name, who started the nationalist university, the next Bepin Pal and the third Monoranjan Guha Thakurtha. It is said that the nationalist revolutionary movement was the outcome of his own movement.

N : How ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because he used to stress work, action !

N : The Calcutta people, the organisers of the celebration, want to know where in your writings you have referred to him. I read in one book your saying that the work begun by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Bejoy Goswami hasn't been finished. Jayantilal was telling me that you have said somewhere about Goswami that he couldn't give to others what he had received.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where have I said that ?

N : Jayantilal thinks it is in a book by Barin.

SRI AUROBINDO : The report is unreliable.

S : Somebody here was saying that a friend of his saw Goswami's presence standing behind a person.

SRI AUROBINDO : Goswami was a very powerful man.

N : I have read that his soul was thrice brought back to life by the Brahmachari of Baradi.

S : You mean Lokanath ?

N : Yes.

S : Jayantilal told me that Lokanath got his realisation at the age of 80, but his guru had no realisation; for which Lokanath was very sorry.

N : Yes. Lokanath's guru was Jnanamargi. Lokanath used to say, "You, my guru, are still bound while I your disciple am free. It is very sad to me." This Lokanath seems to have travelled to Sumeru.

S : Yes, he wanted to go to heaven like Yudhisthir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Did he believe that he could go to heaven bodily ?

N : It looks like it. And so with a friend he started along the Himalayas and, crossing them, came wandering to Sumeru where they met some people only 1/2 yard long who lived on vegetable roots growing beneath the snows. I believe they were Eskimos.

SRI AUROBINDO : Eskimos ? But Eskimos eat fish. Who has written all this ?

N : Some Sitanath Banerji, one of Lokanath's disciples.

EVENING

P : Have you read that book of poems by Udar's friend Armando Menezes ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have glanced through it. He has a mastery over the language and technique, but the work still seems to be derivative except in a few places.

N : Do you mean that he has no inspiration ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. He has inspiration and he has power too. Perhaps the word "derivative" is wrong. For it would mean imitation, though there is an influence of Shelley. What then shall I call his work ? Perhaps I may say it is not authentic yet. It has everything else short of this, and he may achieve something.

P : He is afraid of coming here lest he shouldn't be able to go back.

SRI AUROBINDO : He's afraid like Nandalal Bose ?

P : Yes. He says he has a family and if he takes up poetry here and doesn't go back... (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : He is one of the best among Indians who are writing in English. There is another from your part of the country.

P : Jehangir Vakil ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. But he didn't arrive at anything.

N : To this Armando Menezes as to Amal, his mother tongue practically is English.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not everything, nor does it count for much. Many Englishmen can't write poetry. The point is that Indians writing in English must do something extraordinary to be recognised while that is not so for an Englishman.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE ACTION OF THE HIGHER FORCE

Q : There seems to be a special difficulty about the Force descending. I suspect something wrong is responsible for that. What's the matter with the being ? 25-1-1936

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose not yet sufficiently surrendered or free from ego—The Force can come down in spite of that, but then it is in danger of being misused by an exaggerated ego for its desires.

Q : Instead of being so misused, cannot the descent be rather used for lessening or destroying the ego and its desires ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is its proper working, but if the ego is not rejected, then the wrong use may take place. 26-1-1936

A passive Force has no meaning—Force is always dynamic. Only, a Force can act on a basis of calm passivity just as in the material world the Force acts on the basis of inertia. 24-5-1936

Q : Over my head I see a plane of infinite and eternal Peace. The Mother is the Queen of this plane. From there I feel a ceaseless glow coming down towards me. It first touches my higher being and passes through it without any resistance. But on its way downwards its flow narrows to a small current which passes through the Brahmic hole. How do you find this description ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is quite correct. In many however it descends in a mass through the whole head and not in a current through the Brahmic hole. 13-2-1936

Q : That is the usual movement of the descent. But at times I experience the plane of Peace and Silence, my higher consciousness and inner consciousness as if packed on each other and become one and inseparable.

SRI AUROBINDO : This is felt in the consciousness only or through the whole body ? Or does it ever extend through space, space becoming identical with your own consciousness ? 13-2-1936

Q : I would very much like to know why the dynamic divine descent is prevented or obstructed.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is, I suppose, because the greater part of the nature is accustomed to identify dynamism with the movements of the ordinary consciousness and to let these have free play. 13-2-1936

Q : I sit up to the end of the Pranam ceremony in the Meditation Hall. A strong pressure is felt just when I stand up. It is like a heavy load pulling me down to the floor.

SRI AUROBINDO : It must be the pressure of the Force present there which you feel at that moment because of some shifting of the consciousness at the movement of preparing to go.

21-3-1936

There is a certain state of consciousness while sitting there (in the Meditation Hall) in which one is under the Force but does not feel it as a pressure because there is sufficient assimilation of the Force. When one rises there is a change of consciousness and the Force is felt as a pressure. As soon as the transition to the ordinary consciousness is complete, the pressure is no longer there.

22-3-1936

Q : A Force is felt in the body. But as it is not tangible I am not sure if it has come really inside the body. It is said that when the Force works in the physical it has to be tangible.

SRI AUROBINDO : Don't understand—the Force can be felt above, around, or anywhere else, and yet be quite tangible—if it is felt in the body, then it must be in the body.

24-3-1936

Q : After receiving the Mother's touch at the Pranam I found myself in the higher consciousness. I was there from the morning till 1 p.m. I felt that the "process" (the movement down or sending down the Force) as on the day before yesterday had already begun. But today it was a little different. I had not to take an active part in it. I simply watched the Mother's Force working. It was moving from above below like calm waves. Once it was experienced as an armour shielding my body from head to foot or, speaking psychologically, from my higher consciousness to the subconscious. It remained thus for about half an hour. Can it be called a process ? I am not able to understand the movement of the descending Force.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course it can be called a process. But it is the natural and right movement of the descent of Force. I do not see what there is that is not understandable. The silence or the Force or whatever comes down is at first felt above and then in the mind also, but it must descend afterwards into the heart and vital and physical and everywhere else within and around, if it is to do its work.

24-4-1936

Q : In spite of that process, how is it my vital and physical mind does not yet turn away from the lower nature ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What I said was it could not be done at once—e.g. by a single descent. Whatever the process or movement the lower nature takes time to receive. What is first necessary is to get down the higher consciousness into all the inner being down to the inner physical and live in that, so that anything lower would be quite superficial and unable to invade or trouble.

24-4-1936

The general "condition" does not mean, in my sentence, the surface condition as known to you. It contains many things in it unknown to you. What comes from above can come when one is in a clear mind or when the vital is disturbed, when one is meditating or when one is moving about, when one is working or when one is doing nothing. Most often it comes in a clear concentrated state, but it may not; there is no absolute rule. Moreover the pull or call may produce no immediate effect and yet there may be an effect when one is no longer actually pulling or calling. All these mental reasons alleged for its coming or going are too rigid—sometimes they apply, very often they don't apply. One has to have faith, confidence, aspiration but one cannot bind down the Force as to when, how and why it will act. 24-4-1936

Q : I had asked you if it was possible to change the mechanical mind by a direct higher action. Your reply was : "It is possible if you can bring the direct higher action into this part of the consciousness or else let the Force pass there." Well, I have often concentrated on the higher Force there but there is no change whatever.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a question not merely of concentrating but of bringing the Force into that part and keeping it there long enough to bring light and silence. If the Force does not pass there, it means that something obstructs and does not let it pass. 22-4-1936

NAGIN DOSHI

LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1965)

ROYAL INDIA PAKISTAN & CEYLON SOCIETY : 29TH SEPTEMBER 1955

THE appointment was at 10.30 in the morning with the secretary Mr. F. Richter, a very kind old gentleman. I represented to him the need for an effort to make Sri Aurobindo's work better known than it was in England.

He asked me about Buddhism. I had to explain to him that Buddha's replies to his own disciples about what is Nirvana have never been definite and satisfactory for the modern mind. For instance, he gave the example of a man hit by an arrow, and said his need was not to find who had prepared the arrow but to cure the wound. It is no use asking how or why suffering is there. It is there and needs to be cured. He said : "I have the cure : man suffers because he has desires, *trishna*; the cure is to abandon desires !"

This is a pragmatic approach. It would be difficult to persuade the mind not to question or inquire or seek. But Buddha's service to mankind was not small, he brought the Light to many. Each incarnation brings the Light because each has the contact and even identity with the Supreme Light. But he is also conditioned by the evolutionary stage of humanity at the time of his earthly life. So we do not know if mankind was ready for anything more at that time.

At the end of the talk, October 28, 1955 was fixed for a meeting under the auspices of the Royal India Pakistan & Ceylon Society, at Overseas House, Park Place, St. James Street, of the S.W.I.

OCTOBER 28, 1955

That afternoon the Secretary, Mr. Richter, invited me to lunch in an Indian restaurant. During the lunch he asked me about the Ashram, about Sri Aurobindo and the International Centre of Education. He took me to "L'Institute Française" and showed me round the library where there is a beautiful modern design painted on the wall. He introduced me to the Director who made me an "honorary member" of the Institute. A relation has been established with the Institute from that time.

The meeting was at 6 p.m. Mr. Shukla, I.C.S., the president, came late. But I had to begin the lecture punctually, after Mr. Richter had introduced me to the meeting. I expounded the vision of Sri Aurobindo to the audience. The president spoke on a quite different subject, praising the approach of the Western mind. But on the whole the impression seemed good. There were a few Indians in the audience—Mr. P. D. Mehta was one who came to express his appreciation—and also there were a few that had come from outside London.

I had again a meeting with the secretary on 11th November. He wanted some suggestions about the celebration of August 15 in England. I gave him the names of three persons who could address the meetings and also made other suggestions.¹

LEEDS : 28TH SEPTEMBER - 2ND OCTOBER 1955

Staying far from London city I had to get up early to catch the first bus to Kensington and then the train at King's Cross Station for Leeds. I reached there at 12-45 p.m. The contact with the Vice-Chancellor was made through a common friend, Mrs. Nora Heron, who had visited Pondicherry. Arun Jariwala, a young student from Surat, and the representative of the British Council were at the station to receive me. My lodging was arranged at Sadler Hall by the University where I went in the evening.

In the meantime we had a look at the Town Hall, the Museum, and the Municipal Textile College. Leeds is known for its sculpture and pottery, as well as for its cotton and woollen textiles.

On the way to the Town Hall we saw a group of people in the open, listening to someone. Joining the crowd, we saw a young man with a brass cross in his hands speaking to the people about the Roman Catholic religion, and men from the group

¹ When he knew that I would be leaving England he wrote to me the following letter :

Royal India Pakistan & Ceylon Society,
3 Victoria Street,
London S.W.1.
26th Nov. 1955.

Dear Mr. Purani,

I think you may like to see the enclosed letter that I have received from the Institute of Indian Civilization in Paris. You will see that owing to a chapter of accidents they have not been able to carry out their original intention of inviting you to do them honour at a Reception . . .

Your visit to this country has been a great landmark for all who are interested in Indian Culture and particularly to the members of our society, who, thanks to Professor Langley's book, already have some knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's message. But I feel that before you leave on your return to India, we should meet to discuss the possibility of continued dissemination of this message which perhaps might be entrusted mainly to our Society.

Could we perhaps meet for a talk on Thursday, December 1st or the previous day, Nov. 30th about teatime? May I propose that this might be at your place?

With best wishes,

F. Richter

On 31st December 1955 he wrote :

I hope that you have had a pleasant voyage back to India. Those who were privileged to attend will always remember your stirring address about the great Teacher.

I have taken careful note of your suggestions to the Society and have also written to your friends in Africa regarding the purchase of copies of Langley's book.

yours sincerely,
F. Richter

were plying him with questions. I wanted to slink away from it as I did not like to have any discussion about the subject. One of us—probably Jariwala—asked me if I had some questions to ask. I confessed my ignorance about the various sects of Christianity. He insisted that I ask the young man some questions. I said I had only two questions coming to my mind just then : 1. What happened to men who were born before Christ, as they could not become Christians ? 2. What will happen to those who to-day believe in God but are not Christians ? Then we left the group.

The painting section in the museum has four or five very fine pieces—particularly one with dark and threatening clouds over the sea. There was a model of a coal mine too. Sadler Hall preserves the memory of Sir Michael Sadler who was for years the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University. He was the president of the Sadler Commission appointed in British times to report on the expansion of education in India. He sounded, even in Leeds University, a note of warning about the insistence on science and technology that was elbowing out the humanities—poetry, arts, literature—from the higher studies. He pleaded that it harms the integral development of the individual. In this house students from all countries find a cheap lodging,

Mr. Higginson was in charge and I had a pleasant evening with him talking about Sri Aurobindo's vision, about education and arts. I read out some passages from Wordsworth on his request. He asked me about the basic ideas of Sri Aurobindo on education.

I told him that the first thing is to accept the child as a growing soul; the child has within it the same Divine spark that the teacher has. The true teacher has to awaken that spark within himself and within the student. It means the teacher must get rid of his superiority complex. The child is not capable of using its natural instruments which it has to learn to use well and effectively; it has no experience. It is the teacher's task to make it learn the proper use of the natural powers and also to provide the knowledge of the progress of man in his cultural growth, in the form in which the child can grasp it. The true teacher is happy in the knowledge that the privilege of helping growing souls is given to him—he has the joy and the satisfaction of that knowledge.

The second thing is to remember that the child learns : the teacher does not teach, he only helps the child to learn. He has to present various subjects before the child and should cultivate in him the power of finding out those that interest him.

The programme of my visit to the University was fixed on 29th September 1955, from 10 o'clock to 5 p.m. This included visit to the Registrar, the Library, the Department of Philosophy—lunch with the Vice-Chancellor and senior professors, visit to the textile and engineering departments, visit to the seniors' common room. I returned to Sadler Hall with the British Council representative.

I reached Parkinson's Hall at 10-00 a.m. with a suitcase containing Sri Aurobindo's works. The assistant registrar showed me round. Parkinson's Hall is a very imposing building of marble from Sweden carved here into high pillars and fine slabs. The hall is used for entrance and for gatherings by the students and round

the hall are situated various departments. Leeds is a recent university compared with Oxford and Cambridge; Leeds regards them as old, antiquated and prides itself on being modern.

The library is a circular structure in which cupboards are fitted, filled with books : there I saw the original edition of Descartes' works, Shakespeare's folio edition 1623, Euclid's geometry printed in 1438 with figures in the margin, the first edition of Newton's 'Principia'. Then it dawned on me how slowly, through the centuries, scientific knowledge has gained ground in Europe.

There was one thing which was very interesting: a box 2" × 1" × 2" in thickness—like a small attache-case, containing 40 or 50 miniature books each 2" × 2" (like the Gita in a thumb-edition that we have); it was called the "miniature library" for a man. It contained classical works and books that a cultured man should read. In old times when men went on travels they carried this kind of miniature library with them.

In the philosophical department I met Prof. Toulmin, and I expressed the hope that the students who attended the university would make progress in their studies proportional to the grandeur of Parkinson Hall. He said : "Look at this department; how strongly built it is with brick and mortar. Now in the new craze for big buildings there is an idea of demolishing it, whereas the staff would hardly get facilities for working so quickly."

