

MOTHER INDIA

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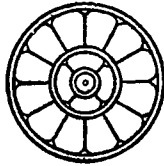
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

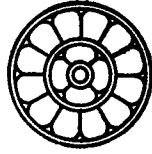
CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 5
READINESS OF HUMANITY FOR THE ADVENT OF THE DIVINE	... 6
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 7
THE FUTURE CULTURE OF INDIA AND THE WORLD: WHAT SRI AUROBINDO HAS CREATED AND CONTRIBUTED	<i>Indra Sen</i> ... 12
LIFE AND YOGA (A Compilation from <i>The Syn- thesis of Yoga</i> by Sri Aurobindo)	<i>S. S. Jhunjhunwalla</i> ... 22
ASPIRATION (Poem)	<i>Srijit</i> ... 30
THE REAL RELIGION OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN A READING IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE ANCIENT VEDANTA	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 31
SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Savitri</i> AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC	<i>Chimanbhai D. Patel</i> ... 49
CULTURE OF THE BODY (Translated by Sanat K. Banerji from the Bengali)	<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> ... 54
DISCOVERY (Poem)	<i>Margaret Forbes</i> ... 57
A LETTER OF THE LAST SPRING : (A Short Story)	<i>Manoj Das</i> ... 58
REALITY (Poem)	<i>K. B. Sitaramayya</i> ... 61
TRANSLATIONS FROM IQBAL	<i>Naresh</i> ... 62

A FAITH BEYOND DOGMA	<i>Miliana Drachman</i>	... 66
PLAYGROUND MEDITATION (POEM)	<i>Bibhash Jyoti Mutsuddi</i>	... 74
IDENTITY (Poem)	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 76
WHOM GOD PROTECTS		
THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT (Translated by Kalayan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)	<i>Promode Kumar Chatterjee</i>	... 78
THE DESTINY OF THE BODY		
THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherji</i>	... 85
THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE		
XIV. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION MOVE- MENT (I)	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 91
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
DICTIONARY OF SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA Compiled from the Writings of Sri Aurobindo by M.P. Pandit	<i>Review by K. D. Sethna</i>	... 95
...		
...		

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
EIGHTH SEMINAR : "WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF MAN ?" (Speeches by Manoj and Prithwindra	<i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	... 99
UNITY IN DIVERSITY		
THE AMERICAN STUDENTS' VISIT TO SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM	<i>Amit</i>	... 105
SEARCH OF THE TRUTH	<i>Prahlad Agarwal</i>	... 108
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION : DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH : NEWSLETTER	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	... 110
TO BE OR NOT ? OR NEVER SAY NO IF YOU CAN (Poem)	<i>Leena</i>	... 113
...		
...		




WORDS OF THE MOTHER

There is a purpose in
life — and it is the only
true and lasting one —

The Divine

Turn to Him and the
emptiness will go..

blessings 

READINESS OF HUMANITY FOR THE ADVENT OF THE DIVINE

ON 2.1.1937 a sadhak asked Sri Aurobindo a question relating to the readiness of humanity for the advent of the Divine, apropos of the following statement of the Mother in *Words of the Mother*, p. 8 :

“Whether humanity as a whole will be benefited, if not directly, at least in an indirect way, will depend upon the condition of humanity itself. If one is to judge from the present conditions, there is not much hope.”

The full drift of the question may be set forth thus :

“Here, if ‘the present’ means about the year 1928 when the Mother said this, does it mean that her work all the years before 1928 bore no fruit? And what about the period up to now?”

Sri Aurobindo’s answer was :

“The question is not necessary—for one has not to judge from the apparent or present conditions—they may seem adverse and yet the Force may be working and preparing the final victory.”

Regarding this answer the Mother was asked the following question on 8.11.1966 :

“Sri Aurobindo’s answer is very heartening at the present moment when the world-conditions have become extremely violent and chaotic. Does what Sri Aurobindo said in 1937 apply with equal or greater force to the present world-conditions?”

The Mother’s answer on 12-11-1966 was :

“YES”.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

FEBRUARY 11, 1940

P : Paul Brunton has come out again with an article on Yoga in the *Indian Review*.

SRI AUROBINDO : What does he say ?

P : The same old thing—that Yoga must be practised for humanity, so that humanity may benefit.

SRI AUROBINDO : He has always been saying this.

P : He is saying that now he is under the guidance of a great Yogi who doesn't want to reveal himself. The Yogi has an eminent disciple whom everybody knows. If the disciple's name is out, the Yogi will be immediately spotted. I wonder if he is hinting at you.

SRI AUROBINDO : Me ? But I have no eminent disciple !

P : What about Sir Akbar Hydari ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He is not exactly a disciple.

S : Perhaps Brunton himself is a disciple eminent enough ?

P : He also says that he is not after money. The proof he gives is : If he were, he would not be contradicting his own past statements, as he is doing, and thereby risking his popularity.

SRI AUROBINDO : Are people complaining that he is contradicting himself for the sake of money ?

P : Yes. But he is contradicting himself, he says, for the sake of Truth.

S : The trouble is that he has started being a teacher before being sufficiently a student of Yoga.

P : Wasn't he giving directions to people from the beginning ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He has formed a group of his own, I believe.

P : He doesn't accept the theory of World-Illusion. He says it is a theory difficult to practise in life.

SRI AUROBINDO : Practise in life ? Nobody practises it. No Illusionist ever does.

P : What Brunton means is that he cannot carry out in life the theory of Illusion.

SRI AUROBINDO : He means to accept of life as much as is needed for the body ?

S : He has spoken of an Egyptian stranger who talked to him in an Oxford accent and even could tell his name. Hamsraj also has written a book where another such instance is given. When he went to the Himalayas he met a Sannyasi who at once addressed him by his name and then spoke in Marathi fluently although he wasn't a Maharatha. What surprised Hamsraj was that he soon began to speak in English. How did he know that Hamsraj knew English.

SRI AUROBINDO : If he could tell Hamsraj's name, it was not difficult to know other things.

S : Yes. That didn't strike me.

EVENING

S : The 13th seems to be an important date because Mars and Saturn are coming very close together on that day. Already they are pretty near. Astrologers fear some catastrophic destruction on that occasion, a great upheaval. But Jupiter and Venus are coming together on the 21st to counteract Mars and Saturn.

N : How can they counteract after the upheaval has taken place ?

SRI AUROBINDO : After the upheaval, there will be a deheaval ? (*Laughter*)

N : Meenakshi's comment is : "See the goodness of God !"

S : I replied, "If God is good, why has He planned the destruction at all ?"

SRI AUROBINDO : In order that you may appreciate His goodness. (*Laughter*)

N (*to S*) : Did you say "on the 21st" ?

S : Yes.

N : On the 21st February it can only be my long-expected Supramental Descent. (*Sri Aurobindo started smiling.*)

S : N is not satisfied with anything less.

N : Mars and Saturn must be Hitler.

SRI AUROBINDO : And Stalin ? By the way, the author of that book, *Inside Europe*, seems pro-Stalin. He says that Stalin is almost ideal except for a touch of blood-thirstiness.

N : What will he say now ?

S : He will say the principles are all right. The man who practises them may turn bad.

N : Nehru has been disillusioned. But Bose, it seems, is supporting Russia against the Finns.

FEBRUARY 12, 1940

P : Visvanath has brought a proposal from Arthur Moore. Moore has said to him, "Why don't you bring out a Sri Aurobindo Memorial Volume on the occasion of his 70th birthday, just as they have done for Tagore and Gandhi ?" Visva-

nath replied, "It needs plenty of money." On this, Moore said, "All right, I will offer Rs. 500." (*Sri Aurobindo kept silent. P. continued.*) Various people will be asked to contribute. Perhaps Sircar will come in too.

SRI AUROBINDO : Isn't a Memorial meant for those who have gone away ? Does Moore want that I also should go away ? (*Laughter*)

P : Well, we'll call it then an Anniversary Volume.

N : For Tagore it is all right, because he is on the point of going away.

SRI AUROBINDO : He has been going away for the last twenty years. It is like the theatres—"Today Last Night Performance."

N : Gandhi is a well-known figure and there will be many contributors.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, everybody has met him and knows about him. That is not the case with me.

N : Perhaps Nolini, Anilbaran and Purani will have to write in your case. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : And each will understand my philosophy in his own way and produce his own philosophy. Mahendra Sircar will come in too and there will be Veerbhadra also after him. (*Laughter*)

P : Veerbhadra will equate you with Shankara or he will say that you have said what Shankara had meant.

SRI AUROBINDO : That will be easier. Or it may be like the Theosophists' idea of Buddha and Shankara. You don't know what it is ?

P & N : No.

SRI AUROBINDO : They say Shankara came as a disguised Buddha in order to correct what he had said. Shankara, according to them, was born in the 1st century B.C. or A.D., I don't remember which; but in any case not long after Buddha's death. That means Buddha realised he had committed some errors in his philosophy and came back soon to rectify them . And now I shall be supposed to have come back as another Shankara to correct what the first Shankara had said and I thus am saying either what he meant but didn't say or what he said but didn't mean.

N : Isn't that what Avatars do ? If we accept Ramakrishna as an Avatar, we have the saying that the body is an iron cage and now you as an Avatar are saying that it is a golden temple !

SRI AUROBINDO : Not quite. I say it is an instrument of the Spirit.

N : Yes, an instrument to be transformed for divine service.

S : But that transformation comes last. Some people want it first. The early sages called life in the body unreal because it was too much with them. They had to hammer and hammer away at the idea that it was unreal. After all, it is a secondary thing. The first thing to achieve is the divine consciousness and not body-transformation.

N : Sotuda has offered his pranams and informs that he is stagnating. But his body doesn't seem to be doing so.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is that why he feels he is stagnating ? The flesh is becoming

too heavy for the spirit ?

S : But his face is shining.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then his body must be getting transformed !

S : I hope the transformation won't stop with the face.

P : He says it is a shame you call him Sotuda. How can a father call a son like that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? The father calls his daughter "ma". Does he want me to drop the "da" and just say "Sotu" ?

C : Why ? There is Babu here—and the Mother calls him Babu. It doesn't mean he is the Mother's father. Babu has simply become his name now.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

N : So Sotuda is not brother Sotu.

S : Sotuda said he had seen some prophecies in which it was told that the war would last till 1941 or 1943.

SRI AUROBINDO : Good Lord !

S : The whole world will be destroyed and Satyayuga will reign at the end of 1943.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nobody will remain then to enjoy the Satyayuga.

C : It doesn't matter much to S if the world is destroyed.

S (*smiling*) : No, what is the use of repeating and repeating the same old thing ?

P : To go back to the idea of Moore : there is another proposal by Nolini and me to make an anthology out of all your works. People who have read your books will select passages and from these again a final selection will be made.

S : That is something like Raja Rao's idea.

P : Yes, but he seems to have dropped away.

S : Because he wasn't encouraged.

Sri Aurobindo : He found it impossible to make a popular edition perhaps. I don't know how it can be done.

N : Dilip says that an English friend of his writes that Aldous Huxley has lost all influence with the publishers and modern writers since his turning a mystic.

SRI AUROBINDO : Except in the *New Statesman* his books are still well-reviewed.

S : He has written only two books of a mystical kind : *Ends and Means* and *After Many a Summer*.

SRI AUROBINDO : *Eyeless in Gaza* also.

S : Is that mystical too ?

N : That is the beginning.

EVENING

DR. Manilal had advised Sri Aurobindo to hang from the edge of the bed the leg to which the accident had happened. The hanging was meant to increase flexion of the knee. Sri Aurobindo did it for one day and then stopped . He said, "After finishing

The Life Divine I'll take it up again." In the meantime Manilal once inquired from Gujarat if Sri Aurobindo had started hanging again. To this Sri Aurobindo replied, "*The Life Divine* is still hanging." Now N announced that Manilal was due to arrive on the 19th or 20th.

SRI AUROBINDO : And I am going to start hanging my leg tomorrow. (*Laughter*) The last two chapters of *The Life Divine* are gone today.

P : Did you say the other day that by following the affirmative way one arrives also at Nonbeing ? I was not very clear about it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*with a surprised look*) : No. By the negative path you arrive at Non-being, or what the Gita calls the Indeterminate. As I said, it is the same thing as in Taoism and Buddhism. But it is not really Nothing. What we can say is that no attribute of Being can be posited of it. Taoism says that Non-being is Everything rather than Nothing. By the affirmative path you come through Supermind to Sachchidananda which is both static and dynamic, while through the negative path you come to Non-being.

P : Then the negative path doesn't come to Sachchidananda ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No.

N : Is Non-being the final stage of the negative path or does one pass through it to something else ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Non-being is only a term of the mind to express the Supreme Existence. It is the Buddhist's way of expressing the Supreme they contact. In reality it is nothing but an aspect of the Supreme. What is called the Indeterminate is not really indeterminate. It can be called so because it is not limited or confined to any one determination, not because it is incapable of any determination. That is what I have tried to show in *The Life Divine*.

P : In fact, it is the source of infinite determination. How is Non-being correlated to the Supermind, etc., of the affirmative way ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Both are gates to the Absolute. Non-being is an aspect of the Absolute. When you enter the Absolute you can't describe it.

P : Jayantilal's friend was asking if inner mind, inner vital and physical are psychic in their nature.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, they are supported by the psychic. These inner parts can have things good and bad, light and darkness.

P : The psychic coming to the front acts through these ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

P : He was also asking how the 6 chakras are related to the three parts of the being—the mental, the vital, the physical.

SRI AUROBINDO : In fact, there are 7 chakras. But you can take eye and throat together, and also heart and navel, and the last two centres as one.

THE FUTURE CULTURE OF INDIA AND THE WORLD

WHAT SRI AUROBINDO HAS CREATED AND CONTRIBUTED

“There is no culture, no civilisation ancient or modern which in its system has been entirely satisfactory to the need of perfection in man...”

★

★

“Is not a unified world-culture the large way of the future ?...A happy or just reconciliation would seem to be a better key to a harmony of Spirit, Mind, and Body. Spiritual and temporal have indeed to be perfectly harmonised, for the spirit works through mind and body.”

★

★

“A wider spiritual culture must recognise that the Spirit is not only the highest and inmost thing, but all is manifestation and creation of the Spirit.”

★

★

“Humanity is one, but different peoples are variant soul-forms of the common humanity....The nations should therefore become conscious not only of their own but of each other’s souls and learn to respect, to help and to profit, not only economically and intellectually but subjectively and spiritually by each other. For the final end is a common world-culture in which each national culture should be, not merged into or fused with some other culture different from it in principle or temperament, but evolved to its full power and could then profit to that end by all the others as well as give its gains and influences to them, all serving by their separateness and their interaction the common aim and idea of human perfection.”

—SRI AUROBINDO

WHAT IS CULTURE ?

CULTURE is man’s highest possession; it is, in fact, the form of his being, what he has become and is tending to become. It is evidently of the greatest interest to consider its nature, its process, its differentiations and the mode and manner of its growth,

Still more interesting is it to consider the life-histories of different cultures, their origin, rise to maturity, decay and death. In this study one comes across a couple of instances, where through successive self-renewals the cultures seem to enjoy indefinite self-prolongation. The growth of cultures through mutual impacts, friendly or otherwise, is also most interesting. And the phenomenon of death among them through natural decay or through attack of one upon another is evidently very instructive.

A culture, the *ensemble* of the life of a people, its practical adjustments of life, its crafts, fine arts, literature, philosophy, morals and religion, its social structure and politics seem to constitute an organic growth, intimately connected with the character and the temperament of the people and its geographical situation and historical antecedents. It is in its motive and form as unique as the individual human personality. It is, in fact, the expression and the being of the personality of the people. And therefore each culture is a unique value and contribution to the general human culture, the totality of fundamental living wealth of man.

While all cultures are unique expressions of the personalities of the peoples concerned, yet they do admit of a relative evaluation on the basis of the qualities and the degrees of the growth of the personalities. But the Individual is always the key to the understanding of the community and humanity. It is the microcosm, which unlocks the secrets of the macrocosm, the universal existence. Therefore, we need to understand the individual human personality rather carefully.

THE HUMAN PERSONALITY

The individual human personality was the object of primary interest to the Upanishadic seers of India, who in the nurseries of their Ashrams laid the essential foundations of Indian culture. According to them personality consists of three concentric formations—the material body, the vitality or the Life-force and the mind, the *śarīra*, the *prāṇa* and the *manas*—and a luminous centre, the soul or the Atman, which silently controls and directs them. Ordinarily our identification is all with our body, the life-impulses and the mental activities and, therefore, the soul remains veiled. But the Upanishadic sages through a profound introspective research had found that the soul is, by its essential nature and character, its competence of self-existence, the master-principle, whereas the body, the vitality and the mind together constitute a dependent factor, an instrument of action on external nature.

This discovery of the soul as a fact of experience (not as an intellectual conception or a hypothesis) then naturally became the governing factor in the creation and regulation of the cultural life of the individual and community. And obviously if the soul is the true master-principle, if it is the true intrinsic value in our life, then its standards alone can guide and regulate the life and action of the body, the vital force and the mind.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

The chief motives of the modern European civilization have been natural science, empirical observation and rational explanation; and external nature has been the chief object of study. The rise of psychology and the study of personality is a most recent development. But it is most interesting how a different approach of the West is tending to conclusions comparable to the earlier findings of the Indian explorers. As in modern physics so in psychology a study of the phenomenon is leading to inferences of a reality very different from the sensible fact. In psychology, *e.g.*, we find the profoundest of the Western psychologists, *i.e.*, Jung, pronouncing: "All the usual little remedies and medicaments of psychology fall somewhat short (to explain personality) just as they do with the man of genius, or the creative human being. Derivation from ancestral heredity or from the milieu does not quite succeed; inventing fictions about childhood, which is so popular today, ends—to put it mildly—in the inappropriate, the explanation from necessity—'he had no money, was ill', and so forth—remains caught in mere externalities."¹ But he does not rest content with this negative conclusion and persists in his search for a positive principle, which would explain the unity and uniqueness and the rest of the essential phenomenon of personality. And at last he does land upon a principle distinct from all the traits and qualities of character. To him, there is "a psychic centre of personality that is not identical with the 'I'." Here is then a 'centre', which is different from the normal 'ego' personality. To this centre he ascribes a power of dynamic action. The centre of personality "acts like a magnet upon the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and like a crystal grating catches them one by one." It has thus an integrating and a harmonising function.

THE SPIRITUAL TRUTH OF PERSONALITY

The Upanishadic perceptions regarding human personality were particularly luminous and vivid and they gave to Indian culture its chief motive, its general scheme of reference, its spirit. And the succeeding centuries also again and again threw up personalities which in an outstanding manner bore witness to the spiritual truth of personality. And the tradition thus built up has given to the Indian people their essential outlook, their tolerance and endurance, their capacity to recover and renew themselves, and live on. In our own day this tradition had caught the fancy of Sri Aurobindo quite early in his life and his prolonged intensive work on it has served to clear it from a mass of dead accretions, rejuvenate it and carry it forward to a further creative outflowering. His writings are fresh and comprehensive accounts of the spiritual truths of life and existence and his Ashram has been the laboratory and the nursery where he with the co-operation of the Mother has sought to evolve the

¹ *The Integration of the Personality*, p. 197.

spiritual personality, the personality which is truly governed and guided by its master-principle, the soul.

We have, it may appear, made a long digression in discussing the nature and character of human personality. But in fact it is not so. Culture is a fact of the personality of man and, therefore, it is of the first importance that we should understand it properly. The ascending levels of body, life, mind and soul of the personality virtually give us a yardstick with which to comparatively evaluate different cultures and properly assess different elements of the same culture.

The perception of the soul, we have said, was the central inspiration of the ancient seers and on this they based Indian culture. The same essential outlook has continued to govern it through all the vicissitudes of its long life. That is why Indian culture has been commonly characterised as spiritual. Ancient Greek culture was primarily intellectual and aesthetic. And modern European culture, which has practically spread over the whole world, has succeeded in creating an enormous material equipment of life, our present paraphernalia of civilization. Science, which has been the predominant activity of this cultural epoch, has primarily aimed at developing technology and the production of goods, which minister to our comfort. That is why it is called materialistic. The source of its chief inspiration is pretty obviously the body and the life-impulse.

THE QUALITY OF WHOLENESS

The Upanishadic seers had discovered soul to be the principal fact of personality and the general trend of Indian culture then became spiritual and today Sri Aurobindo tells us that the time has come when humanity as a whole must make a decisive attempt to exceed its 'mentality' and 'intellectuality' and evolve 'spirituality.' He explains that evolution has one after another thrown up new forms of being. From matter arose life and in life appeared mind. Mind is the highest normal expression of evolution today. But it is surely no end-term. It is essentially outward-directed, dependent on environment, *bahirmukha* as Indian philosophy says. It is not capable of self-existence. It is also divided within itself, it shows conflict and division, it is in a state of unstable equilibrium, it works by a play of action-reaction stresses. It is *dwandwāt-maka*. On the other hand, as an isolated phenomenon in individuals we come across a qualitatively different consciousness, a consciousness which by its nature and character impresses us as being superior to the mental. It appears to be essentially marked by a quality of wholeness. It is capable of self-existence and independence and possesses an inherent balance. It acts on the environment not out of necessary dependence on it and in reaction to the stresses exercised by it, but out of a status of independence and freedom. This consciousness in the quality too of its knowledge, will and feeling is superior to and more efficacious than the mental. Mind knows things by an observation of their appearances. Its grasp is limited and it has, therefore, to proceed by parts. It is essentially analytical. When it synthesizes to get the whole of

phenomena it can only build representative constructions of them. In its essential function it is analytical, divisive, *bhedātmaka*. Its will too is divided and its feeling consists of the opposites of pleasure and pain. The consciousness, which is whole and entire, completely self-poised, is, on the other hand, of distinctly superior quality in all its functions of knowing, willing and feeling. It is not limited to the appearances for an impression of things. It can directly contact their essences. Its grasp is wider and deeper and can therefore know totalities and wholes. It is essentially synthetic and intuitive in its action. Its will is integral and its feeling is one of inherent and essential joy.

This consciousness, which has obviously a different quality, is the spiritual consciousness as distinguished from our normal mental consciousness. As an isolated and individual phenomenon it is known to man the world over. All great mystics and religious leaders have possessed and displayed it in life. But Sri Aurobindo has in our day affirmed that the crisis in which mankind finds itself landed is an extreme consequence of the working of the analytical intellect, of mankind having come to identify itself too much with the external and mental consideration of things. And the solutions, which too we are attempting in the mental way, will also not lead us out of our difficulties. The real solution lies in recognising the limitations of our approach and seeking to rise to the larger way of spiritual comprehension of things. He, in fact, sees a purpose of Nature in the deep crisis that we find ourselves in. It is to show the full consequences of the mental way and thereby prepare humanity for further progress, for a step forward in evolution, for a transition from the mental to the spiritual. Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, Nature herself is getting ready for the next emergence. Matter, Life and Mind, the so-far achieved terms of evolution, are going to be followed up by Supermind. Sri Aurobindo's call to man is to co-operate with Nature, to help in the realisation of her intention, to become a conscious and knowing participant in her cosmic mission. Thereby he would best find the solution of his problems and discover the true foundations of a new living culture, which will be as integral and whole as the spiritual consciousness is.

A full appreciation of the distinctive character of the spiritual consciousness is essential to the development of our thesis and we would here recall an experience of Edmond Taylor reported in his most admirable study entitled *Richer by Asia*. Apparently his intention is a comparative cultural study of the West and the East and he has succeeded in noting some real distinctive features. He says that whereas the average European mentality seems essentially to involve a philosophy of "Nothing-but-ism", of absolute and exclusive rightness, "the perception of wholeness is the most joyous of all experiences to the Hindu mind." He goes on to show that the Indian attitude towards conflict in actual life and contradiction in thought is also characteristically different. It can, as it were, accommodate oppositions within itself and turn them to a relation of mutual complementariness within its larger wholeness. He also observes that the Eastern religions differ from the Western "not only in belief, but in their attitudes towards belief." They are, we can say, psychological not logical

in their approach. Their emphasis is on growth in experience and not on creeds.

THE WHOLENESS-WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS

Indeed the wholeness-way of looking at things was a consequence of the spiritual culture of India. It has become traditional with us and we have reaped enormous benefit from it. But today the call is for a conscious and a full revivification and employment of it in the entire sphere of life. Our traditional spirituality of the mediaeval times sought a cultivation of the spiritual consciousness in exclusion of the world. But this limitation was arbitrary and in fact foreign to the essential wholeness and inclusiveness of the consciousness. We must today seek it as a normal function of life.

We shall now let the light of this consciousness play upon our present situation and see how it can enable us to discover the new and the right form of culture which we seek. Religions have helped man, but they have also been the cause of much trouble. If they have united large masses of the people, they have also created divisions and deadly conflicts. But it is interesting to observe that religions when considered in their essence, in the fact of their original inspiration and typical spiritual experience, seem so easily to fall together; considered in their externals, the ceremonials and professions of creeds, they become different and divergent. Take, for example, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism in their essential spirit and typical spiritual experiences. They show the same broad pattern of experience, a whole-consciousness, an integral quality, with special distinctive nuances, which can easily be felt as complementary and mutually enriching contents. If we could recognise 'spirituality' as a superior category and bring it more and more to the fore in our life, a most wonderful reorientation of religious life would be achieved. The ceremonials and creeds would come to be looked upon as secondary and the experience as primary; and the different experiences as variant forms of the same essential fact. In India what a trouble has existed between Hinduism and Islam ! But does such an opposition really exist between them ? In truth Islam presented to the cultural life of India a new quality of spiritual experience, that of a passionate surrender and obedience to the will of God in life and action. Obviously it is a most valuable aspect of essential spiritual life and as such should be heartily welcome to another religion. Now had Islam valued itself as primarily and essentially this experience and not the external forms of it and if Hinduism, on its side, had recognised the corresponding truths about itself, they could have pretty easily seen their mutual helpfulness and complementarity. And how different would have been the course of Indian history ! Evidently such recognition of truth was premature then. But we can surely see the future possibilities of the matter. On the basis of spiritual experience all religions must, in fact, become co-operative movements for the cultural upliftment of man, affording him distinctive experiences, which must all be contributory to the richness of the spiritual life on the whole.