I said : "My observation is that when the laboratory moves to imposing buildings, the fundamental research is diminished. But I do grant the need of proper equipment for modern research as it is hardly possible to work under the conditions in which Faraday or Richard Arkwright worked."

The laboratories at Leeds are equipped like small factories. In each department experiments are carried on to improve industries—wool, cement, artificial silk, different methods of generating electricity, the engines, processes of dyeing. In each department students work and it depends on each one how much or how well he learns. In my talk with Prof. Toulmin I drew his attention to Dr. Sisir Kumar Maitra's book on Sri Aurobindo.

As the lunch-time was approaching we went to the Professors' common room, where I met Sir Charles Morris, the Vice-Chancellor, who led me to the dining room where seven or eight men of the university joined us. I was glad to find his attitude to India sympathetic. During lunch the subject of the international situation came up. I participated in the discussion and bore the brunt of the talk. I said :

"The current idea seems to be that the fulfilment of man's collective life is in its economic progress. It is a half-truth. The collectivity is not something inconscient, it is a developing being. In the beginning, like the individual, it struggles to maintain its existence; economic organisation of collective life is its means to that end. From stability of collective life it turns to prosperity. But economic prosperity is not its supreme aim : economic organisation is the necessary basis but not its sole end. Different collectivities have developed diverse strains of culture; Europe—with England in particular

—has given social and political values—ideals of freedom and equality—to mankind. India has developed her own strain of culture in which ethical, religious and spiritual values govern the other values of life. As a solid economic basis is necessary for effective collective life so are the spiritual values indispensable for any collective perfection and fulfilment. In a sense it may even be asserted that spiritual values are more important than mere economic values. The unity of mankind that is already coming would gain immensely in its cultural life by the distinct contribution of each culture—diversity would add to its richness. The difficulty is that this collective consciousness, now functioning as the national consciousness, strives—like the ignorant individual—to satisfy its desires and ambitions. It is these national egos that create world-wars. It is after two world-wars that the self-complaisance of modern man is shaken.

“The trend of Nature, as seen in so many events today, is towards unity of mankind—that being the largest and the last unit of collective life possible on earth. This unity of humanity will not come about merely on an economic or constitutional basis—though that will play its part in it. It will necessitate the acceptance of the Truth of man’s divinity : it is this that can make dynamic the brotherhood of man. The U.N.O. is weak to the extent to which it is dependent upon its constitutional rules and regulations. Those who participate in its workings must be moved by a feeling that humanity is a family, without any distinction of big or small nations. It should not be treated as a chess-board for securing support to a point of view or for creating a party. The problem is : how to organise human life in such a way that mankind can progress peacefully towards its goal of perfection. That would necessitate great changes in its outer moulds of life, but in order to be fruitful they must come as a result of an inner change.

“This might look like an empty dream at first, but it is not impossible to put the ideal into practice even under the present difficult conditions. For instance, it is possible to remove the walls that divide nations before the unity of mankind is achieved—the customs barriers that exist between France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland can be removed and the income to the states can be worked out on the basis of past averages—the charges being collected at one point. Mr. Churchill proposed a common citizenship between England and France during the last war; it should be easier to carry out the ideal of multi-citizenship now in peace, *e.g.* the English, the Africans and the Indians who live in East Africa can have triple citizenship. It is natural that there should be difficulties in carrying the idea into practice. On the other hand preparations for an all-out atomic war are not quite easy.”

Sir Charles Morris asked me about the International Centre of Education at Pondicherry and was happy to know that co-education is carried out there from beginning to end.

He took me to his office after lunch; I took the suit-case containing books of Sri Aurobindo and presented them to the University and requested him to keep them as a separate collection in the Library. I drew his attention to the *The Ideal of Human*

Unity and *The Human Cycle* and *The Foundations of Indian Culture* as the books which he might go through. In the afternoon I met Prof. Jefferson and had a talk about modern poetry.

30TH SEPTEMBER

Lunch was to be at Arun Jariwala's place and I had volunteered to cook as he had to attend his classes. Rice, Leghums, cabbage, Halwa, etc., were prepared and we had lunch at 1 o'clock. We met Mr. and Mrs. Jocelne, Quakers, at their place. We had a look at the stream of water which is made to pass through three small lakes. The water was gathered into the last one by a dam and the expanse of water was used for rowing and boating.

1ST OCTOBER 1955

In the morning I went with Mr. Sousmarez,¹ in charge of the art department, to see Lord Irwin's estate "Newsman". It reminded me of the Rajput castle of the middle ages. The Irwins played an important role in those early days. Large rooms for dancing, furniture of the 16th-17th-18th centuries, sculpture, painting, wall decorations—the estate was like a museum surrounded by extensive lawns on the high ground. The maintenance of such a big estate is prohibitively costly and so Lord Irwin sold it to the Leeds Municipality which manages it.

2ND OCTOBER 1955

There was a meeting to celebrate Gandhi-Jayanti and I was one of those scheduled to address it. About four Quakers and two Indians spoke. The Englishmen stressed the point that Gandhiji's greatness was due to his following the principal tenets of Christianity. The tenour was that he became great by following Christian truths. The substance of what I spoke was that (1) in India tolerance of all religions is natural to the people, (2) I gave the instance of Ramakrishna who showed that every religion leads, if followed truly, to the same experience. In fact, religion is not a matter of profession or ceremonials; it should lead to experience. In everyone there is the divine Presence; in some it may be behind or hidden, in some others it may be on the surface. Mahatma Gandhi is a product of Indian culture. He himself declared more than once that he was "a Hindu of Hindus, a Muslim of Musalmans, a Christian of Christians". He found whatever spiritual sustenance he wanted in the Gita. His life proves, to my mind, that it is not necessary to become a Christian in order to practise the highest truths of Christianity.

(to be continued)

A. B. PURANI

SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS ASHRAM

(From an Address Delivered at Durham, England, by the Hon. Mrs. Monica Parish)

I HAVE pondered over what I should say today. Sri Aurobindo lived so fully and wrote so much. His thought was on a cosmic scale. I think we might reflect for a moment upon this point. On the whole we think far too narrowly. The times we live in call for big ideas. We are moving, I think quite undoubtedly, into a new age—and like Sri Aurobindo we must somehow begin to think for the whole of humanity. Science has made this very much one world. What happens today in the East affects us immediately in the West. We are now conscious that this is so. We cannot therefore think of initiating programmes meaningful only to small groups. Ideas of our time are now SOUL-size. When we hear new and big ideas we must try somehow to listen and to open ourselves to them however strange they may be. Too often we shun them for their size alone, because our consciousness cannot adapt itself sufficiently to the new demands made upon it.

The new age into which we are moving is making another demand upon us. I believe there will be—of necessity—more experiment in meditation, in silent exploration into inner experience. This moment in time bears a similarity to the period of the Reformation. Then, we had a revolution in thought. Now we face a revolution in *experience*. There is, and will continue to be, a breaking up of the old forms and institutions which contained man in a framework of fixed and rigid experience. We see this going on in all sorts of ways, not always very healthy ones, but nevertheless all around us are experiments to gain experience. The young have thrown off the traditional disciplines and are being forced to find their own way to inner discipline : or, as we sadly see, they manifest indiscipline. But this indiscipline comes better into perspective, and is much less alarming, when we realize it is part of a great change at least as important to us as the Reformation was in the 15th Century.

From Sri Aurobindo we can learn a pattern for our own experimentation. He reached, as you will remember, a new understanding through intensive meditation and concentration upon an inner path while detained for one year in Alipore jail. Each, however, must find his or her own way, and now more than in any previous age great strides are being taken by both young and old along the many different paths which all eventually lead to the selfsame goal. We need to become aware of this. For to see what is happening is to gather all into oneself.

In 1965 we live in a deafening world. Especially here in a big city. It is deafening not just from outer noise, but from continual distraction and impingement upon us. I want this evening to tell you a little of my own visit to the Ashram in Pondicherry which I made earlier this year. First of all in this connection I want to say something about SILENCE. Silence is an inner experience. It can be maintained amid all our

distractions. It is, however, mightily difficult to go into a silence while surrounded with distractions, and too often we are inclined to forget its importance.

I will try to bring you a sense of the silence from the Ashram. I wonder how many of you have been there.

I want to take you first to the Heart, the very Centre of the Ashram. Here is the Mother's house, the garden where lies Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi—the main and most important buildings. I would like you to picture an inner courtyard—quite large—open, yet with houses surrounding. There are big trees which give shade, and flowers everywhere. There are flowers in great pots, flowers cascading over the walls. It is a place of peace and of colour and of joy. Quiet is maintained. It is not a dead quiet, but, if you can follow me, an anticipatory stillness. It is here that it is most easy to stop the chatter of the mind. It is warm. It is beautiful. It is also active and purposeful. I think it is most like an oasis in the desert—for all day people come to collect living water, refreshment, and to give thanks.

This scene of coming and going, of young and old, in colour, stills the over-active mind. With the stilling of the mind can come the shift of the centre of consciousness of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, and from that shift comes into being the new consciousness. It comes in thought-free stillness.

Perhaps this was one of the most important pivot points of my whole visit. It is, as I have said, so difficult to obtain this quiet initially amid the distractions of a city life. Often we are distracted to the point where we become oblivious of its necessity. Once, however, we are in possession of this inner silence—inner immobility, as it is sometimes called—we have the power within us of dissolving vibrations. If we can remain perfectly still within, we can master any attack of animal or man. It is at this point that we touch and use what Sri Aurobindo calls Supramental power. A story is told of a cyclone which blew throughout the whole of Pondicherry but never blew into Sri Aurobindo's room. It was this inner silence, experienced by everyone in his company, which kept out the cyclone. Sri Aurobindo has used the phrase, "The strong immobility of an immortal Spirit." Inner immobility is the basis of the Supramental power, but silence is the condition of its perfect functioning.

This new age of which I have spoken, and into which we are being—I almost want to say—FLUNG, despite ourselves, demands that we begin to understand this process. In the silence is the point of growth. We must, I feel sure, go into it, expand in it, and rest in it. In the world, we are all faced in every field and walk of life with the problem of unity. Unity within the home; in the factory; in Europe; throughout the Commonwealth; with Communism; between nations. Ultimately a recognition of the non-duality of good and evil : at all levels. The birth of unity is also dependent, I believe, upon a development of this inner silence, for it enables us to dissolve outer opposition. When in the silence we remain detached from outer attacks. I have already mentioned how an attack loses its force if, when we are attacked, we remain in this inner immobility.

I would like to speak also of Beauty. As I mentioned, the Mother and the disciples at the Ashram have gone to great trouble to grow all kinds of beautiful flowers. This is the most obvious sign of Beauty, but one is aware of it in a hundred different ways in every Ashram building. We all acknowledge that Beauty is one of the attributes of the Godhead, but remember that Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's work is to build and make manifest *Heaven on this earth*. Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit scientist and seer, has aptly referred to this kind of vision as the "Divinisation of the World".

This attention to Beauty is one small part of the Divinisation of the world. It is the fruit of constant caring, and of minute attention to detail. One of the most beautiful buildings belonging to the Ashram is a Japanese-type Rest House. It is a large house for living and meditation. Those who live there must agree to keep a number of rules. The outside walls are concrete slates looking like huge venetian blinds, keeping the rooms cool and airy. Inside, the walls are eggshell, some new process which is hard wearing but soft to the eye. The floors are black, shining and polished like mirrors. The furniture is all hand made, in teak wood : the bed covers are handwoven. All are made at the Ashram. The building overlooks a Japanese garden. This whole construction is a manifestation of the spirit in matter, energy made manifest : energy uncorrupted, or rather, to use a word of today, untrimmed. In fact, the other day at a conference we talked about the "communication of values." It was agreed that too much creative work was so severely trimmed that the final production was not what anyone wishes and often so unrecognisable that it became unwanted.

I have spoken of Silence, which I found at the Ashram. I have spoken of Beauty. The Ashram is concerned of course with a great work. This work is both vitally important and different from other work in the world.

I remember when I was there the town was having a sports day for all schools and the administrator of the Ashram went to explain to the Governor of the town why the Ashram children should not participate. I was there just after the language riots in the Spring, so every attempt at good relations was necessary. The administrator had to explain that it was not that the children did not want to join in, but that the work of the Ashram was so important that not one minute could be spent in outside activities which lessened the concentration upon the work.

On the whole, Indian mystics have trained men to appreciate the beyond with an upward aspiration. They help awaken the power known as Kundalini, an upward movement from the base of the vertebral column. Thus can begin an ascent which can eventually take one to a state of self-realization. With the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo comes, as it were, a descending force, and there are those at the Ashram who are participating in an experiment to bring this force, through man, to manifest in the world and thus to change it.

The Ashram is a Centre, a living organism. You will find workshops, engineering sheds, a press and paper mill, weaving, arts, and crafts, dining room, canteen and factories. These are dotted about the town in different buildings. Of supreme im-

portance is the school for about 600 children and also the play grounds, tennis courts, swimming pool, gymnasia, boxing and wrestling rings.

I feel I must stress the importance of the physical. It is, after all, through the physical that the Divine works, so it should be cared for, trained, developed and kept in trim for the work it has to do. I remember a healer who said to me recently that it was more effective, if you wish to pray for someone, to invoke the power vertically first, from the Divine, through the human being, to the person you wish to help and not direct from the Divine to that person.

We begin now in the West to be alarmed, and rightly so, about the corruption of the physical which is taking place from sprayed foods and forced conditions of rearing animals. We know little about the damage some of these practices are doing and although many blessings come from modern techniques, we need to be vigilant and realise that, whatever we do, we are changing man.

We speak of the Evolution of Man. In whatever way we image evolution I think we must all agree changes have taken place. We are not, for instance, Neolithic man any more. True, our outer circumstances have changed and, when the props we call modern civilisation are removed, we wonder how different man really is. Nevertheless, let us hold on to our modern scientific thought which teaches that the inner and outer are one. I think we should therefore image man as we find him today within his world and recognise that he has changed and can therefore change still more.

Sri Aurobindo is concerned primarily with a change in man. A *transformation* in man. Sri Aurobindo says : "Man is still too imperfect an expression of the Spirit". Jesus commands : "Be ye perfect ..". We have no choice but to agree that we fall short of this perfection. Sri Aurobindo also says : "Mind itself is a too limited form and instrumentation.... Mind is only a middle term of consciousness; the mental being can only be a transitional being."

Perhaps we have made a false idol of the mind in the West. Think just for a moment on our school systems which emphasise the development of the mind and the pressure which is put on children. I want to tell you of an experience I had in India of listening to a guru, a wise man, talk. He spoke as if he was pulling his wisdom from the air with his hands. As it came (as it were) out of the air I am convinced he heard himself speak as we heard him speak, from beyond the mind. I can only say the "feel" is different. One knows it when one experiences it, though it is hard to explain.

Sri Aurobindo says we have reached a new crisis of transformation, and he likens it to the crisis which marked the appearance of mind in life. He says our choice now is to become conscious collaborators in our own evolution....

The birth of the new age demands the birth of the new man. Both will bring the *fruits* of a new age. The Mother speaks about these fruits for she has a vision into the future.

Some of you must wonder how I have spoken on the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo's

birthday celebration without mentioning the Mother in greater detail. It is for the same reason that I hesitate to draw attention to the great thoughts of Sri Aurobindo.

The Mother *is* the Ashram. The Mother *is* Sri Aurobindo. Her importance is in everything. Her consciousness is everywhere. This I knew from my short visit to the Ashram. She is an experience : experience of her is peace, beauty, silence, love. The New Age will be the age of Love, but we have not yet learnt how to participate in it or how to express it or how to communicate it : so, all the time, in a roundabout way, I have talked to you of the Mother. She is the past, present, the future, the Ashram and ourselves.

Let me just finish with a few lines from *Savitri*, the epic poem of Sri Aurobindo :

All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home...
 The Spirit shall be the master of the world
 Lurking no more in form's obscurity
 And Nature shall reverse her action's rule,
 The outward world disclose the Truth it veils;
 All things shall manifest the covert God...

Even there shall come as a high crown of all
 The end of Death, the death of Ignorance
 But first high Truth must set her feet on earth
 And man aspire to the Eternal's light
 And all his members feel the Spirit's touch
 And all his life obey an inner Force...

In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss
 Two spirits saved out of a suffering world;
 My soul and his indissolubly linked
 In the one task for which our lives were born
 To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
 To bring God down to the world on earth we came,
 To change the earthly life to life divine.

THE HUMOUR OF SRI AUROBINDO

LAUGHTER or humour is as much a matter of serious study as language. What is behind the laughter—mirth or wrath moots a baffling problem, when it is known that it may be well-meaning or playful, cynical or sardonic. There are many theories about laughter or the comic sense. We are told that there were 363 writings on the subject from Plato upto 1923. But whatever may be the theories about laughter or the comic sense, it cannot be denied that it is creative stimulus that finds expression in the physiological reflex of co-ordinated contraction of about fifteen facial muscles and altered breathing that take place in smiles or laughs. It is also universally admitted that laughter provides relief from utilitarian pressures. Humour is a product of the inner workshop of creative originality. A jester is brother to the sage, says Koestler in *The Act of Creation*. Savants are always witty for it is wit or ingenuity or inventiveness that is at the root of all sense of the sublime or of the ridiculous. Wittgenstein, one of the greatest philosophers of this century, once said that a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes (without being facetious)¹.

Some years ago, I was told by a friend of mine that Sri Aurobindo had no sense of humour while Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Jagadish Chandra Bose excelled in it. Uninformed criticism is not rare, and even informed criticism misses the mark. Some professor of literature once said that Tagore had no humour. Whatever may be the subtle distinction between humour or wit, smile or laughter, fun or joke, to ordinary man, the word 'humour' is not unintelligible without a definition and we may proceed accordingly.

It was from a reading of some of the poems of Sri Aurobindo that I got at first a glimpse of his immense capacity for humour—its calm depth, its crispness and its devastating rapier-like quality. His correspondence and the records of his evening talks are replete with sparkling laughter. We know now² how on a reference to his "Himalayan austerity and grandeur" Sri Aurobindo snubbed thus: "O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the commonsense of all of you people? Commonsense by the way is not logic (which is the least commonsenselike thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter despairing 'I know not why' despairs." A sense of jollity is to be developed in this life and he said, "Laugh and be fat—then dance to keep the fat down—that is a sounder programme." It was not a fanciful playing with words. It was no witticism delighting in a combination of words. It was serious humour.

¹ *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*—Norman Malcolm.

² *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*—Nirodbaran.

When Nirodbaran complained about his work for hours and hours on end in his efforts at poetry or about his indisposition thus :

My boil has burst and as you see
From the depression I am free.
Thanks, Guru, thanks to thee !

Sri Aurobindo retorted smilingly, "I got irritated last night by your persistent boiling and put a gigantic Force which, I am glad to see, burst the little boil," and added:

Thank God for that !
Free from boil,
At poems toil.
Laugh and grow fat.

The disciple undauntedly commented that laughing never made fat. But the Guru was not to be defeated in the battle of wits and sent a rejoinder, "We are now told that it is the activity of certain glands that makes you thin or fat. If glands, then why not gladness ?" The sage in a loving frolicsome mood alleviated not only the pain of the little physical and spiritual ailments but, as a master literary artist, could play on words easily with a smart retort which gives a refreshing glimpse into a more serious philosophy of life than mere fun.

What is the nature of this gladness ? After one comes to know the real meaning of creation and the 'lila' or 'Ananda' or the joy of play behind all activities, one cannot lose one's sense of humour. One laughs as a co-sharer in the cosmic joy. Depression of those who are prohibited from laughing is the very negation of spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo's humour is cosmic in nature. It is like the "laughter of the sea's enormous mirth", to use his own expression. The nature of cosmic humour is this that a sense of delight grows out of the consciousness which knows the past, the present and the future of things and events. Incongruities or imperfections, doubts or hesitations appear in a silly light in the vision of the great Seer. Amidst eternal harmony, the failures and incongruities make him smile. The clash between the limited vision of ordinary minds and the eternal vision of the supermind brings out an incongruity which provokes laughter. A toddling giant is as comic as the asthmatic patient of Auden dreaming himself a boxer. In Sri Aurobindo's humour, the ignorance of limited life contrasts with the vastness and wholeness of cosmic life. His is the humour of the little Krishna who, to the amazement of his mother Yasodah, showed in laughing that the whole universe was there within the smiling cavity of his small mouth. Sri Aurobindo's humour grows out of his sense of amusement at the futile fuss made by man amidst cosmic forces. His humour is not born of a tinkering with life. He laughs at the sacrilege of human follies against the fullness and sacredness of eternal life or will. As a result, his humour is rather dry and astringent.

When it was suggested¹ that someone who had attempted at taking Police Commissioner Taggart's life might commit suicide, so that he might not know that Taggart was alive, he retorted that now he might be hanged and, going to heaven, he would be disappointed in not finding Taggart there. Hearing that someone said that world war had been brought about by Dayananda, he drily said, "Yes, for world peace." When someone condoling upon Monmohan Ghose's death wished him a long life in heaven, Sri Aurobindo drily observed that he seemed to be very much afraid that he might be shortlived even there. It is dry humour again verging on the satirical, when he referred to C. R. Das's earlier speeches being logical like those of a lawyer and added that when he entered politics, he gave up that habit and that was why he succeeded. He had a chuckling mind. Full of human sympathies for men around, he was not, however, a laughing god in divine aloofness. He could laugh at himself. He could talk of a lunatic asylum side by side with a centre of Sadhana. Being told of more loose screws and better Yoga, he asked if he himself was meant.

It is the cosmic sense of humour that prompted Ramakrishna to explain serious religious and spiritual theories in the language of the simple rural folk. He laughed at the grave faces pondering over the problems of life. It was all simple and clear to him when he expressed his commonsense view of such problems. The silliness of the worldly wise failing to understand the very simple things of spiritual life tickled his sense of humour. Sri Aurobindo also excelled in this style. A disciple wanted to know the names of the persons who enjoyed 'Brahman Consciousness' so that he might have practical knowledge of what the blessed thing was like and Sri Aurobindo said, "How can you have the practical knowledge of it by knowing who has it? You might just as well expect to have a practical knowledge of high mathematics by knowing that Einstein was a great mathematician." He was asked what Brahman Consciousness was. Before saying that realisation of self is the beginning of Brahman realisation and the Brahman consciousness is the consciousness of self in all and all in the self, he added in his characteristic humorous style—"In fact, you are Brahman and you are pretending to be Nirod; when Nishikanta is translating Amal's poetry into Bengali, it is really Brahman translating Brahman's Brahman into Brahman. When Amal asks me what consciousness is, it is really Brahman asking Brahman what Brahman is." Being told of someone who explained everything on the blackboard, he exclaimed that Brahman was also being explained on the blackboard.

His cosmic humour more often revealed itself in the commonsense view of matters and of men, their actions and thoughts. When he heard of Sharma going on a hunger-strike to stop animal sacrifices before Kali, it was his commonsense that prompted him to say, "Why does he make a goat-offering of himself to Kali? Is human sacrifice better than animal sacrifice?" In a similar tone, he rebuked the reference to the biographer of Confucius whose separation from his wife had been described as heart-rending, raising the question of such great men marrying at all. He

¹ *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*—A. B. Purani.

said, "When they marry, there is not an omniscient ass like this biographer to tell them that they were going to be 'Dharmaguru' or 'Dharmapagal' or in any way concerned with any other 'dharma' than the biographer's. Well, if the biographer of Confucius can be such an unmitigated ass, Confucius may be allowed to be unwise once or twice..." The silliness of such questions was exposed humorously, although seriously, by him. Equally humorous was his reaction to the noble determinations, as expressed in the South-African saying, "How glorious if the whole world were to destroy itself to save the life of a single mosquito." He wondered what would become of the mosquito. Commonsense dictated that the mosquito would perish also in the glorious holocaust. He said once that humanity fortunately had a sound head and so it was safe from its saviours and was living in spite of them.

In literary criticism, he was very caustic at times in his remarks. He described Dickens as the most unliterary bloke that ever succeeded in literature and his style as a howling desert. But generally his jocular vein was not lost. When he complained about his heavy work in going through correspondence or typed scripts, a disciple wrote to him that Krishna might have complained about his lungs because of his incessant blowing and fluting to melt the hearts of men. But Sri Aurobindo was not to be taken in. His sense of humour at modernist literary ventures bubbled forth thus : "It is an idea !...A modernist poet would catch it at once, 'The Flute and the Lungs' or 'Krishna's Bronchitis'." His own 'surrealist' writing was described by him as a joke. His "Dream of Surreal Science" is a humorous poem leaning towards the satirical. The poem reads as follows :

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
And, rising from its mighty solitude,
Spoke of the Wheel and eight-fold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with Atoms and blew out
The Universe before God had time to shout.

A poet after his futile personal efforts was inspired to write some good poems and he boasted of his Napoleonic efforts. He described this as only Napoleonic rubbish and satirically added—"Imbecility ! thy name is ego." In his poem on a cat, styled "Despair on the Staircase", he wrote—

An animal creature wonderfully human,
 A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman,
 Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat,
 Is now the problem I am wondering at.

This Brahman consciousness gave him what may be described as cosmic commonsense which indulged, as the occasion arose, in playful humour against the limitations of the unconscious Brahman. Besides the cat on the stair-case he saw many other cats before him and he said, "I have other cats to whip and I cannot go on whipping one cat all the time."

Humour is allied to sentiment. It approaches wit when it is more intellectual. In Sri Aurobindo's humour, the essential characteristic is not an emotional or intellectual bias. It bubbles forth from the unrelenting alertness of an eternal consciousness that is tickled by the foibles of doubtful or finite minds. By affronts to the divine afflatus he is often irritated into smiles but he dissolves the follies of men in irradiant humour. His sallies miss no silliness. But he understands the ignorant and with the smiles of a rebuking mother awakens the slumbering souls. It is apprehension of some incongruity against the perfection of the cosmic whole that causes his laughter. His sense of humour is a colourful design woven into the very texture of his integrated philosophy of life. It is born of his spiritual experience and the realisation of a cosmic consciousness which is his commonsense. There is no joke, however, in the cosmos itself, as is discovered by some absolute humorists classified by Watts-Dunton. The joke is in the little "me"-s, in the ignorance of their knowledge and in the foolishness of their wisdom. But Sri Aurobindo knew the potentiality of the toddling child with its faltering gait, as there flashed in his vision the future giant's strength to be. He smiled. The Finite in its relation to the Infinite so brought forth from him more laughter than tears.

JYOTANA NATH MALLIK

THE BLOOM OF PEACE

ALL stir and buzz lie numb in a trance of sleep,
A strange enamoured hush is on the cells;
Precariously, some dream-glow from the deep
Like an errant ray of smile on the surface dwells.

O bloom-spell, grow...to embrace with vastitude
The rainbow peace aflush in the world of flowers,
And burn to know, in the all-oblivious mood,
The white peace brooding through the starry hours.

NARESH

TWO POEMS FROM THE TAMIL

I

(THIS poem is from the Songs of Siddhas in Tamil. These songs are noted for their utter simplicity and captivating rhythm. They are very popular in South India, though the inner meaning is seldom understood except by the initiates.)

A monk there was once,
In a pretty little garden
Of flowers fresh and fine.
He went to the potter
Day after day,
Month after month,
And begged and begged,
And at last,
Brought a pot.
He danced, danced,
And danced, and
Dropped it down,
And broke it
To naught.

Translated by SITARAM

(KEY : Monk—soul. Garden—psychic world. Potter—Creator. Pot—physical body on earth.)

2

(The following is a rendering in English from the famous Saivaite saint Manikavasagar.)

Infinitely more solicitous than a human mother,
Whose love remembers to suckle her babe in time,
Oh Shiva, my Lord and Beloved, you
Came even to this sinner flooding
My being with Light, and melted
My very cells with your Love supreme
And poured into me honey-bliss that never satiates.
And then—Oh ! you left me and wandered far.
I have pursued you and caught you in a firm grip
This time. Where will you go now ?

Translated by MAHALINGAM

TWO POEMS FROM THE BENGALI

I

O goddess, vendor of liberty !
Bind me not in thy boundlessness;
And in the unending path of destiny
Happy be thy unmoving voyage.

Goddess, veiling the Love Eternal,
Come to our mortal land, here bring Heaven's nectar,
To this transient pilgrim life;
O Guide eternal ! draw the pause of our tiresomeness.

O Mind of magic !
A stirless stream art thou upon our stilled earth,
As though the sweet enchanted ocean engulfing a golden boat—
O I kiss the Twin Hearts !

2

Sobs sway Nature...whose are the sobs ?
In the sky even beyond sight : drops of pain...whose are these ?
The blue is mute...aeons pass...a frozen hush...
Even now here am I, an illusory proxy bird...
I write poems picking up the twinkles of stars as they scatter
their hues and shed their petals,
In this dwindling glow of footlights...
The shadows sway timidly,
The darkness stretches her hesitant arms,
Thoughts are a-cold in doubt and fear,
The dense silence of a dark age spreading mist and haze,
A sky of hard concrete.

Termless concepts piled somewhere beyond ken—
Pain drips in the blue, voiceless and mystic...
Ages past bring down their primal stillness,
The stars make an illegible script on heaven's glowing slate...
Who has scribbled this poem unutterable and undecipherable,
Who has written down these unending ideas,
Who has painted this image of the mind, beyond understanding,
An epistle of things secret...a throbbing heart...sleepless Stars...
A sob sways Nature...the Whole night—
Someone is in pain, a muffled and throttled pain.

(Weekly Basumati, June 24, 1965, Vol. 70, No.4)

Translated by NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

Part III : The Conquest of Food-Need

III. METAPHYSICS OF HUNGER THE MYSTERY OF *Anna* AND *Annāda*

This whole world, verily, is just food and the eater of food.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I.4.6)

This is the Power...that has the multitude of its desires so that it may sustain all things; it takes the taste of all foods. *(Rig Veda, V.7.6)*

O Thou in whom is the food, thou art that divine food, thou art the vast, the divine home. *(Rig Veda, IX. 83)*

In the beginning all was covered by Hunger that is Death.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I.2.1)

All Matter...is food, and this is the formula of the material world that "the eater eating is himself eaten".

(The Life Divine, p. 177)

He who knows this food that is established upon food, gets his firm base; he becomes the master of food and its eater.