However, today the political 'nation' is the more concrete reality and force and

mankind finds itself divided amongst nations or groups of nations on political and socio-economic bases. And the various popular 'isms' seem to be making a hell of the life of man. These 'isms' are pursued with exclusive loyalties and the result is discords and divisions, which seem to be unbridgeable. But why is it so? Do we not see that an 'ism' of today, which seems to be our sole passion and in which we see the final good of mankind, becomes within a decade or so a most indifferent opinion? Can we not see the essential character of these 'isms'? Is the exclusiveness we see in them not due to the way of our considering them? In fact it is so, since to the spiritual vision all intellectual opinions are valid, even contradictories are complementaries. Evidently that status of consciousness is the true solution. We have to acquire a new way of perception. The history of Hinduism in this connection is particularly interesting. It has considered all opinions as good and displayed a rare assimilative force and unifying power. We have today, after the fuller experience of intellectuality, to evolve more consciously the quality of spirituality, to set up that as our standard and learn to consider things in that light.

We have said before that spirituality seems to be Nature's own intention in her evolution. It will inevitably come up to fulfil intellectuality. Now if a spiritual consciousness is our common human goal, then its wholeness and inclusiveness itself is a proof of the fact that the distinctive experiences of different nations must be complementary contributions to it. One nation can really have no fear of another, but what it seems to contribute by following its own individual development is a unique quality of experience, which must be an additional enrichment to that of the others. On the spiritual consideration we can thus realise a true unity amidst real diversity. Sri Aurobindo puts the relations of the individual, the community and humanity with great clarity in just a few sentences. He says, "The law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others. His law is to harmonise his life with the life of the social aggregate and to pour himself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for the community or nation is equally to perfect its corporate existence by a free development from within, aiding and taking full advantage of that of the individual, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development of other communities and nations. Its law is to harmonise its life with that of the human aggregate and to pour itself out as a force for growth and perfection of humanity. The law for humanity is to pursue its upward evolution towards the finding and expression of the Divine in the type of mankind, taking full advantage of the free development and gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of man, to work towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family, but even then, when it has succeeded in unifying itself, to respect, aid and be aided by the free growth and activity of its individuals and constituent aggregates."¹

Here we have a complete scheme of a harmonious living for the whole of huma-

¹ *The Human Cycle*, p. 84.

nity with the freedom of the individual and the nations fully guaranteed. And it all rests upon facts of human nature and personality. Today when we seriously think of unity we want uniformity, *i.e.* sameness or similarity in external behaviour. But insistence on uniformity kills inner creation and therefore the force of life and existence. Uniformity for a time may itself give material of creative work, but the freedom of the spirit will before long assert itself and break up the shackles of imposed uniformity. Or else the spirit, failing to find room for its exercise, will withdraw and what we shall be left with is an uncreative community existing by no greater force than its physical inertia. A living and a creative unity has to be a unity in diversity and in the spiritual consideration of things we can more easily appreciate, realise and work it out. In the mental way, uniformity is naturally the first suggestion, because reason is accustomed to classification and standardisation; without that, as it were, it cannot comprehend things.

THE SEPARATIST TENDENCIES

We also complain a great deal of the separatist tendencies today. They are again an interesting symptom of our cultural situation. They evidently show an exclusive instead of an inclusive way of looking at things. But imposition of uniformity is no solution. It is a reaction and is suppressive in effect. Separatist tendencies can surely be frivolous, just encouraged by egoistic fancy. But they can as well be real and, when they are so, they naturally mean a demand for the expression of an individuality and a personality. And this demand must be conceded in the interest of the totality itself, because the part concerned may, through such development, be able to contribute something unique. However, the part must also recognise that it is a part and not the integer, without which it would become unreal.

A DEMONSTRATION AND CONFIRMATION

The foregoing exposition has primarily shown that the spiritual consciousness or view of life and existence, by virtue of its essential wholeness and integrality, seems to hold the key to the problem of an integral culture for the world and India. It has also shown how this wholeness implies independence and freedom and unity. However, this way and experience is no common possession with us. But if the general position rests upon a truth, essential and central to our nature, then our future culture at one time or another will have to base itself on it. And Sri Aurobindo has put the same to the test of life in the nucleus humanity of his Ashram. The Ashram houses within its precincts an enormous variety and difference of religion, language, nationality and temperament. And yet the harmony and unity of it is a fact that is quite striking. External regulation is the least conceivable and thus the greatest freedom obtains for the individual and it is necessary because without it the personality would not grow. But this freedom itself makes the unity natural and spontaneous. It is not that difficulties do not arise between individuals. They do, but the

way they are resolved is a unique cultural phenomenon. It is the spiritual way at work. The community of about 1500 souls—men, women and children—with a lot of normal activity of life constitutes in fact a concrete unit of society, where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have sought to work out and realise the fundamentals of a new culture, a culture which should know and enjoy unity as more primary than difference, which should afford the fullest freedom to the individual, and which should usher in the era of spirituality and offer a real solution of the problems of the intellectual age. The Ashram is an object-lesson of a life of 'unity in diversity' and of the spiritual way and view of life. In what way the fundamentals of human culture, worked out in the Ashram during the last few decades with great pains and devotion, will influence the life of the society as a whole is more than we can say today. But it is certain that Sri Aurobindo aimed at a radical solution of human problems and for that he found a real change of nature necessary. This engaged him long until at last through deep and vast yogic exploration he contacted a specially potent quality of spiritual experience, which he has called the Supermind. The emergence of mind in Nature was in spiritual parlance due to the descent of a portion of the higher consciousness into matter. Sri Aurobindo found that the descent of the Supermind, which he had contacted in his movement of ascension, could lead to the emergence of the spiritual consciousness in man. That would obviously mean a radical change in him. It is not possible here to go into the technique of the spiritual work of Sri Aurobindo, but after the discovery of the Supermind his energies were all concentrated on bringing about the descent of it for which he and the Mother have sought to prepare a proper ground in their Ashram. The work is now carried on by the Mother and whatever time might be needed the ultimate success of the matter can be said to be the evolutionary purpose of life itself.

Sri Aurobindo's thought and the practical life of the Ashram offer some very clear indications as to what the basis of a new orientation of life and culture might be. Sri Aurobindo's essential contribution consists in showing how the spiritual, as different from the mental and intellectual, is the truer way of looking at things. He has shown how an extreme application of the mental way has led to our present divisions and difficulties and how the whole consciousness of the spiritual way could reconcile them. India and the East possess this reconciling consciousness in the grain of their culture and, if they could recover and revivify it and further enrich it with the science and technology of the West, they would not only be saved from repeating the mistakes of the West, they would not only show to the West a way out of its difficulties but also set the standard for the future culture of man.

THE SEEKING FOR THE NEW ORIENTATION

But it may be asked : how can we practically set about creating this new culture and new orientation of life ? The first thing evidently is to fully recognise the nature of the mental and the rational way of life, its sphere of efficiency and power and its

limitations. That itself will in some measure create an expectation and appreciation of the larger spiritual way of our future culture. The next thing is to learn to seek and recognise the fact of spiritual consciousness, to encourage its cultivation and growth and create conditions for the same. If we succeed in creating a general aspiration for it, an increasing number of individuals will be drawn towards it for a practical cultivation and the new way will tend to spread.

A scientific study of the phenomenon of culture could also help to create a dispassionate habit of considering different cultures, one's own as well as of others. And a psychological, philosophical and historical treatment of the subject could bring about a realisation of the great lot that is relative in all cultures and the central spiritual inspiration which is essential. Such study could also show the unique merit of each culture and thus demonstrate the mutual complementariness of them all. An understanding and appreciation of this kind would obviously help a spontaneous growth of the new integral culture of man. It will create understanding, sympathy and toleration and discourage the spirit of exclusiveness, absolutism and dogmatism. Man's inner growth and the rise in the status of his being and personality are the true aim of life. This really means a change from an external and utilitarian point of view to one of intrinsic values, which is the same thing as the rise from the mental to the spiritual. And this is an essential change. How is it to be brought about? Sri Aurobindo says, "What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny, the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual, cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance."¹

INDRA SEN

¹ *The Life Divine* II (2), p. 1170.

LIFE AND YOGA

(FROM THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA BY SRI AUROBINDO)

YOGA—ITS MEANING—DEVELOPMENT OF FACULTIES—RELATION TO LIFE—ALL
LIFE IS YOGA

IN the right view both of life and of Yoga all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. But all life, when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained...

But as in physical knowledge the multiplication of scientific processes has its disadvantages, as that tends, for instance, to develop a victorious artificiality which overwhelms our natural human life under a load of machinery and to purchase certain forms of freedom and mastery at the price of an increased servitude, so the preoccupation with Yogic processes and their exceptional results may have its disadvantages and losses. The Yogin tends to draw away from the common existence and lose his hold upon it; he tends to purchase wealth of spirit by an impoverishment of his human activities, the inner freedom by an outer death. If he gains God, he loses life, or if he turns his effort outwards to conquer life, he is in danger of losing God.... In fact, when a man turns his vision and energy inward and enters on the path of Yoga, he is supposed to be lost inevitably to the great stream of our collective existence and the secular effort of humanity. So strongly has the idea prevailed, so much has it been emphasised by prevalent philosophies and religions that to escape from life is now commonly considered as not only the necessary condition, but the general object of Yoga.

No synthesis of Yoga can be satisfying which does not, in its aim, reunite God and Nature in a liberated and perfected human life or, in its method, not only permit but favour the harmony of our inner and outer activities and experiences in the divine consummation of both. For man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is possible for the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower... The true and full object and utility of Yoga can only be accomplished when the conscious Yoga in man becomes, like the subconscious Yoga in Nature, out-

wardly conterminous with life itself and we can once more, looking out both on the path and the achievement, say in a more perfect and luminous sense : "All life is Yoga."

THE THREE STEPS OF NATURE : BODY, MIND AND BEYOND-MIND

The progressive self-manifestation of Nature in man, termed in modern language his evolution, must necessarily depend upon three successive elements, that which is already evolved, that which is persistently in the stage of conscious evolution and that which is to be evolved and may perhaps be already displayed, if not constantly, then occasionally or with some regularity of recurrence in primary formations or in others more developed and, it may well be, even in some, however rare, that are near to the highest possible realisation of our present humanity.

That which Nature has evolved for us and has firmly founded is the bodily life. She has effected a certain combination and harmony of the two inferior but most fundamentally necessary elements of our action and progress upon earth,—Matter ...and Life-Energy...

If the bodily life is what Nature has firmly evolved for us as her base and first instrument, it is our mental life that she is evolving as her next immediate aim and superior instrument...In the just idea of the ancients man is essentially the thinker, the Manu, the mental being who leads the life and the body (*manomayah prāṇaśarīra-netā*, Mundaka Upanishad II.2.7.), not the animal who is led by them.

But...if beyond that which is being evolved, there is something that has to be evolved, then it may well be that the fullness of the mental life, the suppleness, flexibility and wide capacity of the intellect, the ordered richness of emotion and sensibility may be only a passage towards the development of a higher life and of more powerful faculties which are yet to manifest and to take possession of the lower instrument, just as mind itself has so taken possession of the body that the physical being no longer lives only for its satisfaction but provides the foundation and the materials for a superior activity.

TOWARDS THE SPIRIT

Spirit is the crown of universal existence; Matter is its basis; Mind is the link between the two. Spirit is that which is eternal; Mind and Matter are its workings. Spirit is that which is concealed and has to be revealed; mind and body are the means by which it seeks to reveal itself. Spirit is the image of the Lord of the Yoga; mind and body are the means He has provided for reproducing that image in phenomenal existence. All Nature is an attempt at a progressive revelation of the concealed Truth, a more and more successful reproduction of the divine image. But what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by a rapid revolution.

In practice three conceptions are necessary before there can be any possibility of Yoga; there must be, as it were, three consenting parties to the effort,—God, Nature and the human soul or, in more abstract language, the Transcendental, the Universal and the Individual.

GENESIS OF YOGA-PATHS—VARIOUS POINTS OF CONTACT CALLED YOGA

The contact of the human and individual consciousness with the divine is the very essence of Yoga. Yoga is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality. The contact may take place at any point of the complex and intricately organised consciousness which we call our personality. It may be effected in the physical through the body; in the vital through the action of those functionings which determine the state and the experiences of our nervous being; through the mentality, whether by means of the emotional heart, the active will or the understanding mind, or more largely by a general conversion of the mental consciousness in all its activities. It may equally be accomplished through a direct awakening to the universal or transcendent Truth and Bliss by the conversion of the central ego in the mind. And according to the point of contact that we choose will be the type of the Yoga that we practise.

For if, leaving aside the complexities of their particular processes, we fix our regard on the central principle of the chief schools of Yoga still prevalent in India, we find that they arrange themselves in an ascending order which starts from the lowest rung of the ladder, the body, and ascends to the direct contact between the individual soul and the transcendent and universal Self. Hathayoga selects the body and the vital functionings as its instruments of perfection and realisation; its concern is with the gross body. Rajayoga selects the mental being in its different parts as its lever-power, it concentrates on the subtle body. The triple path of Works, of Love and of Knowledge uses some part of the mental being, will, heart or intellect as a starting-point and seeks by its conversion to arrive at the liberating Truth, Beatitude and Infinity which are the nature of the spiritual life. Its method is a direct commerce between the human Purusha in the individual body and the divine Purusha who dwells in every body and yet transcends all form and name.

HATHAYOGA—FIRST RUNGS OF THE ASCENDING LADDER—BODY AND LIFE-ENERGY

Hathayoga aims at the conquest of the life and the body...The chief processes of Hathayoga are *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. By its numerous Asanas or fixed postures it first cures the body of that restlessness which is a sign of its inability to contain without working them off in action and movement the vital forces poured into it from the universal Life-Ocean, gives to it an extraordinary health, force and suppleness...Pranayama awakens the coiled-up serpent of the Pranic dynamism in the vital sheath and opens to the Yogin fields of consciousness, ranges of experience, abnormal

faculties denied to the ordinary human life while it puissantly intensifies such normal powers and faculties as he already possesses.

The results of Hathayoga are thus striking to the eye and impose easily on the vulgar or physical mind. And yet at the end we may ask what we have gained at the end of all this stupendous labour. The object of physical Nature, the preservation of the mere physical life, its highest perfection, even in a certain sense the capacity of a greater enjoyment of physical living have been carried out on an abnormal scale. But the weakness of Hathayoga is that its laborious and difficult processes make so great a demand on the time and energy and impose so complete a severance from the ordinary life of men that the utilisation of its results for the life of the world becomes either impracticable or is extraordinarily restricted. If in return for this loss we gain another life in another world within, the mental, the dynamic, these results could have been acquired through other systems, through Rajayoga, through Tantra by much less laborious methods and held on much less exacting terms.

RAJAYOGA—ON THE HIGHER RUNGS—PERFECTION OF THE MIND

Rajayoga takes a higher flight. It aims at the liberation and perfection not of the bodily, but of the mental being, the control of the emotional and sensational life, the mastery of the whole apparatus of thought and consciousness... The preliminary movement of Rajayoga is a careful self-discipline by which good habits of mind are substituted for the lawless movements that indulge the lower nervous being. By the practice of truth, by renunciation of all forms of egoistic seeking, by abstention from injury to others, by purity, by constant meditation and inclination to the divine Purusha who is the true lord of the mental kingdom, a pure, glad, clear state of mind and heart is established.

...But Rajayoga does not forget that the disabilities of the ordinary mind proceed largely from its subjection to the reactions of the nervous system and the body. It adopts therefore from the Hathayogic system its devices of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, but reduces their multiple and elaborate forms in each case to one simplest and most directly effective process sufficient for its own immediate object...and for the awakening of that internal dynamism, full of a latent supernormal faculty, typified in Yogic terminology by the *kuṇḍalinī*, the coiled and sleeping serpent of Energy within. This done, the system proceeds to the perfect quieting of the restless mind and its elevation to a higher plane through concentration of mental force by the successive stages which lead to Samadhi.

We perceive that as Hathayoga, dealing with the life and body, aims at the supernormal perfection of the physical life and its capacities and goes beyond it into the domain of the mental life, so Rajayoga, operating with the mind, aims at a supernormal perfection and enlargement of the capacities of the mental life and goes beyond it into the domain of the spiritual existence. But the weakness of the system lies in its excessive reliance on abnormal states of trance. This limitation leads first to a certain

aloofness from the physical life which is our foundation and the sphere into which we have to bring our mental and spiritual gains.... (The spiritual life) tends to withdraw into a secondary plane at the back of our normal experiences instead of descending and possessing our whole existence.

THE TRIPLE PATH—JNANA, BHAKTI AND KARMA

The triple path of devotion, knowledge and works attempts the province which Rajayoga leaves unoccupied.

The Path of Knowledge aims at the realisation of the unique and supreme Self. It proceeds by the method of intellectual reflection, *vicāra*, to right discrimination, *viveka*.

The path of Devotion aims at the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the universe.... The principle of Bhakti Yoga is to utilise all the normal relations of human life into which emotion enters and apply them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful.

The Path of Works aims at the dedication of every human activity to the supreme Will. It begins by the renunciation of all egoistic aim for our works, all pursuit of action for an interested aim or for the sake of a worldly result.

We can see also that in the integral view of things the three paths are one. Divine Love should normally lead to the perfect knowledge of the Beloved by perfect intimacy, thus becoming a path of Knowledge, and to divine service, thus becoming a path of Works. So also should perfect knowledge lead to perfect Love and joy and a full acceptance of the works of That which is known; dedicated Works to the entire love of the Master of the Sacrifice and the deepest knowledge of His ways and His being. It is in this triple path that we come most readily to the absolute knowledge, love and service of the One in all beings and in Its entire manifestation.

But, from the point of view of an integral Yoga there seems to be a defect,—that it is indifferent to mental and bodily perfection and aims only at purity as a condition of the divine realisation. A second defect is that as actually practised it chooses one of the three parallel paths exclusively and almost in antagonism to the others instead of effecting a synthetic harmony of the intellect, the heart and the will in an integral divine realisation.

TANTRA—A SYNTHESIS FROM THE PAST

We observe that there still exists in India a remarkable Yogic system which is in its nature synthetical and starts from a great central principle of Nature, a great dynamic force of Nature, but it is a Yoga apart, not a synthesis of other schools. This system is the way of the Tantra,

In a sense, all the schools we have hitherto examined are Vedantic in their principle; in all the lord of the Yoga is the Purusha, the Conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts, governs. But in Tantra it is rather Prakriti, the Nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power executive in the universe. It was by learning and applying the intimate secrets of this Will-in-Power, its method, its Tantra, that the Tantric Yogin pursued the aims of his discipline,—mastery, perfection, liberation, beatitude.

BUT TANTRA LEANS ON PRAKRITI ALONE

We have in this central Tantric conception one side of the truth, the worship of the Energy, the Shakti, as the sole effective force for all attainment. We get the other extreme in the Vedantic conception of the Shakti as a power of Illusion and in the search after the silent inactive Purusha as the means of liberation from the deceptions created by the active Energy.

But in the integral conception the Conscious Soul is the Lord, the Nature-Soul is his executive Energy. Purusha is of the nature of Sat, conscious self-existence, pure and infinite; Shakti or Prakriti is of the nature of Chit,—it is power of the Purusha's self-conscious existence, pure and infinite.

The movement of Nature is twofold, higher and lower, or, as we may choose to term it, divine and undivine. The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of Yoga; and this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape into the higher,—the ordinary viewpoint,—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher Nature. It is this, rather, that must be the aim of an integral Yoga.

NEED OF NEW SYNTHESIS

The whole difference between the Yogin and the natural man will be this, that the Yogin seeks to substitute in himself for the integral action of the lower Nature working in and by ego and division the integral action of the higher Nature working in and by God and unity. If indeed our aim be only an escape from the world to God, synthesis is unnecessary and a waste of time; for then our sole practical aim must be to find out one path out of the thousand that lead to God, one shortest possible of short cuts, and not to linger exploring different paths that end in the same goal. But if our aim be a transformation of our integral being into the terms of God-existence, it is then that a synthesis becomes necessary.

By the very nature of the principal Yogic schools each covering in its operations a part of the complex human integer and attempting to bring out its highest possibilities, it will appear that a synthesis of all of them largely conceived and applied might well result in an integral Yoga. But they are so disparate in their tendencies, so highly specialised and elaborated in their forms, so long confirmed in the mutual opposition of their ideas and methods that we do not easily find how we can arrive at their right union,

BUT SYNTHESIS DOES NOT MEAN BARE COMBINATIONS

An indiscriminating combination in block would not be a synthesis, but a confusion. Nor would a successive practice of each of them in turn be easy in the short span of our human life and with our limited energies, to say nothing of the waste of labour implied in so cumbrous a process.

METHOD OF SYNTHESIS—SEIZING OF CENTRAL TRUTH AND WHOLENESS

The synthesis we propose cannot, then, be arrived at either by combination in mass or by successive practice. It must therefore be effected by neglecting the forms and outsides of the Yogic disciplines and seizing rather on some central principle common to all which will include and utilise in the right place and proportion their particular principles, and on some central dynamic force which is the common secret of their divergent methods and capable therefore of organising a natural selection and combination of their varied energies and different utilities.

The method we have to pursue, then, is to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense God Himself, the real Person in us, becomes the sadhaka of the sadhana as well as the Master of the Yoga by whom the lower personality is used as the centre of a divine transfiguration and the instrument of its own perfection.

TOWARDS INTEGRAL YOGA—SURRENDER OF EGO

The divine and all-knowing and all-effecting descends upon the limited and obscure, progressively illumines and energises the whole lower nature and substitutes its own action for all the terms of the inferior human light and mortal activity. In psychological fact this method translates itself into the progressive surrender of the ego with its whole field and all its apparatus to the Beyond-ego with its vast and incalculable but always inevitable workings. Certainly, this is no short cut or easy sadhana. It requires a colossal faith, an absolute courage and above all an unflinching patience.

For it implies three stages of which only the last can be wholly blissful or rapid, the attempt of the ego to enter into contact with the Divine, the wide, full and therefore laborious preparation of the whole lower Nature by the divine working to receive and become the higher Nature, and the eventual transformation. In fact, however, the divine strength, often unobserved and behind the veil, substitutes itself for our weakness and supports us through all our failings of faith, courage and patience. It "makes the blind to see and the lame to stride over the hills". The intellect becomes aware of a Law that beneficently insists and a succour that upholds; the heart speaks of a Master of all things and Friend of man or a universal Mother who upholds through all stumblings. Therefore this path is at once the most difficult imaginable and yet in comparison with the magnitude of its effort and object, the most easy and sure of all.

INTEGRAL METHOD AND INTEGRAL AIM

There are three outstanding features of this action of the higher when it works integrally on the lower.

In the first place, it does not act according to a fixed system and succession as in the specialised methods of Yoga, but with a sort of free, scattered and yet gradually intensive and purposeful working determined by the temperament of the individual in whom it operates, the helpful materials which his nature offers and the obstacles which it presents to purification and perfection. In a sense, therefore, each man in this path has his own method of Yoga. Yet are there certain broad lines of working common to all which enables us to construct not indeed a routine system, but yet some kind of Shastra or scientific method of the synthetic Yoga.

Secondly, the process, being integral, accepts our nature such as it stands organised by our past evolution and without rejecting anything essential compels all to undergo a divine change. Everything in us is seized by the hands of a mighty Artificer and transformed into a clear image of that which it now seeks confusedly to present.

Thirdly, the divine Power in us uses all life as the means of this integral Yoga. Every experience and outer contact with our world-environment, however trifling or however disastrous, is used for the work, and every inner experience, even to the most repellent suffering or the most humiliating fall, becomes a step on the path to perfection. All life is a Yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself. Yoga marks the stage at which this effort becomes capable of self-awareness and therefore of right completion in the individual. It is a gathering up and concentration of the movements dispersed and loosely combined in the lower evolution.

An integral method and an integral result. First, an integral realisation of Divine Being; not only a realisation of the One in its indistinguishable unity, but also in its multitude of aspects. Therefore, also an integral liberation.

Not only the freedom born of unbroken contact of the individual being in all its parts with the Divine, *sāyujya-mukti*, by which it becomes free even in its separation, even in the duality; not only the *sālokya-mukti* by which the whole conscious existence dwells in the same status of being as the Divine, in the state of Sachchidananda; but also the acquisition of the divine nature by the transformation of this lower being into the human image of the divine, *sadharmya-mukti*, and the complete and final release of all, the liberation of the consciousness from the transitory mould of the ego and its unification with the One Being, universal both in the world and the individual and transcendently one both in the world and beyond all universe.

By this integral realisation and liberation, the perfect harmony of the results of Knowledge, Love and Works.

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE

Nor would the integrality to which we aspire be real or even possible, if it were confined to the individual. Since our divine perfection embraces the realisation of ourselves in being, in life and in love through others as well as through ourselves, the extension of our liberty and of its results in others would be the inevitable outcome as well as the broadest utility of our liberation and perfection.

The divinising of the normal material life of man and of his great secular attempt of mental and moral self-culture in the individual and the race by this integralisation of a widely perfect spiritual existence would thus be the crown alike of our individual and of our common effort. Such a consummation being no other than the kingdom of heaven within reproduced in the kingdom of heaven without, would be also the true fulfilment of the great dream cherished in different terms by the world's religions.

Compiled by S. S. JHUNJHUNWALLA

ASPIRATION

LET me not taste the honey of this ignorant earth,
 Nor any dreadful lips kiss ever my soul,
 A Maya-love was not sealed at the dawn of my birth.
 O immortal Lord, my future's flaming goal
 Thou hast seen reigning unchallenged in the space
 Of eternity : to love thy Truth as a vast embrace !

From the mystic road of ever luminous light,
 From the body of truth and the brightest sphere,
 No unreal force dwelling in the shadow of night
 Can retreat me to the clutch of infernal power.
 Alone I tread on towards my Lover's breast,
 The sacred sanctuary for this soul to rest.

SRIJIT

THE REAL RELIGION OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

A READING IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE ANCIENT VEDANTA

1

PANTHEISM AND PAN-EN-THEISM : THE COSMIC AND THE CHRISTLY

THE Roman Catholic Church has shown deep concern over the real religion behind the scientific-spiritual philosophy of the Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, Teilhard de Chardin. The disturbing question of questions has been: "Was Teilhard a pantheist?"

According to pantheism, the universe is a single infinite being manifesting all that is physical and all that is psychological as two aspects of itself, revealing to the inner sight all things as one equal stuff of divinity and absorbing into a totality of Universal Soul all individual souls that in mystical experience unite with it.

In the eyes of Roman catholic thought, pantheism stands sharply over against the doctrine of Christianity that a Personal God other than the universe and other than the human soul has created both, established strict moral distinctions among things of the world and ensures even in the unitive life of mysticism an unqualified survival of human personality, a non-absorption of the soul of the individual. Naturally, therefore, zealous efforts have been made to prove that Teilhard's pantheistic-seeming declarations were not those of a true pantheist but only of a formulator, in original terms, of the Christian idea of God's omnipresence (or immanence).