(Taittiriya Upanishad, III.9)

METAPHYSICALLY viewed, the problem of hunger and food-intake is a most important one because the question of death is intimately linked therewith. And this is so not because of the very obvious reason that embodied life cannot sustain itself without substantial support from outside, but because of the much more profound, although at first view paradoxical, consideration that so long as the organism has necessarily to depend for its very existence upon material alimentation, it cannot but succumb sooner or later to the inevitable siege of death.

This strange interlocking of *aśanā*, Hunger, and *mṛtyu*, Death, arises from the inscrutable mystery of the mutual relation of *anna*¹ and *annāda*² ('aliments' and their

¹ & ² From the Sanskrit root \sqrt{ad} meaning 'to eat, to consume, to devour'. *Anna* signifies 'food, aliments', while *annāda* is 'one who devours, takes food'. The terms *anna* and *annāda* do not however apply to gross material food and its devourer alone, they have senses deep and mystical.

'devourers'). For, as the ancient Rishis of the Upanishadic lore discovered long ago, in this manifested world of becoming, each formation without exception is at the same time *annāda* and *anna* : it exhibits a ceaseless search for its 'aliments' (*anna*) and thus plays the role of an insatiable 'devourer' (*annāda*), but at the same time it is constrained by the great Law of Cosmic Exchange (*viśva-yajña*) to offer itself willy-nilly as 'aliments' for others.

But, in real truth, there is only one and unique *anna* in the world, also a unique *annāda* who is One-without-a-second, *ekamevādviṭīyam*. It is the Supreme Spirit, the Eternal in things, who has become 'all this universe, yea, all whatsoever exists',¹ who is in the last result the 'general devourer and enjoyer', *sarvabhuk mahēśvaraḥ*,—whosoever be the immediate 'eater' and whatever be the nature of the 'food', for the world itself has come into existence because of Brahman's seeking after 'food', *annakāmena brahmanā*.²

But the great Initiator of the Cosmic Becoming, the Mother Mahashakti, is not merely licking all the regions around with her million tongues of flame, *sahasrajihvā*; it is She Herself again who has become the universal food, *annabhūtamidaṁ jagat*,³ and it is in the ultimate vision the *annāda* Divine who is devouring and enjoying the *anna* Divine in various guises and names and through various phenomenal intermediaries. It is this very idea that has been so forcefully figured in the Puranic symbol of *chinnamastā*⁴, the Mother chopping off Her own head and holding it in one of Her palms so that the blood gushing forth from Her decapitated trunk may enter Her separated mouth in a threefold stream to quench Her Thirst. The Maitri Upanishad expresses the same truth in more philosophical terms when it declares : "Thou art the Universe, Thou the Vaishvanara; it is Thou who hast brought out the world from Thy own being and who maintainest it all the time; let everything then be offered to Thee in sacrifice."⁵ We find the very same idea occurring in the following verse of *Chandī Saptashati* : "Mother Divine, this world has been created by Thee, is being maintained by Thee, but it is Thou again who art devouring it all the time."⁶ Vadarayan Vyasa's *Brahmasūtram* suggests the same occult finding when it hints⁷ that the Supreme has a double aspect, *sthithyadanamūrti*, an aspect of timeless status, *sthiti*, and an aspect of eternal Becoming which is in its inmost character a great process of Devouring and Assimilation, *adana*. And since phenomenal Nature has been brought forth by the Absolute Spirit from His Self-Being as a great cosmic

¹ *Taittirīya Upanishad*, II 6.

² *Maitri Upanishad*, VI.12.

³ *Ibid.*, VI.10.

⁴ Literally, 'the One with a severed head'.

⁵ "Viśvo'si vaiśvānaro'si viśvam tvayā dhāryate jāyamānam Viśantu tvāmāhutayaśca sarvāḥ praṇāḥ." (*Maitri Upanishad*, VI.9)

⁶ "Tvayava dhāryate viśvaṁ Tvayaitat sṛjate jagat. Tvayaitat pālyate devī tvamatsyante ca sarvādā." (*Chandī*, 53)

⁷ *sthithyadanābhyāñca* (Brahmasūtram, I.3.7)

Also see : Purushottamananda Avadhuta, *Brahmasutra*, pp. 144-46.

Movement "to provide a habitation for the Spirit, who, being One, yet dwells multitudinously¹ in the multiplicity of His mansions"² and since the object of habitation is to possess and enjoy the multiplicity and the movement with all their relations, the Spirit is indeed the great *attā* or Devourer, for He swallows the whole of the Universe, *carācara*,³ including all that moves and all that moves not, the immutable as well as the mutable.⁴

But what is the essential purpose behind this *mahābubhukṣā*, this colossal hunger and cosmic enjoyment of the divine Inhabitant who as 'Agni the Devourer' (*agnih annādaḥ*, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I.4.6.) tastes and consumes the world as *soma*⁵ ? All formations including ourselves are willy-nilly the Great Mother's food; but what high goal has She set Her act of devouring, *adanakriyā*, to achieve ?

An integral spiritual perception discovers therein an absolute drive towards perfection and purification, transfiguration and a divine new birth, *devāya janmane*. All that is not integrally, and in a joyful conscious 'sacrifice' (*yajña*), possessed by the Divine, all that is as yet maimed and impure, has perforce to be devoured again and again by the Cosmic Devourer and pass through the portals of death and dissolution so that it may be progressively re-created on an ascending scale of accomplishment. The Spirit as Agni is thus essentially a 'purifier', *pāvaka*, and "all that is...born, he as the flame of Time and Death can devour. All things are his food which he assimilates and turns into material of new birth and formation."⁶

Indeed, destruction is always a prior necessity if there is to be any new creation or re-creation. "Destruction is always a simultaneous and alternate element which keeps pace with creation and it is by destroying and renewing that the Master of Life does his long work of preservation."⁷ And in all this there is work of purification that can be consciously felt and experienced by the person who has been a real *yajamāna*. For when Agni devours and enjoys, he also purifies at the same time; and his very hunger and desire, infinite in their scope, prepare and perfect the divine Manifestation upon earth. "Devouring and enjoying, purifying, preparing, assimilating, forming he rises upward always and transfigures..."⁸

¹ The Spirit pervades the universe as the Virat Purusha, the Cosmic Soul, and as *paribhū* (literally, 'the One who becomes everywhere'). He has entered into every single object in the Movement, for "it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings" (*Isha Upanishad*, 8). Cf :

"All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion" (*Isha Upanishad*, I. Sri Aurobindo's translation).

"He is below, He is above, He is behind, He is in front, He is to the right, He is to the left, He is indeed all this that is" (*Chhandogya Upanishad*, VII).

² Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 25.

³ *Attā carācaragrahaṇāt* (*Brahmasūtram*, I 2.9.)

⁴ Cf. *Vyaktamannamavyaktamannam* meaning "The manifest is food and the unmanifest is food" (*Maitri Upanishad*, VI.10).

⁵ Cf. "The cosmos is at the same time Agni the Consumer and Soma the Food" (*annānādasva-īṣam agniṣomātmakam jagat*).

⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Kena Upanishad*, p. III.

⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 520.

⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, p. 315.

But what does it mean to be pure and perfect ? When can we say that we have at last attained the status of total purity and unalloyed perfection ? The essence of purity, according to Sri Aurobindo, is to respond to and accept only the Divine Influence and not to have the slightest affinity with other movements of whatever sort. And by perfection is not meant any so-called maximum or an extreme; for, as a matter of fact, in the divine progression of things, there cannot be any extreme achievement with the label of *non plus ultra*. In truth, "perfection is not a static state, it is a poise and a dynamic poise. ...Perfection will be reached in the individual, in the collectivity, upon earth and in the universe, when, *at every moment*,¹ the receptivity will be equal in quality and quantity to the force that seeks to manifest."²

Now, no form or formation in the universe can expect to subsist indefinitely or for all time unless it acquires this state of purity and perfection through being repeatedly devoured by "God the devourer and destroyer."³ We, too, in our egoistic isolation, cut off in our consciousness from the essential source of our existence, must perforce enter again and again into His "mouths that gape to devour"⁴ until we become *pakkvāna* or matured food when the Great Mother-Devourer, *sarva-grāsinī*, can at last eat us up in an entire assimilation, not indeed in a supracosmic Nirvana or extinction, but in Her dynamic World-Play, a state about which it has been said :

"The last stage of this perfection will come when you are completely identified with the Divine Mother and feel yourself to be no longer another and separate being, ...but truly a child and eternal portion of her consciousness and force...it will be your constant, simple and natural experience that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing or moving come from her and are hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for the play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, ananda of her Ananda. When this condition is entire and her supramental energies can freely move you, then you will be perfect .."⁵

But the mystery of the Manifestation lies in the fact that this *ātmāsātkaraṇam* or assimilation in absolute possession by the Mother is at the same time a process of utter assimilation of the Mother Herself.⁶ For Her *annatva* or 'foodhood' is in direct

¹ Italicised in the original.

² The Mother, "The Supreme Poise" in *Bulletin*, Vol. XI. No. 3, pp. 79-81.

³ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 517.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 514.

⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, pp. 32-33.

⁶ In this connection we may recall the following words of The Mother :

"The reality of the universe is what one calls God and God is essentially delight. The universe was created in delight and for delight; but this delight can exist only in the *perfect unity of the creation with its creator*.

"This unity Sri Aurobindo describes as a kind of *mutual possession*. The Possessor, that is to say, the Creator, who possesses the creation is at the same time possessed by it. That is the very essence of

proportion to the creature's *annatva*. Of course, whether we are aware of the situation or not, even in our spiritual ignorance and at all moments, we are devouring and enjoying only the Mother; for it is She who has become food in the shape of this world, *annabhūtam idam jagat*, and no creature can remain in existence even for a moment except by feeding upon Her various forms and figures. But because of our as yet impure and imperfect status, and that too because of our besetting sin of separative ego consciousness, our devouring capacity is itself hemmed in and stunted and our power of assimilation all but reduced to nought.

Now the more we can grow into fit food for the Mother, the more our assimilating capacity is bound to increase until at the end we may dare exclaim with Ramprasad the famous saint of Bengal :

This time I shall devour Thee utterly, Mother Kali:
Thou must devour me first, or I myself shall eat Thee up;
One or the other it must be.

.....
To show to the world that Ramprasad is Kali's rightful son,
Come what may, I shall eat Thee up—Thee and Thy retinue—
Or lose my life attempting it.¹

It is the same mood that Sri Ramakrishna expresses when he refers to one of his experiences in the following terms :

“Oh, what a state of mind I passed through ! I would open my mouth, touching, as it were, heaven and the nether world with my jaws, and utter the word ‘Ma’. I felt that I had seized the Mother, like a fisherman dragging fish in his net.”²

It is because of this holy mystery of ‘the Divine the Devourer and the Divine the Food’, *ahamannam...ahamannādah*,³ that the Upanishadic Rishis sing forth again and again in eulogy of the principle of Food in terms ringing with profoundly mystical overtones. Thus to quote a select few of the inspired utterances :

“Food, verily, is the Lord of Creation” (*Prashna Upanishad*, I.14).

“Lo, all this that was born as form, is no other than Food” (*Aitareya Upanishad*, I.3.2).

“Verily, they who worship the Eternal as food, attain the mastery of food to the uttermost” (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, II.2).

“Great is this figure of the Spirit that is Food” (*Maitri Upanishad*, VI.11).

“Worship then Food as thy very Self” (*Maitri Upanishad*, VI.12).

And the supreme assurance that the Rishis solemnly offer is this that “he who

unity, the source of all delight. But because of division, because the possessor possesses no more and the possessed also no longer possesses the possessor, the essential delight is changed into ignorance. Every-one who has a spiritual realisation has this experience also that the very minute union is established with the divine origin, all suffering disappears” (*The Mother, Bulletin*, Vol. IX No. 2, p. 59).

¹ Swami Nikhilananda's translation.

² Swami Nikhilananda (Trans.), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 527.

³ *Taittiriya Upanishad*, III.10.

recognises the double aspect of the world, the world as Agni the divine Devourer and the world as Soma the divine Food," "will himself become a cosmic devourer" and "never again be caught in the devouring that is death" (*Maitri Upanishad*, VI.10, 13,9).

But it goes without saying that this high achievement can surely not come from a mere intellectual recognition : we have to seize the truth in *a dynamic living experience in which even our body consciousness and its very constituent cells should fully participate* . In no other wise can we expect to dissolve the Hunger-Death wedlock, for by the very definition of the term *anna* ('Food'), "it is eaten and it eats; yea, it devours the creatures that feed upon it, therefore it is called *anna*."¹

But are we indulging in unnecessary obfuscation and passing off nonsense for high-sounding truth ? Let us then be explicit and discuss in intellectual terms how the metaphysical problem of Hunger and Death can be adequately solved, for, as we shall presently find, a prior solution of this crucial question is *a necessary, though by no means sufficient, condition* for the successful tackling of the problem in hand, the necessity of material aliments for the body.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ "Adyate'tti ca bhūtāni tasmādannam taducyat iti" (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, II.1).

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

VI. METHOD AND STYLE

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1965)

So far we have traced the general and basic principles of the style and method of Milton and Sri Aurobindo without going into any elaborate details. But these principles are vital in the understanding of their styles. With them as the background, we shall attempt to discuss some of the main features of style and method of the two poets. The first and foremost is the blank verse form. This is the basis of the structure of these epics.

We know that Milton discarded rhyme deliberately as an impediment to the heroic style. First, it has a tendency to end-stopping and hence to a monotony which is absolutely essential to avoid in a larger poem. Secondly, it has the tendency to make the lines weak and distract too much the attention of the reader to the recurring and identical syllables. Thirdly, it may hamper the freedom of the poet in his use of verse, making him a slave to the habit of sound-echo, which affects the poetical flow, the sweep, the sense and the largeness of strength and generous outbursts of energy, and thus he cannot divert his poetical skill to other metrical subtleties which can enrich the poem. We may say further : rhyme adds to the sweetness, and English, a natural language of vigour, can use this for lyrical purposes; but when strength is needed, sweep and grandeur are aimed at, we can dispense with it, provided we substitute this loss by other technical devices like 'enjambement', verse-paragraph, stress-modulation and inflexion. Chaucer and Spenser, prior to Milton, had retained rhyme, obviously because they had not outgrown the French influence. Also the language had not grown virile enough for the load of blank verse. It is not that Milton was incapable of using rhyme or even a stanza form like Spenser's; his earlier poems are studies in metrical perfection; but he rejected rhyme because he found it unnecessary. Still, he did not follow Shakespeare's dramatic blank verse. Most probably, he had before him the verses of Homer and Virgil—these served as his models. But what is possible in Greek or Latin is impossible in English. The reasons are often repeated, so I refrain from stating them.

Sri Aurobindo's blank verse is different from Milton's by its end-stopped lines. He makes each line complete and perfect and the lines seem to flow and form a natural paragraph without altering this basic principle. 'Enjambements' are few, and to keep variety in such a form calls for a greater skill and a greater technical mastery. Why did Sri Aurobindo choose such a form ? Let us try to analyse the situation.

Blank verse prior to Sri Aurobindo had become perfect as far as it could go with the group of poets that came after Milton : Wordsworth, Keats, Arnold, Tennyson,

to name only some. Each gave something to it, some lucidity, grandeur, beauty, sweetness or flow. Sri Aurobindo's earlier attempts, like *Love and Death*, *Urvashi* and *Baji Prabhau*, reveal part influence of these poets. But in *Savitri* there is a total break from the past. Just as Milton cancelled the past licences which had made blank verse a loose or lyrical or rhetorical structure, Sri Aurobindo too cancels the 'enjambement', the elaborate construction that needed several lines to complete the sense; he makes each line a flawless jewel needing neither the push of the previous line nor the pull of the succeeding one. Yet many lines are interlinked, many lines have bearing on other lines without changing the basic structure of the end-stopped scheme. This method gives a greater architectural perfection and calls for great technical grasp. It also adds to the beauty of each line, each verse becoming a faultless unit placed between other such faultless units, like a house of perfect harmony whose each stone, corner, cornice, opening, door or window possesses beauty of its own apart from the beauty of perfection of the whole edifice. But he avoids masterfully the obvious limitations connected with such a scheme.

Also, lines by their end-stopped character can give a rare mantric quality due to their inevitability, precision and their tuning themselves to the highest possible intensity. It needs a greater ear for subtler 'overhead' rhythms and a consummate-ness of technique that can endure the strain of their high inspiration.

Further, such lines have a double character. They are both lyrical and epical. They are both sweet and heroic. Sri Aurobindo had seen the blank verse form of the past and he had no intention to repeat its ways, methods or styles. This pattern he chose could be used for all types of mystic poetry, for narrative verse, for all kinds of lyrical or epical forms. We can distinguish, not as in Milton's heroic style, or as in the heroic couplet of Pope or as in the lyrical verse of Keats, a style that was used for one purpose alone, but a style that is universal. Used in one context it is epical, in another it is narrative and in yet another it is lyrical. Such is Sri Aurobindo's style that it can absorb all the main types of poetry. Pope's heroic couplet was suitable for mock-heroic poems only. Shakespeare's blank verse could embody dramatic poetry alone. Milton's blank verse could not be used either for romantic or lyrical poetry. But the blank verse of Sri Aurobindo can be used for any of these forms; in fact he does use it differently. Sometimes it is highly mystical as in the first book. It is descriptive as in the second. The third book is again mystical. Book four is narrative while book five is lyrical, book six is dramatic and so on. Such variety is only possible in a form that is elastic on one hand and highly exacting on the other.

Now we shall study some typical lines. Milton has pauses or ends almost anywhere except in the middle which breaks the line into two, and this he avoids, as here :

And now his heart
Distends with pride, and hardening in his strength,
Glories. (Book I)

The whole sentence keeps true to the pentametric base except for the fourth foot of the second line. The next line begins with a trochee. These variations eliminate monotony and give richness to the poetical pattern. Here he starts with trochees:

Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of scorn
Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth.

The end of the second line—the fifth foot—is a spondee. This, like the initial trochees gives us a dramatic effect.

No ! let us rather choose
Armed with hell-flames and fury all at once
O'er heaven's high tower to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms
Against the Torturer...

Such a sentence form is typical of Milton. He begins with the third foot and ends in the middle of the line. This not only lends a flow, it also aids variety.

Milton gives full value to weaker words and conjunctions and prepositions except for some words which he shortens for metre's sake, such as 'o'er' 'gav'st' 'e'er', etc. This adds to the roll of his blank verse and gives dignity, as here :

Will he, so wise, let loose at once his ire ?

Or

Say they who counsel war, "we are decreed,
Reserved and destined to eternal woe."

Sometimes he breaks up his sentences into two or three parts. Sometimes he runs at a great length; sometimes there are abrupt pauses in the middle of a line. As a rule he does not use a single line complete in itself; this is because his thought needs expansion and it needs several lines to complete one idea. He uses parenthesis to break up further his paragraphs. These are more a comment on the main idea or event or situation.

The speeches that are there are not dramatic but there is eloquence and rhetoric in their turn. He does not use these in the same way as the dramatists of his period. They are part of the whole poem and he does not intend to change the tonal quality or the blank verse pattern:

Whether of open war or overt guile
We now debate, who can advise my speak,

or

What can be worse
Than to dwell here driven out from bliss, condemned
In this abhorred deep to utter woe ?

There are some breaks in the first two books and there are dramatic effects due to a loud outburst of passion. But the later speeches are very sedate and they do not reach any dramatic pitch :

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest.

Even the eulogy of Jehovah is in the same vein :

Thou, Father, first, they sung omnipotent,
Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
Eternal King.

Milton rarely uses such high-key words in such quick succession; unless inevitable, he refrains from using them. This is because the four-syllabic words tend to be a burden instead of being an aid. Also they break up the pentametric base. But he uses more often two- or three-syllabic words and rarely uses single syllables all in a row. The two- or three-syllabic words are subject to greater modulation by their position. The single syllables are almost invariably too light and can create monotony if not used with care, but in a fit place they heighten the poetical quality by their even tread and quick succeeding beats.

Another element : he never stops a phrase with an uneven syllable or in the middle of a foot. Such variation is too violent or dramatic, for each foot has a definite stop—a right we cannot trespass upon to create an unnatural break in the formation of a foot. For example here :

A pillar of state. Deep on his front engraven...

We mark that he stops his phrase with the second foot and begins a new sentence with the third, and an anapaest modulation at the end of one sentence balances a trochee at the beginning of the next and the line maintains a harmony in this manner.

But Milton rarely uses three-syllabic feet and almost never four-syllabic ones. As we have remarked earlier, such feet tend to become heavy if not used with skill and measures like the paeons can be used only for special effects. Further, these paeonic measures are foreign to the Anglo-Saxon tongue where shorter and clipped definite syllables are in use; such measures need slurring, liquid and gliding consonants and vowels as we find in Sanskrit or Latin. Thus it would be hazardous to use the paeons.

This ends our brief survey of Milton's blank verse. We have not attempted anything original but these remarks will be useful when we study the blank verse of Sri Aurobindo as a means of comparing and contrasting various elements.

(To be continued)

“THE HEART OF HINDUSTHAN”

It is after a very long time that I have re-read that early book of Sarvapali Radhakrishnan, *The Heart of Hindusthan*. My old copy (second edition, published by G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras) was bought for Re. 1—an astonishing price for such a compendium of admirably sifted learning coupled with careful yet unpretentious felicity of phrase. Radhakrishnan's art of logical exposition possesses a rare individual charm : it consists of a series of simple sentences leading, by a natural evolution from their ideas, to a few unobtrusive epigrams, passing through whose crystal prisms the white light of all that has gone before stands revealed in a various play of hitherto subdued shades of meaning. What was simple becomes now surprising, without the least touch of self-conscious cleverness.

The author rightly perceives that the true disposition of Hindu thought is not to fly off from the earth to a cloudland of metaphysics but a constant preoccupation with making metaphysics a concrete living fact in relation with the fundamentals of experience. Hinduism strives always to become the heart of life, the throbbing centre of individual and collective activity. “The Heart of Hindusthan” is hence a most apposite title for a book dealing with high philosophic themes and their ramifications in cultural issues. For dialectics in India means an aid to and an instrument of self-realisation and God-realisation : it prepares the spiritual experience of the seeker by expounding that of the sage. And it begins with the axiom of inspired rationality that, if all things are reducible, in order to satisfy the integral sense of the mind, to the category of Being-in-Becoming, then the ultimate reality must be the innermost basis of what we call the self in us, the identity which persists through all changes—in other words, an ultimate substratum of selfhood common to all animate and so-called inanimate entities. As Radhakrishnan puts it : “Philosophically the Real is the self-identical *Brahman* revealing itself in all, becoming the permanent background of the world-process. Religiously it is envisaged as the Divine Self-consciousness, pregnant with the whole course of the world, with its evolutions and involutions.”

This being the case, Hindu logic is busy not so much with the question how or why the individual knows as how or why he fails to know. For the essential self is free, infinite, divine : man has but to learn the reason of his outward state of ignorance and transfigure it with the inner illumination. The Rig-Veda and the Upanishads explained the Ignorance by saying that the Eternal Consciousness looses forth a phenomenal play of concealment and rediscovery of itself—a rediscovery in the nature of phenomenal beings which can be achieved by “a prayerful attitude,” to quote Radhakrishnan's fine phrase; by a concentration of the human consciousness on what the heart intuits as the godlike and the eternal hidden in all things. This is Yoga, at once philosophy and scientific psychological experiment and exalted art of living. In India all roads lead to Yoga; but all men are not in the same state of evolution—consequently

a graduated process is adopted, the animating spirit of which is called the Dharma, the law of right living. Radhakrishnan devotes a whole chapter to the elucidation of Dharma, and a very interesting chapter it is, by turns gravely speculative, piquantly ironic, and penetratingly eloquent, in which, as more cursorily in the opening pages, he takes up one after another the questions pertaining to the psychology of social development in India.

Then in a separate paper the Hindu idea of God is succinctly treated. Here several side-issues receive a glance now and then of marked freshness either of style or outlook. Thus the author explains that the Hindu reveres the Vedas owing to the fundamental spirit of the Hindu religion which is to be found in its insistence on the reality of spiritual experience : “We are at grips with reality in the inner depths of the soul. When the Hindus look back to the Vedic period as the epoch of their founders, it means that the Rishis were the pioneer spirits, the first researchers in the realm of spirit. If the Vedas are regarded as the highest authority, it is because the most exacting of all authorities is the authority of facts. God is not the ideal we cherish, but the Real we apprehend. Spiritual experience is not a species of imaginative thinking, but is the closest communion with Reality.” And how uniquely just is this explanation of Buddha’s position : “Buddha admits the reality of spiritual experience, but refuses to interpret it as the revelation of anything beyond itself. For him, the view that spiritual experience gives us a direct contact with God is an interpretation and not an immediate datum. Buddha attempts to keep close to the given, and is content with the affirmation that a deeper universe of spirit penetrates the visible and tangible world.” One sees immediately the subtle line of distinction drawn by the Great Liberator between transcendental psychology and transcendental metaphysics. One regrets, however, that towards the close of the same essay, Radhakrishnan’s perspicacity seems to fail when he is touching on the Supreme as conceived by the Hindu under the dual aspect of the Person and the Absolute. “The difference,” says the author, “between the Supreme as absolute Spirit and the Supreme as personal God is one of standpoint and not of essence.” Very well put; but then follows a rather confusing qualifying sentence—“It is a difference between God as He is and God as He seems to us.” Surely, if this is so, the difference is rather serious; but is it logical to assume such a difference ? After all, the Supreme as absolute Spirit is our own conception or discovery as much as the other : it would be more correct to lay an equal emphasis on the reality of either experience and the desirability of combining and harmonising them in an integral knowledge. The ancient scriptures speak of the Supreme as absolute Spirit when they consider or contact that reality exclusively in its difference from and transcendence of the manifested world. But it is to the same reality in its authentic self-existence that they refer as the supreme Person when viewing it as consciously manifesting the universe and thus acting as a being with whom the universe and its members exist in a multifarious relationship of dependence or aspiration or intimate communion. The various god-forms worshipped by devotees are methods of approaching the Divine adopted according to individual tendencies :

they may be regarded as “symbols”, as chosen aspects of the supreme Person who is not limited by them; but to tilt the balance, however slightly, in favour of the absolute Spirit, at the expense of God the manifester of the universe is to sow the little irrational seed whose mighty sprouting may end in Acosmism, World-Illusionism, the Mayavadin retreat to the cave and the forest—the very last thing Radhakrishnan would dream of encouraging.

Five essays more complete the book. That on Buddhism strikes one as too summary, if not even lacking somewhat in the sureness of touch evinced in the reference *en passant* quoted above. But the four remaining are all creditable. In “Islam and Indian Thought” the author lucidly explores the pristine excellence of the Muslim faith and shows us the several points of similarity it bears to Hinduism—an exposition especially commendable at the present hour when mutual religious understanding between the two predominant communities in India is of the most vital importance. “Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine” traces the affinity of Hinduism to the original form of Christianity as revealed in the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus and in the broad-minded return to it by several modern exegetists. The closing review of “Indian Philosophy” covers a good deal of ground, commonsense going hand in hand with intellectual acuteness, and a wideness of vision enabling one to combine all sides of the needs of India in one burning perception of her fundamental need—the development of her true nature on its own spontaneous lines, surely with the help and assimilation of foreign idealisms and *weltanschauings*, philosophical, scientific and political, but not—as in the near past before independence—under the heavy yoke of a culture and a community out of harmony with all that the Motherland holds sacred and recognises as her genuine motive-force towards integral self-fulfilment.

K. D. SETHNA

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

(Continued from the issue of September, 1965)

13

ARKA in a short time found out all he wanted to know. Then promising to return soon he went out and returned after more than an hour, laden with rice, lentils, flour and vegetables—he had got all these as alms. When he put everything down a very surprised Parvati said, “You are our guest and it is we who should give you food; instead of that you have brought all these.” Arka said, “Parvati, you have not yet grasped who in reality nourishes all. It is not you who nourish me nor I you. This material body attracts to itself the food it requires and as long as the need is there nourishment will surely arrive, but how it will come and from where, is beyond you to discover. Now please get busy with the work; I will go round the place and shall come back after my bath.”

When Arka had departed Parvati got to work; while working she was endeavouring to look within herself and discover if after all these years of difficulty and privations the Divine had at last decided to be kinder. She remembered how the night before, prior to falling asleep, so many thoughts were crowding upon her, and remembered that she did really pray to the Lord to find a way out of her difficulties, further burdened as she was with an aged mother.

There was another person with Arka when he returned after his bath in the river. From a little distance he pointed out Parvati’s huts to the man and said, “I give you four days to do a thorough repairing of these two huts. You could start the work this very day.”

There was a two-storied building close to Parvati’s hut; now Arka went there. The owner of the house, a Bengali gentleman, when he saw a Sadhu, pure and gentle in appearance, approaching came forward and welcomed him. The Sadhu said, “Could you please allot me a corner to stay in for a few days, I shall not require any food, just a place to rest my limbs.” The gentleman acquiesced with pleasure and showed him his room.

From the talks he had with the gentleman Arka learnt that he had bought the house twelve years earlier from its owner who had sold it to him encumbered with a lot of trouble, that he had earned much ill-repute for his various misdeeds and had been sentenced to six years’ rigorous imprisonment by the courts. No one knew where he was at present. Even after a good deal of enquiry Arka could find no trace of Bidhu’s father. People believed that his family had left the region.

That very afternoon Arka came to the ashram of the Kapalika on the bank of the

Ganges; he saw a heap of ruins covered over by a wild scrub jungle. The only sign that still remained of the broken temple was the trident.

Within ten days the habitations of Parvati were thoroughly renovated. He himself stayed with the gentleman next door, that is to say, he used to sleep there at night as during the day no one saw him nor did anyone know what he did or where he went. When he used to return in the evening there were always a few local people who came to meet him. Amongst these was a minor government servant of the courts of law here, who was a frequent visitor. This man was a God-fearing person, ever-eager for Arka's company; his name was Loknath. With this Loknath Arka built up here a large institution, of which we shall speak later on.

Now one day, finding him alone, Arka asked Loknath, "I see you come here everyday, what is it that you really want from me?" Loknath said, "Today is a day of good fortune for me, as it is only now that I have the opportunity I have been seeking. What I really want I am sure you know well, for I have well understood that you are one who is able to know all my inner thoughts. Master, do not delude me, I am truly a luckless miserable."