This idea Teilhard¹ himself has stated. He asks us "to see the divine omnipresence in which we find ourselves plunged as *an omnipresence of action*"²; and he adds : "God enfolds and penetrates us by creating and preserving us." In other words, God is everywhere by his supreme causative power which is creator of the universe and ever remains as the ground of all its processes and can directly act anywhere within it. Christian "omnipresence" is specifically meant not to imply that God in any way constitutes the universe or has in any respect identity with it.

Teilhard was very anxious to escape the label "pantheist" for speaking of the Cosmic Christ who holds together the network of the universe's organising forces and who drives and guides the process of evolution ever higher in the scale of complexity and consciousness until all humanity will converge, as it were, and a World-Soul get realised, carrying a communion of all centres of individuality towards a divine consummation. Teilhard conceived the final evolutionary realisation as a universal unity

¹ *The Divine Milieu* (New York, 1960), p 100.

² All italics in quotations from Teilhard are his own.

achieved not by individual souls getting identified with and lost in God but by an action of love which at once differentiates and unifies. The experience, by all souls, of what looks like pantheism and yet is really pan-en-theism, an abiding of all within God's omnipresence of causative power, within the Cosmic Christ, is to Teilhard in his careful self-annotation the *grande finale* of evolution.

Seizing on this gloss, Christian commentators try to acquit him of the charge of heresy. Unfortunately, he is not a very simple expositor, in evolutionary terms, of Christian "omnipresence". He cannot help being complicated since behind his scientific-spiritual exposition is a number of strong intuitions which do not appear to tally with omnipresence as merely God's enfoldment and penetration of us by creating and preserving us. It is because of his feeling of a discrepancy that he has repeatedly to assure us of his philosophy's consonance with Christianity. His intuitions suggest a more pantheistic cosmos than Christianity would approve—some sort of God-stuff variously manifesting itself.

The whole core of Teilhard's spiritual life is laid bare in its true colour by what he has remembered as his earliest religious experience. He writes :

"I was certainly no more than six or seven when I began to feel myself drawn by Matter—or more exactly by something that 'shone' at the heart of Matter. At this age when I suppose other children feel their first 'sentiment' for a person or for art or religion, I was affectionate, well-behaved, even pious. That is, catching it from my mother, I loved 'the little lord Jesus' dearly. But in reality my genuine self was quite elsewhere. To find out about this you would have had to watch me as I withdrew, always secretly and without a word, without even thinking that there was anything worth saying about it to anyone, to contemplate, indeed, to possess, to savour the existence of my 'God, Iron'. Yes, just that : Iron. In the country a plough-key which I hid away carefully in a corner of the yard. In the town, the hexagonal head of a metal staple which stuck out at the level of the nursery-floor and which I took possession of. Later on, little shell-splinters which I collected lovingly on a nearby shooting range.

"I can't help smiling today when I think of these pranks. Yet at the same time I am forced to recognize that in this instinctive movement which made me truly speaking *worship* a little piece of metal, there was a strong sense of self-giving and a whole train of obligations all mixed up together; and my whole spiritual life has merely been the development of this."¹

We can clearly perceive that at the start of his inner development, at the basis of his spiritual life, Teilhard's "genuine self" was elsewhere than in devotion to the historical Christ-figure. It was only afterwards that his religious being got Christocentric and—apropos of the statement by the Blessed Angela of Foligno, "The world is full of God"—he could write : "This aggrandisement (of spiritual vision) is

¹ Quoted from *The Heart of the Matter* in Nicolas Corte's *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: His Life and Spirit* (London, 1960), pp. 4-5.

only valuable in (the Christian's) eyes in so far as the light, in which everything seems to be bathed, radiates from *an historical centre* and is transmitted along *a traditional and solidly defined axis*. The immense enchantment of the divine milieu owes all its value in the long run to the human-divine contact which was revealed at the Epiphany of Jesus...The mystical Christ, the universal Christ of St. Paul, has neither meaning nor value in our eyes except as an expansion of the Christ who was born of Mary and who died on the Cross."¹

Because the religious instinct driving Teilhard had nothing else than Roman Catholicism as its immediate context, he could not help Christocentrising it. But the Divine *in matter, through matter, even as matter*, is Teilhard's basic and primary religion. He begins with the divinity of the visible tangible world-substance and it is at first explicitly dissociated from "the little lord Jesus". The additive character of the historical incarnate Christ in Teilhard's world-vision is borne out also by the testimony of Claude Cuénot.² Cuénot, in *La Table Ronde* (June 1955), reports: "From the age of four or five — so he told us in a conversation (12 July 1950) — he already had a 'general cosmic sense (the consistency of the whole)'." And Cuénot adds that, according to Teilhard, later "the cosmic came to be concentrated in the human, the Christly."

No doubt, "the human, the Christly" answered to a profound need of his soul. But the concentration of "the cosmic sense" in it does not ever seem to have been a complete success. For, we cannot overlook the passage from *How I Believe (Comment je crois)*, which was written in 1934 and which became the target of a grave criticism in the *Osservatore Romano* in 1962. Teilhard writes :

"If, as a result of some interior revolution, I were successively to lose my faith in Christ, my faith in a personal God, my faith in the Spirit, I think that I would still continue to believe in the World. The World (the value, the infallibility, the goodness of the World) : that, in the final analysis, is the first and last thing in which I believe. It is by this faith that I live, and it is to this faith, I feel, that at the moment of death, mastering all doubts, I shall surrender myself...I surrender myself to this undefined faith in a single and infallible World, wherever it may lead me."

Henri de Lubac, a fellow-priest and a close friend of Teilhard's, has essayed in *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin* a defence of this passage against the accusation of "pantheism". According to Lubac, the words can be justified in their context. The justification is expressed thus by a reviewer of Lubac's book in the *Times Literary Supplement* :³ "The words are part of an apology addressed *ad Gentiles*, whom Teilhard wished to lead from faith in the World to faith in the Spirit, followed by faith in immortality and faith in personality, until eventually they came to faith in Christ. They mean more than Margaret Fuller's declaration, 'I accept the universe', which

¹ *The Divine Milieu*, pp. 94-95.

² Quoted by Corte, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

³ November 18 1965, p. 1027. The passage from *How I Believe* occurs also in the review.

led Carlyle to exclaim, 'Gad! she'd better', but the World is the beginning, not the end, of Teilhard's faith."

True, there is a series of "faiths" mentioned and expounded, but they arise from the belief in the "single and infallible World": the belief does not depend on them. The World is the foundational datum and desideratum, and the manner in which the faith in it is declared suggests its all-sufficiency. It is hardly right to say: "the World is the beginning, not the end, of Teilhard's faith." Teilhard's own asseveration to the contrary stares us in the face: "The world..., in the final analysis, is the first and last thing in which I believe." "Final", "last" — do they not hold "the end"? And, if to this faith he will surrender himself "at the moment of death", what other faith can remain to be reached, remain to follow and be led up to? No, "the cosmic" far exceeds for Teilhard "the human, the Christly", whether he would consciously want it or not.

And by endeavouring to concentrate it in "the Christly" he did injustice to his fundamental feeling. Not that the Super-Person that is his Christ need be irreconcilable with his earlier and foundational credo. But the reconciliation is impossible in the traditional terms of the Christian religion, where the world does not itself partake of God-stuff and is not projected from God's own being. And, if following Teilhard's own misleading cue, we insist, as most Christian exegetists do, on explaining him away as an orthodox in a heterodox garb we miss the living beat of Teilhardism and falsify the deepest significance of his spiritual intuitions.

2

PANPSYCHISM, OMEGA POINT AND THE COSMIC CHRIST

The true situation is well put in one of the three stories he wrote in connection with his service as a stretcher-bearer during World War I. The stories are told about a "friend" before an engagement at Douaumont in 1916, but all students of Teilhard admit that they are about himself. At one point the "friend" confesses: "I had always...been by temperament a 'pantheist'. I had always felt the pantheist's yearnings to be native to me and unarguable; but had never dared to give full rein to them because I could not see how to reconcile them with my faith."¹

In a footnote to this acknowledgment Teilhard enters a Christian qualification and persuades himself that by "pantheism" is meant, with etymological correctness and perfect legitimacy, only what St. Paul meant by the phrase: "*En p̄asi p̄anta Theos*", "God all in all." God, in the view of Teilhard speaking in the *propria persona* of the Jesuit, is not a totality of things with which human souls can get identified: human souls become "one with God" through love of Him who is "all *in* all" and not by

¹ Quoted in a review of Teilhard's *Hymn of the Universe* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, March 4 1965, p. 168.

"God becoming all things". But surely if pan-en-theism—that is, a concept "strictly in accord with Christian orthodoxy", as he says—was intended, why could the "friend" not see how to reconcile it with his faith as a Christian? There are also the tell-tale words: "never dared to give full rein." What should "full rein" connote? Would pan-en-theism "give full rein" to "the pantheist's yearnings"? And would any real "daring" be required to give full rein to them in the sense of pan-en-theism?

The footnote has even deeper evasions than those which verbal analysis can expose. The mystical love-union is not always clearly marked by a unifying that differentiates. Not only Meister Eckhart who is not quite in good odour with the orthodox among his fellow-Catholics, but other Catholic mystics have themselves a non-Teilhardian suggestion. Richard of St. Victor (as far back as the 12th century) says in his treatise, *Of the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity*: "The third degree of love is when the mind of man is ravished into the abyss of divine Light, so that the soul, having forgotten all outward things, is altogether unaware of itself, and passes out completely into its God."¹ Ruysbroeck reports: "we feel ourselves to be swallowed up in the fathomless abyss of our eternal blessedness, wherein we can never find any distinction between ourselves and God."² He has also written: "whenever we feel this union, we are one being and one life and one blessedness with God."³ Luis de Leon affirms that in the state of love-union there is an absorption into God "so that in very truth the soul not only has God dwelling in it, but is indeed God."⁴

Further, if we turn to St. Paul himself, do we have only a phrase justifying pan-en-theism? Do we not have also the phrase in *Colossians* III. II: "*ta panta kai en p̄si Christos*", "Christ is all and in all"? A Christology pantheistic no less than pan-en-theistic can be deduced here. The same is deducible from the Fourth Gospel where Paul's "Christ-mysticism" finds renewed expression through St. John. "Johannine mysticism, like the Pauline," comments Sidney Spencer,⁵ "is a corporate and not merely an individual fact. It receives its culminating expression in the prayer of Jesus in Chapter 17. Jesus prays that all who follow him may share his union with God—that all may be one, as a living and interpenetrating unity of souls, 'even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us'. The divine destiny which Christ has attained, the divine glory which belongs to him in his perfect union with the Father, he seeks to share with all his followers—that they also may be with me where I am; 'that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and Thou in me, that they may become perfectly one'. If the union of souls with Christ is of the same nature as Christ's union with the Father, there must be—over and above the unifying that differentiates—an essential identification.

And the experience which Teilhard records in his stories would appear to provide ground, in pantheistic terms, for such an identification in the union. As the "friend"

¹ *Mysticism in World Religion* by Sidney Spencer (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963): "Mysticism in the Western Catholic Church", p. 249.

² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 221.

meditates before a picture of Christ, its outline becomes blurred and the whole universe grows vibrant. This means that the whole universe vibrates as the Cosmic Christ and therefore every part of the universe becomes essentially one with Him.

In any case, what would normally be called pantheism meets us in the experience : the cosmic stuff gets deified. Again, what shall we make out except one who is "by temperament a pantheist" in Teilhard's "Hymn to Matter" ? "Blessed be you, mighty matter, irresistible march of evolution, reality ever new-born...I acclaim you as the driving *milieu* charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the spirit, as the clay moulded and infused with life by the incarnate Word."¹

The notion of the historical Christ is here at the end; but much else seems to figure matter as a living reality, an evolving Godhead, a spiritually manifesting substance, and the concretely used word "*milieu*" sends us back at once questioningly to the "Divine Milieu" that is equated with God's "Christian" omnipresence. We are prompted to ask "Is not matter itself the 'Divine Milieu' ?"

Perhaps the key to the correct understanding of the relation between God and the physical cosmos in Teilhard's philosophy may be found if we take as our starting-point the words "infused with life" in the above passage. It is a commonplace of Teilhardian exegesis that to the author of *The Phenomenon of Man* life is coextensive with matter. There is, for Teilhard, a "within" to every "without", just as we find in ourselves an interior existence, a being of consciousness, along with our exterior existence, a being of matter. Although life seems to start at a certain stage, Teilhard, accepting the scientific principle of the unity of Nature, sees it as latent—or, rather, as imperceptibly present—in even the apparently inorganic, down to the elementary particles. Another word for life, which Teilhard uses, is consciousness. Thus he writes : "Refracted rearwards along the course of evolution, consciousness displays itself qualitatively as a spectrum of shifting hints whose lower terms are lost in the night."² And "consciousness" is taken "in its widest sense to indicate every kind of psychicism, from the most rudimentary forms of interior perception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought".³ The word "psyche" or "psychic" is perhaps the most general for expressing Teilhard's "within" everywhere. Thus we have the statement : "We are logically forced to assume the existence in rudimentary form...of some sort of psyche in every corpuscle..."⁴ And again : the 'psychic' shows itself subtending (at various degrees of concentration) the totality of the phenomenon."⁵ We may well indicate Teilhard's doctrine of all-life by the common philosophical label : panpsychism. And panpsychism, as Corte⁶ observes, is the very basis of Teilhard's whole vision of the world.

Now, let us inquire how Teilhard's panpsychism is connected with his Cosmic Christ or, as he otherwise names Him, Omega Point which is also Alpha Point, the

¹ *The Times Literary Supplement*, loc. cit.

² *The Phenomenon of Man* (Lodon, 1960), p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57, fn. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁶ Corte, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

God-consciousness in which the race will evolutionarily participate at the end and from which all evolution gets its primal impulse. Let us string together a number of declarations. "We are faced with a harmonised collectivity of consciousnesses equivalent to a sort of superconsciousness."¹ "A new domain of psychical expansion... in an interior totalisation of the world upon itself, in the unanimous construction of a *spirit of the earth*."² "We have seen and admitted that evolution is an ascent towards consciousness....Therefore it should culminate forwards in some sort of supreme consciousness."³ "In the light of our experience it is abundantly clear that emergence *in the course of evolution* can only happen successively and with mechanical dependence on what precedes it....And it is in the very same way that Omega itself is discovered to us at the end of the whole processus, inasmuch as in it the movement of synthesis culminates."⁴ No doubt, Teilhard adds : "Yet we must be careful to note that under this evolutive facet Omega still only reveals *half of itself*. While being the last term of its series, it is also *outside all series*." But this simply means that Omega is also Alpha, a pre-existent Godhood that is really a disclosure rather than a product of evolution, although seeming to be the latter. It does not deny the intimate presence of Omega-Alpha in the evolutionary process, its inwardness to the long series of evolution's products, its continuous line through the corpuscle and the mega-molecule, the cell and the multicellular organism, the human system and the super-human collective race-body and the vast earth-being. It is obviously the all-life seen in its full original reality underlying evolution, impelling it and fulfilling it.

There appears to be no question that the "within" of panpsychism is the same as the "within" which forms "a new domain of psychical expansion", realises the unity of the world and enjoys, through an ascent towards "some sort of supreme consciousness", union with Omega-Alpha. Indeed, Omega-Alpha is the divine "within" whose diverse expressions or manifestations are the graded psychicisms from the most rudimentary form of interior perception imaginable up to man's reflective thought and beyond it to an unimaginable magnitude.

But, if that is so, the Cosmic Christ proves Himself to be the full glory of panpsychism. And, since no controversy rages over Teilhard's meaning of the "within" of panpsychism and nobody talks of pan-en-psychism as his true drift there, the Cosmic Christ is bound to be a divine name for its profoundest significance. In correspondence with panpsychism, the Cosmic Christ must represent pantheism.

This pantheism may not be quite identical with the doctrine usually passing under that designation. But if we attend to several pronouncements of Teilhard's in the course of his story of the developing "within" of panpsychism, we shall be struck even with some direct resemblances. Consciousness, we are told, must be taken to have "a cosmic extension, and as such is surrounded by an aura of indefinite spatial and temporal extensions".⁵ Again, we are informed that "the stuff of the universe" has

¹ *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 251.

² *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

“necessarily a double aspect to its structure, that is to say, in every region of space and time”¹—a double aspect of “without-within”. Further, “spiritual perfection (or conscious ‘certainty’) and material synthesis (or complexity) are but the two aspects of connected parts of one and the same phenomenon.”² Finally, “in the last analysis, somehow or other, there must be a single energy operating in the world”.³

To shirk the pantheism of the Cosmic Christ is merely to quibble. Pan-en-theism is certainly a truth to Teilhard, but it cannot be a substitute for his pantheism. Pantheism must be accepted as basic to his scientific-spiritual world-view and we have to understand it as something irreducible to the pan-en-theistic vision. In Teilhard’s system it would have to be brought into rapport with that vision, but it must also retain some essential shade of what is usually taken to stand sharply over against Christian theology.

And, if Teilhardism has an unavoidably pantheistic element, it cannot be assimilated into current Christianity. However, as there are other elements too—certain links with Roman Catholic doctrine—Christianity in some form has to be assimilated into the Teilhardian *weltanschauung*. This form will depend on what that *weltanschauung* would look like when Teilhardism is freed of its own conflicts and ambiguities and formulated as an *ensemble* in which its pantheistic element has a legitimate logical place in the very front.

Is there any religious philosophy which makes room for the essence of pantheism and even gives it prominence while yet transcending it? We are unmistakably directed to it by a remark of Sri Aurobindo’s in criticism of a view of Albert Schweitzer. Schweitzer, says Sri Aurobindo, has made a misconstruction, “moved by the associations of Western philosophy to read a merely pantheistic sense into the more subtle and complex thought of the ancient Vedanta”.⁴

A brief look, therefore, at the ancient Vedanta through Sri Aurobindo’s eyes will best shape for us the Christianity which Teilhard, at cross-purposes with himself, was striving to set forth.

3

TEILHARD’S CHRISTIANITY AND THE ANCIENT VEDANTA

Our look will be all the more interesting because one of the cross-purposes in Teilhard’s life was just that he found himself simultaneously attracted by and at variance with old Indian thought. As he has explained in his *How I Believe*, he recognised in this thought an abundant “sense of the All”, which chimed with his own faith, but he saw in it (1) a suppression of the individual and the rich dynamism of life in “a homogeneous unity” and (2) a vision of matter as “a dead weight and an illusion”.

¹ *Ibid*,

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³ *Ibid*, p. 63.

⁴ *The Life Divine* (New York, 1949), p. 671, fn. 6.

If anything in the modern Orient struck him as a sign of hope, it was that it appeared "to have already almost forgotten the original passivity of its pantheism".

Sri Aurobindo's remark on Schweitzer can therefore directly apply to Teilhard. And we may observe that Teilhard falls into an error which Sri Aurobindo has particularly warned us against. In speaking of oriental religions Teilhard mentions Buddhism especially, "in order to fix our ideas". Sri Aurobindo¹—after asserting it to be "a misrepresentation to say that Indian culture denies all value to life, detaches from terrestrial interests and insists on the unimportance of the life of the moment"—says:

"To read these European comments one would imagine that in all Indian thought there was nothing but the nihilistic school of Buddhism and the monistic Illusionism of Shankara and that all Indian art, literature and social thinking were nothing but the statement of their recoil from the falsehood and vanity of things...

"Even the most extreme philosophies and religions, Buddhism and Illusionism, which held life to be an impermanence or ignorance that must be transcended and thrown away, yet did not lose sight of the truth that man must develop himself under the conditions of this present ignorance or impermanence before he can attain to knowledge and to that Permanent which is the denial of temporal being. Buddhism was not solely a cloudy sublimation of Nirvana, nothingness, extinction and the tyrannous futility of Karma; it gave us a great and powerful discipline for the life of man on earth. The enormous positive effects it had on society and ethics and the creative impulse it imparted to art and thought and in a less degree to literature, are a sufficient proof of the strong vitality of its method. If this positive turn was present in the most extreme philosophy of denial, it was still more largely present in the totality of Indian culture.

"There has been indeed from early times in the Indian mind a strain, a tendency towards a lofty and austere exaggeration in the direction taken by Buddhism and Mayavada [Illusionism]...But the European critic very ordinarily labours under the idea that this exaggeration...was actually the whole of Indian thought and sentiment or the one undisputed governing idea of the culture. Nothing could be more false and inaccurate. The early Vedic religion did not deny, but laid a full emphasis on life. The Upanishads did not deny life, but held that the world is a manifestation of the Eternal, of Brahman, all here is Brahman, all here is in the Spirit and the Spirit is in all, the self-existent Spirit has become all things and creatures; life too is Brahman, the life-force is the very basis of our existence, the life-spirit, Vayu, is the manifest and evident Eternal, *pratyakṣam brahma*. But it affirmed that the present way of existence of man is not the highest or the whole; his outward mind and life are not all his being; to be fulfilled and perfect he has to grow out of his physical and mental ignorance into spiritual self-knowledge.

"Buddhism arrived at a later stage and seized on one side of this ancient teaching to make a sharp spiritual and intellectual opposition between the impermanence

¹ *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (New York, 1953), p. 79.

of life and the permanence of the Eternal which brought to a head and made a gospel of the ascetic exaggeration. But the synthetic Hindu mind struggled against this negation and finally threw out Buddhism, though not without contracting an increased bias in this direction. That bias came to its height in the philosophy of Shankara, his theory of Maya, which put its powerful imprint on the Indian mind and, coinciding with a progressive decline in the full vitality of the race, did tend for a time to fix a pessimistic and negative view of terrestrial life and distort the larger Indian ideal. But his theory is not at all a necessary deduction from the great Vedantic authorities, the Upanishads, the Brahmasutras and Gita, and was always combated by other Vedantic philosophies and religions which drew from them and from spiritual experience very different conclusions. At the present time, in spite of a temporary exaltation of Shankara's philosophy, the most vital movements of Indian thought and religion are moving again towards the synthesis of spirituality and life which was an essential part of the ancient Indian ideal."

Some more words of Sri Aurobindo's may be cited by way of further introduction to the brief look we shall take at the ancient Vedanta. They touch directly not on the synthesis of spirituality and life but on the synthesis within the spirituality itself, born of the sense that if spirituality is to be living it should have the plasticity and variety which life in its creative movement exhibits. Sri Aurobindo¹ tells us :

"The religious thinking of Europe is accustomed to rigid impoverishing definitions, to strict exclusions, to a constant preoccupation with the outward idea, the organisation, the form....The Indian mind on the contrary is averse to intolerant mental exclusions; for a great force of intuition and inner experience had given it from the beginning that towards which the mind of the West is only now reaching with much fumbling and difficulty,—the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic vision. Even when it sees the One without a second, it still admits his duality of Spirit and Nature; it leaves room for his many trinities and million aspects. Even when it concentrates on a single limiting aspect of the Divinity and seems to see nothing but that, it still keeps instinctively at the back of its consciousness the sense of the All and the idea of the One. Even when it distributes its worship among many objects, it looks at the same time through the objects of its worship and sees beyond the multitude of godheads the unity of the Supreme. This synthetic turn is not peculiar to the mystics or to a small literate class or to philosophic thinkers nourished on the high sublimities of the Veda and Vedanta. It permeates the popular mind nourished on the thoughts, images, traditions and cultural symbols of the Purana and Tantra; for these things are only concrete representations or living figures of the synthetic monism, the many-sided unitarianism, the large cosmic universalism of the Vedic scriptures.

"Indian religion founded itself on the conception of a timeless, nameless and formless Supreme, but it did not feel called upon like the narrower and more ignorant monotheisms of the younger races, to deny or abolish all intermediary forms and names

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-54.

and powers and personalities of the Eternal and Infinite. A colourless monism or a pale vague transcendental Theism was not its beginning, its middle and its end. The one Godhead is worshipped as the All, for all in the universe is he or made out of his being or his nature. But Indian religion is not therefore pantheism; for beyond this universality it recognises the supracosmic Eternal. Indian polytheism is not the popular polytheism of ancient Europe; for here the worshipper of many gods still knows that all his divinities are forms, names, personalities and powers of the One; his gods proceed from the one Purusha, his goddesses are energies of the one divine Force. Those ways of Indian cult, which most resemble a popular form of Theism, are still something more; for they do not exclude, but admit the many aspects of God. Indian image-worship is not the idolatry of a barbaric or undeveloped mind, for even the most ignorant know that the image is a symbol and support and can throw it away when its use is over. The later religious forms which most felt the impress of the Islamic idea, like Nanak's worship of the timeless One, Akala, and the reforming creeds of today, born under the influence of the West, yet draw away from the limitations of western or Semitic monotheism. Irresistibly they turn from these infantile conceptions towards the fathomless truth of Vedanta. The divine personality of God and his human relations with man are strongly stressed by Vaishnavism and Shaivism as the most dynamic Truth; but that is not the whole of these religions, and this divine Personality is not the limited magnified-human personal God of the West. Indian religion cannot be described by any of the definitions known to the occidental intelligence. In its totality it has been a free and tolerant synthesis of all spiritual worship and experience. Observing the one Truth from many sides, it shuts out none. It gave itself no specific name and bound itself by no limiting distinction. Allowing separative designations for its constituting cults and divisions, it remained itself nameless, formless, universal, infinite, like the Brahman of its agelong seeking. Although strikingly distinguished from other creeds by its traditional scriptures, cults and symbols, it is not in its essential character a credal religion at all but a vast and many-sided, an always unifying and always progressive and self-enlarging system of spiritual culture."

4

TOWARDS A VEDANTIC CHRISTIANITY : THE INDIVIDUAL, THE UNIVERSAL,
THE TRANSCENDENTAL

About the "pantheistic experience...that the Divine is everywhere and is all", a letter by Sri Aurobindo¹ pronounces : "it is a very common thing to have this feeling or realisation in the Vedantic sadhana [process of inner development]—in fact without it there would be no Vedantic sadhana." But, keeping in mind the thesis that "all is good" because the Divine is everywhere and is all, he adds : "Of course it

¹ *On Yoga*, II, Tome One, Pondicherry, 1958), pp. 125-26.

does not mean that all here is good or that in the estimation of values a brothel is as good as an Ashram, but it does mean that all are part of one manifestation and that in the inner heart of the harlot as in the inner heart of the sage or saint there is the Divine.... I don't think any Vedantin (except perhaps some modernised ones) would maintain that all is good here—the orthodox Vedantic idea is that all is here an inextricable mixture of good and evil, a play of the Ignorance and therefore a play of the dualities....He says that the dualities come by a separative Ignorance and so long as you accept this separative Ignorance, you cannot get rid of that, but it is possible to draw back from it in experience and to have the realisation of the Divine in all and the Divine everywhere and then you begin to realise the Light, Bliss and Beauty behind all and this is the one thing to do. Also you begin to realise the one Force and you can use it or let it use you for the growth of the Light in you and others—no longer for the satisfaction of the ego and for the works of the ignorance and darkness.”

Like pantheism the ancient Vedanta is monistic, a spiritual philosophy of the One, an Adwaita—to use the Indian term—but it does not overlook the Many. Only, “the Many exist in the One and by the One, the differences are variations in manifestation of that which is fundamentally ever the same”.¹ And the ancient Vedanta avoids the two common extremes of monism : (1) the One alone is and the Many are an illusion (Mayavada Adwaita), in which case there is only the transcendental reality, with the universe a phantasmal appearance; (2) the universe as a system of the One and the Many is the sole reality, in which case God is nothing except Nature and hence, despite appearance, everything of Nature is equally divine. Nature, as we know it, is, for the ancient Vedanta, merely the outer manifestation and if we ignore what is behind this manifestation “we shall fall into the intellectual error of pantheism, not realising that the Divine is more than this outer manifestation and cannot be known by it alone”.²

“The European type of monism,” Sri Aurobindo³ states in a letter, “is usually pantheistic and weaves the universe and the Divine so intimately together that they can hardly be separated. But what explanation of the evil and misery can there be there ? The Indian view is that the Divine is the inmost substance of the universe, but he is also outside it, transcendent; good and evil, happiness and misery are only phenomena of cosmic experience due to a division and a diminution of consciousness in the manifestation but are not part of the essence or of the undivided whole-consciousness either of the Divine or of our own spiritual being.”

However, Sri Aurobindo⁴ is careful to note in consonance with the ancient Vedanta: “...it is not, as some religions suppose, an extra-cosmic, arbitrary, personal Deity, himself altogether uninvolved in the fall, who has imposed evil and suffering on creatures made capriciously by his fiat. The Divine...is an infinite Being in whose infinite manifestation these things have come—it is the Divine itself that is here, behind us, pervading the manifestation, supporting the world with its oneness; it is

¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

² *Ibid.*, p. 280.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28. Cf. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 89.

the Divine that is in us upholding itself the burden of the fall and its dark consequence. If above It stands for ever in its perfect Light, Bliss and Peace, It is also here; its Light, Bliss and Peace are secretly here supporting all; in ourselves there is a spirit, a central presence greater than the series of surface personalities which, like the supreme Divine itself, is not overborne by the fate they endure. If we find out this Divine within us, if we know ourselves as this spirit which is of one essence and being with the Divine, that is our gate of deliverance and in it we can remain ourselves, even in the midst of this world's disharmonies, luminous, blissful and free. That much is the age-old testimony of spiritual experience."

On the general position as regards ultimate reality Sri Aurobindo¹ makes the summary : "In the Upanishads, in the inspired scripture of the most ancient Vedanta, we find the affirmation of the Absolute, the experience-concept of the utter and ineffable Transcendence; but we find also, not in contradiction to it but as its corollary, an affirmation of the cosmic Divinity, an experience-concept of the cosmic Self and the becoming of Brahman in the universe. Equally we find the affirmation of the Divine Reality in the individual : this too is an experience-concept; it is seized upon not as an appearance, but as an actual becoming."²

Now we may consider at a little more length the subtlety and complexity of the old comprehensive Vedanta.

"The Unknowable knowing itself as Sachchidananda [Existence-Consciousness-Bliss] is the one supreme affirmation of Vedanta," writes Sri Aurobindo.³ "The universe and the individual are the two essential appearances into which the Unknowable descends and through which it is to be approached; for other intermediate collectivities are born only of their interaction....⁴ The universe and the individual are necessary to each other in their ascent. Always indeed they exist for each other and profit by each other. Universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time, the individual its concentration within limits of Space and Time. Universe seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realise; for in extension existence drives at a pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire. In the conscious individual..., World seeks after Self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God.

"On the other hand, it is by means of the universe that the individual is impelled to realise himself. Not only is it his foundation, his means, his field, the stuff of the divine Work; but also, since the concentration of the universal Life which he is takes place within limits and is not like the intensive unity of Brahman free from all conception of bound and term, he must necessarily universalise and impersonalise himself

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 567.

² Here "appearance", contrasted to "actual becoming", has the suggestion of "illusion". In a different context the word can suggest "phenomenon" or "manifestation". *E.g.*, the next quotation. (K.D.S.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*

in order to manifest the divine All which is his reality. Yet is he called upon to preserve, even when he most extends himself in universality of consciousness, a mysterious transcendent something of which his sense of personality gives him an obscure and egoistic representation..."¹

"All views of existence that stop short of the Transcendence and ignore it must be incomplete accounts of the truth of being. The pantheistic view of the identity of the Divine and the Universe is a truth, for all this that is is the Brahman : but it stops short of the whole truth when it misses and omits the supracosmic Reality. On the other side, every view that affirms the cosmos only and dismisses the individual as a by-product of the Cosmic Energy, errs by laying too much emphasis on one apparent factual aspect of the world-action; it is true only of the natural individual and is not even the whole truth of that : for the natural individual, the nature-being, is indeed a product of the universal Energy, but is at the same time a nature-personality of the soul, an expressive formation of the inner being and person, and this soul is not a perishable cell or a dissoluble portion of the cosmic Spirit, but has its original immortal reality in the Transcendence...Neither the cosmos nor the individual consciousness is the fundamental truth of existence; for both depend upon and exist by the transcendent Divine Being.

"This Divine Being, Sachchidananda, is at once impersonal and personal : it is Existence and the origin and foundation of all truths, forces, powers, existences, but it is also the one transcendent Conscious Being and the All-Person of whom all conscious beings are the selves and personalities; for He is their highest Self and the universal indwelling Presence. It is a necessity for the soul in the universe—and therefore the inner trend of the evolutionary Energy and its ultimate intention—to know and to grow into this truth of itself, to become one with the Divine Being, to raise its nature to the Divine Nature, its existence to the Divine Existence, its consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, its delight of being into the divine Delight of Being, and to receive all this into its becoming, to make the becoming an expression of that highest Truth, to be possessed inwardly of the Divine Self and and Master of its existence and to be at the same time wholly possessed by Him and moved by His Divine Energy and live and act in a complete self-giving and surrender. On this side the dualistic and theistic views of existence which affirm the eternal real existence of God and the Soul and the eternal real existence and cosmic action of the Divine Energy, express also a truth of the integral existence; but their formulation falls short of the whole truth if it denies the essential unity of God and Soul or their capacity for utter oneness or ignores what underlies the supreme experience of the merger of the soul in the Divine Unity through love, through union of consciousness, through fusion of existence in existence."²

"The Supreme Brahman is that which in Western metaphysics is called the

¹ *Ibid*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 589-91.

Absolute, but Brahman is at the same time the omnipresent Reality in which all that is relative exists as its forms or its movements; this is an Absolute which takes all relativities in its embrace. The Upanishads affirm that all this is the Brahman; Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman; addressing Vayu, the Lord of Air, of Life, it is said, 'O Vayu, thou art manifest Brahman'; and, pointing to man and beast and bird and insect, each separately is identified with the One,—'O Brahman, thou art this old man and boy and girl, this bird, this insect.'...¹ "[Brahman] is the Absolute independent of all relatives, the Absolute basing all relatives, the Absolute governing, pervading, constituting all relatives..."²

"There are three aspects in which we meet this Reality,—Self, Conscious Being or Spirit and God,...or to use the Indian terms, the absolute and omnipresent Reality, Brahman, manifest to us as Atman, Purusha, Ishwara...³ With regard to the universe, Brahman appears as the Self of all existence, Atman, the cosmic Self, but also as the Supreme Self transcendent of its own cosmicity and at the same time individual-universal in each being...⁴ As soon as we become aware of the Self, we are conscious of it as eternal, unborn, unembodied, uninvolved in its workings : it can be felt within the form of being, but also as enveloping it, as above it, surveying its embodiment from above...; it is omnipresent, the same in everything, infinite and pure and intangible for ever.... At the same time there is a realisation of Self in which it is felt not only sustaining and pervading and enveloping all things, but constituting everything and identified in a free identity with all its becomings in Nature...⁵ The Conscious Being, Purusha, is the Self as originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature. As the aspect of Self is in its essential character transcendental even when involved and identified with its universal and individual becomings, so the Purusha aspect is characteristically universal-individual and intimately connected with Nature even when separated from her...⁶ This comes out in its fullest revelation in the third aspect of the Reality, the Divine Being who is the master and creator of the universe. Here the supreme Person, the Being in its transcendental and cosmic consciousness and force, comes to the front, omnipotent, omniscient, the controller of all energies, the Conscious in all that is conscient or inconscient, the Inhabitant of all souls and minds and hearts and bodies, the Ruler or Overruler of all works, the Enjoyer of all delight, the Creator who has built all things in his own being, the All-Person of whom all beings are personalities, the Power from whom are all powers, the Self, the Spirit in all, by his being the Father of all that is, in his Consciousness-Force the Divine Mother, the Friend of all creatures, the All-blissful and All-beautiful of whom beauty and joy are the revelation, the All-Beloved and All-Lover. In a certain sense, so seen and understood, this becomes the most comprehensive of the aspects of the Reality, since here all are united in a single formulation; for the Ishwara is supracosmic as well as intracosmic;

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

² *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 314-15.

He is that which exceeds and inhabits and supports all individuality; He is the supreme and universal Brahman, the Absolute, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha ...revealed as possessor, enjoyer of his own self-existence, creator of the universe and one with it, Pantheos, and yet superior to it..."¹

5

THE VEDANTIC VISION, THE HISTORICAL CHRIST AND SOUL-EVOLUTION

Thus the ancient Vedantic vision is inclusive of all possible aspects of divinity and can harmonise the diverse currents of thought running through Teilhard's philosophy. Even the idea of the Incarnation, the historical Christ-figure, can be a part of it; for the Avatar stands out in the Gita, a development of the Ishwara-aspect. But, of course, the uniqueness, so dear to the Christian, of Christ's avatarhood would be set aside. Instead, we would have a divine phenomenon repeating itself at several stages of human history, a guiding companionship of God to man again and again. "India," explains Sri Aurobindo,² "has from ancient times held strongly a belief in the reality of the Avatar, the descent into form, the revelation of the Godhead in humanity. In the West this belief has never really stamped itself upon the mind because it has been presented through exoteric Christianity as a theological dogma without any roots in the reason and general consciousness and attitude towards life. But in India it has grown up and persisted as a logical outcome of the Vedantic view of life and taken firm root in the consciousness of the race. All existence is a manifestation of God because He is the only existence and nothing can be except as either a real figuring or else a figment of that one reality. Therefore every conscious being is in part or in some way a descent of the Infinite into the apparent finiteness of name and form. But it is a veiled manifestation and there is a gradation between the supreme being of the Divine and the consciousness shrouded partly or wholly by ignorance of self in the finite. The conscious embodied soul is the spark of the divine Fire and that soul in man opens out to self-knowledge as it develops out of ignorance of self into self-being. The Divine also, pouring itself into the forms of the cosmic existence, is revealed ordinarily in an efflorescence of its powers, in energies and magnitudes of its knowledge, love, joy, developed force of being, in degrees and faces of its divinity. But when the divine Consciousness and Power, taking upon itself the human form and the human mode of action, possesses it not only by powers and magnitudes, by degrees and outward faces of itself but out of its eternal self-knowledge, when the Unborn knows itself and acts in the frame of the mental being and the appearance of birth, that is the height of the conditioned manifestation; it is the full and conscious descent of the Godhead, it is the Avatar." And in the central scripture of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

² *Essays on the Gita* (New York, 1950), pp. 12-13.

Avatarhood, the Gita, the divine Incarnation Krishna declares : "Many are my lives that are past....For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right I am born from age to age..."¹

The essential purpose for which the Avatar comes is summarised by Sri Aurobindo.² "The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may by moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood transfigure itself into the divine."

Nor is Avatarhood in Indian thought confined to human history. The human soul itself is not so confined. Rebirth, which is a cardinal tenet of Indian thought, carries it not only through a long series of human embodiments towards a divine outflowering in the terms of manhood : it also implies a non-human past preparing for the status of humanity. "A Upanishad declares that the Self or Spirit after deciding on life creation first formed animal kinds like the cow and horse, but the gods,—who are in the thought of the Upanishads powers of Consciousness and powers of Nature,—found them to be insufficient vehicles, and the Spirit finally created the form of man which the gods saw to be excellently made and sufficient and they entered into it for their cosmic functions. This is a clear parable for the creation of more and more developed forms until one was found that was capable of housing a developed consciousness.... The Tantra speaks of a soul fallen from its status passing through many lacs of births in plant and animal forms before it can reach the human level and be ready for salvation. Here, again, there is implied the conception of vegetable and animal life as the lower steps of a ladder, humanity as the last or culminating development of the conscious being, the form which the soul has to inhabit in order to be capable of the spiritual motive and a spiritual issue out of mentality, life and physicality."³

A soul-evolution and a qualitative time-gradation in the appearance of species, though not explicitly a change of one species into another, are part of ancient as well as mediaeval thought in India. Both are necessary for the Teilhardian philosophy of world-evolution. Particularly is the former needed, if there is a distinct individual soul active in the evolutionary scheme and if the future of this soul is of extreme evolutionary importance. A soul which exists before the body inhabited by it now and which has inhabited other bodies earlier and which not only survives the death of the present body but also inhabits new bodies in the future—such a soul Teilhard should logically envisage instead of the one he does, with no before and after in earth-evolution. And the Vedanta's soul-evolutionary conception through various species increasing in complexity with time emerges most markedly in relation to the Avatar, thus joining up the Indian theory of the "Incarnate Word", as

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³ *The Life Divine*, pp. 745-46.

Teilhard would phrase it, directly with his philosophy of Christogenesis along with cosmogenesis. Apropos of the Avatar-tradition preserved in the Puranas Sri Aurobindo¹ writes in a letter :

“The Hindu procession of the ten Avatars is..., as it were, a parable of evolution. First the Fish Avatar, then the amphibian animal [Tortoise] between land and water, then the land animal [Boar], then the Man-Lion Avatar, then man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence, then the...Avatars leading the human development from the vital [Rama of the Axe]...to the mental man [Rama, son of Dasaratha] and again the overmental man [Krishna]. Krishna, Buddha and Kalki depict the last three stages, the stages of the spiritual development—Krishna opens the possibility of overmind, Buddha tries to shoot beyond to the supreme liberation but that liberation is still negative, not returning upon earth to complete positively the evolution; Kalki is to correct this by bringing the Kingdom of the Divine upon earth, destroying the opposing...forces. The progression is striking and unmistakable.”

All this that is so eminently in tune with Teilhard's philosophy has no standing in current Christianity. The Christianity which can grow out of Teilhardism will thus have to be considerably different from the religion to which he tried to conform his intuitions. Understood in the true sense, the Cosmic Christ who is central to his thought must lead to an Indianised Christianity giving prominence to Pantheos but holding the transcendent Divine as its prime concept—affirming in the midst of Pantheos the individual soul as an eternal evolving portion of the ultimate Reality through a series of births—positing a meaningful succession of Avatars until the spiritual consciousness is established in man—and, from among the Avatars, turning to the historical Christ as the chosen object of worship, *iṣṭa devatā*, as Hinduism would put it.

Formulated wholly from within outward in a spontaneous fashion instead of partially from without inward with the Church now and again in view, the real religion of Teilhard de Chardin would be this Indianised Christianity as modified and modernised by his brilliant many-faceted reading of biological fact.

Such a Christianity would perhaps be opened by that reading to see, in the unknown face of the future, greater possibilities than all past ones of embodied epiphany—possibilities akin to what Sri Aurobindo himself has envisioned as the divine destiny of even man's physical being by the very logic of Evolution.²

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *On Yoga*, II, Tome One, p. 405.

² *The Life Divine*, pp. 3-7.

SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC

SRI AUROBINDO is known to most of us as a master-yogi; very few of us may have any idea that he was also—among several other things—a master-poet in the tradition of the Vedic Rishis. Stray lyrics and longer works written by him in his early years attest to his poetic susceptibility from the very start : they also bear testimony to his mastery over English diction and prosody. But his “Last Testament”—the crowning consummation of several decades of yogic concentration—*Savitri*—easily puts him in the rank of *Mantra-draṣṭā* or Seer-Poet.

Let us try to arrive at an elementary appraisal of that *magnum opus* and its creative genius : I say “elementary”, for no one can ever bring out or formulate in mental terms the infinite wealth and variety of suggestions and scintillations emanating from that Grand Prism of Light. It is by virtue of its pressurised crystal-clarity that a Prism refracts and unseals for us the splendours and glories hidden in the white light : shall we press the analogy and say that it is by virtue of high-pressurised crystal-clarity of consciousness that Sri Aurobindo has achieved the marvel of making palpable the Light of Lights through a multi-scale spectrum of it ? And equally too — shall we add ? — it is in the measure of our own apprehensive susceptibility and consecrated approach that the prismatic splendours and glories could be integrated back to the Pristine Light, and the symbolism stand revealed and fulfilled.

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The Epic opens with a superb word-picture of “the Symbol Dawn” —fraught with mystery and marvel—and the first keynote of the Grand Opera to follow is struck. A giant Night of the Inconscient is lying supine across the pathway of the Gods in stone-still trance; she stirs a little at the advent of a dim glow in the far East —as if “A memory quivered in the heart of time”; a ray of hope enters her heart : “All can be done if the God-touch is there”; and soon Lord Sun appears on the scene awakening all life with his enlivening touch; all beings get up, and Savitri too; but immediately

All came back to her; Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient Disputants, encircled her.

Every morn for a whole year past, she has observed Earth and earthly life thrilling and throbbing with delight; every morn she has drunk deep of the *darśan* of the Lord, bestowing warmth and vitality on life; every morn she has also witnessed this en-

dearing play between Heaven and Earth being overridden by relentless wheels of *kāla* and *karma*; today, especially, the sad inequity of mortal life on earth has been driven home more acutely into her heart, and the ancient sorrow revives with double sting—for, “This was the day when Satyavan must die”. She realised in a lightning flash that the cosmic riddle was interlocked with her own, and she took up the gauntlet of solving that riddle—once and for all ! She arose, full-strung-up in will for the contest of the Day : Her soul arose—confronting time and Fate.

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Having thus flashed a pencil of rays high-lighting the most crucial part of the story, Sri Aurobindo now draws down the curtain over it with the proven technique of a psychological clinicist, and beguiles us for a pretty good while into strange worlds of occult Time and Space with the deft handling of a stage-director. He indulges himself liberally in presenting, with filigree detail, the involutory stadia antecedent to the Birth and Growth of the Flame, *i.e.*, the appearance of Savitri in the House of Aswapathy the King of Yogis. It is only when Aswapathy is made to stand before Mother Maheshwari at the end of his spiritual quest and adventure, imploring :

“O Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the Universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal’s Artist-Bride !
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time !”—

and when Mother Maheshwari responds :

“A seed shall be sown in death’s tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil,
Nature shall overleap her mortal step,
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging Will”—

that we get a first clue to the grand strategy employed by this master plot-weaver and we get a first glimpse of the mystery and majesty, too, behind the façade of the personality of Savitri. It is smooth sailing now for the reader to follow the rest of the narration; and we breathe once again the warm sweet air of Earth and await engaging developments on her stage.

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If the flaming will of Maheshwari Herself was thus incarnated in Savitri, who was Satyavan, her choice ? Let us hear it in the words of Sri Aurobindo himself :

Delightful is the soul of Satyavan,
 A Ray out of the rapturous Infinite;
 In him Soul and Nature, equal Presences,
 Balance and fuse in a wide harmony—

as if the light-circuit that was established in the vertical dimension, through the form and figure of Savitri, was matched and balanced by a delight-circuit in the horizontal dimension evidenced in the form and figure of Satyavan. What blessed outcome ensued at the contact and fusion of the two circuits, let us hear again in the words put in the mouth of Satyavan by Sri Aurobindo :

“I groped for the mystery by the lantern thought;
 I lived in the Ray, but faced not to the Sun;
 I looked upon the world and missed the self,
 And when I found the self, I missed the world;
 But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet,
 And the gold sun has shone on me from thy face.”

And equally, what does Savitri avow apropos of her one irrevocable choice of Satyavan ?—

“For now I know why I have come on this earth,
 And who he is I love and who I am.”

And later on she says :

“For I the woman am the Force of God,
 He the Eternal's delegate soul in man.”

So what other consummation devoutly to be wished than this ?—

The wedding of the Eternal Lord and Spouse
 Took place again on earth in human form

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Of the Three Disputants that encircled Savitri, Earth was fulfilled, Love was fulfilled; what about the Third Disputant—Doom or the Death of Satyavan, that sage Narad had pre-visionsed and pre-determined in his Word of Fate ?

That fateful day, too, turned up—all too soon ! Ostensibly, it was a day of signal victory for Yamaraja (King Death) who hit hard with a single master-stroke both the corporeal and spiritual excellences : the body of Satyavan that was the sweet sum-

mary, as it were, of all terrestrial beauty, and the soul of Savitri that was the distilled essence of all celestial beatitude. Dharmaraj (King Law) that he was, he carried out his law of time most punctiliously, religiously, unmitigatedly.

But let us see how the supreme plot-weaver turns even Death the King to good account—the plot-weaver who holds the strings of all beings and becomings in His hands, and works out a pattern of Unity and Harmony from them for all His several ends. When Yama netted away the subtle body of Satyavan and left, Savitri followed him—even to the region of Hades. That was against the Law, and the upholder of Law tried to avert Savitri by netting her life-self (*prāṇamaya*) with tempting offers and her mind-self (*manomaya*) with plausible sophistries. But she stood like a columned shaft of fire, and her very first words flashed forth a flame that burnt away all the fine meshes of Death's craftsmanship :

“A victor spirit conscious of my Force,
Not as a suppliant to thy gates I come !...
O Death, who reasonest, I reason not :...
I am, I love, I see, I act, I will.”

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Yama was not the one to give up the game for good like that; with endless strategies and from shifting vantage-grounds, he lashed out on her all the gathered momentum of self-discipline and self-righteousness acquired by him down all the ages and aeons of undisputed sway over terrestrial life. That only made, however, the fire of Savitri's soul-force and will-power flare up the stronger, and her words shot out darts of steel :

“O Death who speakest truth, but truth that slays,
I answer to Thee with the truth that saves !...
O Death, if thou couldst see the face of Truth,
Thou wouldst grow suddenly wise and cease to be.”

Half in disdainful doubt, half in earnest, at last Yama nodded his head and supplicated :

“Show me Truth's face that I may worship her !”

And Savitri answered not : she only gathered her dispersed threads of consciousness into her plenary soul-centre and, firm-poised in her Maheshwari-aspect, she extended Grace even to that perverse embodiment of Law; and Law getting fulfilled in Love, Yama the king vanished from the scene !

From Worlds of Eternal Night, Satyavan and Savitri now entered Worlds of

Everlasting Day : they had earned freedom of option to stay there for ages, but what does Savitri say ?—

“If thou and I are true, the world is true :
I sacrifice not Earth to happier worlds !”

And they both returned to earth-consciousness with harvests of Golden Redeeming Light.

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In one of his earlier poems—*Urvasie*—Sri Aurobindo shows how the askesis of the hero regains for him the lost heroine. In another yet—*Love and Death*—he shows how the unflinching sacrifice of the hero revives for him the demised heroine. In both poems he demonstrates Love fulfilled,—in Heaven in the former, on Earth in the latter. But the vast cosmic background was missing in both; and naturally, Sri Aurobindo could not come to grips with the heart of the Problem of Terrestrial Existence at that tender age. But he had already sensed the shadow of that problem, for the very last lines of *Urvasie* strike a dolorous note :

But far below, through silent mighty space,
The green and strenuous Earth abandoned rolled.

And even in his teens he wrote in his *Night by the Sea* :

Dawn relumes the immortal skies.
Ah! what boon for earth-closed eyes ?

The problem repeatedly sensed and posed has now been solved. Poetic Justice has been meted out to the Poetic Beginnings; a mighty Ashwatha of *Savitri* has now sprouted out of that tiny seed of Vishayu : the branches of that Ashwatha are hourly negotiating now between Heaven and Earth : each dawn is now divinely fulfilling the promise and pattern of the first “Symbol Dawn”. Even “earth-closed eyes” are now witnessing—and earth-inclined eyes, too, can witness—the daily miracle of

A million lotuses swaying on one stem,
World after coloured and ecstatic World
Climbing to some far unseen Epiphany !

CHIMANBHAI D. PATEL

CULTURE OF THE BODY

THERE are, as we know, three elements in the culture of the body : first, the body must remain healthy, secondly, it has to become strong, and finally, it must be efficient.

First, the question of health. The body must remain free from disease, which means that all its organs must function without let or hindrance, as in the heart's function of the circulation of blood, the lungs in their work of respiration, the digestive system in its work of assimilation and elimination. Besides, if there is any defect or shortcoming in any part of the body, it too has to be remedied; if there is an irregularity or dysfunction in the shape or movement of a particular limb, it has to be rectified, the disparity removed and the functioning made normal. For this purpose, there are special remedial exercises to serve the particular ends. No medical prescriptions can have the last say in this matter, the aid of the physical culturist is also called for. But even medical men are now prescribing yogic exercises like *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* for health purposes. Once the body is in good health, it needs to be made strong and given fitness and capacity. To this end we have recourse to special exercises known as gymnastics. The third stage of physical culture consists in making the body able and efficient; this may be described as the utilisation of the body's strength and capacity. This is where calisthenics or agility exercises come in, with their dexterity and beauty of bodily movements. The major games like football, hockey and cricket may also be brought within this category.

All this is known to us all. But what I have in view is something different, something a little deeper. It concerns another phase or aspect of physical culture. What I mean is that the body must not only be healthy, strong and efficient, it must also become conscious. Ordinarily, our bodily functionings and movements take place mostly without our knowledge, as in an unconscious instrument or machine. The aim of physical exercises should be to render the body a conscious instrument, through a willed and conscious process. Such conscious movements of the body not only make the objects of the movements fruitful in themselves, but also ensure the results in a fuller, more perfect and speedy manner.

The Mother has said that the movement of going up and down the stairs in the course of our daily work could be made to serve as a fine exercise if, instead of doing it in an unconscious mechanical way, we could do it consciously and with full concentration. One must feel and know that the movement is being performed, the legs too should be aware of the work they are doing. Performed in this manner, it is a fine exercise for the legs.