Arka said, "Loknath, I have not much time to do anything now, but if you could bring yourself to do a dedicated work for the Divine and take full charge of it, I can assure you He will surely fulfil your aspirations."

That night very long was the conversation these two had, all by themselves. When it was over Loknath returned to his lodgings with a very happy heart.

14

One evening a week later, Arka returned to find Parvati's mother was at the last moments of her life. When he approached the bedside, she was still conscious. Parvati was standing there crying, but instead of consoling her he came close to the bedside and asked her mother, "Ma, if you would care to tell me anything as your last wish, please do so."

Parvati's mother said, "My only regret is that I am leaving Parvati quite alone and in a helpless condition. She is a very pure person, for the last twenty years she has tolerated all, thinking herself to have been born under the influence of an unlucky star. She has never neglected me, nor has she approached anyone for help. But in this village there are a few bad men who, I know, have been pestering her for two or three years; now to think how, when I shall be gone, they will behave is making me very restless and I cannot be peaceful."

Arka replied, "Ma, you need have no worry, no one will ever be able to trouble her—no man can afflict or punish another—God Himself will protect your Parvati. Now tell me about yourself."

The old woman then made a sign to Arka to come near; when he came closer she took his hand and in it placed that of her grief-stricken daughter and said, "Give her your protection, she will have no one of her own when I shall

have gone.” With a sigh of relief she continued, “My son, you have come at a very difficult hour. How merciful is the Divine to us! I feel it is He who has sent you here now. I am a woman and I hardly know how to propitiate Him, in fact, I have seldom remembered Him except in times of great distress—now at the moment of leaving my body I am very afraid. I cannot be peaceful to think what my lot will be in the next world.”

Arka bent close to the old woman’s head and whispered a few words into her ear and then said, “Now don’t think of anything else but go on repeating the Name; that will bring your weal.”

The old woman, repeating the Name as advised, closed her eyes and breathing her last severed connections with this world and found her refuge with the Supreme.

Arka helped Parvati to fulfil the due obsequies of a daughter. On the fifth day he asked her, “Parvati, what would you like to do now?” She said, “It would be impossible for me to stay here, I would like to accompany you.” He said, “I am a Fakir, a beggar, where can I take you? If we go together, it will bring harm to both of us. I have overstayed here many days, now I must depart. If you can muster enough courage and stay here, it will be very good for you. Of course I shall make all arrangements to safeguard you from all troubles and you will be able to stay without fear. Will you stay here?”

Parvati said, “How will you arrange for me to stay here with yet nothing to be afraid of? There are three very bad men who are after me; however, from the day of your arrival, I notice, they have become scarce. Now my mother too is not with me—you can hardly imagine with what strength and boldness my mother protected me all along even at her advanced age.”

Arka said, “To begin with, I shall at first initiate you. By the grace of my Guru I have that power now. He is omniscient, he knows all about you and me. The mantra that I shall give you will dispel all your fears for ever. Now, prepare yourself.”

Even before the ceremony of initiation was completed a great change came over Parvati’s attitude—a true transformation, not something mental: her entire expression was changed. Whoever saw her then was so charmed that he could hardly take his eyes off her even for a second. Everybody was astonished to see her faintly red watery eyes.

When the mantra was uttered in her ears, her consciousness was profoundly stilled, then began to expand vastly. Thus her self-consciousness spreading took her towards the Infinite. This awareness began to grow and stabilise itself.

One hardly knew if it was the power of the mantra that brought Parvati to such a state that Arka did not dare to leave her alone but stayed on several days more. He did not foresee that the result of initiating her would be so deep. The manner in which the previous years of her life had passed gave him the hope that with the initiation her strength to do all the external activities would increase, she would become

more self-reliant and be able to live all by herself. She had now no worries as regards the daily necessities of life and no anxiety at living in her own hut alone. Nor did she any longer fear molestation from wicked people, but with the flowering of her spiritual power her body for some accountable reason began to waste away, her strength to accomplish her daily duties was dwindling, it seemed, as if all the bonds were becoming more and more loose. Arka noticing her attitude asked her one day, "Parvati, I believe you are quite able now to lead an independent life of your own. Still why are you getting leaner and weaker ? I can hardly leave you in this condition, but it is necessary for me to go on a distant journey that I have already told you about." She replied, "Now you are my Guru, still I am unable to tell you all, there is still a little shrinking mixed with fear. The feelings that rise in me are of various kinds that surprise me. There is yet a great feeling of restraint in me from telling you all."

"Just now you are in a state of flux and change, many desires and mental turns will arise and dissolve again. The more you will succeed in concentrating on the Divinity in your heart, the more will the spiritual wealth increase, and in the measure of this increase the agitation of the mind and heart will decrease and dissolve away. I feel that you should apply yourself a little more yet to the outward activities of your practical living. This will be good in all ways. Don't forget that external activities have their place in the world." Parvati said, "If I told you plainly that which is very active now in my mind it would be very useful."

On hearing this Arka said, "What you would consider necessary to tell me and what I should hear and know, you should certainly speak of. I hope you have understood me? Remember that too much talk dissipates the beauty and force of inner feelings."

"Do you imagine that I am still so child-like that I cannot distinguish between what I should tell you and what I should not? Ever since my initiation a great feeling of joy, a sort of drunkenness, comes upon me, and often lasts all through the day and night. At those times I am very reluctant to converse with others. Again for days that state does not come—I am well aware of it, it is a rare gift of meditation—a joy of devotion for the inner Divinity—I am not telling you of that condition. I would like to speak to you of the other when I do not feel the joy. At the beginning when these periods of absence of meditation would come, I used to suffer very much, as if all was lost, and my entire being was frantic to regain the joyful state; I used to be so troubled that every external activity was extremely distasteful, life became intolerable, there was no joy in living. True, in that condition all this is natural. However, for the past few days something else has been taking place in me that I feel I must tell you but I don't dare to. If you gave me the assurance, I would tell you."

Though slightly perturbed Arka forced a smile to his lips and asked, "What can it possibly be that I need to assure you ? I have, however, felt your lack of courage to speak without shrinking."

“For the ast few days I see you instead of the Ishta, the Divinity in my heart,— every living moment I see your image in me and outside me too, in my meditations too I see nothing but you. Even when I try to concentrate with greater force on the Divinity, it is your image that becomes much more luminous and occupies all of myself.”

“Parvati, I can well understand it and will explain to you the truth about it. It is that the Ishta will appear to you in the form of that which is very dear to you. You have looked upon me with a great Shraddha a feeling of great devotion and reverence, my figure is very dear to you, and it is very charming to your eyes. The Ishta is now appearing before you in my form, but this form will be dissolved and all other forms as well, till at last the Divinity will appear in Her true form. Forms appear in the intermediary stages and when they appear in meditation it means that the Atman is proceeding from the gross to the subtle states, all the play of the influence of the gross and dear forms is coming to an end. This condition will not last long.”

“Your knowledge is very much more profound than mine, you know all there is to be known about spiritual practices, consequently you have understood much more than myself, but I feel that I have not been able to explain myself very clearly. I like this condition very much and wish it never leaves me—I would like that the Divinity appeared in no other shape. The form of you that I see is the best for me.”

“In your present state it is quite useless to discuss these principles, as you won’t like it nor is this the time to discuss it. In the soft fertile field of your nature the seed of Ishta has been sown—the flower of the Atma-Shakti, the power of the Spirit, has begun to blossom. The inner ocean of awareness is billowing in you and in various ways all your inner longings are appearing and disappearing. You will have to spend some time in this state. Only, if no strong desire bubbled up in you, you will progress higher and higher—a most blissful condition, nothing can be compared to it. But you have not gone beyond the realm of the gross—you have only the slight taste of Chidananda, the ecstasy of spiritual consciousness. As long as you do not cross over even this you cannot enter the Kingdom of the Spirit. You must understand this. By hankering for something much lesser, Parvati, I cannot allow you to lose the invaluable and supreme wealth.”

(To be continued)

PRAMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)

A. B. PURANI

A. B. Purani is no more with us. A fervent follower and disciple of Sri Aurobindo from his very teens, a zealous patriot impatient of foreign domination, an indefatigable worker in the field of physical education dedicated to the service of the Motherland, a soul of ardour relentlessly driving towards a higher and nobler life, a karmayogin of the Gita, a sadhaka irrevocably offered up to the yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the Lord and the Master, a devoted servant of the Mother has serenely taken his leave on December 11, 1965 at 5-25 a.m.

His spirit's ascension has left behind a big blank. His well-lived life, moving on like a wide and mighty stream, was worth more than a fortune one could crave for. His was an ideal ever mounting upward, for the realisation of which no effort was spared, no thought of rest given permission, no weakness tolerated. A fire of enthusiasm was burning in his heart, undamped by adverse circumstances, undaunted by any opposing might, and it rose ever higher to taste with its numberless tongues the nectar and ambrosia of the gods.

Belonging to a family originally hailing from Mewar, the land of heroes for whom fight for independence was their life-breath, it was but natural that Ambubhai Purani, under the guidance of his equally spirited elder brother Chhotubhai, vowed to fight for the freedom of our Motherland. Both, along with some other intimate companions, had drawn their inspiration from Sri Aurobindo's gospel of nationalism and were initiated with the Mantra of Vande Mataram. They formed a widening circle of patriotic young souls, each preparing himself for a national activity aimed at the uplift of the fallen people and the awakening of the spirit of self-sacrifice. They had before their vision a free and self-governing India living her life of noble spiritual culture, mastering modern material science and standing in the forefront of free nations, blazing forth her message of life divine.

Ambubhai was commissioned to spread physical culture in the province of Gujarat which badly needed it, and the young enthusiast, an expert in the work he had to do, took up the task wholeheartedly soon after his bright college career.

He, who was later reputed to be carrying a gymnasium in his pocket, started his first centre of physical culture at Nadiad and that too in a Dharmashala, and I had the good fortune of joining it or rather joining my fate with that of Ambubhai who in no time became the darling of our whole brotherhood. I well remember how he was a child with a child, a youth with the youthful, and a serenely wise elderly gentleman with the elderly and the wise. His buoyant spirit, his spontaneous childlike laughter, his sense of unoffending humour, his patriotic fervour, the silent soothing influence of the karmayogin in him, percolated into the hearts of all around and a happy, healthy and healing atmosphere used to be created wherever he stood, sat or spoke words of fire enkindling another fire.

He possessed an inborn power of speech. He was at once a convincing and appealing conversationalist and a speaker whose words sprang from a heart of sincerity and selflessness. All who heard him felt as if they were spellbound and drawn into the circle of his fervour and friendly influence. Versatile genius that he was, he could speak on any subject with an equal ease and appeal. This had become possible because of his habit of study and contemplation which had made him a veritable storehouse of knowledge on all worthy subjects that a cultured mind should be conversant with.

But courage and adventure were his watchwords; and he missed no occasion demanding them. It was more through his example than words that his young companions learnt to be fearless and faithful to the chosen ideal. It was truly an awe-inspiring sight to watch him plunge into the wildly turbulent river Shedhi in full flood or see him daring the on-rushing Narmada sweeping everything before her. We remember with pride and exultation how in the Sakar Bazar of Ahmedabad he dashed to the ground an impudent Pathan who was left helplessly struggling under him, or a soldier at Pondicherry who had dared to harass a young girl. He was therefore the one man whom the rather too soft Gujarat needed and admired most and its youth idolised. And it was for this very reason that Gujarat was much disturbed when he left it in the lurch, as it seemed, and came over to Pondicherry for good.

Let us note here that the establishing of gymnasiums was not a mere physical activity for building up bodies. Each of his gymnasiums was a centre of culture, exerting an urge towards a higher and nobler life, a college for the building up of strong, sturdy and self-sacrificing character. It was almost a military academy where the would-be fighters of freedom were being trained. It was an ideal heaven of an idealistic brotherhood that was being created and propagated throughout Gujarat. And the central figure, the life-giving source, the inspiring hero and beloved leader of every centre was Ambubhai, the later Purani of the Ashram.

Needing to attend to many gymnasiums in many different distant places, Ambubhai had to do a lot of regular travelling by train. But his train journeys too became his moving study and writing room, where he did his reading and literary work. He translated Ashvinikumar Dutt's *Bhaktiyoga* and Tagore's *Reminiscences* in the beginning, but afterwards turned all his attention to the works of Sri Aurobindo and admirably succeeded in his task—a very hard task—of translating works on Yoga and Philosophy. It was the labour of a pioneer in this field and none but a highly gifted devoted soul could dare to undertake it. I know how he managed to find some time to go to Kutch Bidada and, staying there as a guest of his young friend Veljibhai, translated in a white heat Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* in about three weeks. One can well imagine that such a feat is well nigh impossible, and if it was successfully performed it was due to a powerful concentration of both mental and vital energy which he possessed to a rare degree. In due course thereafter he translated *The Synthesis of Yoga* and some other works of the Master and the Mother for the benefit of Gujarati readers.

Of poetry, the crown of the art of speech, he was an ardent lover. Poets of the east and the west had become his delightful friends. But for the epic *Savitri* of Sri Aurobindo he had truly a passionate love. He had read and studied it with his heart and soul and mind and digested and assimilated the superb substance, the grandeur and beauty, the soul-stirring Rigvedic rhythm of the Master Poet's *magnum opus*. It was because of this that he was in the forefront with the very few who were qualified to speak or write on *Savitri* with something like authority. And Purani has done this to the full measure of his great capacity and given to both English and Gujarati readers enlightening interpretations of the epic, several of which are already published in book-form.

A sadhak of the heroic type, Purani lived his life from 1923 in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. Observing the full yogic discipline of a true disciple he always worked for the furtherance of the Cause through his soul's sadhana, radiating thought and vivifying word, leaning always on the Divine for strength and support, illumination and inspiration. Thus he often became instrumental in bringing quite a number of aspirant to the feet of the Master and the Mother.

By nature he liked to be useful and helpful. His wide and sympathetic heart, his benevolent will were promptly ready in the name of God to be of service to anyone who sought it—service without remuneration of any kind. Even those who were not well-disposed towards him had his help at their asking, his heart never hesitating to flow in friendly feeling towards them.

The last great event of Purani's life was his foreign tour—a tour to Japan, America, Europe and Africa. So strenuous was the work he did there for about a year, often without anyone to help him, that it turned out to be his first and last great tour. Wherever he went he spoke with the zeal of a missionary and made available to many a soul the light and message of Sri Aurobindo and the benign presence of the Mother.

He strove and toiled hard under the all-perceiving eye of the Divine and left there an impress that shall work itself out in the near future.

While in England he collected historic information about Sri Aurobindo's life there, which, incorporated in his biography of the Master, has enriched it and made it more intimate to all devotees and informative to the public at large.

Thus worked he day after day with a strength born of his devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the spiritual mission of the Mother. But the strain was too much even for his giant strength, and consequently the physical heart in him reached a breaking point. Even during this tour mild heart attacks began, but he hardly cared for them. It was on the next day of his return to the Ashram that the heart-trouble started with vehemence and continued unabated for days on end. But fortunately his constitutional soundness and solidity somehow withstood the onslaught and, although his heart was irreparably impaired, he was temporarily out of danger. A once marvellously strong man of inexhaustible energy, he was compelled to live meagrely as an invalid. But even as an invalid he worked more than a valid person. His one great

desire was to finish as much as possible his work of service to the Divine, before he would breathe no more, and the grace of God that was ever with him granted him the fulfilment of his aspiration.