Now there are two ways of becoming conscious. To be conscious implies becoming conscious of one's self. This self can be the "I", that is, there is not only the "I" who does the work, but there is also the sense that *I* am doing the work while it is being done; whatever the nature of the work I remain aware all the time that it is I

who am doing the work. But the “self” that becomes conscious may also be the individual consciousness of the particular organ or limb that does the work; it too becomes conscious in the course of the work that is being done. When, for instance, I run, not only do I remain aware that I am running, but all parts of the body that are involved in this running become themselves conscious of their action. That adds manifold to the success of the result. Thus to make the body conscious by infusing in its organs and limbs the movement of consciousness and vibrations of light, what the scientist would describe as “energising” the body—this is the real aim, the true utility of physical culture and exercises.

But one need not stop with this; it is necessary to rise another step. The body must not only become conscious, it must become rightly conscious. My consciousness, the one that stands behind all my action, is not mine, at least not exclusively mine; it is a deeper, wider, higher, consciousness. What works and manifests itself through my personal consciousness is another kind of consciousness. Thus we find ourselves within the realm of spiritual discipline, *yoga-sādhana*, by following the line of physical culture.

For, we must realise that the body can become healthy, strong and efficient with any kind of true permanence and integrality only when its self-consciousness can be changed into the right consciousness. By right consciousness I mean a true and harmonious consciousness. It can come, in the first place, from the depths of our inner and inmost being; that is the consciousness of the inner self, the indwelling inner Being. It may be called the inner consciousness. And secondly, the right consciousness can come, not from within or at least not primarily from there but from the environment, from a wider expanse, a universal wideness extending beyond the limits of the individual ego. This we shall call the environmental consciousness. The right consciousness may on the other hand come from above, in the form of a higher consciousness. The “above” too has many levels or planes. The highest of these is called the Supreme Consciousness. There may be added an intermediary level of the higher consciousness which we term in general the Supramental, a consciousness which begins the first step rising beyond the mind.

These then are the main gradations or steps in the ascent of consciousness : 1) unconsciousness, 2) consciousness, 3) active consciousness, 4) inner consciousness, 5) environmental consciousness, 6) Supramental consciousness, 7) Supreme or Transcendental consciousness. These correspond to the seven layers of our being, *sapta-kōṣa*, the seven worlds or the seven oceans; these are the seven tongues of the Fire-God, Agni, the seven horses of the Sun-God, Surya. Any of these planes of consciousness can take charge of the being and its principal knot, the ego; the result will depend on the fruit of this union.

A common function of all right consciousness is to drench the being in light by transmitting its light, bring in a purity as a result of which even the body down to its gross material elements becomes thoroughly washed and purified. For acquiring health which is the body’s first essential need, there is no better means or a more

effective medicine.

In this way, the farther we ascend towards the heights and gain a higher status in our consciousness, the brighter becomes the light in its purity and whiteness. Likewise, the deeper we take the plunge within, there too the consciousness gets more and more deep and intimate and true, full of an intensity and force. These two movements, one towards the heights and the other into the depths, in time become simultaneous, become one in the end. The consciousness thus perfected brings in its turn a perfection of the body as well.

There is another point to be noted. This state of being "conscious" is not a mere outer remembrance, is not an activity of the discriminating mind, nor the kind of memory we use in repeating a lesson; it is the very basis of mind, a deep self-awareness and knowledge. To try to keep this awareness with the help of the logical mind cannot help, it can only hinder the action.

We usually speak of getting "engrossed" or "immersed" in what we do; we forget ourselves in our work, and it is such work as is done with this kind of concentration that alone can be flawless and perfect. But concentration does not imply a state of unconsciousness. A clock continues to give correct time unconsciously, plants and even the lower orders of the animal world work without knowledge, unconsciously, and in most perfect order. In man however the infusion of consciousness has brought about a distinction between the "I" and the work which the "I" performs; I want to do my work consciously, hence I look upon my work and consider it as something apart from me. But it is precisely this that makes for imperfection in work, hedges it with doubt. When this consciousness in work is changed to right consciousness, then I can get back the unity or identity between the worker and the work; in the true consciousness there thus comes a conscious identity between subject and object. To repeat what I have already said : When I run, my running, the goal of my running, and myself—these three become unified in a conscious integral whole; I am aware not only that I am running, but also that I myself am that running and myself the goal; these three elements become one in a mutual embrace. There is an experience and realisation of *brahman* which describes the trio of *brahman*, *brahmāṇḍa* and *jīva*, the Supreme Reality and Its works, the manifested universe and the individual being, as forming a single unity, one undivided Consciousness strung together in a triple thread. To be one-pointed like an arrow, *śara-vat tanmayo bhavet*, does not mean that the arrow ceases to be and only the target exists—not that, but the arrow and its target become one, gathered together and unified as in an indivisible consciousness.

I had to bring in all this in order to explain that to become conscious does not mean that one becomes mentally conscious, only with the external mind. This may serve a temporary need, namely, that of removing unconsciousness, it is not the true consciousness. To be truly conscious, one has to be conscious with the inner mind, and that implies a union or unification that preserves the sense of separate entity, a new kind of differentiated monism.

Anyhow, for ordinary mortals like us, however far-off this realisation might ap-

pear, at least a first step or two are within everybody's reach. Even a slight advance on this path gives one astounding results.

So we see how the culture of the body can lead up to the spiritualisation of the body.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

DISCOVERY

Now have we mighty wings, swift and terrible,
Thrusting frail bodies and intrepid minds
Harshly through space. Not yet benign.
For who controls, communicates ?
Earth-bound no longer, yet not free,
Self-ignorant whispering to Self-unknown?
Sometimes—do not our hearts stand still,
Listening, breathless, to a golden Sound
Of wings, other, more subtle,
Hovering beyond these hazardous instruments,
Wings of measureless possibility
Sustaining us in a pure scintillant Space
Where each, Self-knowing, calls to each,
Inseparable in joy ?

MARGARET FORBES

A LETTER OF THE LAST SPRING

A SHORT STORY

(This is the second short story in English we are publishing of the well-known writer in Oriya, Manoj Das. Again there is a delightful combination of the sensitive and the penetrating—now the presentation of a child's mind working in an amusing manner but expressive ultimately of a sweet and deep gesture of sacrifice on her part.)

To the farthest west of the metropolis, the new colony breathed calm and shone elegance, with smart modern mansions of sky-tint or biscuit-colour—a few of them as polished and enticing as grapes.

And the double-storeyed dwelling, that stood at the quietmost end of the colony, looked like a tranquil nest amid a small dense orchard and creepers of affluent growth.

And like an infant bird peeping from the nest, a little girl within a riot of flowers and leaves looked, as though enchanted, at the end of the long rolling road, from the balcony of the upper floor.

Cars and carriages, so many and of many a fashion, whisked through that road every hour. But with all their burnished glow and speed, they could not stir the child's vision for a moment. Drumming and fluting and fluttering leaflets from a cart stuck with colourful film posters used to cover that road every day. By the office hours, a young gent and a lady, both cyclists, made such an interesting sight that the watchman of the house who otherwise seemed to be smoothly tossing over the tides of time by sitting on a stool and patting his stout moustache, coughed a little and often a young pedlar got the hint and whistled merrily. Also appeared in that road, carrying a supernatural atmosphere around him, a tall, bearded man, darting anxiously to relieve humanity of its agonies by means of his love-charms and talismans.

But all this, and still more, failed to distract the child from her strange gazing.

I had developed, in my prolonged reclusiveness, the pleasant habit of observing the little girl for hours together, from my solitary apartment in the double-storeyed hotel opposite her house. I had lately come to the city as a Professor in a private evening college after I had retired as a Professor under the Government. Much had I travelled in the realms of gold, from Langland to Eliot. There was no more zeal to study, and so, except for correcting the papers of the students, I had seldom any work to do.

During the idle hours of the day—those long idle hours—I had found a cosy rest for my eyes in that lonely little face across the street. Sometimes someone came out to the balcony and induced the girl to go in. But it seemed as if the girl was under some spell to remain standing there for at least a couple of hours in the morning and

the same length of time in the afternoon. Sometimes I felt the urge to observe her a bit closely and so came out to my small veranda. In spite of the distance and my age-dimmed sight, I saw, or rather felt, that the girl had a pair of big and beautiful but melancholy eyes. Yet the spark that came out at times from beneath the layers of wistfulness did sprinkle sunlight all around her—at times, when a tiny robin hopped towards her through the plants, or when the tame little monkey of the neighbour escaped from his chain and preferred her company from a respectable distance, while a pussy cat went on bloating her tail with fury at the intruder.

But the spark used to be short-lived. Though I longed to see such genial moments of exception in her usual mood, curiously indeed she used to re-enter her gloom the moment her eyes fell on me. While a student and even later, I had several times participated in dramatic performances, and always as a comedian. Fortunately or unfortunately, my very physical appearance upon the stage stimulated the faculty of jocoseness in the audience. So, to be frank, it was a shock to see the little girl losing at my sight the meagre pleasure which she got in the company of a robin or a monkey ! Perhaps, age had reduced my face to an awe-inspiring mask. Thus I thought and felt sad.

The man dressed in khaki who appeared every day at the distant turning by about 11 a.m., him only she awaited. When the man—the Postman, distributing messages at several doors—at last came to pass in front of her house, she, her voice choking with anxiety, leaned utmost over the railing and enthusiastically asked : “Is there a letter for me ? My name is Rina.” The Postman smiled and waved his hand denoting “No”. The manner, in which Rina remained vacantly looking still for a minute and then with a sigh slowly moved away, made me sad too, though I did not know from whom she expected the letter, and why she did not receive any. As she disappeared, I too walked back into my room.

This sequence of an anxious expectation abruptly ending in a vacant look and a sickly sigh was repeated again in the later half of the day. By about 3 p.m., Rina stood leaning over the railing to retreat after her two hours, when the Postman waved his hand and cycled away, and when I too turned back and prepared to go to my evening duty. Well, in the meanwhile, I had got into the habit of standing in the veranda and looking at the remoteness when not at Rina. Of course, I did not expect any letter here as my post was delivered at the college. The habit grew out of my thirst, which seemed unquenchable, to gaze at little Rina. She too gradually felt more and more inclined to bestow her graceful look upon me. At times even I felt as though she wanted to inquire something of me whereas modesty forbade her to be so very loud. However, I was feeling that in spite of all our silence we were getting intimate with each other. That was an entranced delight of an inaudible exchange.

Days passed. It was a summer noon and I was preparing for my usual nap, when I heard a delicate tapping on my door. I opened the door and was rather astonished to see standing before me in all humility the giant-looking watchman of Rina’s mansion. There was that sort of smile on his face, which instantly made me aware of a character

all of which was not represented by the violent moustache. I cordially led him into my room. He then handed over an open envelope to me upon which the address ran : "Rina, C/o.—etc., etc." Looking askance at the watchman I obtained nothing except a fresh wave of reverential smile. Hence I brought the letter out of the envelope—a small blue piece of paper. It was written from a distant sanatorium, and obviously by Rina's mother. I read :

My dear little Rina,

Only if you could read this letter by yourself, my having learnt to write will bring so great a joy to me ! I learn that you are feeling very sorry for my absence from you. But the learned doctors say that I won't have to stay here for long. Yet for the few days of my stay here, you must not, my sweet cherub, feel sorry.

You love flowers. Here, just beyond my window, there is a decent little garden. Today, the garden looks more beautiful. Perhaps Spring has come. This time you have to pluck flowers alone from small plants with your tiny hands. By the next Spring, you will remain in my arms and pluck flowers from taller trees as you did last year when your hands were tinier still.

I am always thinking of you and dreaming of you. I always look at the few pictures of yours which I have brought with me. But I am sorry to know from your father's letter that because I am not there to dress you up, you refuse to pose for new pictures. Please, my little one, see that I get some recent pictures of yours as soon as possible. In exchange for your allowing yourself to be photographed, I will write one letter every week to you. I wish I could write more. But you see, I have no strength in spite of all that your uncle and the doctors are doing...

From the date of the letter I understood that it had been written three months ago. I was witness to the fact that not even one of the eleven letters that should have reached Rina in the meanwhile did reach her.

I looked at the watchman's face. He was trying to avoid his face being seen, which however was too gigantic to allow his effort any success.

I had no difficulty in understanding that Rina would never get a letter from her mother. The learned doctors were right. The mother had not had to stay in the sanatorium for long.

Rina's father was rich. But all the diversions his riches could create could not make his child forget to wait for the Postman.

I understood everything. But I did not understand why the letter was brought to me and who had sent it. The watchman, controlling his emotion, explained the matter : Rina observes me waiting in my veranda, as she does in hers, every day. She realised that I too never receive any letter from my mother. She feels deeply for me.

But what could she do ? At last, she knew the best she could do. She decided to offer the only letter that she had ever received from her mother.

I listened to everything with rapt attention.

I had lost my mother half a century ago. All that remained suppressed beneath the weight of age and experiences—the sorrow of having lost her, and the strange sensations of having got her back in dreams and hallucinations—all the emotions together, now passed like lightning through my veins. Unconsciously I cried out, “Rina ! My little mother !”

MANOJ DAS

REALITY

God's eternal dream is our world.
And our world's eternal dream is God.
Between these dreams is all Reality.
Other Realities are mere dreams.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

TRANSLATIONS FROM IQBAL

Introduction

Iqbal, the Tagore of modern Urdu Poetry, has left behind three major works — *Bang-e-Dera*, *Zarb -e-Kaleem-*, *Bang-e-fibreel*—from which I have picked out some couplets that form short connected themes or stand out singly, each complete in itself (for in Urdu Ghazal mostly each line is independent of others) conveying a characteristic mood of the poet. Iqbal has a definite philosophy of life and gives it the authentic voice of sublime, moving poetry. “Hai filsafa mere aab wo gil men, meri kafé khak Barhaman Zad” (“Philosophy is in my elements, for I come of the Brahman stock”), he asserts in one of his poems, and the couplets here presented reflect his vision of the self, the evolving soul, Life-force, other worlds and planes of consciousness, and true love which lifts to God, the Friend with whom the Poet exults in taking liberties that sound blasphemous to orthodox ears. But the inspiration that informs this boldness of utterance ‘cometh from afar’ and energises the palling sob-stuff of traditional love-lyrics, striking an altogether new note of masculine poetry in Urdu. Here is a crusader’s message of dynamic spiritual living, self-mastery and world-mastery. Here is a genuine turning to intuition, vision, experience and truth-awareness (as embodied in the life of God-intoxicated seers), from the lower plane of Reason and Intellect, the leading light of the West and of all the ultra-modernist crazes like Freudian motivation in life, literature and art. But here is also the unspared lashing of pseudo-mysticism, pseudo-religion, false renunciation and escapism, superficial democracy and all manner of cant and affectation. And here, finally, is the poet’s earlier inspiring call to national unity and solidarity and a note of prophetic warning against external peril such as looms much larger over India today. The later drift exclusively towards the religious fold does not figure in these translations.

Iambic pentameter is the general verse form I have adopted, with the Alexandrine and the Septameter for some of the couplets. Rhymes have been used throughout except in one piece which is put in blank verse.

TRANSLATIONS

I. From *Bang-e-Dera*

1. Thy God in stone-built idols thou dost see,
Each grain of my country’s soil is a god to me !
2. The devotee’s songs are attuned to peace and power,
True world-felicity only love can shower.

3. Let each dawn sing on high these hymns that move
All worshippers' hearts with the throbbing wine of love.
4. To raise the severing veils, once more combine,
And of harmony build in our land a vast new shrine.
5. See what is happening here and what's to come—
What boots it ever to beat the ancients' drum ?
6. From tongue-tied proneness turn to lean on prayer :
Lift thy soul-cry to the heavens—mercy is there.
7. Self-quest I have made my poet-seeker's role
As though I am both the traveller and the goal !
8. This garden of becoming view not stranger-wise :
It's a wondrous thing worth seeing, ravish thine eyes !
9. Death is a fresh throb on Life-pulse a gleam,
A message of waking through a veil of dream !
10. This speck that yearns for vastitude evermore
Perhaps is the desert itself indrawn to its core !
11. For thee, empyrean bird, it is worse than death
Food-bound to impair thy pinions' native breath !
12. For the very summit of Thy love I aspire—
Behold the innocence of my desire !
13. For fear of a tempest trembles thus thy heart—
When sailor, boat and sea and shore thou art ?
14. Ah, ignorant suppliant, thou at the giver's bar—
Being the Saqi,¹ gathering, wine and jar ?
15. From full-renouncing comes Felicity—
World-shunner, lean not even on the world-to-be !
16. Man, merge into the Self—there lies life's mystery :
Transcend the morn-eve whirl and all's eternity.

¹ Tavern-keeper, symbolically the Divine Dispenser of mystic ecstasy.

17. Saqi, in truth, he does no justice to thy wine
Who draws between world-touch and ecstasy a line.
18. There is neither a coming nor going, nor the dangled hereafter's sphere—
All objects my presence reveal, my own native place is nowhere.
19. The eyes ever-thirsty for a glimpse, the heart all ache to find...
What drives this quenchless quest of mine if nought be hidden behind ?
20. I wear a veil of darkness here, which truly is sheer Light,
And of all things in this tavern vast, I carry the essence bright.
21. A magic web wrought by Desire death showed my life to be :
Mere dust from the lanes of yearning formed this body's fixity !
22. Whenever I prostrate myself, from the ground a voice I hear :
All other idols swaying thy heart what wilt thou gain by prayer ?
23. O bided Reality, some day our human frame adorn,
A thousand keen prostrations in my forehead pine forlorn !

II. From *Zarb-e-Kaleem*

1. To be lost in ecstasy is the Sufi's mode,
Mere wordy zeal expounds the Mulla's code.
2. The poet is steeped in a drowse of musings pale,
Asleep nor awake—and his voice rings verveless, stale.
3. Rare the crusader—for action all athrill—
Whose very nerve and cell possess a will.
4. O for a Mehdi's¹ gaze full earthquake-fierce
To purge this world of plaguing groans and tears !
5. All lost in cosmos while the infidel goes,
All cosmos lost in him the believer shows.
6. Minerals and plants dictates of destiny sway :
God's will alone the men of faith obey.
7. Deeming the dark soil-bed a comfort vain,
One passion to grow each minute consumes the grain.

¹ The next and last prophet of Islam.

8. A spark's brief magic all moonlight and starlight lend :
The spell of the wine of Self glows till Time's end !
9. Though on thy body Death's angel lays his hands,
From the centre of thy being far he stands.
10. This wise man¹ keeping on Life his steady gaze
Sees presence, being, light, and joy ablaze.
11. This sage² confronts Death looming large in his sight—
Where Life is a mere spark-flash in a gloomy night.
12. Not life or death does true significance own—
The eye of Self pursues the Self alone !
13. When in thy³ vision man has place nowhere,
Of thy own place by God, pious one, despair !
14. From thy Namaz⁴ have glory and grace withdrawn,
My poet's magic call dulls thy azaan.⁵
15. All things sublime from the eyes of men they keep :
The flesh is roused, the soul induced to sleep !
16. Said knowledge to me, 'Love is frenzy, wantonness,'
And Love said, 'Knowledge is doubt and estimate and guess,
'No bookworm be, mere proper visionless—
 'Knowledge is all a veil, the unveiled Presence Love.
17. 'The code of Love forbids the goal's joy-lure,
'Bids brave the storm, renounce the cosy shore,
'Abjure all gain, the lightning's stab endure—
 'Knowledge is the child of Books, the Mother of Books is Love.'

(To be continued)

NARESH

¹ Spinoza.

² Plato.

³ Reference to the Mulla of Kaabaa.

⁴ Muslim mode of prayer.

⁵ The Mulla's call from the mosque for congregational prayers.



A FAITH BEYOND DOGMA

I

In his recent publication, *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, Dr. Ira Progoff, a Manhattan psychologist, has given psychology a turn that presents, in our opinion, a great challenge to religion. In his comprehensive study he states that although it began as a part of the protest against religion, the net result of modern psychology has been to reaffirm man's experience of himself as a spiritual being.¹ In spite of its intention, the discipline of psychology recalls modern man to an awareness of his inner life, and thus re-establishes the ancient religious knowledge that man's fundamental accomplishments began within himself. Dr. Progoff states that we are now in the midst of a transformation affecting the fundamental nature and spirit of psychological work. Depth psychology in particular, by which he means all the varied theories interpreting the "unconscious depth" of man, has arrived at "conclusions that reverse the major assumptions with which psychology began as a field of modern study". Its culminating insights, he states, suggest not only a new conception of human personality, but also a new approach to art and religion as well as a change in the way we view ourselves in history.

Freud's work, he continues, dealt with the old moral problems that had been previously experienced in spiritual terms. Freud, however, translated them into a language of psychological concepts.² Appealing to an age that was about to make science its religion, this psychological language seemed quite "reasonable" and carried a special aura of "truth". It sounded convincing to those who were looking for a new framework of belief to replace the old spiritual concepts and soon became accepted as the realistic "truth" of human nature—it was phrased in modern scientific terms. Freud's rationalistic explanations of human existence satisfied the desire for an intellectual answer to life's problems, but they could not *solve* man's problems, since man's life in the world inconveniently refuses to follow rational patterns. Otto Rank was convinced that all psychological theories that attempt to answer the problems of modern man in a rationalistic or analytical way must defeat themselves in the long run.³

Dr. Progoff states that the destined contribution of depth psychology is a "faith beyond dogma" in which men will be connected with the spiritual core of being, the metaphysical foundation of life itself, and the very foundation of this new kind of psychology is its conception of man as an organism of psychological depth and

¹ Progoff, Ira. *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, New York, Julian Press, 1956, pp. 3-4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

spiritual magnitude.¹ We are told that the underlying aim of the new psychology is to carry out its work on the unconscious levels of the personality in such a way as to “open the dormant potentialities of the spirit and permit them to emerge and unfold”. Such a working involves a penetration deep into the core of one’s being where one comes “in touch with the creative forces of life” and is led to the spiritual authenticity of the inner life in terms of experiences that he can verify by himself, within himself. The new psychology will lead ‘modern man in search of a soul’ to a soul beyond psychology.

We cannot help wondering what this implies for religion; it seems that the implications are extensive. Thus, it will be the problem of this paper to explore and determine the meaning of a “faith beyond dogma”. We shall discuss religion, faith and dogma and the role of faith in the life of man. It is our assumption that religion along with psychology will fully realize itself only when it arrives at or leads man to a faith beyond dogma. In pursuing our problem we shall rely on the works of Sri Aurobindo, who has been called by many men from both East and West the greatest spiritual genius of our age.² Also we shall consult Ira Progoff and others. All—because of the comprehensiveness of their views, for we feel that it is only in such a manner that the problem can be broached. Certainly a narrow and sectarian view cannot approach the problem of faith objectively; our approach must be broad and inclusive.

2

In stating our problem, let us review the characteristics of religion. Sri Aurobindo states that religion is man’s first attempt to get beyond himself and beyond the obvious and material facts of his existence.³ The first essential work of religion, he tells us, is to confirm and make real to man his subjective sense of an Infinite on which his material and mental being and the aspiration of his soul depends. Also it assures him of that possibility of transcending himself and growing out of his bodily life and mortality into the joy of an immortal and spiritual life, the possibility of which he has always dreamed, but of which ordinary life gives him no assurance. It confirms in him the sense that worlds and planes of being exist other than that in which “his lot is now cast”, worlds in which mortality and subjection to evil and suffering are not the natural state, “but rather bliss of immortality is the eternal condition”. It gives him a rule for mortal life by which he may prepare himself for immortality. Further it helps him to know that he is a soul and not a body and that his earthly life may become a means by which he can determine the future condition of his spiritual being. This much is common to all religions; but beyond this we are not assured with any certainty.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

² Chaudhuri, Haridas. *Sri Aurobindo: The Prophet of Life Divine*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1951, p. v., p. 56.

³ Sri Aurobindo. *Science and Culture (A Compilation)*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1951, p. 63.

Beyond this the voices of religion vary; some tell us that we have but one life on earth in which to determine our future existence. They deny the soul's past immortality and assert only its future immortality, threaten it even with the "incredible dogma" of a future of eternal suffering for those who miss the right path. Others broader and more rational affirm successive existences by which we grow into the knowledge of the Infinite with a complete assurance for all of ultimate arrival and perfection.¹ One group of religions present the Infinite as a Being other than ourselves with whom we can have a personal relationship, while a second group present It as an impersonal existence into which our separate individuality has to merge; thus some give us our goal in worlds beyond "in which we dwell in the presence of the Divine, others a cessation of world-existence by immergence in the Infinite". Most religions "invite us to bear or to abandon earthly life as a trial or a temporary affliction or a vanity and fix our hopes beyond"; but in a few we find an indication of the future triumph of the spirit, the Divine upon earth, in the body, in the collective life of man, and thus justify not only the individual's hope and aspiration, but also the "united and sympathetic hope and aspiration of the race".

Sri Aurobindo, at this point, stresses that religion is in fact not knowledge, but a faith and an aspiration : it justifies itself both by an imprecise intuitive knowledge of large spiritual truths and by the subjective experience of those souls who have risen beyond the ordinary life,

But in itself it only gives us the hope and faith by which we may be induced to aspire to the intimate possession of the hidden tracts and larger realities of the Spirit.²

That we always turn these few distinct truths and the symbols or the discipline of a given religion into hard and fast dogmas, he says, is a sign that we are as yet far from the "science of the Infinite".

Religion first opens itself to denial, he continues, when it claims to determine truth by divine authority, by inspiration, "by a sacrosanct and infallible sovereignty given to it from on high"; for by such means it seeks to impose itself on humanity without discussion or question.³ Sri Aurobindo states that this is an excessive and premature claim, because although faith is indispensable to man, without it he could not proceed forward in his journey through the Unknown, it ought not to be imposed, it should come as a free perception of an imperative direction from the inner spirit. Only if the spiritual effort achieves a progression to the highest Truth-consciousness total and integral, free from all ignorant mental and vital mixture, can a claim to unquestioned acceptance be warranted. As the ultimate object has not yet been

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³ Sri Aurobindo. *The Life Divine*, New York, Dutton, 1949, p. 768.

achieved, the premature claim has obscured the true work of the religious instinct in man. Sri Aurobindo states that religion should lead man towards the Divine Reality, formulate all that he has yet achieved in that direction and give to each human being a mould of spiritual discipline, a way of seeking, touching, nearing the Divine Truth, a way which is proper to the potentialities of his nature.

In India is to be found "the wide and supple method of evolutionary Nature providing the amplest scope and preserving the true intention of the religious seeking of the human being," for any number of religious formulations, cults and disciplines are allowed, have even been encouraged to subsist together, side by side. And each man has been free to accept and follow whichever is congenial to his thought and feeling and temperament. "It is right and reasonable that there should be the plasticity, proper to an experimental evolution" : for the real business of religion is to lead man to the spiritual consciousness, to that point where the inner spiritual light unfolds and begins fully to emerge. Sri Aurobindo states that it is at this point that religion must learn to subordinate itself, not to insist on its outer characters, but give full scope to the inner spirit itself to develop its own truth and reality.

He states that each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him a vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wider, gentler, purer; Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities.¹ "A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way."

All religions, he says, have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualize mankind. "For that there is needed not cult and creed but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution." The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral and physical in their ideal and intention; the spiritual revolution awaits its hour and meanwhile throws up its waves here and there. "Its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity."

3

It would seem that in his own manner Ira Progoff, like Sri Aurobindo, is at work on a "spiritual revolution" leading men back to "the spiritual authenticity of the inner life". They both tell us that underlying the search for scientific truth in psychology as well as underlying theology, dogma, cult and creed in religion is the need of the "modern person to re-establish a relationship with the creative sources of life"—reach

¹ Sri Aurobindo. *Thoughts and Glimpses*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1920, pp. 39-41.

the "psychic level beyond rationality".¹ Analytical psychology and theological religion may be aware of this need but it seems they cannot satisfy it. They can speak of the need, offer their prescriptions; but the analytical method cannot itself, because of the paradox of its rationality, bring the necessary experience into existence. It seems that neither analytical psychology nor theology can make the spontaneity of creative acts come to pass—and that spontaneity is the secret of works of art, religious faith and also of meaningful experience in everyday living.

If leaders in their own fields, like Sri Aurobindo and Ira Progoff, can put the modern person into touch with the creative and sustaining forces of life beyond "all intellectual dogmas that may be preached or professed", they will indeed have carried us a good way in our solution to the problem of "faith and dogma". Ira Progoff has given the spiritual challenge to Western religion, philosophy and psychology; perhaps it will be his destiny "to open our eyes" and indicate the future scope of these fields. Sri Aurobindo, however, leads us to the avenues of inner discovery and gives us the method for opening the dormant potentialities of the spirit. By emphasizing the need of the inward self-opening, he gives the new turn to Ira Progoff's psychological approach. His method insists that the walls of separation between the conscious and the unconscious be broken down and that our surface consciousness be joined to the depths of our being.²

But first, now that we have discussed religion in general and its "stands" on faith, let us turn our regard to the faith beyond dogma. We are told by Sri Aurobindo that there is in that highest superconscience a highest truth and action of immortality, a greatest divine way of being, a way of the eternal and infinite.³ That eternal way of existence and divine manner of being, he tells us, exists already in the eternity of the Supreme Being, but when we attempt to create it here too in our becoming, by our endeavour to become the Divine, to be as He, the success of our endeavour depends on faith.

It is by an act of conscious will and a belief in its truth, an inmost will to live it or to be it that we attain the Divine. But Sri Aurobindo states that this does not mean that It does not already exist beyond us. Though the Supreme Being "may not exist for our outward mind until we see and create ourselves anew into it, it is still there in the Eternal and we may say even that it is already there in our own secret self". It is in us also—in our depths the Divine Nature always is. Our growth into it, our creation of it, is its manifestation in us. All creation indeed, as it proceeds from the conscious substance of the Eternal, is a manifestation of Him and proceeds by a faith, acceptance, will to be one with the Originating Consciousness.⁴

The soul's faith—not simply an intellectual belief, but its concordant will to

¹ Progoff, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

² Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ Sri Aurobindo. *Essays on the Gita*, New York, Dutton, 1950, p. 430.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

know, to see, to believe, to act and to be according to its vision and knowledge—determines by its power the possibilities of our becoming. “It is this faith and will turned in all our inner and outer self, nature and action towards all that is highest, most divine, most real and eternal that will enable us to reach the supreme perfection.”¹ This then is Sri Aurobindo’s statement on the metaphysical meaning of faith. For him it is the flame of aspiration to the Godhead whereby man may fulfill himself. Knowingly or unknowingly, he tells us, something in our secret nature always aspires to the Divine.²

The wise, he continues, have never been willing to limit man’s avenues to God; “they have not shut against his entry even the narrowest portal, the lowest and darkest postern, the humblest wicket-gate”.³ Any name, any form, symbol or offering has been held sufficient “if there is the consecration along with it; for the Divine knows himself in the heart of the seeker and accepts the sacrifice”.

But if the idea-force behind the consecration be great and wide, the seeker’s attainment “is likely to be fuller and more ample”. If we are to attempt an integral realization, it will be well that we start with an idea of the Divine that is in itself integral. There should be in the heart an aspiration wide enough for a realization without any narrow limits.

Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the Ineffable in a restricting mental formula. The dynamic conception or impelling sense with which... (we) can best set out would be naturally the idea, the sense of a conscious all-embracing but all-exceeding Infinite. Our uplook must be to a free, all-powerful, perfect and blissful One and Oneness in which all beings move and live and through which all can meet and become one.⁴

The Eternal, in our conception, must be at once personal and impersonal in Its “self-revelation and touch upon the soul”. He is personal because this infinite Person is the conscious Divine and casts His reflection in the “myriad divine and undivine personalities of the universe.” He is impersonal because he appears to us to be infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss and because he is the very foundation and “constituent of all existences and all energies,—the very material of our being and mind and life and body, our spirit and our matter”. Our thought, when concentrated on him, must not simply understand in an intellectual way that he exists, or conceive of him simply as “an abstraction, a logical necessity”; it must become a “seeing thought” able to perceive and “meet him here as the Inhabitant in all, realise him in ourselves, watch and take hold on the movement of his forces”. Sri Aurobindo states that He

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 438.

² Sri Aurobindo. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, New York, Dutton, 1950, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

is the one Existence : He is the original and universal Delight that constitutes all things and exceeds them : He is the one infinite Consciousness that composes all consciousnesses and informs all their movements; He is the one illimitable Being who sustains all action and experience; His will guides the evolution of things towards their yet unrealized but inevitable aim and plenitude. To Him each heart can consecrate itself, "approach him as the supreme Beloved, beat and move in him as in a universal sweetness of Love and a living sea of Delight".¹ For His is the secret Joy that supports our soul in all its experiences and maintains even our errant ego in its ordeals and struggles till all our sorrow and suffering shall cease. "His is the Love and the Bliss of the infinite divine Lover who is drawing all things by their own path towards his happy oneness." The Will can "unalterably fix" on Him "as the invisible Power that guides and fulfills it and as the source of its strength". Thus, in the impersonality this Power is an actuating and self-illuminated Force that contains all results, all possibilities "and calmly works until it accomplishes". In the personality : an all-wise and omnipotent Master whom nothing can prevent from arriving at its goal. "This is the faith with which the seeker has to begin his seeking and endeavour; for in all his effort here, but most of all in his effort towards the unseen, mental man must perforce proceed by faith." When his realization comes, "the faith divinely fulfilled and completed will be transformed into an eternal flame of knowledge".

Thus Sri Aurobindo leads us to believe that when such a faith is realized and man is connected with his inner life, the truth behind all religions will have been realized; we shall pass from "faith" to *knowledge* of our inner realities. We feel with Sri Aurobindo and also with Ira Progoff that this is the solution to our problem : Religion along with psychology and possibly philosophy will realize itself only when it leads man to a faith beyond all rationality, all dogma "that may be preached or professed", to the creative realities of his inner life. Sri Aurobindo provides us with the method for breaking the walls of separation between the conscious and the unconscious so that our surface consciousness may be joined to the depths of our being.² His many volumes are filled with this method; it has not been our intention to indicate it here. We have sought only to discuss the role of faith in the inner discovery and to make some inroad in freeing it from the cumbersome dogma that surrounds it.

We feel that the contributions, in their differing degrees, of Sri Aurobindo and Ira Progoff have a far-reaching meaning for the spiritual future of mankind. It is only the evidence and experience of the future that can complete our hypothesis and make our case firm. But it seems readily obvious to us that the area of the inner spiritual faculties and the role that faith plays in their realization cannot be ignored by philosophers, theologians and psychologists whose task it is to know man and guide him in his self-discovery. In November of 1957, just a year after Ira Progoff's book, we heard from Sri Aurobindo's Ashram the following :

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

² Chaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

The old spirituality was an escape from life towards the divine Reality, leaving the world where it was, as it was. Our new vision, on the contrary, is the divinisation of life, the transformation of the material world into a divine world...one can say that the old world...was in a characteristic way the age of the gods and therefore the age of religions. The flower of man's effort towards that which was higher than him gave birth to numerous religions, to a religious relation between the soul of the select few and the invisible world, and at the summit of all that, as an effort towards a still higher realisation, was born this idea of the unity of religions, of Something that is unique, which is behind all manifestation—and this idea was really the ceiling of human aspiration...a new creation it tries to attain but is unable to seize. To seize it, what is needed is a reversal. One must have come out of (the old). But for that, the new creation...must have taken place.

And now all those old things seem so old, so antiquated, so arbitrary, such a travesty of the true truth !

In the supramental creation there will be no more religions. All life will be the expression, the flowering in forms of the Divine Unity manifesting in the world.¹

Sri Aurobindo, in the great domain of direct spiritual realisation, and Ira Progoff, in the sphere of a reorientated deep-searching psychology, present a momentous challenge to all who have the will to investigate and the integrity that demands and seeks for man the truth of his existence.

MILIANA DRACHMAN

¹ The Mother. "Questions and Answers": "The True Adventure", *Bulletin of Physical Education*, IX-No 4, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1957, pp. 95, 97.

PLAYGROUND MEDITATION

God, Deliverance, Unity—

Peace—

Big words, powerful words

Scorching words upon the conscience of men

Words once sprung from the deeps of human heart

Now indestructible by human will !

Words whose unextinguishable fire shall

Brighten the face of the Earth through the ages

Though men may flee them

Though at times Earth herself may go astray.

Words from whose frightful presence

I vainly yearn to run away.

For the mind denies them—

And the obstinate self goes on

Flying—searching in dire frenzy for a nook to hide.

Where's the hiding place

When the Traitor in me

Finds me out

Hands me over ?...

No imagination, no hallucination, this.

The inner drama repeats within :

Mercilessly my own Self pursues myself.

And phosphorescent memories of carefree days

Gleam within the chasm of being

As the moon and the stars above.

I drink deep the voiceless language of vastness.

But a scene more beautiful

Disturbs the depths :

When the night presses close upon us

And the inner flames grow bright

And the roar of the sea is dull

And the winds blow soft,

When the spaces teem with whispers

And a thousand desires swish against the soul
And music tells of births long ago, of worlds long forgotten—
Whatever their failings, whatever their strivings
Whatever the fever of their cravings,
To see people sitting around The Mother's Chair—calm, indrawn
 Aspiring—receiving
Seems a sight more wonderful than
The sky and the moon and the stars,
 Though always on them I gaze.

BIBHASH JYOTI MUTSUDDI

IDENTITY

WHEN I may think of the neighbour on the other side
Of my own wall, needing a hand or prospering,
O let my labour be to spur love, widening
To my that-other-self, or rush my goodwill tide
Uncalled along my blood-plucked god-speed instancy
With all my mite of succour as if he were I.

When I may think of the surround of suffering,
Men subsisting ignorant on Nature's cast-off crumbs,
Held down to earth with escapeless plated weighty plumbs
With not one far-fain reverie of fluttering,
O let my heart-felt thought-willed soul-seen effort lie
In raising their being's lot as if they all were I.

Pregnant with guileless sentiments when my thoughts go
Wandering home wherein the tender hands had cradled
My infancy, wherein were childlike parents saddled
By innocence, where harmless rebukes, bargainless flow
Of love of sisters, brothers, neighbours nurtured me,
I send my core-plucked prayers for their felicity.

When thoughts may shift their venue to my studentship days,
When childhood-cherished touch and taste of world with kind-
Ness and severity adulated my puny mind,
Made me condign with knowledge and life-growth to face
The wider world and partake in it with bravery,
I plead for these learning-places long prosperity.

When my thoughts move to my community, with whom
I drank of early cavilless faith in Self and God,
With whom in humble beginnings learned to pray and laud
And yearn for Him in heart's deep-lain eternal room,—
I pray, from its self-formed boundaries it widen free
On its soul-creative path to universality.

When heartfelt eyes may cast their glance on my country great,
The standard-bearer of the message of truth and peace,

The storer of eternal wisdom-treasures,
I pray, it carry on its selfless way to translate
High ideals to action in modes exemplary
And spate the peoples with Spirit's rich immensity.

When I may image fray-torn world before my eyes,
A world forever craving peace, yet lacking ever,
A world forgetful of its self-held power-lever
That can crane it to high sky-lines and harmonize
Its straying multiple dappled traits in unity
As if God were reborn in heavenly nudity,

And when within I tortoise my far-winging thoughts
And dwell in deep detachment in my self-poised soul,
I pray, for never once forgetting God-sheer goal,
Missioned by Him I work unflinching to turn the lots
Of all to whom by God my self of eternity
Belongs, be one with them in act as in depths am I.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

(Continued from the October Issue)

29

AFTER a stay of nearly five years when Arka Avadhuta returned to India, the First World War was ravaging Europe. The enterprise that Loknath built up was in no way troubled, rather the Government of India utilised it in many ways. Consequently his field of action became more extensive and his enterprise became an object of envy to other local works. From three of his schools of crafts many competent young men had been to Japan, Germany, England and America to complete their education; some of them had already returned to be absorbed all over the country.

Two schools in Bengal and one in Bihar were also started to impart general education. Tuition in those schools was free of charge. The stipulation was that, on matriculating, the students were required to enter the schools of crafts. There were nearly two thousand boys and as many girls receiving education in the three institutions. The centres of education, as far as possible, were meant to be established in villages rather than in towns and cities. The Avadhuta was very pleased to note this. Girls after they had studied up to a point were often engaged as teachers in small village schools, although Loknath's primary object was to make them excellent housewives; they were never encouraged to earn money. His purpose followed the ancient custom of women to become the presiding deities of the home and hearth and men to go out and earn money and become real householders.

If someone, contrary to the rules, was attracted to the life of a sannyasin, he was not dissuaded from it and could easily follow his bent. From the three main centres Loknath had established many branches in villages. Besides these he also founded centres, following the example of the Ramakrishna Mission, in many distressed areas composed of whole-hearted young people, who gave themselves exclusively to this work. No one was asked to contribute to the funds, as there was already a large amount in hand and a lot of money flowed in from the war efforts. In three health resorts at Almora, Darjeeling and Vaidyanath, more than a hundred patients were being looked after irrespective of their class, creed or social standing. If from any quarter news of epidemics or natural calamities arrived, the necessary work was immediately undertaken from the centres. The Avadhuta, observing all these activities and the remarkable efficiency and capacity of Loknath, was extremely happy and fondly embraced him and blessed him. His pleasure was even greater when Loknath showed him a list of all the workers and learners neatly made out, giving

their names, the work they were engaged in and their progress, as well as their race and creed or religion. He saw that, though the centre was in Bihar, students and workers from far Assam and the North-West Frontier regions were there as well as from neighbouring Bengal. It was noted, too, that students and workers from Bengal predominated; it was they who took the most advantage of the establishment and were always in the forefront. Arka heard Loknath's comment, too, that the youth of Bengal were not so keen on physical labour as they were for subtle brain work, which was more congenial to their make-up.

Just then four Bengali and three Bihari youths had returned home after completing their studies abroad; Loknath brought them to the Avadhuta and presented them to him. Among these was a Bengali youth named Sachindra, a domicile of Bihar, who was a gold-medalist in Civil Engineering and a Bihari named Gopal Dutt who had qualified himself as a physician. The Avadhuta was much attracted to them. When they left he told Loknath, "You can send Sachindra to any centre in Bengal except Calcutta and Gopal Dutt anywhere in Bihar, with full charge of those centres. You must keep a very vigilant eye in choosing the top-men."

At Kahalgaon again, with Karali Bhairav at the head, a school for general education and a big centre for crafts were established adjoining the Bhairav's ashram. He was no longer known as Karali Bhairav; he had changed his name to Arkapada. With a sane mind and a healthy body he was ever active in all works for the welfare of the people. Karali, as he met the Avadhuta, bent down to touch his feet but the Avadhuta, preventing him, clasped him in his arms and said, "All this is due to your efforts. Do you see now how the World Mother has employed you to do her Work? Your meeting with Loknath, was it not divinely ordained?"

Karali felt himself more than satisfied and spoke such words welling out of his emotion as no one had heard him utter previously. At last he said something that astounded the Avadhuta. He said that it had not yet been necessary to open the famous chest, the jars of gold pieces were still intact as they were before. Loknath had not even taken the key yet. He said, "Master! I am still its guard but I don't feel it weighing upon me now and that is a great relief."

The Avadhuta explained to him, "Unless Loknath is in need of the money, why should he open the chest? All the money he needs comes from his efforts and has been enough to extend his activities."

The Avadhuta had not yet met Parvati as he was so long busy inspecting the vast enterprise built up by Loknath. When at last he had seen all, he came to Parvati's temple.

He had heard from Loknath, as soon as he arrived, that Parvati had been ill at regular intervals. He was quite worried when he heard that she had been having epileptic fits for the last two years—at least everyone there believed that she was having epileptic fits. At times she used to remain unconscious for two or three days and, when she regained her senses, she used to go about as if nothing had happened. Loknath and others felt even more sorry when she refused all treatment and even rejected

all medical advice. Loknath said to the Avadhuta, "Now that you have come I feel no further anxiety."

This is why he did not go to meet Parvati at first, but waited till he could be quite free and at ease. Now, after he had inspected all, he came to Parvati's ashram—an area of nearly an acre studded with rows of huts and having a large garden. Right in the middle was Parvati's own hut with the temple adjoining it.

The Avadhuta was delighted and surprised to see Parvati. There was no sign of any illness in her; she looked quite like the Goddess Parvati of Kailash, as if *tapasyā* condensed and materialised had taken this form. The courtyard of the temple was resplendent with Parvati's figure of a Sannyasini, a living image effulgent with the inner beauty of the Spirit. But in the heart of the image lingered a faint shadow of unease, of tired expression. The Avadhuta was pained to see it there.

On her head was a mound of matted locks that enhanced the beauty of that fair face; compassion filled her eyes. The Avadhuta stood enchanted, no words of greeting passed his lips; though it was after five long years.

The Avadhuta saw another wonder that he had not even remotely imagined. Parvati was sitting with a fan in her hand beside a plate filled with all kinds of fruits and sweets and a bowl of thickened milk, in front of an asana. With a feeling of joy and wonder he advanced towards her. She was getting up as soon as she saw him. To avoid the *praṇām* (prostration to a superior) he stood where he was; then with folded hands he said, "Devi! spare me, do not leave your seat, stay just where you are, I implore you."

Parvati understood and remained seated as before. Then she said, "I am seeing you after a long absence : would I be denied even to do my *praṇām* to you ?"

"No—that must not be," said Arka.

"Very well," said Parvati. "I shall not get up but you must come and partake of all these, as it is Narayana's *prasād*—the offering has already been made. Now please come and sit down."

As he was unable to refuse he sat down after washing his hands. All that a sadhu takes were there; Parvati had procured everything. While eating, Arka said, "All these wonderfully tasty things have never before been my lot to eat. It seems you are bent on making me an epicure".

Parvati said, "You an epicure ! Is it possible for me to make you one or have I the power ? I am not going to allow you to take things so lightly to-day, a happy and auspicious day for us all. To-day is my day of full realisation, no unnecessary talk is permitted."

Arka said, "I see, you have taken the role of a teacher to-day. Even a jest is not permitted".

"Where is the time for it ?" said Parvati, "Now as you eat give me a full account of the last five years, don't digress into useless things. Loknath, Karali Bhairav, they are all fortunate people as they have the tops—the dregs are for me. However, I am content."

The Avadhuta understood the deep significance of the words. Without further ado he said, "Very well, as you please. Now listen to me. I went to Nepal straight from here, as a royal guest. It took many days to get everything arranged; then after a long journey I reached Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. There I was a guest in a monastery where I learnt Tibetan from the Thulo Lama. It took me full seventeen months to master the language. Then circumstances so arranged themselves that I was summoned to Potala to the presence of the Dalai Lama. In a few days I managed to appraise him of all about the Yantra, how it was stolen and the efforts that were made to recover it. From there I went straight to Tigachchi, to the Lama there who was the real owner of the Yantra. After a most colourful journey, lasting a month and a half, over hills and dales and beautiful plateaus, crossing turbulent hill-streams, I arrived there and handed over the Yantra to the great yogi, Thulo Lama, and was cordially received by him. From him I learnt the full history of the bejewelled Yantra." The Avadhuta said at last, "You see, Parvati, what was my conjecture before has proved to be true as regards the Yantra. Finally, I became a great friend of the Lama—all due to the power of that living Yantra; more, I came to know all about Tara Siddhi in all its details. All I believe was due to the great compassion of my Guru. At the end, however, I did something for which I am guilty towards you and now I ask your forgiveness for it."

After listening to all that wonderful tale, in reply to his last words she said, "It is we who are the real culprits, we women, kin of the World Mother, able instruments in Her hands—it is we who turn you away from your path. Now you are saying something quite the opposite. What are you guilty of?"

The Avadhuta felt that Parvati was now more bold and easy than she had ever been before.

Cheerfully, he said, "First hear what it is. Truly, Parvati, I think I have done something blamable. You will soon understand that I have, without a doubt, done something quite wrong. Even if it is so, I must tell you to lighten my soul. Ready?"

"O Narayana!" exclaimed Parvati. "What sort of Guru have you given me, O Lord? I have to listen to a 'wrong' thing from my Guru and bear to hear something probably not true! Then let it be, let there be an end to the discussion of a guilty deed. Now please tell me what is the final upshot."

"That is just what I am trying to say," said Arka.

"Who is stopping you?"

"My hesitation is the obstacle, Parvati. But now I am reassured, as I look at you. Listen then. My great friend, the Lama of Tigachchi, after his realisation proposed that I should accept the Yantra as a friendly gift from him."

As he said this he noted in the eyes of Parvati a merry twinkle that was exceedingly beautiful. She then said, "Then, what happened?"

"You have already understood what happened," said he.

"You have refrained from accepting it because of the stringent stipulations that accompany its acceptance. Is it not like that? Where is the wrong in that?" said she.

"Then you think I have done nothing wrong?" he said and looked up at Parvati.

"Certainly not. You are not to blame at all. If there had been any fault it would have been in your mind—and you know all about it," said Parvati.

Arka said, "Such a priceless jewel would have given you great satisfaction, if I had accepted it. Thus I thought that my non-acceptance may be construed as a guilt in your mind. That's all."

Now on Parvati's face appeared a smile that would have charmed the world. She said, "Since you did not even once think in this way when you refused it, as you cannot possibly have done so, then why are you erecting before me this idea of an imaginary guilt? This mystifying preamble that you began with is the only fault I can find. However, I pardon you for that."

While talking, quite unaware of what he was doing, he had eaten everything that was on the plate. He was racked with remorse to think what a glutton he had been. With a contrite awe he said, "What have I done, Parvati! All this is your game."

Parvati said, "That's just what I wanted. He, who fulfils the ardent desires of a devotee, has listened to my prayer."

The Avadhuta said, "But that does not console me."

Parvati said, "You are a great devotee of the Lord; after a long time you have received his *prasād*—there should remain nothing uneaten of the Lord's gift and you have got it in full—that is just what the scriptures prescribe."

When his meal was over the Avadhuta said, "Now that you have heard all about myself, tell me what you have done all this time that I have been away. I am eager to hear."

With a face seared with pain Parvati said, "You know all about me, there is nothing new to add."

The Avadhuta then prepared to get up and, as he rose like the full moon peeping out of a dark cloud, Parvati's face beamed with a sweet smile chasing away the dolorous expression that was there a short while ago. In that smile Arka saw a heavenly expression and the meaning was apparent only to him.

Just as a devotee approaches the Deity of his heart Parvati advanced towards the Avadhuta to do her *praṇām*; he moved back a few steps but Parvati came on unchecked with her arms stretched in front; the Avadhuta went on moving backwards and, reaching the temple of Narayana, he went in. That Parvati worshipped Narayana was known to him, but only now he saw that an idol had been set up too.

The temple room was a fairly big one, square in shape. On a white marble altar was an image in black marble about eighteen inches in height, a four-armed figure of Narayana. The daily worship must have been done a little while before: this was apparent from the signs there. The Avadhuta, his hands folded, was gazing at the image with a steady look. Perhaps he thought that now he was safe from Parvati's touching his feet. But what happened was as extraordinary as it was wonderful and unthought-of, something of which the Avadhuta could not even have dreamt.

Parvati came into the altar-room and gently shut the doors. He did not notice her as he was still looking at the image in rapt attention. Parvati then came in front of the Divine Image and without any haste or hurry said in a voice husky with emotion, "The hour of my surrendering to my *iṣṭa* and completing my realisation has arrived—to him, whom I had given my body, life and mind and for whom I have till now preserved in full the sanctity of dharma, I give myself again and wish to attain to his feet with all my heart and soul." Saying this she bent down and stretched her hands towards the Avadhuta's feet. He wanted to prevent her, but one hardly knew how it happened, he granted her prayer.

What really happened was that intending to stop her he caught that Sannyasini in his strong arms and drew her on to the wide expanse of his chest. The Devi closed her eyes in a beatific expression of fulfilment. Still in that embrace he whispered into her ears, "O Devi, no longer the relation of a Guru with his disciple exists. Look up to your *Ishta*." He said this and gazed again at the image of Narayana, but Parvati looked up once at the tranquil and benignant face of the Avadhuta; who can tell what she saw there? And who knows what the Avadhuta saw in that face suffused with a blissful light and what he felt? He then felt two soft arms clinging to him with all their strength. A profound silence reigned. No one spoke. After a long pause he spoke in a soft and tender voice, "Well, at peace now? Was this your *Sadhana*?" With these questions on his lips he kept looking at Parvati.

Her lips quivered for a second in an expression of exquisite joy although her steady gaze on the face of the Avadhuta did not flicker even once. The Avadhuta, as he saw that look, felt rather uneasy.

All encompassing was that look, an experience till now unknown to him—that look penetrating the outer heart was strongly pulling at the inner conscious Purusha—so powerful was the pull that he was forced to submit to it. In a speechless wonder he saw that Parvati's lips were moving softly, as if vibrating to utter a few words. Mechanically he brought his ear close to them and heard an exquisitely soft voice and her words were like a flow of nectar. She was saying, "You are my God and you know it too. I say that I have never asked for anything else, Narayana is my witness. This is the day of absolute fulfilment for me."