The day of doom was coming apace. He was all kindness. He seemed to be feeling the approach of the Shadow and was inwardly gathering himself up for the passage—a peaceful passage of his soul straight to the Divine of his days. People around him did not know this and they were carrying on their daily duties as usual.

The night of 10th December 1965 came. Purani had his usual good-natured talk with friends and associates who by ten o'clock all returned to their respective homes without suspecting anything unfortunate, and he was left alone in his room.

But at about eleven, Ambubhai began to feel unusually uneasy and he requested his neighbour Bula to call Vishnu and Krishnalal who had daily nursed him. They hurriedly came and saw that the situation demanded the help of a doctor and Dr. Nripendra was immediately called. The treatment started. His daughter Anu came and other close friends too gathered round him. At about five in the morning Purani, resigned to the will of the Lord of his life, cast his calm and recognizing glance on all around him one after another and breathed his last.

Thus ended a career leaving behind an ever-living memory of a life lived for God, lived with God, lived and lost in God.

PUNJALAL

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FIFTH SEMINAR

8 August 1965

HOW TO TURN ONE'S DIFFICULTIES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1965)

IV

DIFFICULTIES are invariable occurrences in our path of yoga. But their presence is not a sign of one's incapacity or failing. They do not occur by chance or by the caprice of fate. They arise owing to our attempt to go beyond the confines of world-ignorance; or they may occur owing to some disharmony in our being. Whatever may be the source, no difficulties are unsurmountable, no failing or limitation can bar us from the goal, once we have taken the decision to go forth firmly rooted in our soul, with faith as our guide, with the Divine as our companion.

In fact, if we have the vision we would find that difficulties make the true basis of all progress. They give us the incentive to conquer our lower nature, they spur us to discover our central being, the core of all strength and light. Difficulties are the marks of our ascent from Ignorance to Knowledge, from manhood to godliness. They must be tackled with patience, with unflinching faith; for it is not easy to change our lower nature and consciousness, our habits and impulses and all those movements which cling to the lower rhythm of things. Difficulties make us aware of our actual state. They bring us to the reality of our present condition, so that our limitations may be dealt with resolutely and thrown out. If we allow the difficulties to rule over us, that would mean that we are shirking our responsibility and that we are clinging to the past and are against all progress. Neither remorse nor self-harassment would solve the problem. We must look squarely at the situation, study each nook and crevice of our being and call down the Divine Force to fight the impeding obstacle. Any attachment to our failings would nullify the effort; any weakness for our limitations would only increase the difficulties.

Whenever difficulties present themselves before us, we have also the invariable aid of the Divine to overcome them. For, no difficulties come which we cannot cope

with. They increase in proportion to our progress, our capacity for resistance, our reliance on the Divine. Difficulties do not allow us to stagnate into complacency, into torpor, but, by their stings and blows, make us push ahead. This is the path of the spiritual warrior. In *Savitri* we witness this phenomenon. Savitri refuses to be ruled by Death or cowed down by its puissance. For her its fiat does not exist. Death reveals to her its many attractions, it shows her the futility of the apparent creation, it mocks at her attempt to rescue Satyavan's soul from its invincible grip. It debates long with her to win her soul. But Savitri is unconquerable. The Divinity within her increases in proportion to the menace of the great universal power. Her puissance increases with Death's increase, till at the end she reveals herself as the Supreme World-Mother :

In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.

(*Savitri*, Book 10, Canto 4, page 745.)

Here difficulties become the gateway for self-discovery and self-perfection. What holds good for Savitri may not apply equally to our small instance; but the ideal remains, the example is set before us that difficulties can become the real doors to progress.

If we look at the world-conditions, we discover no issue in the tangle of contending powers; there is no solution whatsoever of problems in man's existence, be it in politics or in society or as a matter of fact in any sphere of his activities. We find obstacles everywhere standing like unscalable walls. We have reached the very nadir of obscurity, of falsehood, of error, of suffering. It is now that we must evoke the Divine Grace, the ray of the Supreme to guide us, to change us, to lead us out of the quagmire. The Lord has put before us extremely trying conditions. Also we on our part have invited them by our weaknesses and our turning away from the path of light. But the moment has come when we must call the Flame, the radiance which also grows secretly with the growth of darkness. For we must remember that we are not alone in the struggle; the Divine herself is there with us, fighting with us, overcoming all obstacles for us. Only we have to grow aware of her working, her unflinching aid, her unfatigued love. We must have faith, a total and burning faith in her. But if we shut her out by our ego and only see the external aspect of things, then difficulties would rule over us and then we would miss the great opportunity for progress that these extreme chaotic conditions have opened before us. Otherwise we shall find that difficulties and opportunities are manifestations of the same term. One is the negation of light and the other the affirmation of it. Wherever there are difficulties, there must invariably accompany them the even measures of Divine Grace and the chances of progress. If we had faith in the Divine and have heard the call, difficulties would vanish before us. If we know that we are the children of Immortality, no obstacle can limit our progress or bar our way to self-knowledge

and God-knowledge. By faith, perseverance and by adhering to our soul we can transform difficulties into opportunities for greater realisation.

ROMEN

V

“All who enter the spiritual path have to face the difficulties and ordeals of the path,¹ says Sri Aurobindo. The path to our goal, to the complete manifestation of the divine on earth, to the absolute change of ignorance, darkness and falsehood into divine knowledge, light and truth, is exceedingly difficult. This path is strewn with the opposition of various forces, coming either from insufficient faith, egoism and inertia in the consciousness of the sadhak himself or from outer hostile forces which are fundamentally against any progress towards the manifestation of divine life on earth. But these too have their own utilities. For the Master has also said, “If one can take the coming of these circumstances clairvoyantly as a call and an opportunity for conquering the defect, then one can progress very quickly...”² “They rise, because if they did not rise the action would not be complete, for all has to be faced and worked out, in order that nothing may be left to rise up hereafter.”³

Man suffers from several difficulties. Most of them, as I have said, are due to his own imperfect ignorant nature and others are the resistances of outer hostile forces. The former is the first and main stumbling-block before the sadhak. As soon as he starts his sadhana, which is an invocation of the divine force to change the ignorance of mind, body and life to create a divine life in matter, he acts against his very own nature. His mental ideas, vital desires and attractions, physical habits stand in the way of the growth of the higher consciousness. There is also the resistance of universal nature, which either influences the mind, vital and physical by old ideas and habits or creates opposition, persecution, misfortune of many kinds, pain, illnesses, assaults and adverse conditions. Moreover, these attacks are persistent. They occur unendingly and the rare victories are chequered with failures.

There are also other complications due to the limited movements of human consciousness. The divine force which comes down to change the unwilling resisting parts, to make the sadhak a fit *ādhāra* for the descent, goes to work behind the veil of the surface consciousness. The external being of the sadhak, which was elated at the first touch of the higher force, loses all its sense of elation when the force withdraws behind the veil, for it is incapable of following the way of action of the higher consciousness. On account of his ignorance, he cannot understand the cause of this sudden loss, and feels that he has been neglected and left without guidance.

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 697.

² *Ibid.*, p. 769.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 752.

Besides, the force traces a path too intricate for the mind to follow. It rises up lifting a part of the nature to a higher level and then comes down to a lower layer again to raise another part. Human ignorance becomes a difficulty here too; the mind cannot understand this movement of ascent and descent.

The imperfections of human nature also create a barrier. In spite of all its eagerness for the Divine it fails to bear a constant touch of light, power or ananda. A continuous presence of the Divine Truth exhausts the mind and the resultant fatigue becomes an obstacle in the path.

All these impediments are, however, temporary, for as the sadhak becomes more and more conscious of his own nature, as he progresses nearer to the goal, he understands the Divine Will and attunes himself to the working of the Divine Light and Power. But till the inner changes are entirely assimilated and absorbed the sadhak must guard himself vigilantly against the pitfalls of depression and doubt. The continuous struggle against his own nature, the long periods of obscurity and the tiresome overwhelming pressure of difficulties set the sadhak to doubt his own capacity and to distrust the divine working. This absence of faith opens the sadhak to the hostile forces too, which do not delay at all in taking advantage of his weakness and exaggerating the difficulties to intensify the depression and dullness.

But if these depressions and doubts can be avoided then the difficulties do not remain difficulties any longer, they become opportunities to hasten progress. In this Yoga a complete change of the nature down to the physical is demanded. Due to his unconsciousness and ignorance the sadhak fails to spot his weakness, he cannot distinguish between the divine will and his own desires. Under the strain of the difficulties the sadhak has the opportunity to know the right from the wrong, acquire a more perfect self-knowledge. These oppositions also force him to seek "a greater strength, a more perfect self-knowledge, an intenser purity and force of aspiration, a faith that nothing can crush, a more powerful descent of the Divine Grace."¹

The sadhak has also the opportunity to understand the unfathomable love and compassion of the Divine Mother for Her children. If he turns a little towards the light and the truth, She gives him tenfold courage, sympathy and support. And even if he refuses or misuses Her help She does not leave or forsake him, She waits patiently for his return. So the difficulties not only teach the sadhak to scrutinise himself, they also make him aware of the divine compassion, the knowledge that the Divine is the only friend, the truest, the kindest. The Divine is the only one in the world who really cares for him, understands him and sympathises with him. So the difficulties are in fact opportunities.

If these difficulties are to be turned into opportunities successfully by the sadhak, the first step he should take is to be conscious of his own self. For the sources of the difficulties are within him and not without. He must understand the real cause of the struggles, the undivine elements within him and must reject them strongly and

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 797.

persistently. A sincere strong central will to follow the truth alone even in face of the hardest physical, vital or mental ordeal, is the basic necessity.

A quiet mind is also a basic necessity for the descent of the Mother's Force. No one can succeed in his sadhana by his own merit. It is the Mother's Force alone which can change the oppositions and adverse conditions. But the Mother's Force cannot work effectively except in a quiet mind. Only a single sincere aspiration can bring back or create the necessary quietude.

Once the sadhak attains the quiet mind and recognises the Divine Presence within him, he has to aspire for the peace, the purity and the force. He has to call them again and again till they settle within and start changing and transforming the movements of his lower nature. If the sadhak thus opens and spreads himself to the light and waits faithfully for the descent, he hastens and facilitates the Divine working. When the opposition has disappeared the sadhak will find in his consciousness a greater receptivity and capacity to retain them.

It is necessary for the sadhak to observe the wrong movements within himself but it is also necessary that he does not think of these negative aspects too much. The concentration on the lower nature discourages the sadhak and may obscure a less vigilant mind easily. Only those who have a permanent connection with the higher consciousness can go down to spot the imperfections and weaknesses in the lower consciousness. But that too is risky. It is always safer and better for the sadhak to become like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother and to aspire for Her help to detect and reject the falsities of his being.

If the sadhak, however, seeks to progress too rapidly by taking sudden and decisive steps instead of pursuing the slow method of elimination, the hostile forces stir into activity and attack in all fury. In order to hamper his progress they try to stop him by all possible ways. They present various suggestions to the mind and vital and try to influence them and turn them away from the path. If the sadhak can steadily reject and give no response to those suggestions the hostiles become really violent and try to shake his inner being by outer assaults.

To the sadhak these adverse conditions present a trial of his strength and sincerity. If he can gather all his capacities for calm and openness for light and power to make himself a fit instrument for the victory of the Divine against the undivine, then he is ready to win the battle. It may seem sometimes that all is lost but as the Divine Mother has said "...It is when everything seems lost that all is saved."¹ An obstinate perseverance and an ardent aspiration bring always the help, force and blessings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

In Chinese the word "crisis" is written with two characters, one representing danger and the other opportunity. Our difficulties are indeed made of these two components. Of course they should not be invited, but when they occur the sadhak must change the one into the other, danger into opportunity.

¹ *Prières Annuelles*, p. 33.

He must pray to the Divine Mother for help and guidance, he must aspire ardently for the descent of Her light and truth, he must obey Her unquestioningly.

In doubt and depression the sadhak has to say to himself, "I belong to the Divine, I cannot fail"; to all suggestions of impurity and unfitness, to reply, 'I am a child of Immortality chosen by the Divine; I have but to be true to myself and to Him—the victory is sure; even if I fell, I would rise again'; to all impulses to depart and serve some smaller ideal, to reply, 'This is the greatest, this is the Truth that alone can satisfy the soul within me; I will endure through all tests and tribulations to the very end of the divine journey'."¹

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

(*Isha Upanishad, Verse 18*)

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

MITA

VI

A difficulty is the psychological or physical resistance we meet with in the circumstances, when we make an effort. This sense of resistance might arise even from the limitations of our own powers when we are trying to realise something in the outer world or to make an inner progress. It might be merely a sense of want that appears in the basic needs of life. In all cases, a difficulty is a first "no" to our striving or desire, or a break in the established harmony in our life.

But nature never submits to it, except perhaps at its faintest points. In fact it would seem that the challenge of the obstacle is the very principle by which she moves. So from that point of view, we are not turning the difficulty into an opportunity,—it would seem the only condition for progress. Our duty then is to turn our consciousness, in order to perceive the fact rightly and face squarely the situation that presents the difficulty.

Yet this is no absolute law of human consciousness. For it does not always move in a straight line, and often a retreat contributes to a greater progress than a blind, fruitless drive. Thus a difficulty is not necessarily a challenge to intenser effort. It may represent an opportunity to withdraw, to step back, to gather force. It is also an opportunity to question and verify the fundamental validity of the undertaking, and, even more, to revise our attitude, the very quality of pressure we are exerting—whether in spite of all appearance our effort is not a "dusty folly" merely. "Strive

¹ *On Yoga II Tome Two, p. 520.*

² *Eight Upamshads, p. 17. Sri Aurobindo's translation.*

rightly," we are told, and a difficulty comes in to remind us of it again and again. The circumstances are as often a guiding finger as a deterrent. And the universe may hold for us a greater prize than we can offer ourselves.

Difficulties can take an infinite variety of forms; and how to face them or utilise them for progress will depend on their nature as well as our own state of consciousness. Mostly when a difficulty appears, it carries with it at once a sign of strength and weakness in us. Strength, because the very fact that it has appeared and we are put in the circumstances to face it shows that we have reached the point where we hold a real capacity of executing the difficult task or outgrowing a limitation in our nature. Weakness, because there are still in our nature weak points which give us the experience of difficulty.

A difficulty might make itself felt through physical pain, suffering, want; a sense of limitation, imprisonment, suffocation under certain given circumstances; rising of desires, passions contradictory to the goal; revolt, depression, peacelessness due to failure to understand certain problems in the mind or situations in life itself. It might as well show itself through an accident, a tragedy, with a demand on the being to bear a physical, mental handicap or separation.

In most cases difficulties are unavoidable and we have no choice but to undergo them. What should we then understand by not utilising the opportunity? It would simply mean that out of fear we try to shut our eyes to the difficulties, deaden the senses and consciousness in order to avoid the suffering or to mitigate it. But we know from experience, at least from physical suffering of pain or cold or heat, that shrinking makes it more acute, with what we can add to it with our imagination. On the other hand, an acquiescence, a conscious "letting go" can release us into a fresh field of experience, which is a further extension of consciousness, and which corresponds more to joy than to pain.