After these soft words had been said, she lifted her face up to him, a face full of love's delicacy. The Avadhuta then, still holding that goddess in his arms, imprinted a kiss on her snow-white forehead. Thus they stood both merged into each other.

Suddenly an intense shivering passed through her body and a great sigh escaped her lips. The Avadhuta then opened his eyes to see—he saw on her handsome face a bluish tint that deepened as he looked. He concentrated his look between her eyebrows and a feeling arose in his heart violently agitating it—he realised in all certitude that something unforeseen had just happened. With this awareness he felt Parvati's encircling arms slacken, and slowly her lifeless body sank down on to the lap of Mother Earth, the lap that is the final refuge of all mortal beings. On the forehead of that body the Avadhuta once again imprinted another kiss, then stretched it gently on

the altar of Narayana. An expression of celestial bliss was still visible on that divine face, that yet seemed alive.

Arka carried the body of Parvati alone to the cremation ground—probably Shiva too had carried thus the body of Uma—and allowed no one to touch it.

Arka stepped out once again on to the road after the obsequies were over. Loknath and the others never saw him again.

END

PRAMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

PART THREE : THE CONQUEST OF FOOD-NEED

(Continued from the October issue)

XI. THE ASCENDING SCALE OF ENERGY

One thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature, giving to her her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it. But until something like this is achieved or made possible we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, p. 52)

“Do you think I get all this energy from my frugal meals ? Of course not, one can draw infinite energy from the universe when needed !”¹
(The Mother)

THE body is the vehicle, *vāhana*, of the Spirit; it is the indispensable means and instrument for the latter’s self-manifestation in this world of evolutionary becoming. But this Becoming is in its nature an infinite play of Force or Shakti, a ‘measureless Movement in Time and Space’. Phenomenally, there is nothing stable or stationary there. All that appears to be stable or inert, passive or immobile, is in reality ‘a block’ of movement’ maintained in its covert and unceasing motion by the dynamic play of Energy that so affects our limited vision as to create the illusion of an apparent immobility.

¹ Quoted by Dr. Prabhat Sanyal in “A Call from Pondicherry”, p. 9.

It is no doubt true that behind all this movement, supporting all this Becoming, there is the fundamental reality of the moveless and immutable, Timeless and Spaceless, pure Existent. But the movement, the becoming, the energy in action are also eternal facts of existence. These 'two fundamental facts of pure existence and of world-existence, a fact of Being, a fact of Becoming'¹ are not contradictory and mutually cancellative, as our Mind basing itself on finite reason would like us to believe. The integral spiritual vision bears testimony to the truth that "the Absolute...takes its eternal poise in the one and the stable and whirls round itself infinitely, inconceivably, securely in the moving and the multitudinous. World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view : it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing".²

Thus phenomenally every formation in this world of eternal Becoming is in constant movement overt or involved : and the apparent stability is no more than an error of perspective. And embodied life forms no exception to this general rule. Both psychologically and physiologically life represents a ceaseless dynamis, a movement with a forward and upward orientation. Psychologically, in the inimitable words of The Mother : "The moment you cease to advance, you fall back. From the moment you are satisfied and aspire no longer, you begin to die. Life is movement, life is effort; it is marching forward, scaling the mountain, climbing towards future revelations and realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in forward march that you must find rest."³

Physiologically too, a living body in spite of its deceptive stability on the surface is in a ceaseless dynamic flux, and must be so for ever, whatever be its status or degree of development already attained or to be attained in future. For it cannot expect to abrogate the universally valid principle of Becoming.

Hence arises the body's need for a constant source of supply of energy. And this energy-need will always be there if the body has to serve as the effective instrument for the Spirit's dynamic self-unfolding in the universe. The whole question then turns round the nature of the energy in demand and the nature of its possible source of supply.

We have noted before that in the evolutionary elaboration of life so far, Nature has so arranged that all heterotrophic organisms including man must have their sources of energy in material aliments and that too in the form of organic food stuffs derived from other organisms. Indeed, the animal body stores all the energy that it needs for its synthetic processes and for the performance of muscular work, in 'high energy' phosphate compounds, notably in what has come to be known as ATP (adenosine triphosphate). This ATP that acts as the energy pool is the main carrier of chemical energy within the organism and is produced in its turn by the animal body from

¹ & ² *The Life Divine*, p. 74.

³ *The Mother, Bulletin*, Vol. IX No. 2, p. 93.

ingested organic aliments, through a complex chain of operations mediated by a whole series of enzymes.

But ATP is not the only possible source of energy for living organisms. The autotrophes, and in particular all green plants, do not depend upon ATP as their principal energy-source. Through a process known as photo-synthesis, green plants can directly tap the energy of sunlight, convert it into chemical energy and thus transform simple inorganic materials like water and carbon dioxide into energy-rich organic matter. Green plants are thus free from the necessity of organic aliments.

A closer look at the phenomenon of life so far elaborated upon earth shows however that all life, directly or indirectly, depends for its existence upon this one and unique source of energy : the energy radiated by the sun. For it is this solar energy that is transmitted in stages through the plants to the herbivores and through the latter to the carnivores, and "were there no green plants to function as solar energy converters, practically all life on earth would cease."¹

So it is not so much the organic material aliments as the solar energy that is in the last analysis the sustainer of life. And this fact opens the possibility of an ultimate victory, even in the case of man's body, over the necessity for material alimentation. For, so far as energy-need is concerned, once we admit the possibility of the emergence of a new body-chemistry and of new physiological functioning, attendant upon the supramental change of consciousness,² there is no theoretical bar to the New Body manifesting the capability of directly absorbing and utilizing the *physical energy* that is all around us in the universe.

But the New Body need not limit itself to the tapping of "the energies accumulated in the material and earthly world and [drawing] freely from this inexhaustible source."³ Apart from the fact that "these material energies are obscure and half in-conscious",⁴ physical energy is not the only modality of Energy as modern science would like to believe. Physical energy is rather the lowest derivative form of the universally operative Energy that rises on an ascending scale of potency and subtlety. Indeed, even under the existing conditions of life, it is not the physical energy that is the real sustainer of the living body : for, this energy is neither primal in nature nor independent in action. It is rather the universal life-energy, the Prana of the Upanishads, that is the prime governor and support of all embodied existence, although on the frontal plane it may sometimes be constrained to act through the modified form of physical energy.

Modern science, concerning itself only with the gross external operations of Nature, fails to recognise the existence or effectivity of a Prana-Shakti as distinct from the physical manifestation of energy. For, in the very nature of its field of investigation and of the means adopted, physical analysis can reveal to us only the 'external signs and symbols' of the operation of Shakti. But, as the ancient Wisdom points

¹ Arthur W. Galston, *The Life of the Green Plant*, p. 1.

² See the discussion in Chapter X.

³ & ⁴ *Words of the Mother*, p. 203.

out, the true foundation is above while the branchings are downward, *ūrdhavudhna nīchīna-śākha* (Rig-Veda), *ūrdhamulo'vāksākha* (Gita), so that to know the essential truth of things as distinguished from their phenomenal appearances, one has to probe upward and inward instead of remaining content only with surface scrutiny.

Now, helped by this inner and deeper vision of things, when we reflect upon the world of forms and upon its ceaseless dynamic movement, we make the following significant discoveries :

(i) Behind every action of physical energy and supporting it, there lies always a Pranic Shakti, the universal Life-Energy that is “not physical in itself;...not material energy, but rather a different principle supporting Matter and involved in it.”¹

(ii) This universal Prana, “supports and occupies all forms and without it no physical form could have come into being or could remain in being.”²

(iii) This Prana-Shakti is the real motive power behind the action of even physical forces. “No material forces could exist or act without it, for from it they derive their energy and movement and they are its vehicles.”³ It is the universal Prana that “in various forms sustains or drives material energy in all physical things from the electron and atom and gas up through the metal, plant, animal, physical man.”⁴

(iv) Thus all material aspects are only fields and forms of this Prana which “is in itself a pure energy, their cause and not their result.”⁵ Even in the functioning of our body it is this Pranic Shakti that is the essential “condition of all action, even of the most apparently inanimate physical action.”⁶

(v) This universal Life-Energy is not only active within ourselves, in our body; it is at the same time “freely available in the world and in any quantity.”⁷ As a matter of fact, because of the prevailing imperfect organisation of our physical system, it is only a very limited amount of this Energy that can be active in our body. But in its own nature, it is illimitable in scope and immense in effectivity. This limitless ocean of Shakti is “all around us and above, one with the same energy in us, and [we] can draw it in and down to aggrandise our normal action or call upon and get it to pour into us.”⁸ And if we only know how to open ourselves to the uninterrupted play of this universal Pranic Energy, how to “assimilate that energy, assimilate it directly, then there is no limit to [our] energy.... [We] can take it in and absorb as much as we are capable of it.”⁹ It will then sustain all our physical energies and maintain the functionings of our bodily life with a far greater and effective power than any that our present body-bound energy can command.

¹ & ² Sri Aurobindo, *Kena Upanishad*, p. 84.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, (I) : *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 837.

⁵ *Kena Upanishad*, p. 84.

⁶ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 837.

⁷ The Mother as quoted by Nolini Kanto Gupta in *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, (VIII), p. 97.

⁸ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 864.

⁹ The Mother as quoted in *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, (VIII), pp. 96-97.

It is then in the direct and unlimited tapping of this Life-Energy that our evolving body can expect to find the second way of obviating the necessity of material aliments.

But even this Prana or Life-Energy is not the primal or self-existent power. This too, in its turn, is an inferior derivative form of a far higher Force in action, that 'guides, drives, controls and uses' this Life-Energy and yokes it to the many workings of existence. But what is the nature of this supreme Energy, this Life of the Life-Force, *Ko devah* ?

The real and ultimate upholder of the Manifestation, of which the Pranic Shakti is but an agent and intermediary, is the supremely conscious universal Energy of existence, the Tapas or Chit-Shakti of the Divine Sachchidananda. It is "nothing but infinite force in action of the supreme conscious Being in His own illumined self. The self-existent is luminously aware of Himself and full of His own delight; and that self-awareness is a timeless self-possession which in action reveals itself as a force of infinite consciousness omnipotent as well as omniscient, for it exists between two poles, one of eternal stillness and pure identity, the other of eternal energy and identity of All with itself, the stillness eternally supporting the energy. That is the true existence, the Life from which our life proceeds."¹

If only we can open ourselves, even in our body, to the action of this supreme Consciousness-Force, we shall never have any dearth of energy for the functioning of our life-processes. In the words of the Mother :

"[It] is a source of energy which, once discovered, never dries up, whatever the circumstances and the physical conditions in life. It is the energy that can be described as spiritual, that which is received not from below, from the depths of inconscience, but from above, from the supreme origin of men and the universe, from the all-powerful and eternal splendours of the superconscious. It is there, everywhere around us, penetrating everything."²

And The Mother assures us that once we allow ourselves to be made the channels of this supreme creative energy and acquire "the power to draw at will and in all circumstances from the limitless source of (this) omnipotent energy in its luminous purity,... fatigue, exhaustion, illness, age and even death become mere obstacles on the way which a steady will is sure to surmount."³

It is then in the opening up of our physical system to the unimpeded action of this ultimate Source of all energies that we can expect to discover the most perfect and adequate means of meeting our body's energy-needs and thus liberate ourselves integrally from the binding necessity of gathering energy from the crude source of material aliments.

But unfortunately there is a snag in the above procedure and the problem is not so easy of solution as it appears at first view. For as we have found in our Chapter

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Kena Upanishad*, p. 89.

² *Words of the Mother*, p. 204.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

VII, it is not enough for our purpose to be *subjectively* open and receptive; this openness and receptivity must be made integrally operative in our very physical system. But the whole trouble comes from the fact that in the evolutionary elaboration of life upon earth Nature has provided us with a body whose capacity for opening to, and power of assimilation of, the superior forms of Energy is extremely poor and imperfect in scope. The bodily instrument in its present organisation or status is all but shut to any direct operation of these supra-physical energies. It is still the raw and unbaked earthen vessel, *ataptatanu* in the Vedic image, and apt to get agitated, upset and broken under the impact of any great inrush of the higher or the highest Energy. And this fact has imposed an almost insuperable limitation on the availability and use of the universal Shakti for the purposes of our physical functionings.

This limitation is bound to subsist, whatever may be the level or intensity of our inner illumination and spiritual realisation, unless and until the problem is tackled at its basal station to have the very physical system get transfigured.

But precisely this will be one of the results of the supramental transformation of our earthly existence. It will suffuse the very cells of the body with the Light and Power of Supermind, transmute its stuff and transfigure its functionings, and make of the New Body 'a dynamic constant eddy' and 'a vibrant station of storage and communication' for the Chit-Shakti to stream in and act.

But even when the problem of energy-needs of the body is thus tackled and finds its solution, the problem of material alimentation is only half resolved. For there still remains the question of the substantial stuff of the body. How can our material body maintain its integrity if there is no absorption of a regular supply of material aliments from outside ? Let us seek for an answer to this crucial question.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

XIV. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT (I)

WHEREAS Curzon sought to wean us away from the English tongue because we were using it for furthering revolt against an alien domination, the movement for a system of national education that began in Bengal directly as a result of Curzon's moves and later spread to the rest of India held fast to the opposite viewpoint. It accepted as axiomatic that we had become denationalised and forgotten our birthright to be free because we had had too much of English and that to popularise the vernaculars and make them the media of instruction both in schools and colleges was the one palliative needed. Whatever the merits of this view, it must be conceded at once that much of the propaganda now being carried on in favour of the vernacular languages and the decrying of the English language as a medium of education and culture that has become fashionable in some quarters are the direct results of the national education movement. We should therefore examine, however cursorily, the origins and course of this movement, with special reference to the question of language.

This movement had precursors in the voices raised from time to time in the second half of the nineteenth century against the attempt of Christian missionaries to impose their religious beliefs on young school children and college boys. The menace was really strong until the rise of the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj set an opposite force in motion, and the Government had to take steps to curb missionary propaganda through educational institutions. In this connection the name of Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, has to be mentioned with particular reverence. He it was who for the first time in our recent history stemmed the tide of this cultural invasion and set forth boldly, too boldly perhaps for a disinterested observer but with great and immediate effect all the same, that all that was best in the religions of the world, including Christianity, was a mere derivation from the fountainhead of all religions, the Vedas. This implied a harking back to the old Indian ideals, and a glorification of the ancient Sanskrit tongue. Along with this went a strong condemnation of everything western, including the English language. A concrete shape was given to his ideas when, within twenty years of Dayanand's death, the Gurukul university was founded (1902), with a view to impart instruction at all levels through the medium of Hindi and to encourage the use of the Sanskrit language in the higher courses.

The missionaries had been insisting that the tenets of the Christian religion should be taught, not only in the schools managed by them (of which there was a considerable number), but also in all Government schools. A Commission—the Hunter Commission of 1882—was appointed mainly in order to examine this proposition,

The Commission had to respect the new public opinion created by Dayanand and the other religious leaders, and declared categorically against the missionaries. The only points the latter could win were that they would not forfeit their grants-in-aid solely because they imparted a particular form of religious instruction, and they were free to continue to use their own text-books with a heavy religious bias, provided these text-books were approved by the Government. The recommendations of the Commission, which were accepted by the Government, raised a storm of protest among a number of Indian educationists and this was a harbinger of other things to come.

Among those who protested and stressed the need of a radical change may be mentioned Sir Gooroo Dass Bannerjee, the first Indian Vice-Chancellor (of the Calcutta University), and Rabindranath Tagore. Sir Gooroo Dass, in his Convocation addresses (1890-92), suggested a thorough overhaul of the existing system of university education and recommended among other things the adoption of the mother-tongue, in this case Bengali, as the medium of instruction. About the same time, that is, in 1892-93, Rabindranath published his first important article on education, entitled *Shikshar Her-pher* (in Bengali), *Reconstruction of Education*, where he dwelt on the defects of the existing system and stressed the need for the adoption of Bengali as the medium of instruction. His ideas were immediately accepted by some of the leaders of public opinion in Bengal, including such names as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Ananda Mohan Bose (one of the founders of the Indian National Congress). Rabindranath too, like Swami Dayanand, proceeded almost immediately to give a concrete shape to his ideas. The Brahmacharya Ashram, which he founded in 1901 at Bolpur (Shantiniketan) and where in the beginning he himself took a leading part in active teaching along with such renowned figures in the Swadeshi movement as Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, has since developed into the great centre of learning known the world over, Viswabharati.

Certain other manifestations of the new spirit in education which was visible even before the Swadeshi movement brought the question of national education to the forefront should be mentioned in this connection. For a long time in the course of the nineteenth century it had been held by both Englishmen and Indians alike that the spread of European knowledge and science which was the avowed object of education in India could not be made possible except through the agency of Englishmen. Universities had been established in the Presidency towns by 1857 and private colleges (run by missionaries, the Government and a few Indian organisations) had been turning out scholars supposed to be proficient in "European knowledge and science" by the score. But few of these scholars took up teaching as a profession; most of them preferred the pay, prestige and security offered by Government service. The Government had a special branch of service meant for experts in education—the Indian Education Service. But no Indians were considered at the time fit to hold posts reserved for members of this service. The result was that almost all the Principals of colleges, many of the senior lecturers and professors, and even head-

masters of schools were non-Indian.

A change began to come in the seventies and eighties. Surendranath Banerjee, who had entered the Indian Civil Service—he belonged to the second batch of Indians to qualify for it—and was forced to resign owing to the machinations of some interested officials, took up teaching at one of the private colleges in Calcutta. R. P. Paranjpe, the first Indian senior wrangler of Cambridge University, one of its highest academic distinctions, chose to accept the position of Principal at a private college. Sri Aurobindo, who had obtained all the prizes in his year for Greek and Latin at Cambridge and had qualified for the Indian Civil Service but for the riding test where he chose not to appear, accepted a post of professor at the Baroda College. B. G. Tilak, a renowned scholar in mathematics and Sanskrit, had taken up teaching at the Ferguson College in Poona under the auspices of the Deccan Education Society on a mere pittance. These and other instances could be cited to prove that a change was gradually coming in the attitude of Indians to the question of their competence as college professors and principals.

This had a remarkable result. The number of colleges under Indian management increased more than eightfold between 1882 and 1902, and most of these colleges now had Indian professors and principals. The effect on the morale of the students can be well imagined. We should always keep in mind that the Swadeshi movement, or rather all that was vital in it, was the direct result of the active part the students took in it. The nationalisation of Indian colleges was the first step in the movement for national education. But for the inspiration received by the students from Indian professors and principals—the name of Aswini Kumar Dutt of the Barisal College in Bengal should be mentioned with reverence in this connection—it is not certain that the students of Bengal would have responded so readily when the call came in 1905. Of that we shall speak in the sequel.

Here it might be well to note that before the Swadeshi movement began and gave a real start to the movement for a system of national education, sporadic attempts were already being made though on a very modest scale to change the very basis and content of our education. The initiative was taken here by the Muslim community. They had long pined under a sense of grievance and loss of prestige as a result of the British conquest. Not many had taken kindly to the new system of education and the opportunities it offered. A change came with the founding of the Mahomedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1877 under the inspiration of Syed Ahmad; the college has since grown into the Muslim University of Aligarh. But this was merely to follow the prevailing trend of anglicisation, perhaps with a slight Muslim religious bias. The real attempt at a revival of the old Muslim traditions was made elsewhere. A truly Muslim university on orthodox lines was established in 1864 : this was the Dar-ul-uloom of Deoband, which specialised in the study of Arabic and Persian texts and acted as a training centre for the understanding and propagation of the Muslim religion. The Dar-ul-uloom of Lucknow, founded in 1898, stands midway between the one at Deoband and the Muslim University

at Aligarh; it turns out a type of student aptly described as the "modern Maulavi".

The Hindus too were not to be outdone in this attempt at "purifying" education of the foreign taint. In Bengal this took the form of a renovated *Tol* system. In 1895 was established in Calcutta a Bhagavat Chatuspathi at the instance of Sir Romesh Chander Mitter. The object of this antique institution was, to quote the words of Satishchandra Mukerjee who had much to do with the running of it, "The regulation of the daily life and habits of the scholar under a system of Hindu discipline" modelled largely on the ancient Gurukul pattern. There were no tuition fees charged, and the curriculum specialised in the Hindu scriptures and philosophical writings, to be taught according to orthodox methods. This, it may be recalled, was soon to have its counterpart in the Gurukul established at Kangri in 1902.

These attempts to revive ancient orthodoxy were, it may be objected, not moves in the right direction. Nevertheless, they were among the first signs of a new kind of national life arising in India. They also largely influenced the choice of subjects in the new national schools and colleges that came into being during the Swadeshi movement and afterwards. Above all, they paved the way for a reorientation of vernacular languages in our scheme of education.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Compiled from the Writings of Sri Aurobindo by M. P. Pandit. Sponsored by C. C. Mulgund. Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1966. Rs. 10.

THIS is a most welcome addition to the various experiments in compiling passages from Sri Aurobindo to serve particular practical ends. What Sri Aurobindo has written on Culture, on Science, on Education, on Yoga—we have had fine anthologies of such matter, the largest and of the greatest interest being on the last-named theme. But these, in spite of helpful headings, cannot immediately enlighten one on a question vexing one's unhelpful head. An alphabetical arrangement, combing all the works of Sri Aurobindo for pronouncements that would pointedly assist one towards a specific goal, is an excellent inspiration.

And the purpose for which the present book has been made by M. P. Pandit goes to the very heart of the Aurobindonian body of the Truth-Word. Yoga ("Yoga means union with the Divine, but it also means awaking first to your inner self and then to your highest self,—a movement inward and a movement upward", as one of the definitions in the book has it¹)—Yoga is indeed the luminous centre of Sri Aurobindo's action in the world, and to be able to consult him at a moment's notice and draw the rays of his seer-wisdom on to a pressing problem is a boon.

Nor is Pandit's *Dictionary* a treasure-trove for just a coterie of spiritual aspirants. The very nature of Sri Aurobindo's personality and authorship breaks through an exclusive utility. This Master of the *Via Mystica* is at the same time, in a super-Aristotelian sense, "the Master of those who know" (to quote a phrase from Dante) and, we may add, the Master of all who love literature. Philosopher and stylist at every instant, Sri Aurobindo comes out in the *Dictionary* not only as a boon to disciples bent on Yoga but also as "boon nature" to students looking out for ideas and as "a boon companion" to connoisseurs of the *mot juste*.

Just one example picked out from the section we have already opened will serve to illustrate the threefold drive of Sri Aurobindo. Here are psycho-spiritual profundity, intellectual perspicacity and literary felicity—and all with a natural ease befitting what was written by way of a letter to a disciple :

"Yoga and Occident : The difficulties of the occidental nature are born of the dominant trend of the European mind in the immediate past. A greater readiness of essential doubt and sceptical reserve; a habit of mental activity as a necessity of the nature which makes it more difficult to achieve a complete mental silence; a stronger turn towards outside things born of the plenitude of active life; a habit of mental and

¹ P. 312.

vital self-assertion and sometimes an aggressively vigilant independence which renders difficult any completeness of internal surrender even to a greater Light and Knowledge, even to the divine influence—these are frequent obstacles.

“But these things are not universal in Westerners; they are super-structural formations, not the very grain of the being. They cannot permanently stand in the way of the soul, if the soul’s aspiration is strong and firm, if the spiritual aim is the chief thing in the life.”¹

Yes, the lexicographer cannot help bringing out Sri Aurobindo in a *trymūrti* aspect—Brahma of the Creative Word, Vishnu the World-Preserver and Dharma-Saviour, Shiva the Destroyer of Darkness. But naturally the stress falls on the main work for which the Truth-Consciousness that is Sri Aurobindo brought East and West together in one living light of all-round development. And many indeed are the flashing surprises of insight the seeker of the Spirit receives on turning the pages. The present reviewer has been an assiduous reader of the Aurobindonian *corpus*, but he has been happily struck with several discoveries—or, rather, with the springing of several known lines of Sri Aurobindo’s thought and teaching into sudden bright relief. The *trouvailles* range from cross-illuminations on a surface spot to specialist information on subtle details and little peeps into huge depths.

Thus there is a double approach to difficulties in one’s nature : “When there is something in the nature that has to be got over, it is always drawing on itself incidents that put it to the test till the sadhaka has overcome and is free...² It very often happens that when there is an exceptional power in the nature, there is found in the exterior being some contrary element which opens it to a quite opposite influence.”³

Again, we have the arresting definition of the Cross-symbol : “Sign of the Divine Descent barred and marred by the transversal line of a cosmic deformation which turns life into a state of suffering and misfortune.”⁴ To pass from the sublime to what may seem ridiculous but is still a terror for all its tininess, the dream of teeth falling is given its de-terrifying significance which has even a subliming touch : “The falling of teeth means disappearance of old or fixed mental habits belonging to the physical mind.”⁵

Finally, here are two bits of “inlook” achieved effortlessly. First, on how Knowledge can by itself be Power : “Knowledge, when it goes to the root of our troubles, has in itself a marvellous healing power as it were. As soon as you touch the quick of the trouble, as soon as you, diving down and down, get at what really ails you, the pain disappears as though by a miracle”⁶ Next, on what the Ideal Prayer is : “Not prayer insisting on immediate fulfilment, but prayer that is itself a communion of the mind and heart with the Divine and can have the joy and satisfaction of itself, trusting for fulfilment by the Divine in his own time.”⁷

In an undertaking which calls for a concentrated and systematic movement of study over a vast terrain, a few slips or omissions are bound to occur. If we notice any of them, it is not in the mood of cavil but with the aim of helping the second edi-

¹ Pp 310-11. ² P. 29. ³ P. 42. ⁴ P. 44. ⁵ P. 274. ⁶ P. 143 ⁷ P 193.

tion. We are sure a perfectionist like Pandit will welcome our procedure.

One feels a small oversight in the definition of "*Aparārdha*" : "Lower half of world-existence : Mind, Life, Matter."¹ This has sanction from Sri Aurobindo's pen, but strictly speaking either in early writings or in a special universe of discourse. It was valid when beyond Mind he put Supermind in a wide connotation. Afterwards it could hold when he extended the range of Mind to include in general the Spiritual Mind, the domain of the Cosmic Knowledge, which he described as standing between the Cosmic Ignorance and the Transcendental or Integral Truth—Supermind. But the definition falls short when he distinguishes Mind from Spiritual Mind as well as demarcates the highest grade of the latter—namely, Overmind—from Supermind. In the final detailed vision, the *Aparārdha* begins with Overmind, of which Mind is the extreme lopsided diminution. Thus *The Life Divine*² says of Overmind : "It is a power, though the highest power, of the lower hemisphere." A reference to the *Dictionary's* own section on "Overmind" can broadly clarify the point.

With assistance from the omitted portion³ of a passage appearing in that section and from a sentence in *The Life Divine*⁴, we may propose, instead of a single-titled entry, a double-titled one, expanding the present definition thus :

Parārdha, Aparārdha : Higher and lower halves or hemispheres. A line is drawn between the higher half of the universe of consciousness and the lower half. The higher half is constituted of Sat, Chit, Ananda, Mahas (the supramental)—the lower half of Mind, Life, Matter. This line is the intermediary Overmind. In certain contexts, the knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where Mind and Supermind meet with a veil between them.

No doubt, the little *lacuna* we have somewhat heavily put our finger on can be defended on the ground that the distinction we have laboured is after all a fine philosophical *nuance* and the book is essentially one of day-to-day Yogic guidance.

In a Guide to the Godly a couple of printer's devils may be considered odd presences; but, in a world of multitudinous mixture resulting from the Overmind's *Vidyā-Avidyā*, so rare an intrusion is almost an entry on the credit side. Indeed, only two misprints we have spotted of a possibly confusing type, and we are attending to them merely in order to save some readers' grey cells from getting greyer with puzzlement. But even this pair of errors can be relished once they are seen through. One of them constitutes a pleasant paradox of merging opposites by turning "none" into "more" in a sentence on "Absolute" : "...It is the individual soul and all souls and more of them; it is the formless Brahman and the universe."⁵ The other instance effects an entertaining anagram on the nature of dead matter by giving us "cold" for "clod" in a phrase on the surrender, in "Adhyātma Yoga", to the transcendent, infinite and universal Personality who "informs with his being not only the Gods above, but man and the worm and the cold below."⁶ Such diminutive misprints are passing occurren-

¹ P. 8.

² P. 845 (American Edition.)

³ *On Yoga*, I, p. 264.

⁴ P. 243.

⁵ P. 2.

⁶ P. 3.

ces of mystification quite enjoyable in a compendium of mysticism. They are rather "intelligence tests" for the common reader than a blot on the reputation of the proof-reader.

Talking of "tests", one cannot—in closing the review of so useful and "luminiferous" a medium of vibrant Word meant to become Flesh in us—do better than quote an extremely helpful hint for all who are troubled on the spiritual path by "tests" when they make sincere efforts to overcome defects: "One does not always know whether it is the hostiles who are trying to break the resolution or putting it to the test (for they claim the right to do it) or whether it is, let us say, the gods who are doing it so as to press and hasten the progress or insisting on the surety and thoroughness of the change aspired for. Perhaps it helps most when one can take it from the latter standpoint."¹

Rs. 10 for a *Dictionary* of such secrets of Yogic attitude and action is almost like getting everything for nothing—and one may well include in "everything" on the material side a fine finish in printing and get-up and binding and jacket. No Aurobindonian can afford to go without this publication.

K. D. S.

¹ P. 29.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

EIGHTH SEMINAR

14 AUGUST 1966

(Continued from the October issue)

WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF MAN ?

I

Friends,

Whenever I am asked to speak at a conference such as this one, in my guilty conscience rings these words of the Mother : "...to speak usefully for ten minutes, you should remain silent for ten days."¹ The silence the Mother speaks of here is the inner quietude.

But then if we were to adhere strictly to this dictum of the Mother, I am afraid we would hardly find a speaker for all our conferences. And that would be an agonising situation. For after all what distinguishes us, human beings, from the animals is precisely this power of articulate speech. And by Jove, we know how to make a jolly good use of it ! So let's talk—that is, let me talk. Of course I am not here to speak on ships and shoes and sealing wax and cabbages and kings, but on a specific subject : "What is the destiny of man ?"

Well, what is the destiny of man ? Frankly speaking, I don't know. Not to speak of man in general, I don't know even the destiny of the man I am most interested in, namely myself. Each second I am ignorant of what is going to happen to me in the next second. I dare say, so are you. So is the premier of Britain, Mr. Wilson—or else he would have ducked in time to avoid the stink-bomb hurled at him in one of his election campaigns. (I only hope no such thing happens to me here.) Yet, Mr. Wilson and all the politicians and all the statesmen and all the intellectuals and all of us big and small are eating our heads away worrying over such issues as the future of Vietnam, the possibility of a third world-war, the destiny of mankind, etc., etc.,—we who are ignorant of the next second !

¹ *Words of the Mother* (1949), p. 102.

The question therefore arises : Is it worthwhile to ask such a question ? Is it at all possible for us here to know our destiny ?—

Here where our half-lit ignorance skirts the gulfs
On the dumb bosom of the ambiguous earth,
Here where one knows not even the step in front
And Truth has her throne on the shadowy back of doubt.¹

Well, if we accept the view that :

This world was not built with random bricks of chance,
A blind god is not destiny's architect;
A conscious power has drawn the plan of life,
There is a meaning in each curve and line²—

then we must admit the possibility of becoming conscious of this Plan—to know our destiny. Of course we should not expect it to be within our immediate grasp and we must be prepared to fulfil the necessary conditions. As the Mother puts it :

“To foresee destiny ! How many have tried, how many systems have been elaborated, how many sciences of divination created, developed and then have perished under the charge of charlatanism or superstition. And why is destiny always so unforeseeable; since it has been proved that everything is inescapably determined, how is it that one cannot succeed in knowing the determinism with certitude ?”

The Mother goes on to say : “Here also the solution is found in Yoga. By yogic discipline one can not only foresee destiny but can alter it, change it almost wholly.”³

But who shall pierce into the cryptic gulf
And learn what deep necessity of the soul
Determined casual deed and consequence ?
Absorbed in a routine of daily acts,
Our eyes are fixed on an external scene;
We hear the crash of the wheels of Circumstance
And wonder at the hidden cause of things.
Yet a foreseeing Knowledge might be ours,
If we could take our spirit's stand within,
If we could hear the muffled daemon voice.⁴

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* (1954), Bk. I, Canto I, p. 7.

² *Bulletin of Physical Education*, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 21.

⁴ *Savitri* (1954), Bk. I, Canto 4, p. 60.

³ *Ibid*, Vk. VI, Canto 2, p. 521.

Friends, the way has been shown to us. Let us not tarry therefore making fine lines — “the speech that labels more than it lights” — nor indulge in subtle metaphysical issues :

For not by Reason was creation made
And not by Reason can the Truth be seen.¹

We, the children of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, are, however, exceptionally fortunate; for it has been revealed to us that the ultimate destiny of man is godhead. Therefore, though the way is long and arduous and beset with all sorts of dangers, we shall face calmly all vicissitudes, carrying ever in our hearts the Master’s reassuring words :

Whatever the appearance we must bear,
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.
After we have served this great divided world
God’s bliss and oneness are our inborn right.
A date is fixed in the calender of the Unknown,
An anniversary of the Birth sublime :
Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,
All will come near that now is naught or far.”²

MANOJ

II

In the dead of the night preceding the dawn of civilisation, a million years ago, against the primitive darkness appeared the dim silhouette of a new species of animal. Striving and quarrelling, mating and hunting, gregarious, it began its cycle of existence, and the sensational and emotional impacts of everyday life teased the brain of these animals to some peculiar reactions; they wept and laughed, and the power of speech soon characterised them as *homo sapiens*. Helpless before the overwhelming elements, awe-struck by the sublimity of the universe, curious of the reason behind the mysterious unfolding of great events, they must have wondered : *Which way do we proceed ?*

In a million years of anabasis, man moved from the clan to the tribe, from the tribe to the nation, from the nation to the consciousness of the world as one; and, further, to an exploration beyond the limits of this too small planet. According to Sri

¹ *Ibid.*, Bk. II, Canto 10, p. 291.

² *Ibid.*, Bk. I, Canto 4, p. 68.

Aurobindo, in all early societies first we find a symbolic mentality that governs man.—as in the little-understood Vedic Age in India. From this stage the society on to the typical order with its increasing fixity in ideal type, and as it moves further towards the conventional stage it turns more and more into a structure of rigid grades and fixed hierarchies till in the end the whole system turns into a falsehood and a sham. Then revolting against this falsehood arise men of intellectual power and we have the age of Reason, Revolt, Progress, Freedom. Limited in aim and method, it is yet a necessary passage to the subjective age of humanity with its endless potentialities of a deeper self-discovery.

In the early ages, especially in the age of conventions, the individual has suffered enough under the weight of social laws and customs. Now the spirit of adventure and love of freedom in him has risen at last to shake off the deafening demands of the collectivistic conservatives around him. Now at last he is free to follow the course decreed by the law of his individual self-development. Now at last he has the assurance that it is not the individual who exists solely by the community, but it is the community that exists more by the individual. Today the individual is growing increasingly stronger in order to live by himself and, consequently, preparing to live by his inmost Divine self. Judging from the present course of man's evolution, it has been rightly assumed that he has now entered the long-awaited subjective age, which is no doubt a step towards self-knowledge and towards living in and from the self. But everything depends on how this step is taken. "A psychological self-knowledge tells us how there are in our being many frontal apparent selves and only one that is entirely secret and real."¹ And in *The Human Cycle* we have seen that the subjective period of human development becomes the most fruitful and creative when the individual does not rest in the apparent self, mistaking it for the real. For, the subjective period makes clear to us not only what man has become in the past but what he might be in the future. Existence is an illimitable Reality expressing itself in the multiple values of life. Life begins with Matter, and is fixed in type; as it develops there is an increase in the power of variation. Hence we conclude that man's individuality is his distinction because by this he understands the law of his being and development and, in the end, learns to go beyond himself. **TO DO THIS IS THE DESTINY OF MAN** and the object of his individual and social existence. "This is done primarily through the individual man; for this end man has become an individual soul, that the One may find and manifest Himself in each human being."²

Thus, armed with the knowledge of the external world and satiated with it, man has to turn his gaze inward and explore yet another space, another solar system within himself, follow the truly subjective path of the Integral Yoga leading to the inevitable and spiritual manifestation of the Divine Superman, which is the only destiny of man the transitional being in the process of evolution.

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, pp. 50-1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

But what exactly do we mean by Superman? Is ours the popular conception that supermanhood is nothing more important than a deification of the rare solitary ego that out-topped others in the force of our common human qualities"¹? Nietzsche, for instance, presents to us "a superman who fiercely and arrogantly repels the burden of sorrow and service, not one who arises victorious over mortality and suffering..."² But, as Sri Aurobindo points out, this is only a narrow and false presentation of the true superman; it is but an image of an enlarged human personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of the mind, of vital force, a massive exaggeration of the forces of human Ignorance, a return to barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force : THIS WOULD BE NO EVOLUTION ! "The gospel of true superman," according to Sri Aurobindo, "gives us a general ideal for the progressive human race and should not be turned into an arrogant claim for a class or individuals. It is a call to man to do what no species has yet done or aspired to do in terrestrial history, evolve itself consciously into the next superior type already half foreseen by the continual cyclic development of the world-idea in Nature's fruitful musings."³ Sri Aurobindo further says, "For what is supermanhood but a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man? He is made in God's image, but there is this difference between the divine Reality and its human representative that every thing which in the one is unlimited, spontaneous, absolute, harmonious, self-possessed becomes in the other limited, relative, laboured, discordant, deformed, possessed by struggle, kept by subservience to one's possessions, lost by the transience and insecurity which come from wrong holding. But in this constant imperfection there is always a craving and an aspiration towards perfection. Man, limited, yearns to the Infinite; relative, is attracted in all things towards their absolute; artificial in nature, drives towards a higher ease, mastery and naturalness that must for ever be denied to her inconscient forces and half-conscient animals; full of discords, he insists upon harmony; possessed by Nature and to her enslaved, is yet convinced of his mission to possess and master her. What he aspires to, is the sign of what he may be. He has to pass by a sort of transmutation of the earthly metal he now is out of flawed manhood into some higher symbol. For Man is Nature's great term of transition in which she grows conscious of her aim; in him she looks up from the animal with open eyes towards her divine ideal."⁴ Sri Aurobindo specifies in the last chapter of *The Life Divine*, "But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realised being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty,—not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Superman* (1944), p. 1.

² *Ibid*, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7

exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of ~~w~~ forward in evolutionary Nature."¹

This then is the true destiny of man : *to be the Divine Superman.*

PRITHWINDRA

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 1270.

(*Acknowledgement* . Passages in the first two paragraphs are written with the help of Dr. S. K. Ghose's summary of *The Human Cycle*)

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

(THE AMERICAN STUDENTS' VISIT TO SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM)

THE tall young man was gliding across the floor showing us the nimble footwork of an American folk dance. "It's simple," he was saying, "put your right leg across...like this...followed by the left leg..." I watched him intently. I watched his smooth, handsome face, the dark hair carelessly tossed back, his blue quizzical eyes, and of course the graceful movements as he swept past us to the other corner. I nudged Ken who sat beside me and whispered, "Take a good look at this fellow; this is something you see once in your life-time". He smiled and nodded.

To be frank Ken had no reason to disagree with me. Ken and Co. were American students come to India thanks to that brilliant co-operative venture of "students exchange". They had spent the early phase of their tour in Delhi and lived with Indian families. As a result they had bagged a number of "Indian parents" and "Indian cousins" and obviously this new mode of life was, as one of them remarked, "a strange and novel experience". They were now nearing the end of their visit and had dropped for a week into Sri Aurobindo Ashram since they were all interested in religions or, to widen that term, "spirituality". And now as they sipped their cool drinks and watched fascinated an Indian student perform the delicate intricacies of the Bharat Natyam, I wondered whether this farewell party given by the students of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education had not after all taken a new and more profound meaning—that of bringing two peoples geographically miles apart nearer together, and of nurturing their friendship in a manner that no political or such other motives can fruitfully accomplish. I believe I was not very much off the target.

As I looked around I could not help smiling to myself. What a strange gathering this was! There was Daniel, a chubby, heavy-footed young man in checked shorts (which always seemed to threaten to slip down) and blue shirt, from the north of the U.S., from "the wilderness and mountains and streams" as he loved to put it. Bespectacled Gary looked an unlikely combination of East and West in his Indian punjabi and crisp modern trousers; he was a student of psychology who hoped to become a professional photographer. Then, Claire, dreamy-eyed and soft-spoken, who unfortunately appeared to be considerably cowed down by a sunstroke. Judy was now on the floor trying her best to pick up the traditional poses of the Indian dances. "And how is Shiva?" she asked in her characteristic American accent. No one could possibly mistake her; she was an American, through and through—vivacious, lively, ever willing to learn and exchange views and gifted with a fine sense of humour.

And then of course there were the Indian students who represented a fair cross-section of the country : Gujaratis, Tamils, Panjabis, and the whole lot. It almost

seemed a dreamland where people from different sects and religions had suddenly come together, all anxious to know each other, to share the various beliefs and faiths, hopes and ideals, achievements and frustrations. The discussions and conversations were all free from formality and restriction, and one sensed in this freedom a greater nearness, a more intimate understanding of each other's problems and aspirations. Not that we agreed on all the problems — far from it. Indeed in that case the exchange would have been colourless, stale and shallow, dominated by a one-track narrow outlook that would have prohibited any diversity. The conflicting ideas, on the contrary, enlivened the proceeding, and all problems, political, economic or social in nature, seemed to take different colours when observed from different points of view. And yet in the midst of these diverging and outwardly conflicting firework of theories we could feel the everlasting bonds of unity, unity that we achieve through understanding and consideration of the difficulties of others, the affinity that is born of sympathy and love.

The cameras clicked and the amateur photographers hurried to take up new positions. Perhaps they felt, as I did, that this was a moment that should not be left to drift away with the flow of Time; that this was a moment to be stored and cherished forever. "A nice cultural exchange," it was Gary who now stood beside me. "Yes," acknowledged Ken, and drawled, "almost a cultural revolution." We all laughed at that. We would not have done so had this been said a month later. "Cultural Revolution" today denotes pulling down the statues of Buddha and Christ, and compelling people to behave in a regimented uniformity. What an abuse it is of the word "culture" and that too from the nation of Confucius and Lao-tse! But, then, perhaps it takes "all sorts to make a world".

I have often wondered whether the traditional division of the world into two parts, east and west, was ever reconcilable. Outwardly this imaginary grouping seemed well-grounded. The west consists of a different stock of people with a vastly different outlook on life and the world. They are a practical race who welcome life and its many-faced splendours. The east on the contrary with its metaphysical and mystical blend sees life and the world around in a different light. Will the two worlds ever meet hand-in-hand? Or will we forever remain the exotic "unknown" east and the American "strangers" from the west?

At the end of the function I asked Daniel why it was that he chose India when he could have gone to any of the European countries. "Well," he said, "I wanted to visit a country that was culturally vastly different from our own. You know, I wanted to see something new, a way of life that evidently I had not seen before. So I came here, I guess I was pretty well satisfied, for your culture is different. But then," he paused, "in the final analysis there is no difference at all."

I shall treasure this answer of Dan (incidentally not a Christian but a Bahai) for a long time to come. Yes, there is a difference in culture and outlook, make no mistake about that. But then is not this difference a mere superficial covering of a greater reality? Is it not a fact that despite all ideological differences we still welcome each

other, still feel some subtle affinity that holds us together ? Dan had the answer and he was right; for, in the last analysis, whether we be Americans or Indians, Hindus or Muslims, idealists or pragmatists, we have one thing in common...we are all human beings. And, whatever may be our local directions, is there not a single universal destiny for us ?

AMIT

SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

Scene : Palace of King Ashwapati

KING : Supreme Savitri is the Divine Mother. So I am a part of Savitri in my soul and nature. In my blood and heart her light is present. One day I will see her in me and in others. (*The King sits in deep thought. Rajguru enters. Music performance to please the King.*)

RAJGURU : O King, what is the matter today ?

KING : I want to see my soul and God.

RAJGURU : Then do yoga.

KING : What is yoga ?

RAJGURU : Yoga means to see the soul and God. One must surrender to his guru and God. One must pray and concentrate in his heart. One must increase his aspiration to realise the Divine in his soul and nature. Then one becomes a yogi. A yogi gets the Divine eye to see God everywhere.

KING : Who is a yogi ?

RAJGURU : A yogi kicks aside shame and fame,
He follows the will Supreme;
His peace cannot be erased
By hate, misfortune or disgrace.

God's seal on his task, he cannot fail;
He moves in silence with blissful gait;
His love supreme, too high, too powerful,
Difficult to hold, always misunderstood.

Krishna's presence in his heart,
He is liberated, God within;
In Ananda He lives, in Ananda He breathes,
Calm and tranquil he acts.

KING : Where is the seat of the Divine Eye ?

RAJGURU : Between the eyebrows, here. (*Indicating with finger*)

KING : What is the aspiration only for God ?

RAJGURU : I shall tell you a story.

There was Kumbha Mela in Hardwar. Two children were moving with their mother. Somehow the children got separated from the mother and began to cry. A volunteer took them to the camp and gave fruits and sweets. One become quiet but the other was calling "Ma, Ma." After a short time the mother arrived. Soon the

child became quiet and was full of joy. This is an example of aspiration only for the Divine.

KING : I understand.

(The King prostrates himself at the feet of Rajguru and gets blessings. He sits for meditation and concentrates in his heart. He feels a great peace coming down. Then he increases his aspiration for the Divine. In the heart he sees a bright light in which the soul in the form of the Divine Mother is visible. The soul is born, her name is SAVITRI.)

KING : Mother Divine in a silver sheen.

I am liberated, God within.

A VOICE : But you eat, act and think;

How liberated? tell me the link :

KING : Feeling the Divine light,

Nature guided by insight,

Enough to prove liberation's might.

PRAHLAD AGARWAL

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

NEWSLETTER

Nos. 11-12.

November-December 1966

I. Students in Conflict

Student unrest seems to have erupted into a world problem almost overnight and to seek the true cause in order to discover a remedy should naturally be the first consideration of those concerned with children, their welfare and education.

Those properly concerned with this momentous problem are primarily the parents who should somehow be made to realise their first responsibility. Next comes the older student who stands so often as a captain or a figure image of admiration, trust and sometimes even worship to the younger student. The teacher comes next and finally all those indirectly in authority from the head of the state down to the principal of the school. None of these people can turn away from the responsibility of facing this problem of conflict which burns in the heart of the students today because all are variously involved and must contribute some sincere thinking and heart-searching if it is to be resolved.

To attempt to say what each of these people should do would be not only most presumptuous but certainly controversial. We can, however, bring into focus the student image and try to see what factors have contributed to irritate the situation beyond *parental control* and *teacher discipline*. The italicised words are, I believe, obvious starting points to any inquiry. Parental control is, today, almost non-existent in most parts of the world mainly because of three reasons : 1) Children are, relative to their age, far more intelligent than the average parent realises. This is due to the leap in the evolving human consciousness, especially is this so in the last ten to twenty years. Perhaps only Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have been able to testify to this with any clarity. 2) The parent usually stands between the past and the future and cannot decide which to opt for. 3) The parent is usually far too unenthusiastic about the child's eagerness to try new ways and new methods for a more progressive future. He is far too content to let past glories be the lessons for the problems of today, and rarely thinks of tomorrow.

The Mother, many years ago, clearly indicated to students and teachers alike what the spirit of future education should be when She gave the following prayer :

"Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born against the past that seeks to

endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.”

If we are to fight successfully the great battle of the future we must abjure the inadequacies of the past and agree to change those defects in our nature which anchor us to the soil of the ignorance and the slime of our animal beginnings. We are, as Sri Aurobindo says, “transitional beings” evolving from a lower to a higher nature, and the sooner we understand that this is a fact and not just a philosophical image the sooner we shall be able to understand that this is the root of most of our misunderstandings *vis-à-vis* man, nature, the universe and world problems in an evolving consciousness.

From the student’s point of view the problem is much clearer because youth has an intuition of the future interwoven into the conscious need for progress; and this intuition in the present-day student is very much more conscious because channels of communication are vastly multiplied as compared to what they were when his teacher or parents went to school. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines of all kinds, advertisements and the increasing libraries of books, all help to inform him of what is going on in other parts of the world as well as in his own country. This up-to-date information together with the expectations of science technology, together with the evolutionary leap forward in consciousness, *puts the student in a far more mature position than his elders can appreciate* without identifying themselves with his point of view; so much so that he naturally cannot put up with those old fashioned methods of teaching which relied 50% on blind obedience to outworn shibboleths and often 50% on an out-of-date text book. The student of today, even in the kindergarten and primary classes, cannot be bluffed into accepting anything without question. If a child in the primary-science classes is told that the sun rises in the east he might very easily challenge the teacher with, “I thought you said that the earth turns towards the sun ?”

A university student seated in a room with a hundred or more other students listening to some old-time professor intone from ten-year-old notes that the student can buy in the bazaar for a few rupees, can only stand so much for so long, there comes a time and a fullness when his frustrated personality, craving to express itself, cries, “Enough ! how much longer must we endure this pretense, this masquerade, this educational charade !”

The remedy seems only to be found in a revolutionary change in classroom environment and teaching techniques in consonance with the needs of modern progress. The first step that seems to cry out for recognition is the need of the state to elevate the status of the teacher to a proper position of importance both for his own self-respect and the respect that should be accorded him by the students. Perhaps this is the key to the major part of the problem—mutual respect. When there is a mutual respect between student and teacher there is never any question of discipline. The teacher, nevertheless, has to merit that respect, and not only the teacher but all those in authority above him.

The student has to feel he is being considered. He has to have the assurance he is an important element in the future structure of the country. He has to know he is being treated, not as a number or the unit of a class, but as a human being, a living soul capable of contributing something worthwhile to the school to which he belongs, the university, the nation, the world.

2. *Answers to Questions*

a) Mathematics : *What is the highest award for mathematics ?*

Prof. P. J. Cohen of Stanford University and Dr. Stephen Smale of the University of California are the two winners of this year's highest award for mathematics, the Fields Math Medal at the International Congress of Mathematicians meeting in Moscow. Prof. Cohen's work showed that the "continuum hypothesis" is independent of the axioms of set theory; therefore the hypothesis cannot be proved until new axioms are formulated. Dr. Smale developed the Smale Theorem, an incredibly complex solution to a problem in differential topology. The theorem proves that a sphere can be turned inside out without forming a "crease". The Fields Medal is awarded every four years when the Congress meet and is open to young mathematicians (under 40) throughout the world not only in recognition of the work they already have done, but to encourage their further mathematical achievements.

b) *Does the Milky Way of the astronomers have a place in literature ?*

The Milky Way is famous in legend and poetry. Ovid called it "the high road paved with stars to the court of Jove." This was echoed by Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, to whom it was "the Way to God's eternal house." He also referred to it as "A broad and ample road whose dust is gold, and pavement stars." The ancient Vikings thought it was the path of the ghosts going to Valhalla—the palace of their heroes slain in battle. Longfellow made use of a similar image in *Hiawatha* :

Showed the broad white road in heaven,
Pathway of the ghosts, the shadows,
Running straight across the heavens,
Crowded with the ghosts, the shadows,
To the kingdom of Ponemah,
To the land of the hereafter,"

But, even in antiquity, a few people suspected its true explanation. One was the Greek philosopher Democritus who, in the fifth century B.C., proposed that all matter consists of tiny units called atoms. He also believed that the Milky Way was a vast swarm of very distant stars, each so far that it could not be seen as an individual point of light. This idea was confirmed in 1610 when Galileo, in Italy, examined the Milky Way with his newly made telescope, which revealed many of the separate stars which the unaided eye could not resolve,

3. *Thought of the Month*

“Men have made language, poetry, history, philosophy agents for the training of this side of intellectuality, necessary parts of a liberal education, but the immense educative force of music, painting and sculpture has not been duly recognised.”

SRI AUROBINDO, *The National Value of Art.*

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

TO BE OR NOT ?

OR

NEVER SAY NO IF YOU CAN

FUTURE man—
 Must have a dead-pan
 Face.
 And, when anyone says—NO !
 He must say...BO
 To the goose,
 And turn him into a swoose !
 He who says...IMPOSSIBLE
 Will be a “was”-able...
 For he who was
 Becomes impasse
 And cannot be!
 Q. E. D.
 Yet he could have been,
 Had he just
 Peeped behind the scene—
 And, instead of a comma,
 Put a full-stop
 To all the old comoedia—
 Then, stretching to his greatest height
 And yearning with all his inner might,
 Called upon the winds of Heaven
 To act for him as leaven.
 Then, on the double
 Would come a bubble
 Of Light.

LEENA