But I do not mean that we should invite them. For difficulties cannot be a goal in themselves and hunting for them could be a form of perversity. "Don't run away, nor invite" might be a good general rule. For there are plenty of difficulties even for the most heroic, if we are awake.

There are difficulties that merely stand tentatively for our choice. Such would be the invitations to meet those situations that offer possible satisfaction to the egoistic or lower nature. Here, if we are not too sure of remaining within ourselves, it would be wise to gently refuse the invitation. At a later stage we may allow ourselves casual tests by accepting.

When desires arise, facing the difficulty consists in refusing to satisfy them, with the whole process of rejection from the entire nature and a transformation to follow.

For those that live primarily in the mind, the widest range of difficulties arise from a failure to understand, to understand the out-of-placeness of things, chaos, injustice, contradictions in life... Here, in order to overcome the difficulty we have to grow in mind, follow step by step the cause, and look for a pattern in which the difficulty falls in place. And that pattern is never complete on this side of the ego-walls...

Difficulties born of physical privation often build in the being a deep and lasting strength. Accidents, death, tragedy remind us of the need of the permanent, the perfect, which are found nowhere here, and of the quest not yet undertaken of the beyond.

In all cases, the conquest of difficulty always draws us out of our little shell, with the supreme satisfaction of a growing self-recovery.

BRAJKISHORE

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

TO MORWENNA... WITH LOVE

TODAY while working in the Press,
 I read your lines; and must confess—
 The honours go to you, dear Bard,
 And I am 'hoist by my own petard'.
 But may I say, in voice most humble,
 "You do not know our local Bumble" ?
 No honey would he want to give—
 And woe to those who touch his hive !
 In fact he has been known erstwhile
 To chase a victim for one mile.¹
 And though the nightingale, it's true,
 Can sing far sweeter than we do,
 Does he upward, upward soar...
 Onward, onward, through, 'that door' ?
 The poets here,² all who aspire,
 Always write on something higher
 Than themselves; for how could they
 Progress—pen-stuck to things of clay ?

LEENA

¹ See Ripley's "Believe it or Not."

² I am not a Poet, just a prosodiser.

WALLACE STEVENS

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1965)

2. THE DOCTRINE OF *Correspondences*

CONCERNING his theory of *correspondences* Baudelaire had written in *Salon de 1846* on the symbolism of colour, admitting his debt to Hoffmann, from whose *Kreisleriana* he cited the following : "It is not only in dreams, and in the light delirium which precedes sleep, but also on waking, that I hear music, that I discover an intimate analogy between colours, sounds, and perfumes. The odour of red-brown marigolds produces above all a magic effect on me. It makes me fall into a profound reverie, and then I hear as from afar the deep and solemn sounds of the oboe." In his analysis of the lyricism of Victor Hugo, he wrote in *L'Art romantique* : "...everything, form, movement, colour, number perfume, in the spiritual as in the material world, is significant, reciprocal, conversely related, and corresponding." (MacIntyre)

Describing 'The Quest' of Savitri, Sri Aurobindo writes :

Often from gilded dusk to argent dawn
Where jewel-lamps flickered on frescoed walls
And the stone lattice stared at moonlit boughs,
Half-conscious of the tardy listening night
Dimly she glided between banks of sleep
At rest in the slumbering palaces of kings. (p. 430)

Some such journey takes place in the realm of creative imagination or vision when the poet has the significant perception of *correspondences* (from gilded dusk to argent dawn, half-conscious, dimly gliding between banks of sleep).

"The doctrine of 'correspondences', a term with many meanings and covering a broad range of experiences, finds a place in Stevens' poetry. It would seem that this doctrine arose from a sense of the need to express relationships between the world of matter and spirit. It gave rise to the attempt to translate one sense impression into another. For Stevens the doctrine of correspondences is included in his concern with the realm of resemblances, with the ability of the imagination to see resemblances between things. With other poets who write in the Symbolist tradition, Stevens appears to be indebted to Baudelaire's 'Correspondences'. But Stevens does not seem to have appropriated Baudelaire's belief that spirituality or beauty or truth, existing in some objective though hidden realm, is to be caught by the poet in his material symbols. Stevens is deeply concerned with the ideal, but for him it is to be found in the individual's imagination, not in some transcendental or platonic realm of Ideas.

The poet can create a unity, draw seemingly divergent things together, but he is working from within his own mind. Stevens does not believe that all 'things partake of one'. That

was the theory, when bishop's books
Resolved the world. We cannot go back to that.

Baudelaire's belief in this unity gave rise to his theory, which has been neatly expressed by Emd Starkie, of the relationship among the arts.

Since art in its totality reflects a vision, then each art—painting, music, sculpture and poetry—expresses in its own language, using its own hieroglyphics, what it has perceived in the realm where there are no boundaries, in the realm of pure beauty and truth. It follows thence that it matters little which artistic language is used to express the spiritual experience. Baudelaire imagined that it might be possible to find one art which would comprise all the languages, would appeal to all his senses 'fondus en un'. In his poetry he endeavoured to use the idiom of all the arts, to render what his eye saw not merely in line and colour, what his ear perceived not only in harmony, but to glide imperceptibly from one mode of expression to the other. Since 'les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se repondent' then he could render colour by means of harmony and sound by means of colour and line.

"Stevens' symbolist esthetic includes the translating of one sense impression into another. Poetry is identified with 'sound', 'music', or painting, an idea merges with a colour, a thought with an odour or perfume. Presumably he believes that synaesthesia is a fact of the mind which should be recognized and given its place in the language of poetry. Taken together, all the arts suggest a common concern, a reaching toward the ideal that each individually expresses in a fragmentary way. Perhaps the most notable examples of 'correspondences' in Stevens' poetry are in 'Peter Quince at the Clavier'.

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the selfsame sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna.

Again at the end of the poem, he writes :

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
 Of those white elders; but escaping,
 Left only Death's ironic scraping.
 Now, in its immortality, it plays
 On the clear viol of her memory,
 And makes a constant sacrament of praise."

(William Van O'Connor)

(To be continued)

C. SUBBIAN

A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

I

KING ASHWAPATY : What is a change of consciousness ?

RAJ GURU : O King, become conscious of thy soul, its Power and Ananda. Then you will have a change in your consciousness. You will have the divine eye. You will see God in the world. You will feel one with others. Ego will fade away.

KING : What do you mean by the divine eye ?

RAJGURU : You see so many things in the world, how ?

KING : By this eye.

RAJGURU : You see so many things in the dream, how ?

KING : I don't know.

RAJ GURU : Through the mental eye. But God's Shakti is hidden in everything, in stone, in plant, in animal, in man, this Shakti is visible through the divine eye.

KING : How to become conscious of the soul ?

RAJGURU : By Yoga.

KING : What is Yoga ?

RAJGURU : United with him,
 Divine within,
 Yoga it is.

 Surrender to Him,
 Work for Him,
 Yoga it is.

 Love for Him,
 Desire nothing,
 Yoga it is.

(The King does yoga. He surrenders to his Father and Guru. He concentrates in the heart, there he sees Fire. In the heart's Fire the old physical consciousness is dissolved, the soul is born, her name is Savitri.)

The consciousness of the King has changed. He experiences the presence of the Divine Mother, He feels her Shakti in his works, he gets inspirations, he is full of love. He feels one with others. His aim of life is to realise the Divine. He sings a song in joy and ananda.)

KING :

I am a child
A flower sweet
At the lotus feet.

She is my heart
My soul, my love
I call her the Divine Mother.

She is my Light,
She is my Power
I work and pray to Her.

II

(Savitri is on the Mountain of Truth. She meets a sannyasi.)

SANNYASI : O Virgin, where are you going ?

SAVITRI : I go to meet the supreme God. One day I will return with his Shakti and change the world.

SANNYASI : This is impossible. This world of maya cannot be changed. Come with me to Nirvana.

(The divine sage Narad appears)

NARAD : O sannyasi, I have three mangoes, tell me their condition.

SANNYASI : This is quite unripe,
This is about to ripe,
This is perfectly ripe.

NARAD : All the three mangoes are of the same tree. The ripe mango was unripe at one time. Like the ripe mango the world will become ripe one day. It will be full of Peace and Ananda. God's Shakti supramental is working in it. The consciousness of the world will be changed.

HOW SAVITRI BRINGS A CHANGE

Savitri is the soul, the divine flame
In the heart, Savitri is the Light
In the mind, Savitri is the force of life,
Savitri is the Peace of the body. When

Savitri becomes big, she goes to God
 To bring His Light, his Power, his Love
 And Ananda. She meets Satyavan
 And surrenders to him. With his help she
 Transforms the Nature and the body.
 She manifests beauty, harmony, love
 And beatitude and Divine Life.

PRAHLAD AGARWAL

THE BODY NATURAL

WITH regard to the food that man takes, there are two factors that determine or prescribe it. First of all, the real need of the body, that is to say, what the body actually requires for its maintenance, the elements to meet the chemical changes happening in it, something quite material and very definite, viz., the kind of food and the quantity. But usually this real need of the body is obscured and submerged under the demands of another kind of agency, almost altogether foreign to it, (1) vital desire and (2) mental notions. Indeed, the menu of our table, at least 90% of it, is arranged so as to satisfy the demands of the second category, the consideration that should come first comes last in fact. The body is at present a slave of the mind and the vital; it is hardly given the freedom of choosing its own requirements in the right quantity and quality. That is why the body is seen to suffer everywhere and is normally sick for the greater part of its earthly existence. It has been compelled to occupy an anomalous position in the human organism between these two tyrants. The vital goes by its greed, its attraction and repulsion, its impulse to excess (sometimes to its opposite of deprivation); what it has been accustomed to, what it has taken a fancy for, to that it clings, and if the body has not what it prescribes, it throws the suggestion into the body that it will become sick. The same with the mental factor. The physical mind has its own notions and schemes, pet ideas and plans (perhaps from what has been read in books or heard from persons) in respect of the body's needs; it thinks that if a certain prescription is not followed, the body will suffer. The mind and the vital are thus close friends and accomplices in regimenting the body. They impose their own demands and prejudices upon the body which helplessly gets entangled in them and loses its native instinct. The body left to itself is marvellously self-conscious; it knows spontaneously and unflinchingly what is good for its health and strength.

The animals usually, especially those of the forest, maintain still the unspoilt body instinct, for they have no mind to tyrannise over the body nor is their vital of a kind to go against the normal demands of the body. The body, segregated from the mind and the vital, very easily can choose the right kind of food and the right quantity and even vary them according to the varying conditions of the body. Common sense is an inherent attribute of the body consciousness; it never errs on the side of excess and immoderation or perversity. The vital is dramatic, the mind is imaginative, but the body is sanity itself. And that is not a sign of its inconscience and inertia. The dull and dumb immobility of which it is sometimes accused is after all perhaps a mode of its self-defence against the wild vagaries of the mind and the vital to which it is so often called upon to lend support. Indeed it may very well be that the accusation against the flesh that it is weak is only an opinion or suggestion imposed on the body by the mental-vital who throw the whole blame upon the body just to escape from the blame due to themselves. The vital is impatient and clamorous, and if it is all push and drive—towards physical execution and fulfilment—it is normally clouded and troubled and obscured and doubly twisted when counselled and supported by a mind, narrow and superficial, not seeing beyond its nose, bound within a frame of incorrect and borrowed notions.

The body, precisely because of its negative nature—its dumb inertia, as it is called—precisely because it has no axe of its own to grind, that is to say, as it has no fancies and impulses, plans and schemes upon which it can pride itself, precisely because of this childlike innocence, it has a wonderful plasticity and a calm stability, when it is not troubled by the mind or vital. Indeed the divine qualities that are secreted in the body, which the body seeks to conserve and express are a stable harmony, a balance and equilibrium, capable of supporting the whole weight of all the levels of consciousness from the highest peak to the lowest abysses even as physically it bears the weight of the entire depth of the atmosphere so lightly as it were, without feeling the burden in the least.

(Based on a Talk by the Mother : first published in "The Advent")

**SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH**

NEWSLETTER

No. 1

January 1966

1. Towards the Future

We look forward to a New Year of Educational Progress. A year, where students and teachers may come closer to a deeper understanding of the urgent responsibility of what education means to every growing individual in a developing country, in an expanding universe and an evolving consciousness. A responsibility, of which we in this unique centre of international life feel more and more insistent as we enter into the demands of the future and the growing complexity of modern needs.

It is quite obvious that we have to create now the climate in which our children can grow towards a future which may easily exceed all our most imaginative preparations; and to do that we must be much more plastic, alert and open to entirely new ideas and vast possibilities of change. It is in such a climate of great expectations and individual awareness that real co-operation can be initiated. Co-operation is the keynote to the symphonic harmony and synthesis awaiting to be born—and this especially in an institution where community effort is a prerequisite for the manifestation of any future progress of consequence.

One important avenue along which modern education is heading is the avenue of 'ecology'—where the progress of the student must be open to relate all subjects to each other and to their environment; and for this immediate and growing need the teacher, especially in the middle school, will have to be able to deal with all aspects of education. Specialisation at this level will be dealt with by time-saving teaching machines and audio-visual aids of a highly efficient order, releasing teachers for a more personal contact with the students.

Out of this world-wide insistence for an ecological synthesis will grow the New Type Teacher, who will research his own development and that of his student's needs, who will be successful only in terms of dedicating his life to the work as a vocation, a calling to the highest ideals of his thought and culture in the pursuit of truth.

2. Per ardua ad astra

With the success of the rendezvous in space of Gemini VI and VII man has literally climbed a step nearer to the stars and it is man's destiny that he should; but we should also remember that the laws for man are not those of science but of himself. It is true that these laws are continually in need of revision if we are to adapt to our purposes the conquests of new horizons of achievement and the discoveries of new



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techniques. As Vice-Admiral H. G. Rickover of the United States Navy declared to the British Association Granada in a lecture given last October : “Technology must be managed as a humanistic enterprise....It troubles me that we are so easily pressured by purveyors of technology into permitting so-called ‘progress’ to alter our lives without attempting to control it....First determine the good life and then ruthlessly bend our knowledge, our extraordinary inventiveness, to its service.”

There is no doubt that man will climb by labour to the stars but let him not forget to take his soul, otherwise heaven may not open its gates to let him enter, for *sic itur ad astra*, says Virgil in the *Aeneid*.

3. *Thoughts for 1966*

Sri Aurobindo, in *A System of National Education*, says : “The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or a task-master, he is a helper and a guide.”

If nothing can be taught what is the most important function of the teacher ?

The most important function of the teacher is to first see that the climate is conducive to an emotional happiness and a mental harmony that will stimulate learning and that learning is to be encouraged—in Art through the need for creativity; in language through the delight of communication; in science through the power of curiosity; in mathematics through the joy of discovery; in history and geography through the urge for an ecology of peoples, places and purpose; in philosophy through the love of truth.

To help and guide this need, this delight, this power, this joy, this urge, this love,—we have, Sri Aurobindo’s “Four Aids to Yoga” :

Shastra	...	...	The Word
Utsaha	...	...	Zeal
Guru	...	...	The Master
Kala	...	...	Time

For all life and learning is Y o g a.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT