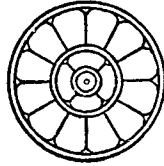


MOTHER INDIA

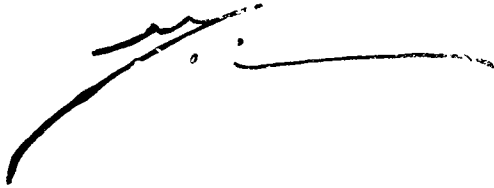
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVIII

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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NOTICE

Because of the rise in postal rates for foreign post, we are obliged to increase our subscription for foreign Countries.

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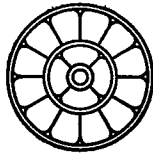
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Intellectually, the Truth is the point where all the opposites meet and join to make a unity.

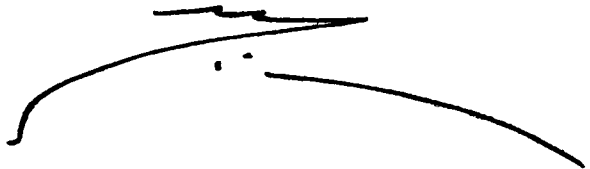
Practically, the Truth is the surrender of the ego to make possible the birth and manifestation of the Divine.

Doubt is the best arm used by the ego to protect itself from extinction.

These are remarks on the way which may lead you a little further.

They are sent with blessings.

6-10-1965



TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

JANUARY 26, 1940

P : Anilbaran was asking if you would send your blessings to the centenary celebration of Bejoy Goswami's birth.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't send any blessings publicly. Ask him to send his on his own behalf.

P : He asks if he can write to them that you have read their letter.

SRI AUROBINDO : What is the use ?

N : Somebody has written a letter to Anilbaran, in which he has put many metaphysical questions to you. (*N read out the letter but nobody could make head or tail of the questions.*)

SRI AUROBINDO : Let Anilbaran have the pleasure of answering them.

EVENING

The Radio News said that Germany had prepared 2,000 pocket battleships. We were cutting jokes on that unbelievable figure.

SRI AUROBINDO: The commentator should say a 2,000-pockets battleship, *i.e.*, a battleship with 2,000 pockets, whatever that may mean. One battleship takes one and a half to two years to prepare. How could Germany have prepared 2,000 ?

N (*after a while*) : I understand Dilip sent you some extracts from Huxley's book *After Many A Summer*. He wants to know how you found them. Anilkumar says that he doesn't find anything there to indicate that Huxley had any spiritual experience or has written from such experience. Dilip maintains that he must have done some sadhana in order to be able to write like that.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some silence*) : All I can say is that he has thought about the problem. And he himself says that experience is necessary. How can you say from his writings whether he had experience or not ? You know what my uncle

Krishnakumar Mitra said ? When *The Synthesis of Yoga* in the *Arya* was out, he said that it was all philosophy; there was nothing of yoga in it.

N : Did he do any yoga ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, he had some experiences in jail.

N : P wants to know how you found the criticism on his recent book.

SRI AUROBINDO : How can I say anything without reading the book ? But does the critic know anything about the Veda on which there is an article in P's book ?

P : No, and he says that in the criticism. These people hold the socialistic theory in literature. The style and the subject of the book must be approachable by the mass. Kalelkar has developed a racy style. Munshi's style also is very good.

N : Modern writers are more bent on perfecting style.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is because they have nothing to say. And what is queer, especially about the modern poets, is that they talk of writing in a popular style and about popular literature but they take care to see that their own writings may not be understandable by the people. And their popular style makes a muddle when they go to write serious things.

N : Basanta Chatterji has left Anilbaran and now taken up his pen against you. He has written an article, "The Veda and Sri Aurobindo", in which he says that like the westerners you have not accepted the reality of the gods. You have interpreted Agni as Tapa Shakti, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO : If I have spoken of Agni as representing Tapa Shakti, it doesn't mean that he is not a god. If Saraswati is represented as a symbol of learning, does it mean she is not a goddess? Where have I said that the Vedic gods are unreal?

P : Sri Aurobindo has nowhere said this; on the contrary, he has spoken of them as personalities. Chatterji hasn't read anything. In *The Life Divine* itself there is a passage on the point. (*P read out the passage.*)

JANUARY 27, 1940

P : Anilbaran was asking if a contradiction of Basanta Chatterji could be written, showing up his mistake or his ignorance.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, this can be done.

S : Who is this man ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He is Anilbaran's pet controversialist. (*Laughter*)

S : He hasn't read your *Hymns of the Atris* probably. There you have distinctly spoken about the Vedic gods.

P : In *The Life Divine*'s chapter on the Overmind, too.

S : He can be referred to that chapter.

P : Better not refer him to it. He will say : "Now what is this Overmind ?"

N : He is sure to misunderstand it.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know what he will not misunderstand.

N : He says the Gita is Sri Aurobindo's favourite book. But the Gita also speaks of the gods.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not only the Gita, but also Sri Aurobindo speaks of them.
(*Laughter*)

After the sponging, Sri Aurobindo asked for *The Hymns of the Atris*. He said he had forgotten what he had written there and wanted to verify S's reference.

N : Your critic says too that you have criticised Sayana's polytheistic interpretation of the Vedas.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where have I done so ?

N : He doesn't say.

P : We find that you have translated most of the Suktas of the Svetashwatara Upanishad.

SRI AUROBINDO : I translated this Upanishad long ago and the book came out from somewhere. I don't remember who published it, but I know that the publisher didn't even take my permission. I translated the Svetashwatara Upanishad while I was in Bengal. The manuscript is still with me.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*before P and S came up*) : I have read *The Hymns*. There I have distinctly said that the Vedic gods are no mere imageries but realities. I don't understand where this Basanta Chatterji found me denying them.

N : S has shown me also what you have written.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't remember if I have written anything against Sayana in my Introduction to *The Secret of the Veda*. I have to ask P.

When P came up, Sri Aurobindo put him the question.

P : I don't think you have written anything against Sayana's polytheism. However, I'll look up the Introduction.

SRI AUROBINDO : In *The Hymns* I have clearly held the gods to be realities and I have marked two or three passages saying so.

P : Going back to Armando Menezies and his work, do you know that Harin told Armando that his poetry has a mystic element ? Armando replied that he didn't know of it.

SRI AUROBINDO : What is meant by "mystic" ? If you mean something beyond the external material existence, then there are several mystic passages in his poems.

N : Dilip asks whether Francis Thompson can be called a great poet.

SRI AUROBINDO : Here, again, we must ask : what is meant by "great" ? At

any rate, Thompson has written one great poem, "The Hound of Heaven", and he who writes a great poem is necessarily great.

N : Dilip does admit that he has written a great poem.

SRI AUROBINDO : But he holds, I suppose, that the writer is still a small poet ?

N : No. What he wants to ascertain is whether by writing a single great poem one becomes a great poet. In that case Oscar Wilde and Chesterton are also great because they have each written a great poem.

SRI AUROBINDO : Thompson's poem is great in a peculiar way. Of course, if you take the mass of his work into account you may say he is not great. "Greatness" too can be variously defined.

N : I can only say that poets like Shakespeare are great. Also Wordsworth and Shelley can be called great poets.

P : Through "The Hound of Heaven" Thompson has expressed a whole life-experience and has achieved the summit of art while doing so. Considering these two points I think he must be called great.

SRI AUROBINDO : I may add that he has expressed a whole life-experience not only in an individual sense but also in a universal one. Whoever goes through the spiritual life gets the experience he has expressed. And yet can one jump to an absolute assertion from single poems ? As I said, greatness can be variously defined. Look at the French poet Villon. He is called great. If you take his poems one by one he is equal in greatness to any other poet. But if you take his work in a mass you can't justify his greatness.

Petrarch has written only sonnets and these too on merely one subject. And yet he is considered a great poet and given a place next to Dante. Simonides has not a single complete poem surviving : he is known only by fragments. But he is ranked as a great poet, second only to Pindar who is the greatest Greek lyricist. Nor has Pindar himself written very much. Sappho has come down to us in only one complete poem : the rest of her is in mere snatches. Still, she is hailed as a great poet. So there can be no fixed standard by which one can judge the greatness of a poet.

As to Thompson and Wilde and Chesterton, I believe "The Hound of Heaven" is greater than any poem by the last two.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE EMERGENCE OF THE PSYCHIC BEING OR SOUL

SRI AUROBINDO : ... It is the psychic opening and the action of the psychic on the mind, vital and physical that is important. 4-2-1936

Q : Now a rapid flow of love and joy springs out of my heart centre. Is there any possibility of the lower vital misusing this flow !

SRI AUROBINDO : It can be misused on a large scale only if there is a strong and vehement vital ego not accustomed to correction or else a vital full of the *Kāma-vāsanā*.¹ On a small scale it can be misused by the small selfishnesses, vanities, ambitions, demands of the lower vital supporting themselves upon it. If you are on guard against these things then there is no danger of misuse. If the psychic puts forth psychic discernment along with the love, there is no danger, for the light of psychic discernment at once refuses all mixture or misuse. 13-7-1936

Of course the ego and the vital with its claims and desires is always the main obstacle to the emergence of the psychic. For they make one live, act, do sadhana even for one's own sake and psychicism means to live, act and do sadhana for the sake of the Divine. 28-7-1936

If desire is rejected and no longer governs the thought, feeling or action and there is the steady aspiration of an entirely sincere self-giving, the psychic usually after a time opens of itself. 12-9-1936

Surrender and love-bhakti are not contrary things—they go together. It is true that at first surrender can be made through knowledge by the mind, but it implies a mental bhakti and, as soon as the surrender reaches the heart, the bhakti manifests as a feeling and with the feeling of bhakti love comes. 21-9-1936

Q : People say that an average human being starts first with the vital love, joy etc. and it is afterwards that it changes into pure psychic love, joy etc. For if he does not begin this way, how will he proceed?

SRI AUROBINDO : He doesn't usually. He begins and ends with the vital love except when the vital love changes into vital dislike, hatred, revolt, repugnance, contempt or indifference. Why should it change into pure psychic love etc? And why should a man not start with psychic love, joy etc.? There are very extraordinary theories that reign in the Ashram. People seem to take a pleasure in inventing theories that justify their not following the ideals of the sadhana. 30-12-1936

¹ Sexual desire.

Q : I don't, of course, mean to start with the vital love and joy. I simply wished to know if what is said was true or not.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not. There is no objection to start with vital love and afterwards find it difficult to enter into the psychic movement but that is no justification for making it a general rule of procedure for the Yoga and the right thing. If the people who come here are so average that they cannot have any psychic feeling of which even animals are capable, it is a bad look-out for the Yoga.

It is egoistic if the ego thinks that "it is the psychic fire". If the consciousness feels identified with the psychic fire and becomes conscious that the fire can burn out all impurities, then it is a true experience. 19-5-1936

Q : I am told that the psychic even when it unites itself with the Mother keeps its separation. It is the self that merges entirely like a drop of water in the sea.

SRI AUROBINDO : If the psychic unites itself, it cannot be separated; separation is non-union. The psychic realisation is one of diversity in unity (the portion and the whole); it is not one of dissolving like a drop of water in the sea—for then no love or devotion is possible unless it is love of oneself, devotion to oneself. 1-11-1936

It is impossible to become like a child giving oneself entirely until the psychic is in control and stronger than the vital. 12-2-1937

It is true of every soul on earth that it is a portion of the Divine Mother passing through the experiences of the Ignorance in order to arrive at the Truth of its being and be the instrument of a Divine Manifestation and work here. 15-2-1937

The word "mission" is rather excessive. It would imply a special mission which other souls have not. 15-2-1937

Q : It seems I have learnt a lot about myself during yesterday, my birthday, on which Mother had given me an interview. It may be perhaps a kind of experienced knowledge aided by her Force. I no more feel myself so weak, helpless or a slave to my defects and imperfections. Rather there is a growing surety that I shall be able to get rid of my whole lower nature.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is what we call growing conscious—a perception of which the base is the psychic though it may take place in the mind or vital or physical. No doubt the Force that woke it up came from the Mother. 9-9-1937

From NAGIN DOSHI

LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

(Continued from the January Issue)

MANCHESTER : 3RD OCTOBER, 1955 : FIRST VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF
WILLIAM H. DREWETT, WHERE SRI AUROBINDO HAD STAYED FROM
1879 TO 1884

IN the register of St. Paul's, Rev. Drewett's name was mentioned. The only thing known was that he had been a Congregational priest. I went to the Reference Library, Manchester, and looked up old reports of the Congregational Church. From one of them it was found that he had been the priest of the Stockport Road Church. His address was 84 Shakespeare Street.

Then the question was : how long had Rev. Drewett been in Manchester ? This was not known.

Referring to the old files of the *Manchester Guardian* I found that he had resigned his pastorage in March 1881; it was definitely established that he had not been working in Manchester in 1882.

In order to ascertain whether Rev. Drewett had worked as a priest in Australia—after his departure from England—as I had heard from Sri Aurobindo—I went through the reports of the Australian Church from 1882; but did not find his name there.

Inquiring at the Municipal Office whether any changes had taken place in Shakespeare Street since 1880, I found no definite information. I started for the place myself in the evening and found that Nelson Street is in a line with the Royal Infirmary. Nelson Street becomes Shakespeare Street further on. House No. 84 was in a dilapidated condition, the ground was all broken. Knocking for a long time at the door brought no response. The surrounding houses showed signs of poverty. House No 79 was near; it was a medical store and an old man was present there. I inquired how long he had been there. He said he had bought the house 36 years before, and told me that the street had not undergone any change during the interval. He also told me that before the First World War this locality had been inhabited by cultured men but now it was labour that had come in. I asked why the two houses No 80 and 78 were not in existence. He said that they had been pulled down and the empty space could clearly indicate the site.

*
**

I found in B.B.C. Manchester that religion is a subject of their broadcasts; priests are regularly called on T.V. also. England spends a good sum on spreading religious ideas. There is arrangement for different denominations too, on the B.B.C. I wonder why India could not follow the example of England in this respect.

I tried to get the house No 84 Shakespeare Street photographed, but with three photographers I failed to get any help. No one had any arrangement for taking photographs outdoors. I went to Bolton to try to get an Indian student's help in this task; but there also I failed.

5TH OCTOBER 1955

I saw the docks at Manchester, which are a triumph of man over Nature. They are about 35 miles from the sea ! A small creek-like river is widened and dug to bring steamers to the docks which are surrounded by land all round. In all big cities of England even now damage due to German bombing can be seen. The Manchester Docks were hard hit.

9TH NOVEMBER 1955 : SECOND VISIT

As I had not succeeded in taking the photo of house No 84 Shakespeare Street during my first visit on 3rd October, I had to go to Manchester again for that purpose. Fortunately Willie Lovegrove drove me to Manchester from Hampton-in-Arden. It was arranged with the controller of B.B.C. Manchester, Mr. Cave-Brown-Cave, that I would meet a number of invited persons in his office at Piccadilly. I stayed at the Essex Hotel. I suggested to Mr. Miller, who was assistant to the Director, to try to contact a daily or a weekly paper to find out whether a photographer was available. Accordingly I was informed that a photographer would come to the hotel at 3.30. p.m.

Fortunately Shakespeare Street was only five minutes' walk from the Essex Hotel. But it was raining and cloudy. The photographer had flashlight with him. Three photos were taken and they all came out well. At the very time a man who looked like a soldier came out of the house with a small girl. I asked him the name of the owner and took it down. Going to the place indicated I found that the rent was being collected by a firm of solicitors and the owner was even willing to sell it. I did not succeed in eliciting more information about Rev. Drewett nor about the owner of the house.

I met Dr. Cyril Bailey, the only living contemporary of Sri Aurobindo from St. Paul's school, London, on 8th October 1955 at Wantage, Berkshire. He had been professor of philosophy at Balliol College, Oxford, from 1898-1926. And during the last war he was again at Oxford. He has been the governor of St. Paul's school for the last 50 years. My appointment was in the afternoon. I reached his place 'Mulberrys' at 3.30. p.m.

The house was small, simple and quiet. When I knocked, someone opened the door. After putting the overcoat in the ante-room I turned and saw a small, lean man, 84 years old, with an intelligent face welcoming me. I greeted him in Indian style with Namaskar.

He said : "I do not often go out at my age and I don't see many persons. I have worked for many years at St. Paul's. I have asked to be relieved. Perhaps this year I shall be free."

I started about Sri Aurobindo, and showed him two photographs of his childhood. His eyes brightened; he said about one, "Yes, I can recognise him here, but in the other photograph he is not recognisable."

I tried to put his mind 70 years back by referring to his days at St. Paul's as a student. He described Dr. Walker, the high-master, which reminded me of the words of Chesterton : "Surrounded by the aroma of havanna leaf, a man with a deep sonorous voice, an impressive personality. He took very few classes. He used to take the youngest students and coach them in subjects in which they were weak." This agreed with what Sri Aurobindo had told us. Dr. Bailey said, "Once he (Dr. Walker) was taking such a class and I had to do my Greek lesson. He used to pace up and down the room, sometimes stopping at a desk to explain something to a student. One day I heard from behind : 'Do not steal the poet's gold.' I was puzzled as I was not stealing anything. A second time I heard the same sentence, then I understood that he wanted me to translate it into Greek."

The topic of our talk changed. Now it was limitation of the human reason. Dr. Bailey said, "Even the animals have intelligence which works as instinct; but it is a form of knowledge—only there is no logic, no argument."

I brought to his notice Sri Aurobindo's Alipore jail experience, his place in the Indian political struggle, and his great philosophical and spiritual synthesis. He asked me about the Colloquium at Oxford. I told him of the philosophers and their preoccupation with "Analysis" and "Reconstruction". He was not happy about it.

He said that he had been more familiar with Monomohan Ghose than with Sri Aurobindo at St. Paul's. "The age between 13 and 18 is such that boys hardly want to know all the details about one another. They have no interest in them." What he said was true; Sri Aurobindo was at St. Paul's, he was a scholar and took prizes and won a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, from St. Paul's and yet Cyril Bailey, his contemporary, did not know it. He showed me round his house, a solid structure without upstairs, with a fine lawn and some apple trees. The water for use was heated by fuel stored up in a reservoir and used during day to wash hands, clean utensils, etc. Electricity was there but no water-pipe, no drainage. A small nursery garden with glass doors was also there. Mrs. Bailey came at 5 p.m. and joined us at tea and brought out a home-made cake which really was very tasty. She had gone to join the prayer for the harvest and the folk songs that are sung on the occasion. Both seemed to be interested in this aspect of collective life of Christianity.

Dr. Bailey showed an inclination to read Diwaker's *Maha Yogi*, his life of Sri Aurobindo. I sent him the book from London. He did not appreciate in it the hard strictures on the British Rule in India.

He wrote to me the following letter on receiving the book.

The Mulberries, East Hanney, Wantage,
Berkshire,
26-10-1955

Dear Mr. Purani,

Many thanks for your letter and for procuring me a copy of 'Maha Yogi', which I am very glad to possess. I am reading it with interest. It tells me much that I did not know of Aurobindo, and, what is more,—it is the first time that I have read the history of that period and of the British occupation from the Indian point of view. I can understand and appreciate it and see how British actions and aims were interpreted often, I fear, rightly. But I think that the author does not do justice to the genuine love of many of the I.C.S. members for India and Indian friends. I do not think it was all "exploitation". Aurobindo's was a beautiful mind and educated. I wish I had known him better as a boy. I have an affection for Man Mohan which I wish could have included his brother.

Mrs. Bailey asks me to send you her greetings. Accept also my own.

Yours sincerely,

Cyril Bailey.

I wrote back :

5th November 1955

Dear Mr. Bailey,

I had to go to Durham and have come back only today.

Many thanks for your kind letter.

I agree with you about the one-sidedness or lopsidedness of judgment not only in this book but, I am afraid, in many other books written by young nationalist Indians. Perhaps it is excusable on the ground that freedom is a new experience to many of them. It takes time to realise the severe limitations even of national freedom and sovereignty. But I trust Indian Culture is old enough and ripe enough to outgrow this stage in a short time. We all expect an era of greater cultural interchange to pave the way for a really great human culture.

It is by stressing the points of human contact, which were far from being negligible and which have always existed in the past in spite of political differences and fights, that the two cultures and the two nations might be brought together to mutual advantage.

It is in this light that Sri Aurobindo is a very real link between England and India or more properly between Europe and Asia. The sweep of his mind is universal, his vision is comprehensive, free from prejudice or prepossession and, over and above all, he brings to all human problems an insight and detachment, a power of expression and logic which makes him rank among the creators of future humanity.

This may sound an exaggeration but I am giving expression not merely to my feeling and attitude but to a conviction based on what studies I have been

able to make. I hope to send two of his books, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*—both bearing on problems of social reconstruction and political unification of mankind which I am sure you will enjoy.

Please give my respects to Mrs. Bailey.

Yours sincerely,
A. B. Purani.

Dr. Bailey wrote to Mr. Cohen :

December 9, 1955

I shall certainly hope to listen to Sri Purani's talk on Monday 19th. I am sorry that I shall not now meet him again, but am very glad to realise what a much greater man Sri Aurobindo was than I had realised. I have been reading the life with interest. I think that kind of mysticism does not come easily to the English mind, but it certainly gave me a great sense of respect and admiration.

Yours sincerely,
Cyril Bailey.

Dr. Bailey's admission about want of capacity to understand 'mysticism' is not about himself but about the English mentality in general. It is due to the difference in the cultural heritage not only of England but of Europe. The inclination to practise Yoga does not come naturally to the English mind. Looking to the practical and even utilitarian values of the culture, and the long history of its economic, political and rational development, it seems natural that it should be so.

The last letter from Dr. Bailey was received by Alan Cohen who had informed him of the formation of a study-circle in London.

January 6, 1956

I am interested to hear of the group in this country which follows the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. But I fear it is not for me; for one thing, I am too old in my 85th year, but more important, I am a convinced Christian and find it is more than I can do to make myself what I should be. I therefore regard Yoga with sympathetic interest, but not with more—it is too mystic for me.

Yours sincerely
Cyril Bailey.

I have purposely given these quotations as they shed light on the attitude of educated Englishmen to spirituality. The reasons for the attitude also become clear :

(1) The Christian religion as practised in Europe does not lead to any concrete spiritual experience—except, perhaps, for a small minority in the Roman Catholic church. Yoga, or any system of psychological discipline that is consciously practised, does not easily appeal to the English mind, and this is understandable. It thinks : Why not choose one of the intellectual or ethical ideals which mankind has found in the past and follow it in life ? After all, man has to practise his religion with his ordinary nature; the essence of religion is the observance of all its injunctions and ceremonies, not concrete inner experience of the Reality. Such an attitude may admit

some element of faith, devotion and even mysticism but it is a concession to human weakness. Hardly any Christian in Europe imagines it possible to go beyond the practice of ethical ideals as represented in Christianity. Of course, one great truth which most of the "convinced Christians" try to practise is the ideal of universal love based on brotherhood of man; they devote themselves to altruistic works, to service, to charity. That the pursuit of religion should end in an experience and possibly a change of consciousness is not acceptable to them.

The interpretation of the utterance of Christ, "I and my Father are one", as the identity of the human soul with the essential Divine is easy for the Indian mind to understand. But the Christians seem to have narrowed it down to mean identity of Christ, the man, with the Divine. It is perhaps a legacy of the idea of an extracosmic God from a Jewish origin. The other great teaching, "Love thy neighbour as thyself", has evidently a spiritual background of identity of self in all. But it has hardly been followed in practice by Christians. European nations for years have respected that great tenet in the breach and non-Christian nations have been victims of economic and political exploitation wherein either the flag followed the church or the church followed the flag. Conversion has been the main motive. After the renaissance the age of reason and science dawned in Europe. The one great truth which science has established is the unity of Matter or of Material Energy. The scientific mind of today, or the modern mind in general, accepts untold possibilities of Matter or Energy. But it is not prepared to grant unlimited potentialities of life-energy or of mind or of the spirit. Such an acceptance smacks to it of mysticism, superstition, woolly-headedness, traditionalism, etc.

Even when unconnected with politics the highest practice of Christianity ends in conversions of willing persons, in acts of service, spread of education and such other altruistic activities. In the modern world it is difficult to prevent the reasoning intellect encroaching on the field of religion and spirituality. The Roman Catholic religion relied on devotion and faith as its strong supports. But with the rise of Protestantism and other sects those living fountains of spiritual life—faith and devotion—were lost and the pure intellect did not get a place in religion. When scientific progress had its impact on the economic and political life of Europe the whole cultural trend became extravert, utilitarian, practical. With the establishment of Empires and Colonies the Western nations seem to have been convinced of their culture being the highest and the greatest that man has attained, and the other nations on earth also accepted the values of that culture because nothing succeeds like success. In the attitude of "convinced Christians" like Dr. Cyril Bailey there is tacit acceptance of the cultural values of Europe of the 17th century as the highest possible. I feel sure that sooner or later European culture will have to change that attitude.

(To be continued)

A. B. PURANI

FIFTY-ONE YEARS AGO

ON 21st February, 1915, the Mother's 37th birthday was observed at Pondicherry. The next day she left India. The exigencies of the First World War were responsible for her departure.

On March 3, on board the *Kamo Maru*, the Mother records in her diary :

'Solitude, a harsh, intense solitude, and always this strong impression of having been flung headlong into an inferno of darkness ! Never at any moment of my life, in any circumstances, have I felt myself living in surroundings so entirely opposite to all that I am conscious of as true, so contrary to all that is the essence of my life. Sometimes when the impression and the contrast grow very intense, I cannot prevent my total submission from taking a hue of melancholy, and the calm and mute converse with the Master within is transformed for a moment into an invocation almost suppliant, "O Lord, what have I done that Thou throwest me thus into the sombre night ?" But at once the aspiration becomes more ardent, "Spare this being all weakening; grant that it may be the docile and clear-eyed instrument of Thy work, whatever that work may be."...'

The next day she writes :

'Always the same harsh solitude...but it is not painful, rather the contrary. In it is revealed more clearly the infinite and pure love in which the whole earth is immersed. By this love everything lives and is animated by it; the darkest shadows seem to become translucent and let its streams flow through them, and the most intense pain is transformed into a potent bliss.

'Each turn of the helix upon the deep ocean appears to carry me farther from my true destiny, from that which best expresses the divine Will; each hour that passes seems to plunge me back more and more into that past with which I had severed connection, sure of being called to new and vaster realisations; everything appears to draw me back towards a state of things totally contrary to the life of my soul, although it reigns uncontested over the external activities; and, in spite of the apparent sadness of the individual situation, the consciousness is so strongly established in a world which on all sides overpasses the personal limits, that the whole being exults in a constant perception of power and love.

'Tomorrow is obscure and illegible in the material fact; no light, ever so feeble, reveals to my bewildered sight the indication, the presence of the Divine. But something in the depths of my consciousness turns to the Invisible and Sovereign Witness and says to Him, "Thou plungest me, O Lord, into the most opaque darkness; it must be then because Thou hast so firmly established Thy light in me that Thou knowest it will stand the perilous test. Hast thou chosen me for descending into the vortex of this hell as Thy torch-bearer ? Hast Thou deemed my heart strong enough not to fail, my hand firm enough not to tremble ? And yet my individual being feels power-

less and weak; when Thou dost not manifest Thy Presence, it is more poorly equipped than the majority of those who do not know or who disregard Thee. In Thee alone is its strength and its capacity. If Thou art pleased to use it, nothing will be too difficult to accomplish, no task too vast and complex. But if Thou withdrawest, there is left only a poor child capable solely of nestling in Thy arms and sleeping there that sweet dreamless sleep in which nothing exists save Thou alone."

March 8. 'In a general way, the condition is one of calm and profound indifference; the being feels neither desire nor repulsion, neither enthusiasm nor depression, neither joy nor sorrow. It regards life as a spectacle in which it takes only a very small part; it perceives the actions and reactions, the conflicts of forces as things that at once belong to its own existence which overflows the small personality on every side and yet to that personality are altogether foreign and remote.

'But from time to time a great breath passes, a great breath of sorrow, of anguished isolation, of spiritual destitution,—one could say, the despairing appeal of Earth abandoned by the Divine...It is a pang as silent as it is cruel, a sorrow submissive, without revolt, without any desire to avoid or pass out of it and full of an infinite sweetness in which suffering and felicity are closely wedded; something infinitely vast, great and profound, too great, too profound perhaps to be understood by men... something which holds in it the seed of Tomorrow.'

There is a break of six weeks. Then an urgent need compels her to write again. On April 19, at Lunel, she pens :

'...The mind has recognised with good grace its error and made its perfect surrender to all that Thou wilt. The vital being is quietly satisfied in all circumstances. The feelings live in an equal and pure peace; the whole being is flooded with Thy vast, eternal light; Thy love penetrates and animates it. And yet the impression that the external fact is a falsehood has not been effaced, and the body, despite its indisputable good-will, is so profoundly shaken that it cannot regain the equilibrium of its health...

'The whole thing gives an impression of a void which is full of light, peace and immensity, eluding all form and all definition. It is the nihil, but a nihil which is real and which can endure eternally; for it is, even while having the perfect immensity of that which is not... Poor words which try to say what silence itself cannot express...'

On 20th May Sri Aurobindo writes to the Mother :

'Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the Yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, "Heaven and Earth equal and one." '

On July 31, at Marsillargues, the Mother records a similar experience :

'The heavens have been definitively conquered, and nothing and nobody has the power to take them from me. But the conquest of the earth has yet to be made; it is going on in the very heart of the turmoil, and, even when achieved, will still be

relative; in this world its victories are but stages leading progressively towards still more glorious victories...

'Thou hast said that the earth would die, and it will die to its old ignorance.

'Thou hast said that the earth would live, and it will live in the renewal of Thy Power.

'What words will ever tell the splendour of Thy Law and the magnificence of Thy Glory ! What words will express the Perfection of Thy Consciousness and the infinite Bliss of Thy Love !

'What words can sing Thy ineffable Peace and celebrate the Majesty of Thy Silence and the Grandeur of Thy omnipotent Truth !...'

At Paris, on November 2, she writes :

'As a strong breeze passes over the sea and crowns with foam its innumerable waves, so a great breath passed over the memory and awakened a multitude of reminiscences. Intense, complex, crowded the past lived again in a flash, losing nothing of its savour, no part of its riches.

'Then was the whole being raised up in a great uplift of adoration, and, gathering all its remembrances like an abundant harvest, it laid them, O Lord, at Thy feet as an offering...

'The personal existence is a canticle, perpetually renewed, which the universe offers to Thy inconceivable splendour.'

The long struggle between the earth-Nature and the Highest is a recurring theme henceforth in the Mother's notes. On November 7, at 3 o'clock, she says :

'Beyond all external signs, all particular circumstances, the minutes flowed on so majestically, in so solemn an inner silence, so deep and vast a calm, that my tears streamed freely. For the last two days the earth seems to be passing through a decisive crisis; it seems that the great, the formidable play between the material resistance and the spiritual powers, is nearing a conclusion, or, in any case, an element of capital importance has made, or is about to make, its appearance in the play...

'This sorrowful world kneels before Thee, O Lord, in mute supplication; this tortured Matter nestles at Thy feet, its last, its sole refuge; and so imploring Thee, it adores Thee, Thee whom it neither knows nor understands ! Its prayer rises like the cry of one in a last agony; that which is disappearing feels confusedly the possibility of living in Thee; the earth awaits Thy decree in a grandiose prostration. Listen, listen; its voice implores and supplicates Thee...'

On January 15, 1916, she asks, 'Will the great miracle of the integral Divine Life in the individual be accomplished at last ?'

A week later, 'O Lord, hasten, I implore Thee, the blessed day when the divine miracle will be accomplished, hasten the day of the realisation of the Divine upon earth!'

A period of transition, lasting for months. And then, on June 7, at Tokyo, she reveals the transfiguration of the vital being which is perhaps the most difficult part of the human personality for taming and training.

‘...Suddenly on the fifth June the veil was torn and there was light in my consciousness.

‘When I contemplated Thee under Thy individual form, O Lord of eternity, and implored Thee to take possession of Thy kingdom of the flesh, Thou hast set in motion, in activity, this vital form which, for the necessity of development and unification, had been living for years in a receptive and harmonious passivity, but as a stranger to all active manifestation of Thy will...

‘Little by little, the vital being was habituated to find harmony in the most intense action, as it had found it in passive surrender. And once this harmony was sufficiently established, there was light again in all parts of the being, and the consciousness of what had happened became complete.

‘Now the vital being has recovered in the midst of action the perception of Infinity and Eternity...’

December 5. It is an experience of the One in all and the transparency of matter before the gaze of the spirit :

‘ “Turn towards the earth”. The habitual injunction was heard in the silence of the immutable identification. Then the consciousness became that of the One in all. “Everywhere and in all in whom thou canst see the One, will be awakened the consciousness of this identity with the Divine. Look”... It was a Japanese street, brilliantly illuminated with gay lanterns, set out picturesquely with vivid colours. And as whatever was conscious moved forward in the street, the Divine became visible in each and in all. One of the slight houses became transparent, so that one could see a woman seated on a tatami in a sumptuous violet kimono embroidered with gold and vivid colours. The woman was beautiful and must have been between thirty-five and forty. She played on a golden samisen. At her feet was a young child. And in the woman also the Divine was visible.’

On December 8, the Mother had a conversation with the Lord in the morning :

‘Thou hast made the vital being awake with the magic wand of Thy impulsion and Thou saidst to it : “Awake, bend the bow of thy will, for the hour of action will soon come.” Suddenly awakened, the vital being rose, stretched itself and shook off the dust of its long torpor; it perceived from the elasticity of its members that it was still vigorous and fit to act. And it was with an ardent faith that it replied to the sovereign call : “Here am I, what demandest Thou of me, O Lord ?”...

‘As always, O Lord, when the voice of the depths was silent, the sublime and all-powerful benediction enveloped me fully.

‘And for a moment, the Master and the instrument were but one : The One without a second, the Eternal, the Infinite.’

The Mother works for the divinisation of humanity and the earth. She is truly happy at each receptive acceptance by the human of the Divine. On March 31, 1917, she writes :

‘Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy Divine breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume, all becomes more friendly.

‘How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy joy is sufficient to efface so much darkness, so many sorrows, and a single ray of Thy glory can light up thus the dullest pebble, illumine the blackest consciousness !

‘Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and unhopèd-for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a heart leaps at the touch of Thy Divine breath...

‘Drop by drop Thou allowest to fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty love. When these drops of eternal light descend softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain upon earth of golden stars one by one from a sombre firmament.

‘All kneels in mute devotion before this ever renewed miracle.’

But man with his gross, earth-bound, material nature refuses to participate in the Divine manifestation.

On September 3, 1919, the Mother writes at Oiwake :

‘Since the man refused the meal I had prepared with so much love and care, I invoked the God to take it.

‘My God, Thou hast accepted my invitation, Thou hast come to sit at my table, and in exchange for my poor and humble offering Thou hast granted to me the last liberation.’

The Lord will send her the ordeal, the struggle. But the Mother will welcome it with gladness. The work for the transformation of all the elements up to the most obscure will continue. She accepts the Herculean task with a smile.

Says she, ‘My body smiles to Thee with happiness as before my soul smiled to Thee !’

Compiled by S. S. JHUNJHUNWALA

AN INQUIRY INTO MODERN PSYCHOLOGY IN LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S PSYCHOLOGY

(Continued from the issue of September, 1965)

A NEW PSYCHOLOGY

V

"Knowledge for Being's Sake"

Mühling stated that the way of ordinary psychology had been an "...objective inquiry into the subjective nature of man...." It has proceeded under the conception that knowledge can be attained only by objective means. It had not known that objective reality is just a small cross-section of subjective existence. "...it is self-bound by the very means with which it tries to liberate itself...." But soon it would have to recognize the essential limitations of its method of scientific research.

An integral psychology, said Mühling, would proceed in part "by a subjective inquiry into the nature of the scientist" and would thus "...attain its goal of self-being."

Knowledge for action's sake is of a little value, knowledge for knowledge's sake of no value at all. What is fundamentally important is knowledge for being's sake. For it is being that determines action, not *vice versa*.

If psychology could adopt this experiential or existential viewpoint it would become a creative and useful instrument of discovery; it would fulfill its scientific purpose more completely than by any other method and justify its workings beyond any doubt. But above all it would help man to know himself and to become himself.¹

Therefore, said Sri Aurobindo, if an individual is

...to find the truth of things and the law of his being in relation to that truth he must go deeper and fathom the subjective secret of himself and things as well as their objective forms and surroundings.

This he might attempt to do with the power of his critical and analytical reason which had carried him thus far; "...but not for long...." For as he studied himself and the world he could not but come face to face with his own soul and the soul of the world "...and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex, so full of hidden secrets and powers..." that his intellectual reason would betray itself "...as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker : it is successfully analytical only of superficialities

¹ Jobst Mühling, "The Future of Psychology," *Mother India*, 12:20-21, April, 1960.

and of what lies just behind the superficialities....” The need of a deeper knowledge, said Sri Aurobindo, is bound to turn him to the discovery of powers and resources within himself. He would find that he could only know himself completely by becoming actively self-aware and not merely self-critical,

...by more and more living in his soul and acting out of it rather than floundering on surfaces, by putting himself into conscious harmony with that which lies behind his superficial mentality and psychology and by enlightening his reason and making dynamic his action through this deeper light and power to which he thus opens.

In this process the rationalistic ideal would begin to submit to the ideal of intuitional knowledge and a growing self-awareness.¹

Our surface existence is only a surface and it is there that ignorance has its full reign. To know we must go within ourselves and see with an inner knowledge. All that exists on the surface “...is a small and diminished representation of our secret greater existence.”²

In ourselves consciousness seems to be identical with mind. In truth, however, mind is not the whole of us;

...there is also in us a life and a body, a subconscious and an inconscience; there is a spiritual entity whose origin and secret truth carry us into an occult inward consciousness and a superconscience.³

But the immobile self in us can be found only when the outer mental and vital activities are quiet, as it is “...seated deep within and is represented on the surface only by the intuitive sense of self-existence....” Further, it is misrepresented by the mental, vital and physical ego-sense and thus “...its truth has to be experienced in the mind’s silence...”⁴

But the mobile or active parts of our surface being are also diminished figures of greater things that are hidden in the depths of our nature.

A mind with immeasurably wider and more subtle perceptions, a life-energy with a greater dynamism, a subtle-physical substance with a larger and finer receptivity are building out of themselves our surface evolution.⁵

Still deeper is a psychic entity there behind these occult activities, which is the true support of our individuation; the ego is only an outward and false substitute : for in

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (New York: Sri Aurobindo Library, Inc., 1950), pp 30-31.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1951), p. 467.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 468.

truth it is this secret soul that supports and holds together our experience of self and of the world; our mental, vital, physical, external ego is a superficial construction of nature. It is only when we have seen both our self and our nature as a whole, in the depths as well as on the surface, that we can have a true basis of knowledge.¹

The principle of spirituality has yet to affirm itself in its own complete right and sovereignty; it has been until now a power for the mental being to escape from itself or to refine and raise itself to a spiritual poise. There has been an enlargement of the being in a spiritualized mind and heart, but not—or not yet sufficiently—the self-affirmation of the spirit in its own dynamic and sovereign mastery free from the mind's limitations and from the mental instrumentation.²

If the full potentialities of the individual are to be realized the gulf between mind and supermind has to be bridged, "...the closed passages opened and the roads of ascent and descent created where there is now a void and a silence." This can be done, according to Sri Aurobindo, only by a psychological transformation.³

Sri Aurobindo devoted his life to a study of the psychological and practical conditions under which such a transformation can be changed from an essential possibility into a dynamic potentiality. It is beyond the limits of the present study to explore Sri Aurobindo's theory of psychological transformation. The process has been carefully delineated by him in his many writings, where he not only synthesizes the knowledge of East and West, but produces a new and greater psychology whereby man can attain his goal of full realization and perfection, his true individuation.⁴

A New Education

In modern education, as contrasted with the old authoritarian form, there is a glimmering of the realization that each individual is a self-developing soul and that the business of parents and teachers is "...to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being...."

....It is not yet realized what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within.

That, if ever given the chance to come forward, and still more if called into the foreground as "the leader of the march set in our front," would itself take the greater part of education out of the hands of parents and teachers and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards the fulfilment of its potentials; this is the crux of a new education.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 468.

² *Ibid.*, p. 792.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 793.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

The newer methods of education are on the right path because of a "...closer touch attempted with the psychical being behind the vital and physical mentality...." And a growing reliance upon its possibilities

...must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.¹

(To be concluded)

MILIANA DRACHMAN

¹ Jobst Muhling, "The Future of Psychology," *Moher India*, 12:25, April, 1960.

SOUL-SCAPES

O CLOUD-POTENTIAL, leaning over my soil,
Melt into Sun-willed showers, thrilled irised hours
Of a long luxuriant Day—leaving behind
A still absorbing Night's rich memory-sky.
There my spent moment-drops etherealized
Shall have their imaged star-seed afterhush
Bliss-tense for each birth's brighter episodes
Informed with the heightened climax of the Whole
Arrayed in the Vision of soul's eternal Now.

NARESH

TWO LOVES

Love, crave-born
Once-known ageless dweller,
Your open abyss
Severed my screaming heart.

Steel-daggered jaws
Opened on a desert pit
Where a deafening red stridency
Fed crimson upon crimson death.

Devourer devouring
You sought but ardent pain,
Knew but black chilled terror,
And shouting wrecked the soul and being.

Estranged, mute,
Man stood stilled,
Deaf witness
To the crucified call
Of love craving love.

But another love
Has just now trembled
—Secret stirring of a shy white rose,
A love love-born
Flowing from the flowered pool
Of a brimming peaceful heart.

Surging from a fulness,
It asks nor wants but gives
From an ever replenished
Quiet core of being.

Milk-white secret Fount,
Sweet cradle-depth of angels,
You hold the mystery
Of the gift-giving child.

Nascent joy,
Pearl of psychic love,
A smile surprised !

Within this new heart—Her heart,
Man stands at one,
United in Her love-stream,
The Divine Mother's.

Love essence,
Love inexplicable,
Love love-born,
Newcomer,
Stay awhile !
O Mother, make it stay awhile !

SRIMAYI

WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

(Continued from the January issue)

16

“SINCE you have permitted me to speak without any hesitation, I shall tell you all,” said Parvati. “I would ask you not to brush everything aside and explain all away by your knowledge of the fundamental principles. Another thing is this : the way in which you have come to me is such, that if now I am obliged to remain apart from you it would be tantamount to my death. I shall not be able to remain away from you. I stand in no need of acquiring spiritual powers. Don’t you see till now I have lived uselessly, your arrival gives promise of fulfilment—I feel my existence is fulfilled by your company; don’t leave me now.”

“This is just what I was afraid of, Parvati,” said Arka. “You must now plainly understand that in the world, in the attachment between the husband and the wife, the woman is completed by the man and the man’s life is made fuller by the woman. The woman is Prakriti, and she cannot exist without a support—this means that you now need a support. But you must do without the gross material support for the present. The complete enjoyment of two persons tends towards creation and it is for that reason Nature is ever prone to create the favourable circumstances to fulfil it, because the intention of Nature is to bring forth creatures. This is how Nature’s aim is achieved. But, in your case, you are a widow, a Brahmacharini, and lately you have had a taste of spiritual life; more, you are initiated now. I am a Brahmachari from my childhood. If Nature had had other intentions the course of my life would have been quite another. You do not know the story of my birth; if you did, you would easily understand that my life’s path is totally different, so different that there exists no favourable impulse of Nature appropriate for procreation. Therefore....”

Parvati, interrupting, said, “I do not need to know your life-story, nor do we need to lead a conjugal life as there exists no impulse to beget children—therefore as there exists no other purpose than to live near each other, where is the fault or difficulty ? By your very presence and association I feel completed whereas your absence renders me utterly lifeless and powerless, Why is it so? Is this something that can be brushed away by words or reasoning? In this, too, I discern an intention of Nature; if it were not so, why then has your very existence become so deeply engraved in my heart? When you first came here you were a mere boy of six or seven years, I was of the same age too. But why is it then that I have never forgotten you? Again, your advent now has impressed me profoundly and I feel that you have come as my

Ishta, my God. You have chased away all my sorrows. So why are you reluctant to take me with you?—I see no possibility of any harm coming to you from me.”

“You see, Parvati,” said Arka, “from your very childhood you have been of a tranquil nature, suffering without a word all the vicissitudes of life, accepting them as your lot decreed by Fate. You were married but you never did enjoy a conjugal life with your husband. Thus a life of frustration kept all your secret desires in a dormant condition. Now by my arrival here you have risen above your feeling of want; you have even tasted what is true freedom. But, in spite of your experience of that bliss of the spiritual realm, the sleeping desires in you are trying to rise to fulfil your woman’s nature, seeking with great force the means for satisfying them. I can clearly see what terrible disaster would result if we, even for a moment, deviate from our untarnished path. You are intelligent, of a nature calm and peaceful and, though a woman, yet endowed with considerable strength. So if you pull me in this way and I have to fight at every step of my life, the purpose of my living will be frustrated. Is this your return for all the help I have given you ? Is this how you are going to express your gratitude?”

“No, no, that is not quite correct,” said Parvati; “are you such a weak person that you need to battle against an insignificant woman like me to save yourself ? I have some idea of your strength, I don’t think you need even a hundredth part of that strength to surmount my attraction for you.”

“Let me tell you a secret,” said Arka, “which married people given over to a sexual life do not know; this deep truth is quite beyond them; nay, there is no possibility of their knowing about it, because only to one who has been a Brahmachari, one of absolute sexual abstinence, from his very childhood is this truth revealed. If this one-pointed love of yours for me were totally devoid of any idea of sensual satisfaction, then you would be the possessor of Nature’s infinite wealth and do a great good to humanity. But if, instead, you harbour any desire clamouring for the satisfaction of mental, vital, physical needs, you shall never be able to acquire it. By the decree of the Divine I am without desire; you too have never come in contact with a man, so are quite pure; now how happy we would be if you could totally reject this craving from you! All my efforts are to save you from the pull of the lower modes of Nature. As a result, if we succeed, our existence is sure to be fulfilled by the acquisition of a great, glorious and blissful Power, and through us a noble intention of Nature will be realised.”

“The intention of Nature that you are speaking of, is it not in this too ?” asked Parvati. “Since my heart wants none other than you, then if we do unite, how can that be something inferior? I fail to understand.”

Arka said, “If like any ordinary worldly couple we were to come together impelled by the lust for sexual relations, then Nature will direct us in that inferior path of begetting and bringing up of children and there will be no possibility of any great work. You are a woman and for you this is a good work, but I have received the clue of a very noble work that I must pursue, I cannot forsake it for you and

drift away in the current of an inferior existence. Whereas, if you could renounce the impulse of satisfying an insignificant happiness, we need never part."

Parvati said, "If you have clearly understood me, you cannot then be of a different opinion. Is it all so insignificant, if my life be fulfilled with you? Do you stand to gain nothing by it? Won't you be happy too? Are we not one in soul?"

"No, no, no! No two persons can be of one soul as long as there has been no abiding realisation of the Self, and that is our ultimate aim," said Arka. "Nothing is achieved by words of knowledge alone, so long as there is no true vision of the Truth. We often discuss that realisation even before getting any glimpse of it, and imagine we have attained. After a great deal of effort can one realise the bliss of the Self; then will come the inalienable Samadhi, undifferentiated trance. On the other hand, the self-giving of a woman due to her attraction for a man will no longer remain something spoken but will draw him down to action; to try to avoid it will be something without meaning, the ramblings of a mad man. That attraction will inevitably lead him towards hell, although it is also true that a true love may even bring liberation."

For a long time Parvati was listening with her eyes closed; now she said, "I can no longer listen to you—your words are so terrible—I am not so enlightened as to accept what you say and follow your instructions. It is not so easy, there is no possibility of my understanding all yet. That I am still quietly listening and am able to think is due to the company of a very great man and by his grace. Let us stop here to-day. Whatever you will ask me to do I shall not let go undone."

After two or three days Parvati started the conversation again. She said, "I guessed from the very beginning that you would never accept my love for you nor would be indulgent to it and that is why I was so hesitant to speak of it."

She continued, "Will you please tell me why you were so agitated in this matter? Your words convey to me the idea that not only there is the fear of a great evil but that you have even had a glimpse of that possibility."

"Oh! well, Parvati," said Arka, "You women are a great and favourite instrument of the World-Mother to fulfil her design, and you do not even know it. The natural and soft delicacy of your nature is such a potent power attacking one so simply and noiselessly, working through the being of the victim with such efficiency that it brings him under its full control and he has not even the faintest suspicion of the terrible consequences at the beginning. Even the most wise with the mind under a perfect control has not the least inkling of it. Just as an elephant has no idea of his huge body and enormous strength, similarly Nature has made you quite blind to the infinite power of attraction she has endowed you with—or else she would have had to alter her methods for begetting offspring."

"Is it really true that the final result of our love may be so harmful as to leave you utterly without any peace at the end? It seems to me that you, with a view to be very careful, are depicting it as so terrible, just to frighten me. I cannot at all

dream even that the attachment of my heart for you would destroy your purity and make you deviate from your goal."

"Firstly, just now, the influence of the spiritual Power is on you. Remarkable indeed is this period of its unfolding. In this condition, you have risen so high that from there you can have no suspicion of any harm. A great light has suffused even your body, emanating from the spirit through your heart. By this state of your purity, the most impure creature would be purified if he came in contact with you; even more, if the most lustful of human animal came face to face with you, in him too a great wave of purity would descend, and he would begin to regret his past life. It is for this that I would like you to stay here for sometime. Be that as it may, what is true is that in this state your love now is as spotless as purest gold. But you will have to descend from that height, as you have not yet attained the full spiritual realisation. Many will be such ascents and descents. The glory of this love of yours may not remain as purified when you will come down into the lower stratum of a pragmatic world. Because all the demands of your feminine nature are yet unfulfilled, as soon as you would descend your heart would be fiercely attacked through your mind, through the opportunities that will come in the circumstances of time, place and object."

That day they stopped at that point—the Avadhuta deliberately refrained from further discussions. Parvati, too, had to be content, in spite of the fact that the impetus of arriving at a conclusion was still very strong in her.

(To be continued)

PROMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Kalyan K. Choudhuri from the Bengali)

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(Continued from the January issue)

Part Three : The Conquest of Food-Need

IV. METAPHYSICS OF HUNGER : THE UNIVERSAL *Yajña*

A thousand salutations to the Great Mother who pervadest all becomings
in the shape of Hunger and Thirst.

(Chandi Saptashati, III. 16, 19)

To whatever god the oblation is offered, Hunger and Thirst surely have
their share in the offering.¹

(Aitareya Upanishad, I.2.5)

By the Apāna...food was seized and of Apāna Death was born.

(Ibid., I.3.10 & I.1.4)

They preyed upon the world and were its prey.

(Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, Book Two, Canto 4)

A Hunger amorous of its suffering prey,
Life that devours, my image see in things.

(Ibid., Book Nine, Canto 2)

Without being possessed one does not possess oneself utterly.

(Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 189)

Let it be the divine Enjoyer who possesses the enjoyment and by him
let us be its possessors.²

(Rig Veda, VII. 41-5)

WE have ventured to put forward the suggestion that because of the actually prevailing predatory method of satisfying its hunger, bodily life has ultimately to fall a prey to death, and this is due to some occult interlinking between the two processes. We are therefore in search of a solution that will obviate for the body the necessity of grabbing material aliments but enable it all the same to remain a viable concern with all its dynamic activity unimpaired.

¹ & ² Sri Aurobindo's translations.

But we have suggested, too, that the physical body's hunger and thirst and the particular way of their satisfaction are but reflections in the physical sheath, *annamaya koṣa*, of something that is operative in all other sheaths or *koṣas* of our being. And unless we effectuate a transfiguration of the very principle of Hunger and the manner of its satisfaction in the higher and deeper and more fundamental strands of our complex existence, no solution can possibly be forthcoming in the outermost realm of our physical living.

Let us then begin with a probing inquiry about the genesis of Hunger and Thirst in their most generalised aspect and try to find out the compelling factor behind the 'wrong seizing of food'¹ that has brought in its wake all sorts of malaise to the embodied life, culminating in the sombre finale of death.

This world has been created out of the Self-Being of Sachchidananda for His possession and creative enjoyment, *prajāvat saubhagam*, and it is He who is tasting all Beings and Becomings in an all-possessing and self-possessing self-existent delight.

Now all that is is Sachchidananda, *vāsudevaḥ sarvam*, and "every separate object in the universe is, in truth, itself the whole universe. The microcosm is one with the macrocosm."² Thus each being is in its essence one with the Lord of the world, *viśvapati*, and is therefore secretly spurred to appropriate for itself the 'seven delights', *sapta ratna*, of existence. The individual would, if it could, possess and enjoy the whole of the universe, just as the omnipresent Lord in the exercise of His omnipotent Will already does. The individual would like to have 'the wideness and plenty of earth and the vastness and abundance of heaven', and all the treasures of the mental, vital and physical existence multiplied a millionfold. Indeed, the goal of individual existence is the divine beatitude in dynamis as much as in status, and in consequence a total and perfect possession and enjoyment of all that enters the field of universal movement. "All being has this divine enjoyment of existence for its aim and end, whether it seeks for it with knowledge or with ignorance, with the divine strength or the weakness of our yet undeveloped powers."³

And this is as it should be; for the individual creature knows itself, albeit obscurely in its depths, to be the Lord, the divine Enjoyer, *bhoktā maheśvaraḥ*, for whose food this whole world has been brought into being, *annabhūtamidam jagat*. And this being so, "a physical, vital, moral, mental increase by a more and more all-embracing experience, a more and more all-embracing possession, absorption, assimilation, enjoyment is the inevitable, fundamental, ineradicable impulse of Existence, once divided and individualised, yet ever secretly conscious of its all-embracing, all-possessing unity."⁴

But although the spur of the cosmic Divine urges the individual on his path of ever-widening possessions, his demands for infinite and unfettered enjoyment can-

¹ *Aitareya Upanishad*, I. 2.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 24.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, p. 575.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 179.

not be satisfied, by the very nature of the situation, on the basis of a separative fragmented consciousness. For the absolute completeness is not feasible in the finite ego-bound individual existence that artificially cuts itself off from 'the One who is all and in all and beyond all' and, by an ignorant exclusive attachment of the idea of self to a single formation in Time and Space, stands out from the rest of the cosmos as a separate existence different in being. Because of this liability of separative ego, the individual fails to realise itself as but a conscious form of the One, and instead of 'embracing all consciousness, all knowledge, all will, all force, all enjoyment and all being as one with its own', it regards all cosmic formations and movements as alien and not-self, *anātma*, excepting the limited mass of experiences that 'flow out from and in upon' its illusory particular self-centre. But the inescapable result of this artificial dyking of the individual life from the All-Life is its inability to enter into harmony and oneness with the universal movement and a consequent incapacity to possess and enjoy it. For "though Life is Power and the growth of individual life means the growth of the individual Power, still the mere fact of its being a divided individualised life and force prevents it from really becoming master of its world. For that would mean to be master of the All-Force, and it is impossible for a divided and individualised consciousness with a divided, individualised and therefore limited power and will to be master of the All-Force; only the All-Will can be that."¹

The separative individual is thus faced with an impossible situation. On the one hand, the innate impulse of self-expansion and all-possession cannot be abrogated, for "it does not and is not meant to measure or limit itself by the limit of its present force or capacity."² On the other hand, by the very definition of ego, its capacity for enjoyment is miserably circumscribed by the limitation of its force. Now from the unbridgeable gulf between the impulse to possess and the force of possession the phenomenon of hunger with its 'strainings of energy in passion and in desire' arises. The individual formation tries to assert by its external, aggressive and inadequate means 'its innate character of Ish or Lord and so to possess and enjoy the world.' It seeks to gather 'food' and become the 'devourer' (*anānda*) all the time. It would like to have the role of a fire that,

growing by its fuel's death,
Increased by what it seized and made its own :
It gathered and grew and gave itself to none.³

But the very nature of this cosmic Manifestation debars the separative individual existence from the assumption of this unique role. For although the ego would feign that it is really a separate and independent formation and a centre around which the whole of the universe is destined to turn, bringing to its altar a continuous supply of sap and aliments to assuage its insatiable hunger and thirst, it is not so as a matter

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 177.

² *Ibid* p. 181.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book II, Canto 4, p. 169.

of fact and cannot thus live to itself even if it would; for, all are linked together by an indissoluble bond of a secret Oneness. Indeed, unity is the master principle of world-existence of which division is but a subordinate term and as such "to the principle of unity every divided form must...subordinate itself in one fashion or another by mechanical necessity, by compulsion, by assent or inducement."¹

As a matter of fact, it is around the principle of 'sacrifice' understood in the sense of *yajña* of ancient Indian spiritual wisdom, that the whole of the cosmic Becoming is inexorably woven. With sacrifice as their eternal companion, says the Gita, the Lord of creation has created all existences. Now, 'sacrifice' is a process of giving and receiving, of interchange, intermixture and fusion of being with being. This law of sacrifice, law of mutual dependence, 'each growing by each and living by all', is a common divine action from which no separate existence can ever expect to be exempt; for it is the symbol of the solidarity of the universal existence that is innumerable one although phenomenally divided. It is because of this truth that a mutual giving and receiving has become the very principle of life, without which it cannot subsist even for a moment. Each existence has thus to give out from its assets and acquisitions in streams that go to all that is around it, and in return it receives something from its environment. And this process is operative in all the planes of our existence. Modern biological researches have shown beyond any shadow of doubt that our body, falsifying the illusion of its apparent fixity, is in reality in a state of dynamic equilibrium, undergoing continual interchange of material with its surroundings. Studies with radioactive isotopes by G. Hevesy, A. Krogh, R. Schoenheimer and others have strikingly revealed that practically every chemical system of a living organism is in a continuous state of change, being remodelled with a quite unexpected rapidity, and in constant equilibrium between ingested substances and identical ones which have already been incorporated into the body.² The overall effect is that "the tissues forming the animal body are composed of chemical substances all of which are derived from its environment, and in the course of the animal's life these substances are returned to that environment many times over."³

But this dynamic interchange, this mutual *yajña*, is not confined to our body constituents alone; it governs our vital and mental sheaths too. The extent to which this law reigns in Nature has not yet been fully recognised by men of our time, who take their stand on the supposed substratum of Matter, and indeed cannot be recognized, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, "until we have a science of mental life and spiritual existence as sound as our present science of physical life and the existence of Matter."⁴

When that day arrives the man of science will wake to the discovery that "not

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 185.

² *Vide* : (i) "Properties of Living Matter" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 3, pp. 606-09; (ii) "Nutrition" in *ibid*, Vol. 16, p. 652.

³ F.R. Winton and L.E. Bayliss, *Human Physiology* (1955), p. 181.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 186.

only the elements of our physical body, but those of our subtler vital being, our life-energy, our desire-energy, our powers, strivings, passions enter both during our life and after our death into the life-existence of others. ...Our life energies while we live are continually mixing with the energies of other beings. A similar law governs the mutual relations of our mental life with the mental life of other thinking creatures. There is a constant dissolution and dispersion and a reconstruction effected by the shock of mind with a constant interchange and fusion of elements."¹

The whole process of the universe is thus seen to be in its very nature a sacrifice, a process of interchange and of mutual 'feeding', of fusion of each with each and of each with all. Self-fulfilment by fulfilling others, to possess by being possessed, to enjoy by being enjoyed, to grow by giving is the universal law. But the separative ego in its ignorant isolation tries to set this law at naught. It seeks to erect a barrier of defence around its divided limited existence with just a one-way opening left, through which it would seek to gather its aliments from outside but which would prevent by all means any outward flow. But the false hopes of the ego founder at every moment, and when sacrifice is not voluntarily offered, Nature exacts it by force; for the law has been imposed from above and, even from those who do not consciously recognise its validity, the universal World-Force invariably exacts and takes the sacrifice. Only in this latter case, the harmony of *yajña* is rudely disturbed and as a result the poor, limited, individual existence helplessly thrown into the arena of constant cosmic interchange of force fails to embrace freely and grow eternally by the shock and pressure of the universal Life, and instead gets disrupted and devoured at the end. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "that which refuses to give itself, is still the food of the cosmic Powers. 'The eater eating is eaten' is the formula, pregnant and terrible, in which the Upanishad² sums up this aspect of the universe, and in another passage men are described as the cattle of the gods."³

So long as this law of sacrifice is not consciously recognised and voluntarily accepted, so long as the individual formation displays its habit of predatory hunger, the law of interchange, of action and reaction, will see to it that the devourer itself is constantly fed upon by universal Life, and that the separative existence through an ultimate exhaustion slides down into death and disintegration.

The kingdom of death cannot be overpassed, the state of Immortality cannot be attained, unless and until the individual existence renounces the fetters of its separative ego, merges its will with the All-Will, becomes one with the All-Force and in that process changes the straining rapacity of its hunger into the motion of the free and all-possessing bliss of the Infinite.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 186.

² Cf. "I being food eat him that eats", *ahamannamannamadantama'dmi* (Taittiriya Upanishad, III. 10. 7)

³ Sri Aurobindo, *On the Vedā*, p. 316.

LIFE, DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

SOME OBSERVATIONS

“That eternal One breathes out the universe and breathes it in.”
The Veda.

LIFE and creation are an eternal enigma to us; so also is death. Our most thorough and exhaustive research fails to unravel fully the secret mystery, charm, beauty and complexity of life; our most meditative insight cannot enlighten wholly the dark and deep obscurity of death. From matter evolved life and from life came mind. We can try to trace our origin in the past; but what about the future ? We can observe and scrutinise our outer structure; but what about our inner depth and ultimate height ?

To draw a straight line of separation between animate beings and inanimate objects is really a difficult task. It has been stated that even metals that appear to be inanimate show under certain circumstances a kind of rudimentary life-reaction. And we seem to be on the verge of synthesising a living cell. However, roughly those objects are generally called animate which exhibit distinctly the action of the life-force within them. Sensation, reaction to stimuli, sympathy, aversion, are some of the signs of living beings. Apart from these they have another main trait : they are subject to birth, growth and destruction or death. They are mortals : they must die one day, they cannot live for ever. But, on the other hand, can they die for ever? Does not something in them have to take birth over again, sooner or later? If so, we stand face to face with “soul”, a shining entity bridging the gap between life and death.

What does immortality mean in relation to mortals, particularly man ? Mortality of man is as clear as daylight, but mortality of what part in man ? This question excites our thought and imagination. We start groping within us for a true answer. If mortality applies to our outer shape and body, then what about our life and mind? They are also parts which constitute a man. From the materialistic point of view, at the death of the body everything dies; we then remain unconcerned with the life and mind parts. But a little of contemplative introspection converts the fact of death into an endless mystery to us. What dies, what remains, what vanishes and what is destroyed when one is dead appear to be a great problem and we are surprised at our ignorance of the how and why of life and death. We are confronted with the same enigma when we want to know about the immortality of man. Here again hangs before us a brilliant figure that is called “soul”.

Poets throughout the world and at all times have sung the glory of both life and death; they have shown their limitations as well. Let us see some examples :

Mystic Miracle, daughter of Delight,
Life, thou ecstasy...

Life by Sri Aurobindo

O Death, thou art god, yet not he...

Savitri by Sri Aurobindo

Renew me over again, O Life;
I, who am eternally old...

‘নূতন কবিতা লহ আৰবাব চিবপুৰাতন মোৰে।’

Tagore

O Death, thou art dear to me as my beloved Lord.

‘মৰণ রে তুঁহ মোৰ শ্যাম সন্মান।’

Tagore

[Life] is a tale

Told by an idiot full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Shakespeare

How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave !

Shelley

Ah, for the weariness that comes of living
There is no cure but death.

Elizabeth Chase

The poets are not expected to give exact and categorical definitions of truth. They express the essence of their experience and vision through inspired words. And these words carry some suggestive appeal to our consciousness. We can in that way have a kind of direct feeling and appreciation of the truth. We know from the Katha Upanishad that Nachiketas went to Yama, the lord of death himself, to be enlightened about the fact of the existence of soul after death. There also he got replies through suggestive and inspired slokas, which form the essential part of that highly appreciated scripture. From the following single sloka we can have an idea of how splendid a revelation it is about the functions of the different parts of our being.

“Know the body for a chariot and the soul for the master of the chariot; know Reason for the charioteer and the mind for the reins only.” “3”

“आत्मान रथिन विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु।

बुद्धिं तु सारथि विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च” ॥३॥

—कठोपनिषद्, अध्याय १, वल्ली ३

The approach of the scientists to the question of life and death is entirely different. They are busy devising ways and means to grasp the mystery of life, to eradicate the causes of disease, to cure illness, to create artificial life, to overcome death and to achieve physical immortality. In spite of bone-breaking cares, anxieties and disharmonies in worldly life, hardly anybody chooses death as a remedy. Men are in love with life. And attempts have been made from time immemorial to conquer death. Perhaps spiritual initiates of ancient India, Egypt, Tibet and elsewhere knew some way to maintain youth and prolong life for an exceptionally long period. But to go on living in the same body for an unlimited period of time has not yet been possible. Probably from the spiritual point of view to attain such a success immediately is not a pressing need. What is more important is the realisation of God, mastery over self and control of the lower nature. Scientists, however, take a different view.

Keeping this view aside for the time being, if we enter into the realm of faith, religion and spirituality a secret door opens to us. A door through which we can peep into the depth of existence and catch some glimpses of truth that are vivid and sparkling but beyond the scope of modern science as it is. Immortals mean gods. Gods are above the cycle of birth and death. They are, as it were, fixed manifestations; that is to say, they are not subject to evolutionary change, they are ever-existent, whereas men are mortals. Men go through the cycle of birth and death. They could also be like gods had they not this burden of material body from which the immortals are supposed to be free. Of course there is nothing in this for the gods to be proud of, because on that account they are deprived of the joy of progress which mortals have the birth-right to enjoy. Moreover, within men also there is an undying and ever-existent something that survives the destruction of their outer forms. What is that imperishable spark? That is the divinity within them, the soul, the psychic being, their true individuality. So we see that the immortality of man is involved in his mortality. But this immortality should not be confused with the glory or notoriety of man earned as a result of his uncommon deeds good or bad which keep a permanent impression on the historical consciousness of the human race. Our concern here is with the immortality of the intrinsic man himself, not with the remembrance of a man and his qualities.

At this point it will not be out of place perhaps to mention a kind of caricature I saw during my school days, where one of my friends played all by himself the roles of a number of persons, namely, a teacher, a barrister, a doctor, a maulavi and an ascetic. He was found first to appear before the spectators on an open stage as a school-teacher putting on dhoti and chadder. And after his part as a teacher was over he turned into a barrister. How? He simply threw away his dhoti and chadder, came out from within as a barrister with black coat, trousers and tie. This role being finished, he removed the black coat and put on a pair of spectacles. We saw the young doctor with white silken shirt, trousers and tie. Finally, when he became the ascetic he had nothing on his body excepting a small kaupin about his loins. It seems to me to be a

very good example of how the outer personality is changed while the real being within remains unaffected. It is only a question of putting on a new garb at each successive turn for the different roles one has to play in the drama.

This manifested universe is also a sort of drama, *lila*, of the infinite and timeless Purusha in terms of time and space. But the time when actually this drama began is not known to us, it is beyond our conception. 'If you can give a beginning to time, the whole concept of time will be destroyed,' says Vivekananda. He also says that there is a God, unchangeable, the ruler, and there is the soul as unchangeable as God, eternal but under the ruler. There is also the third entity Nature, infinite but changeable. It means that the Universal God has an infinite but changeable universal Nature. In the same way the soul or the individual god is changeless but has his own individual nature which is subject to change. A living individual is understood to be an epitome of these three entities, God, Soul, and Nature. He is timeless God, he is god incarnate, a Soul, and also he is in possession of an infinite but changeable Nature. A kind of commerce is always going on amongst these different states of existence, the nature of which is mysterious and not easy to follow in its true perspective.

The interactions of forces, influences and powers between man and God, God and Nature, nature and soul of man is veiled from our ordinary vision and understanding. To realise truly the deeper implication of these interchanges one has to be an initiate, a seer, a seeker and a yogi.

From what is revealed to us by such personalities it can be said that man from birth to birth changes his nature-parts according to the demand of the scheme of creation of the supreme Lord or God. When one dies one's soul or psychic being, involved in the working of nature, gets released and throws away the parts of body, life and mind by gradual steps and stages. After that it takes shelter in a plane of peace, tranquillity and rest. And then for some time assimilation of the experiences of the past life goes on, as well as preparation for the field of the soul's next birth. This is the common course of the soul between life and death. Of course there are variations for exceptional cases. The key of man's immortality lies in his being self-realised, his having full knowledge and control over all his parts, his having the capacity to live or die at will.

About death Sri Aurobindo says, "Death is only a shedding of the body, not a cessation of the personal existence. A man is not dead because he goes into another country and changes his clothes to suit that climate." The knowledge of soul and its transmigration is as old as time. Almost all religions of the world accept this truth in one form or another. But it is a pity that, based on it, many imaginary faiths, superstitious dogmas and ghostly stories have cropped up. The clear vision of truth has been confined in many a blind and half-blind lane and by-lane. Sanctity of immortality has been polluted by the waters of stagnant deeps and ditches. The doctrine of Karma is perhaps essentially true but not in the way it is mixed up with the effects of virtue and sin, with justice and punishment, egoistic hopes, desires, passions

and fears, successes and failures of the surface personality of man. No doubt, in the mechanical working of nature the principle of cause and effect is a binding force. The proverb 'as you sow so you reap' should certainly be given its due share of credit for its underlying truth. But when it is said that a man, though honest, good and religious, suffers misfortunes on account of the sins of his past life and a wicked man prospers and enjoys name and fame as a result of the good deeds of his previous life, it cannot be accepted without hesitation. Man is not completely bound by the mechanical cosmic laws of justice. He is the divine incarnate, a soul, a giver of sanction and master of nature or prakriti. He is the lord or ordainer even of karma itself. Perhaps Karmavada is not much concerned with the outer living of man, his sorrow and happiness, good fortune or ill luck. It is probable that the doctrine of Karma has bearing more on the progress or advancement of soul and its experience. Maybe it is not for the bad deeds of his past life that a good man faces adverse circumstances in this life. Possibly because of the soul's need to have experiences it takes upon itself the burden of poverty and pain and so forth.

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOUDHURY

"OVERHEAD POETRY"

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

the creative intelligence the “mental Overmind” or, with the intuitive plane added, the “Overmind Intuition”.

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

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

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

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

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

EDITOR

II

HARMONIES

UNFATHOMED harmonies roll, drowning our sight
 In purple of their passionate abyss—
 A superhuman solitude of night
 Sprung from a deep where all the waves are bliss.

O waves divine, dark to our shuddering eyes,
 You float a fire that glooms each common glow !
 Sweep over foundering thought your rhythmic skies
 Until we gain some marvellous earth below.

There still the pure Atlantis shall be found
 Of rapture lost by souls unluminous :
 There rings of silver memories surround
 An empty throne of gold awaiting us.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“It is more mental than usual—but the vision and expression are there. The first stanza is the most powerful, a Higher Mind movement; lines 7, 8 belong to the same category—though, as I say, the mental strain is more pronounced than it has been in recent poems. The other lines are colourful and imaginative....Its vision brings out a truth of spiritual experience with sufficient force and exactness, though not with the deeper intimacy that sometimes comes in from above. It has a perfection of its own which is considerable.”

 THE DESCENT

A secret of far sky burns suddenly close,
 A deep blue wakes to glory from pale blue :
 Then large and calm and effortless wings of light
 Swoop crimson through the paradisal air !
 Talons of eyrie truth—a clutch of gold—
 Numb every thought to a shining vacancy
 Merged in the immortal spaciousness around
 This haloed hawk that preys on time-desire...

My body, wrapt in the vast apocalypse,
 Grows king of Nature with the mystic bird
 A flaming crown of godhead over life !

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"It is certainly very original and expresses with great force the spiritual experience. A very fine poem—most of it being in substance from the Illumined Mind (except 2 or 3 lines) but its rhythm belongs to the poetic intelligence, strong and clear-cut but not with the subtle or large inner tones of the overhead music. It is a very luminous and powerful image."

GULFS OF NIGHT

From hills in aureoled by a twilight trance,
 Arms eager with the enchanted cry of love
 Strain towards a mountain lost in timeless dawn.
 But how shall arms of reverie clasp that fire
 When gulfs of nameless night—a dragon's mouth—
 Have stretched below their blinded centuries ?...

O paradise-haunted pilgrims of the dusk,
 Nothing save fall can bare the soul's rich deep.
 To the emperor height take tributary hands
 Full of wide wounds like rubies proud and warm,
 Cut from life's inmost core of mystery.
 No rapture—till you appease with diamond tears
 Truth's spirit throne of dross-consuming gold.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"There is something mental in the turn—which makes it sound like an overhead inspiration coming through the mind, rather than direct. At the same time the first five lines, 7 and 11 also, have a more direct overhead ring,—

"It expresses its idea with great richness and force and images that carry one beyond the mental vision of things—that seems to me its main quality."

DISCLOSURE

Stoop your calm beauty—let your shining hair
 Unveil its ages of high secrecy
 To float upon dull earth the frankincense
 Your face of love burns to an infinite sky.

Fill life with mystic rondures of your breast
 And all that worship dreamed unknowable
 Bare through your body's perfect universe.
 O mate the sculptor-vigil of our gloom
 With those superb clay-lines that sing your soul :
 Then every stroke of time shall carve to birth
 Immortal moods lit by your ecstasy.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"Very fine poetry. Blank verse rhythm very good. Illumined Higher Mind."

MERE OF DREAM

The Unknown above is a mute vacancy—
 But in the mere of dream wide wings are spread,
 An ageless bird poising a rumour of gold
 Upon prophetic waters hung asleep.
 The veils of vastitude are cloven white,
 The burden of unreachable blue is lost :
 A ring of hills around a silver hush,
 The far mind haloed with mysterious dawn
 Treasures in the deep eye of thought-suspense
 An eagle-destiny beaconing through all time.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

On an earlier version not including lines 5 and 6 :

"First line from the higher Mind, the next five from the illumined Mind—the last two I can't very well say : perhaps the inner Mind there has taken up the illumined inspiration and given it a turn belonging to an interpretative language of its own making. All the lines are of a fine quality, but the 2nd and 4th are the finest."

On the present version :

"As a whole it gains by the two lines added; the line about the veils of vastitude being on the general level of the first four and even on the specially high level of 2 and 4. 6 is also a fine line (illumined higher Mind)".—"The poem does not fall below the average mark [you have set yourself], but there are degrees even in the above-average and this is fine, even very fine, but not *as a whole* quite as absolute as some that went before. The 2nd and 4th and 5th lines are the finest.—"

"What you are writing now is 'overhead' poetry—I mean poetry inspired from those planes—before you used to write poems very often from the intuitive mind—these had a beauty and perfection of their own. What I mean by absoluteness here is a full intensely inevitable expression of what comes from above. These lines are original, convincing, have vision, they are not to be rejected, but they are not the highest flight except in single lines. Such variations are to be expected and will be more prominent if you were writing longer poems, for then to keep always or even usually to that highest level would be an extraordinary feat—no poet has managed as yet to write always at his highest flight and here in that kind of poetry it would be still more difficult. The important point is not to fall below a certain level—when you do, I shall certainly tell you."

(What exactly is the intuitive mind you have spoken of, and how does it differ from what you have called 'inner mind' and 'mystic mind'?)

"The intuitive mind, strictly speaking, stretches from the Intuition proper down to the intuitivised inner mind—it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power. All depends on the amount, intensity, quality of the intuition and how far it is mixed with mind or pure. The inner mind is not necessarily intuitive, though it can easily become so. The mystic mind is turned towards the occult and spiritual, but the inner mind can act without direct reference to the occult and spiritual, it can act in the same field and in the same material as the ordinary mind, only with a larger and deeper power, range and light and in greater unison with the Universal Mind; it can open also more easily to what is within and what is above. Intuitive intelligence, mystic mind, inner mind intelligence are all part of the inner mind operation. In today's poem, for instance—

A POET'S STAMMER

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

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

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

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

it is certainly the inner mind that has transformed the idea of stammering into a symbol of inner phenomena and into that operation a certain strain of mystic mind enters, but what is prominent is the intuitive inspiration throughout. It blends with the intuitive poetic intelligence in the first stanza, gets touched by the overhead intuition in the second, gets full of it in the third and again rises rapidly to that in the two last lines of the fourth stanza. This is what I call poetry of the intuitive mind.”—
 “It is a very true and beautiful poem.”

THE SACRED FIRE

O keep the sacred fire
 A prisoner poise
 With walls that never wake
 To earthly voice.

So delicate and small
 This undefiled
 Epiphany of joy,
 This golden child,

That like a freezing blast
 The unfruitful power
 Of stormy mind will quench
 The burning flower.

Breathe tenderly your love :
 Feed the pure flame
 By secret offerings
 Of one far Name

Whose rhythms make more rich
 That smiling face
 Of angel glow within
 The heart's embrace—

Until the dreamy hue
Grows wide enough
To flash upon time's chill
A warrior laugh

Piercing through twilight walls
Of calm to blind
With a noon of ecstasy
The space of mind.

A sword divine which darts
From clay's dull sheath,
The luminous tongue shall rise
Devouring death

And every icy thought's
Oblivion
Of earth's untarnished soul,
Its core of sun.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"It is a very fine lyric. The inspiration is not equally intense throughout—it is most felicitous in the three stanzas marked [2, 5, 7]; the first also is almost that and also the three first lines of the sixth. The rest is admirable, though it has not quite the same intuitive edge; but still it is the right thought with the just, poetic expression. I don't know exactly what plane, but it comes from the inner being—there is a fine psychic touch in stanzas 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and it is the psychic truth that is expressed throughout."

(Would the emergence of the psychic being make the writing of "above-head" poetry more possible ?)

"To get the psychic being to emerge is not easy, though it is a very necessary thing for sadhana and when it does it is not certain that it will switch on to the above-head planes at once. But obviously anyone who could psychicise his poetry would get a unique place among the poets.

"The direct psychic touch is not frequent in poetry. It breaks in sometimes—more often there is only a tinge here and there."

(Would the emergence of the psychic being cut across any above-head inspiration ?)

"I don't suppose the emergence of the psychic would interfere at all with the inspiration from above. It would be more likely to help it by making the connection with these planes more direct and conscious."

“To get back from the surface vital into the psychic and psychic vital, to raise the level of your mental from the intellect to the Illumined Mind is your need both in poetry and in Yoga. I have told you already that your best poetry comes from the Illumined Mind....If you could always write direct from the Illumined Mind—finding there not only the substance, as you often do, but the rhythm and language, that indeed would be a poetry exquisite, original and unique. The intellect produces the idea, even the poetic idea, too much for the sake of the idea alone; coming from the Illumined Mind the idea in a form of light and music is itself but the shining body of the Light Divine.”

(What distinguishes in manner and quality a pure inspiration of the Illumined Mind from that which has the psychic plane for its origin ?)

“Your question reads like a poser in an examination paper. And suppose I could give a satisfactory definition Euclideanly rigid, I don’t know that it would be of much use or would really help you to distinguish between the two kinds; these things have to be felt and perceived by experience. I would prefer to give examples. I suppose it would be impossible to find a more perfect example of psychic inspiration in English literature than Shelley’s lines,

I can give not what men call love :
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above,
And the heavens reject not :
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow ?

—you will find there the true rhythm, expression and substance of poetry full of the psychic influence. I have not any books of poetry with me except my own and Shakespeare’s; so I will give you examples first of the Illumined Mind and then of the combination of the psychic and the Illumined Mind powers from a poet¹ whom you will perhaps easily recognise. For the first the lines—

The longing of ecstatic tears
From infinite to infinite²—

will do very well. For the combination, here is an example that could not be bettered :

¹ The addressee himself.

² The last lines of the poem “Young-hearted river !”

If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
 Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
 Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
 Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
 For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate :
 Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
 And all Thy formless glory turn to love
 And mould Thy love into a human face."¹

THIS ERRANT LIFE

This errant life is dear although it dies;
 And human lips are sweet though they but sing
 Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
 Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
 I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
 If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
 Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
 Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
 Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
 For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate :
 Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
 And all Thy formless glory turn to love
 And mould Thy love into a human face.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"A very beautiful poem, one of the very best you have written. The last six lines, one may say even the last eight, are absolutely perfect. If you could always write like that, you would take your place among English poets and no low place either. —I consider they can rank—these eight lines—with the very best in English poetry."

To a translator : "X's lines are not easily translatable, least of all into Bengali. There is in them a union or rather fusion of high severity of speech with exaltation and both with a pervading intense sweetness which it is almost impossible to transfer bodily without loss into another language. There is no word in excess, none that could have been added or changed without spoiling the expression, every word just the right revelatory one—no colour, no ornamentation, but a sort of suppressed

¹ The last lines of the poem "This Errant Life".

burning glow, no similes, but images which have been fused inseparably into the substance of the thought and feeling—the thought itself perfectly developed, not idea added to idea at the will of the fancy, but perfectly interrelated and linked together like the limbs of an organic body. It is high poetic style in its full perfection and nothing at all that is transferable. You have taken his last line and put in a lotus-face and made divine love bloom in it,—a pretty image, but how far from the glowing impassioned severity of the phrase : ‘And mould Thy love into a human face’ ! ”

To the poet himself : “The quotations [AE] makes [from your poems]—

The song-impetuous mind...

The Eternal Beauty is a wanderer
Hungry for lips of clay—

certainly deserve the praise he gives them and they are moreover of the kind AE and Yeats also, I think, would naturally like. But the poem I selected for special praise had no striking expressions like these standing out from the rest, just as in a Greek statue there would be no single feature standing out in a special beauty (eyes, lips, head or hands), but the whole has a harmoniously modelled grace of equal perfection everywhere as, let us say, in the perfect charm of a statue by Praxiteles. This apart from the idea and feeling, which goes psychically and emotionally much deeper than the ideas in the lines quoted by AE, which are poetically striking but have not the same subtle spiritual appeal; they touch the mind and vital strongly, but the other goes home into the soul.”

OUT OF THE UNKNOWN

Out of the Unknown, like meteor-rain
Fell glimmering on my dark despair
The syllables of a prophetic tongue :
“O heart disconsolate, beauty-wrung,
Wanderer unsated, not in vain
A voice of unattainable melody
Winging in heavenly air,
Came Brindavun’s immortal memory
And turned thy human happiness
Into dim longing pain.
Thy life’s search is not meaningless
Though Jumuna’s banks are void and bare;
Now too a spirit-flute
Conveys again so holy a calm abroad

That even on misery's lips fall'n mute
 In uncompanioned throes
 | Pale silence blossoms like a rose
 | Deep-rooted in the soul's eternity.
 Rest not till thou find sanctuary
 | Where Brindavun has gone behind its God.
 For there the veil shall draw aside,
 Which hangs between thy in-turned gaze
 And Him of the irradiant face :
 His musical tranquillity
 Shall once more in thy ear abide
 And all the heart-beats of thy life's increase
 Count but the starlike moments of His peace.”

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“When you get something through from the illumined mind, as in the last couplet of this poem or the three other lines I marked off, then you produce something really fine and great. When you get with labour or without it something reasonably like what the poetic intelligence wanted to say, then you get something fine and adequate, but not great.

The lines,

A voice of unattainable melody
 Winging in heavenly air,
 Came Brindavun's immortal memory,

though not on the same level as the best in the poem, are yet not far below them; they are a fine expression of a psychic and a mystic reality.”

OJAS

Rise upward, stream of passion in the gloom !
 Rise where lone pinnacles mate with heaven's womb !
 Earth drags you down, but all your shimmers know
 The stars' enchanted fire calling you home.

Mountains of mind are sacred : join your cry
 Unto their peaceful marriage with the sky.
 Your children shall be words eternal, sprung
 From golden seeds of packed immensity.

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENT

"It is a fine poem, the second stanza especially fine. Language and rhythm from the illumined Mind."—

"I can't exactly say that it is equal to your best. It is a fine poem; but entire inevitability is not there, except perhaps in the [second stanza's] first three lines (the last is a very fine one full of light and fire but not quite with that realised and consummate perfection which is meant by 'inevitable'); perhaps also the 2nd line [of the first stanza]."

 STORM-LIGHT

The immortal music of her mind
 Sweeps through the earth a lustrous wind—
 "Renounce, O man, thy arduous oar
 And, opening out faith's song-charmed helpless sail,
 Reach on my breath of love the ecstatic shore !
 My rush is truth self-beaconed, not thy pale
 Stranger-surmise :
 I am a cyclic gale
 That blows from paradise to paradise !"

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENT

"This is now quite perfect. Only, the lines 2-5 are now of the Illumined Mind, with a strong undertone of the effective,¹ the first and last four intuitive. This is not a defect.

"The poetry of the Illumined Mind is usually full of a play of lights and colours, brilliant and striking in phrase, for illumination makes the Truth vivid—it acts usually by a luminous rush. The poetry of the Intuition may have a play of colour and bright lights, but it does not depend on them—it may be quite bare; it tells by a sort of close intimacy with the Truth, an inward expression of it. The illumined Mind sometimes gets rid of its trappings, but even then it always keeps a sort of lustrousness of robe which is its characteristic."

¹ The reference is to the various kinds of style which, apart from the various levels of inspiration, have been distinguished by Sri Aurobindo in his critical writings : the adequate, the effective, the illumined, the inspired—each capable of inevitability—and the pure inevitable which cannot be given a descriptive label at all.

GODS

They give us life with some high burning breath,
Life which but draws a golden road to death.
In vain we lift warm hands that quiver and cry
Unto the blue salvation of the sky.

Above, transparencies divine are spread
Of fusing fires—gay purple, eager red;
But who there heeds our love ? Thwarted, alone,
We struggle through an atmosphere of stone.

The heaven-coloured distances lie dumb—
But all our hush is sleep or clay grown numb:
A blinded beauty fills our heart, a sun
Lost in gigantic self-oblivion.

Those ever-shining quietudes of bliss
How shall we know—pale wanderers from kiss to kiss ?

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

"Very fine. The markings in the poems [lines 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12] are meant to indicate lines of a high and inevitable felicity—revelatory in their expression and significance. Intuition seems to be their source. The others are more mental, but fine in their kind."

NE PLUS ULTRA ?

A madrigal to enchant her—and no more ?
With the brief beauty of her face—drunk, blind
To the inexhaustible vastnesses that lure
 The song-impetuous mind ?
Is the keen voice of tuneful ecstasy
To be denied its winged omnipotence,
Its ancient kinship to immensity
 And the swift suns ?
When mystic grandeurs urge him from behind,
When all creation is a rapturous wind
Driving him towards an ever-limitless goal,
Can such pale moments crown the poet's soul ?

Shall he—born nomad of the infinite heart !
 Time-tamer ! star-struck debauchee of light !
 Warrior who hurls his spirit like a dart
 Across the terrible night
 Of death to conquer immortality !
 Content with little loves that seek to bind
 His giant feet with perishing joys, shall he
 Remain confined
 To languors of a narrow paradise—
 He in the mirroring depths of whose far eyes
 The gods behold, o'erawed, the unnamable One
 Beyond all gods, the Luminous, the Unknown ?

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO :

“This is magnificent. The three passages I have marked [lines 6, 7 and 9, 10, 11 in stanza 1: lines 1-5 in stanza 2] reach a high-water mark of poetic force, but the rest also is very fine. This poem can very well take its place by the other early poem [*This Errant Life*] which I sent you back the other day, though the tone is different—that other was more subtly perfect, this reaches another kind of summit through sustained height and grandeur.”

On the plane of inspiration of lines 1-5 in stanza 2 : “Illumined Mind with mental Overmind touch.”

(*To be continued*)

ESSAYS ON *SAVITRI* AND *PARADISE LOST*

METHOD AND STYLE

SRI AUROBINDO, like Milton, avoids the dramatic turn although all the manifest themes of it are present in his lines. This he does deliberately in order not to lessen or dilute the high intensity and the pitch to which he keeps his poem tuned. Milton's dialogues reveal his knowledge of parliamentary procedure; but the dialogues of Sri Aurobindo have no such implications. They reveal the struggle of consciousness against consciousness. While the dialogues in Milton are short, those of Sri Aurobindo are long, some of them covering many cantos.

The blank verse of Sri Aurobindo is not ornate with rhetoric or Miltonic inversions. He avoids these, because they lend an artificial air. He does use inversions at places but more for tonal effect than anything else. This is one cardinal point in which he differs from Milton.

Although he uses end-stopped lines, and the meaning seems to be complete in each line, the whole paragraph runs on for several lines. The whole is one mass or pattern and yet each line has its perfection. Milton's single lines lack this perfection because what he aims at is the expressive paragraph. Although Sri Aurobindo does not break lines and his enjambment is very rare, yet there is no monotony for lack of a Miltonic pattern. Also, he brings at the end of his paragraph an intense, rich and high-pitched line like the finale of an orchestral composition to mark the close of a passage. Further, the thought-content in each line is so intense, that it attracts all attention and one forgets the larger form or paragraph pattern. This too aids the removal of monotony, because we find something new in each verse, something which is in one line but not there in another, something which reveals itself more and more, a new mood, a new thought, a new perception, a new feeling : all these give variety and enrich the blank verse.

Milton on the other hand does not have this variety of subjective moods, these phases of feeling, these bursts of revelation. Hence he must use all rhetorical devices, to bring in freshness and spontaneity. While Sri Aurobindo is keyed to subjective realities, Milton is tuned to outer facts of life. Thus one is simple in his verse form while the other is complex in his poetic execution.

If we analyse Sri Aurobindo's verse, we are struck by its simplicity; and yet such simplicity does express a miraculous mystic poetry. That is because he does not allow a set convention, dogma or heritage to dominate him, while Milton has his fixed code of poetics, his laws of diction and his rhetorical principles. Sri Aurobindo is utterly ruled by inspiration and the form we see is the creation of this and not the result of a mental idea of form. But this does not mean he lacks definite form, and that his method is fluid and amorphous.

The inspiration, that comes, brings with it the needed form and the form created is definite and possesses a character. Let us see how he builds his paragraph :

The golden issue of mind's labyrinth plots,
The riches unfound or still uncaught by our lives,
Unsullied by the attainment of mortal thought,
Abide in that pellucid atmosphere. (Book II, Canto 7)

The verb for the first line occurs in the fourth and grammatically we have quite a complex construction, but the whole seems absolutely natural. The paragraph ends with a line's end and we do not feel any rhetorical effect aimed at. Or listen to this :

A wisdom governing the mystic worlds,
A silence listening to the cry of life,
It sees the hurrying crowd of moments stream
Towards the still greatness of a distant hour (Book II, Canto 5)

There is a pause after the first and second lines, but the third and fourth form one unit and yet if analysed both the final lines have completeness. In the next example all lines are complete pictures and have no continuing effect :

A divinising stream possessed his veins,
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy :
Tissue and flesh partook beatitude. (Book III, Canto 4)

There is no great use of any variations here. All is a plain pentameter. Yet we feel the surge of ecstasy; we do not sense any lack of variety. In the first example there are two trisyllabic feet in the second line. These, as in Milton, are there deliberately to give a sense of wideness—the last balances the first.

It would be wrong to say that Sri Aurobindo never used enjambment. But it is rare indeed, as here :

A cry of spheres comes with thee and a song
Of flaming gods. (Book V, Canto 3)

Even here the line seems complete as it is: 'Of flaming gods' heightens the sense. Here is another example:

If our time-vexed affections thou canst feel,
Earth's ease of simple things can satisfy,
If thy glance can dwell content on earthly soil,
And this celestial summary of delight,
Thy golden body, dally with fatigue

Oppressing with its grace our terrain, while
 The frail sweet passing taste of earthly food
 Delays thee and the torrent's leaping wine,
 Descend' (Book V, Canto 3)

The whole is a closely linked phrase. Images of different kinds are knit together, and the last 'Descend' comes almost inevitably. Because Sri Aurobindo does not use overflowing lines, these rare uses come as breaks and they are there to heighten the poetical quality. He gets out of them the maximum possible effect.

We get an intenser line at the end of a phrase to mark the end of a train of thought—as a great climax :

In a thousand ways he served her royal needs;
 He makes the hours pivot around her will,
 Makes all reflect her whims : all is their play :
 This whole wide world is only her and she.

Or here :

Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
 Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns
 Outpoured the revelation and the flame.

Again :

Great, patient, calm it sees the centuries pass,
 Awaiting the slow miracle of our change
 In the sure deliberate process of world-force
 And the long march of all-revealing Time.

Mark how the last line sums up the content of the previous lines in the first example; it gives the essential meaning, the inner bearing and forms the close of a set of images and thoughts by putting forth one line that is intenser, louder, and yet deeper than the rest. After this he begins a new train of images. In the second example the intensity increases suddenly and we have the climax of the 'revelation and the flame' that justifies the 'rift' and the 'trickle'. In the third there is no heightening, but a widening at the close. The last line symbolises in short all that has gone before. There is a dramatic quality in all these final lines. The previous lines are preparatory, they lead up to the close.

Milton is rich in similes. They not only enrich his poem, but lend grace and give a sense of expansiveness by their reference to subjects not related to the poem. Similes also come as refreshing elements and in a tale of pathos, strife, revolt and resulting sin, they for a brief moment make us forget the dreariness and the overshadow-

ing presence of Satan. Sometimes they uplift the act, the image, the gesture by widening the scope. Finally they reveal the vast knowledge Milton had and the great amount of classical tradition he had imbibed.

Similes that we come across here are mostly pictorial or refer to sensuous objects. Milton reveals his art of picturisation. Sri Aurobindo's similes refer to subjective experience. They express some inner state, some psychological mood. Rarely does Sri Aurobindo point to some physical act, scene, occurrence, condition, and his similes are not there to enrich the poem. But they are there to make living the subjective experience, by reference to another living, vibrant and subjective experience. He has no need to elevate the brooding atmosphere by other non-textual references, for such gloomy states of consciousness or atmosphere are absent in *Savitri*. Lastly, he has no need to reveal what his mind has imbibed through classical education. He does not want to show how much he has garnered in his mind, or how broad is the scope of his intellectual grasp. Rather he would reveal what states of consciousness he has passed through, what the extent of his inner realisation is. He speaks only of what he himself has realised.

This is the background from which we should see the similes of our two poets. Now we shall examine a few examples. Satan is compared to a vulture which,

To gorge the flesh of lambs or yeanling kids
On hills where flocks are fed, flies towards the springs
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams...

The comparison makes vivid the picture, the situation and the purpose. Or this :

As when a scout,
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
All night, at last by break of cheerful dawn
Obtains the brow of some high climbing hill,
Which to his eye discovers unaware
The goodly prospect of some foreign land.

This is the 'gleaming metropolis' with shining 'spires'. This is Satan's view of paradise after a difficult journey. This simile is classical and breathes an atmosphere which intensifies the effect of travail and the sudden hope of the end of his ordeal. Let us see how Sri Aurobindo uses a simile :

As a sculptor chisels a deity out of stone
He slowly chips off the dark envelope,
Line of defence of Nature's ignorance...

Sri Aurobindo does not resort, like Milton, to a long-winded simile. He makes a

brief reference to a physical fact that leads swiftly to some psychological inference. The reference does not distract the mind from the central theme, the leading idea. Not all of Milton's similes are long, as here :

He, in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms,
Smiled with superior love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles when he impregns the clouds
That shed May showers.'

Here the reference is to Greek mythology and the analogy between Jupiter and Adam is a happy one. Again, from Sri Aurobindo as a contrast referring to the same theme of love :

As if a whole rich world suddenly possessed,
Wedded to all he had become himself,
An inexhaustible joy made his alone,
He gathered all Savitri into his clasp.

There is no depth of feeling in the Miltonic simile. We feel as if we were a distant onlooker, a witness to something which did not concern us; while in Sri Aurobindo we feel the sudden surprise, the sudden overwhelming joy to possess and be possessed. Again, from Milton :

A globe far off
It seemed, now seems a boundless continent,
Dark, waste and wild, under the frown of Night,
Starless, exposed to ever-threatening storms.

Mark how successful is Milton in sombre picturisation. The darkness, the desolation come home with matchless power; the feeling of foreboding is intense as opposed to his joyous themes which do not somehow bring that impact of reality and intensity. In contrast :

As if from a Silence without form or name
The shadow of a remote uncaring god
Doomed to his naught illusory universe,
Cancelling its show of idea and act in Time
And its imitation of eternity.

How palpable is the feeling of silence, the formless and nameless god that cancels everything ! We get a double feeling here : one, of intense reality born from a psychological-union with the subject; two, of a witnessing regard, an aloofness that does away

with fear and awe. Milton's similes possess neither while describing happy scenes, but in his sombre ones there is a sort of union with the subject which makes them so real-toned. Milton is more successful when he refers to classical themes, as here :

To Palès, or Pomona, thus adorned,
Likest she seemed—Pomona when she fled
Vertumnus—or to Ceres in her prime
Yet virgin of Prosperina from Jove.

This reference to Greek mythology and its deities in relation to Eve at once gives another colour and heightens her personality and she sheds some of that ethical sheath in which Milton had originally enwrapped her.

Before we end this topic, we may glance at one more example to show that Sri Aurobindo's similes are not always subjective and that yet he gives a strange turn to a physical image in order to bring home a psychological truth, a thought trying but failing to enter a silent mind :

As smoothly glides a ship nearing its port,
Ignorant of embargo and blockade,
Confident of entrance and the visa's seal,
It came to the silent city of the brain,
To the accustomed and expectant quay,
But met a barring will, a blow of force
And sank vanishing in the immensity.

Although he uses a simile, yet to the conscious mind which has got the necessary preparation and training, this picture is not an abstract image but a figure of reality.

A last word about Milton's similes. Generally they are long and we have chosen only the briefest and those that seemed to us to be representative.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

VI

THE ANGLICIST VIEWPOINT

As long as the English East India Company remained in charge of the government of India, its Court of Directors in London naturally had the final say in all matters affecting that government. Its educational policy, like most other questions affecting the conquered territories, remained in a state of flux for over seventy years after Plassey.

Meanwhile, certain definite views were being expressed on the question of education, both in India and England, which ultimately decided the issue in favour of the English medium. Some of the arguments advanced in support of the Anglicist view deserve more than a passing notice. They may not all be quite satisfying to our national pride. But they represent the conqueror's point of view, and we need not shut our eyes to the fact that India was at the time a conquered country. Some of our well-known patriots of the time too did not hesitate to join in the chorus.

Perhaps the most outspoken presentation of the case for introducing the English language as the chief medium of instruction came from the pen of Charles Grant, in his pamphlet, written in 1792, on the *State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain*. Grant had been in the service of the Company in Bengal where he amassed a fortune through private trading, a practice that had continued long after Clive and one that was not always quite above board. Early in his career he seems to have developed a mania for converting Indians to what he conceived to be the one true religion and, as a first step to that end, to give them an English education. For, according to him, there was no other way of rescuing the people of India from the utter depravity and darkness in which he found them steeped. "In Bengal," he says, "a man of real veracity and integrity is a great phenomenon; one conscientious in the whole of his conduct, it is to be feared, is an unknown character....Power entrusted to a native of Hindoostan seldom fails of being exercised tyrannically, or perverted to the purpose of injustice....The apathy with which a Hindoo views all persons and interests unconnected with himself is such as excites the indignation of Europeans....Patriotism is absolutely unknown in Hindoostan".

Such an utter disregard of virtues, in which presumably the Company's officials excelled, could not be allowed unchecked. Where was the remedy? "The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant; and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders....There are two ways of making this communication : the one is, by the medium of the languages of those countries, the other is by the medium

of our own ...It is perfectly in the power of the country, by degrees, to impart to the Hindoos our language; afterwards, through that medium, to make them acquainted with our easy literary compositions, upon a variety of subjects; and, let not the idea hastily excite derision, progressively with the simple elements of our arts, our philosophy, and religion. These acquisitions would silently undermine, and at length subvert, the fabric of error ..."

Grant was impelled no doubt by the ethico-religious motive. But, like all empire-builders of his time, he had the political motive at the back of his mind. "To introduce the language of the conquerors," he continues, "seems to be an obvious means of assimilating a conquered people to them. The Mahomedans, from the beginning of their power, employed the Persian language in the affairs of government, and in the public departments. This practice aided them in maintaining their superiority, and enabled them, instead of depending blindly on native agents, to look into the conduct and details of public business as well as to keep intelligible registers of the income and expenditure of the State." He proceeds to say that the English administrators should have adopted this practice and substituted the language of the conqueror immediately after the effective transfer of power in place of the obsolete Persian. "It is certain that the Hindoos would easily have conformed to the use of English; and they would still be glad to possess the language of their masters, the language which always gives weight and consequence to the Natives who have any acquaintance with it."

He was fully aware of the possible results of introducing the language of liberty to a nation of would-be serfs. But here his idealism and religious zeal brushed aside all lesser considerations, and he invokes the dread of retribution if England misused or missed her opportunity of doing so much good. "Especially it should be pondered whether, believing in the moral government of the world, we can expect the approbation and continued support of the Supreme Ruler of it, by willingly acquiescing in so much error, so much moral and political evil, when so many just means for the alleviation of them are in our power."

This last sentiment was voiced again and perhaps more eloquently, in 1815, by another official of the Company, Sir Charles Metcalfe who later acted as Governor General for a short term. "The world is governed by an irresistible Power which giveth and taketh away dominions, and vain would be the impotent prudence of man against the operations of its Almighty influence. All that rulers can do is to merit dominion by promoting the happiness of those under them. If we perform our duty in this respect, the gratitude of India, and the admiration of the world, will accompany our name through all ages, whatever may be the revolutions of futurity; but if we withhold blessings from our subjects, from a selfish apprehension of possible danger at a remote period, we shall not deserve to keep our dominion, we shall merit that reverse which time has possibly in store for us...." These were prophetic words which the subsequent history of British dominion in India has amply borne out.

Grant was not alone in voicing his opinion as to the need for giving India more light. One of the best-known Indians of the time, Raja Ram Mohan Roy whom we

delight to call our first patriot and nationalist leader in modern times, put the case against Sanskrit in a much more compelling manner. This is what he wrote in a letter dated 11th December 1823, addressed to the Governor General of India : “The Sanscrit language, so difficult that almost a life-time is necessary for its acquisition, is well known to have been for ages a lamentable check to the diffusion of knowledge, and the learning concealed under this almost impervious veil, is far from sufficient to reward the labour of acquiring it....No improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen years of the most valuable period of their lives, in acquiring the niceties of Vyakarana or Sanskrit Grammar, for instance, in learning to discuss such points as the following : *khāda*, signifying, to eat; *khādati*, he or she or it eats; query, whether *khādati* taken as a whole conveys the meaning he, she or it eats, or are separate parts of this meaning conveyed by distinctions of the words, as if in the English language it were asked how much meaning is there in the *eat* and how much in the *s*, and is the whole meaning of the word conveyed by these two portions of it distinctly or by them taken jointly ? Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta,—in what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity ? what relation does it bear to the Divine Essence ? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, etc. have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better. Again, no essential benefit can be derived by the student of the Mumansa from knowing what it is that makes the killer of a goat sinless pronouncing certain passages of the Vedanta and what is the real nature and operative influence of passages of the Vedas.....In order to enable your Lordship to appreciate the futility of encouraging such imaginary learning as above characterised, I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of science and literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote....The Sanscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness....But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences....” It was of course understood that the medium for the communication of such useful knowledge should be the English language.

Historians aver that the Raja’s memorial to the Governor General was filed in due course and nothing came of it. But this does not tally with the facts. For, very soon afterwards, we shall find the Court of Directors in London sending a dispatch couched in identical terms; and within a decade of the Raja’s letter, Macaulay was repeating some of the Raja’s arguments in his famous minute which finally solved the question and settled the controversy.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Monkey Tree, by *Irene Mott Bose*. Illustrated by Enver Ahmed. Published by Bhawani & Sons, 8-F Connaught Place, New Delhi. Price Rupees 10.00

"Boys and monkeys, monkeys and boys !" cries Dajiba's mother, a character in the book, and thereby she reveals the very elixir of the juvenile fiction, *The Monkey Tree*.

Nanda is a quiet hamlet far from the city. Its border is marked by a river and a forest. It is constituted of Hindu families with various caste-wise occupations, and two Muslim families. Yet the village accomodates a different population. In a big banyan tree, some monkeys have found their permanent dwelling. The story commences as the children decide to tease them. A monkey babe is stolen. The elder monkeys wage a determined war till their tiny one is surrendered to them. Then the monkeys are not only pacified, but they feel grateful to the village children. Soon opportunities arise when the monkeys express their feeling through concrete actions.

The author, a foreigner by birth, is an Indian by choice. The book under review bears testimony to the strength behind her choice. Her intimacy with Village India is evident not only in the characters and events set forth in the book, but in its language too. She proudly presents the typical picturesque idioms of the children of the soil in their literal English rendering. Apart from this, she has succeeded in developing a style of her own—a fusion of her creative wit and the spirit of the folk-phraseology, manifested in expressions such as "Troubles are like mosquitoes; if one finds you, he summons the whole flock," "With a face as long as a cucumber," or "Dajiba's round eyes shone like rupees".

Revolutionary experiments have been made in the realm of fiction since the coming of the Stream of Consciousness—the latest trend being marked in what introduces itself as the complete 'Absurd Novel'. Still goes strong the lure of the fables. Here is a book which features the animals and yet is realistic in the very modern sense of the term. It is, however, more than a book of monkeys and boys, as the village-headman cries towards the end of the book, "Boys and rubies ! Monkeys and gold !

MANOJ DAS

Youth Movement of the World, by *Dr. J. C. Ramachandrani* and *Dr. J. C. Srivastava*. Published by Bhawani & Sons. New Delhi. Price : Rupees 20.00

This is a book of information in a very honest sense, as the authors do not try to interpret or philosophise the developments of the Youth Movement of the world.

The stress is given on rural youth. The authors have already collected a good deal of information. They should have put in some more effort to cover countries like China, Indonesia, etc.

MANOJ DAS

Sanskrit Nibandhadarsa, Ptacgar-maka Series No. 8

Sanskrit Gadya-Sangraha " " " " II

Sanskrit Padya-Sangraha " " " " I2

Published by Sarva-Bhouma Prachar Karyalaya, Teri-neem, Varanasi.

This institution for the propagation of Sanskrit learning is to be congratulated for the very useful service rendered to the cause of teaching the language. No language, other than the mother-tongue, is easy for a beginner and Sanskrit is admittedly difficult. The difficulty is rendered more so because of the dearth of properly-graded text-books and easy readers for rapid reading. The above publications fill up the want in no small measure. Selections from classical writers have been made with great care, illustrative of the various declensional and conjugational forms—the two big hurdles for the beginner. The Essay-book deals with modern topics and sets a standard for simple elegant prose. Teachers of the Sanskrit language will find it of great benefit to get in touch with the Karyalaya and to make use of their numerous publications of similar nature.

I. K. Roy

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FIFTH SEMINAR

8 August 1965

HOW TO TURN ONE'S DIFFICULTIES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

(Continued from the January issue)

VII

WHO likes difficulties ? Probably not many of us. The majority prefer to sail along smoothly, avoiding obstacles. However, aren't difficulties a source of progress and thus our best friends in the course of our evolution ? Without difficulties, would we not be satisfied with what we are and probably not progress at all ?

Difficulties are there to be surmounted and conquered. Their sole *raison d'être* is to make us stronger, more perfect and more conscious. Once conquered, the obstacle will vanish into thin air. It is quite obvious that people who aspire and try to lead a better life will encounter many more difficulties and resistances than the average men who try to live happily and merrily from day to day. But those who aspire for the supreme aim of Integral Yoga—the complete transformation and divinisation of man—must be prepared to battle against Himalayan obstacles. That is one of the reasons why the Integral Yoga is not meant for the weak. A strong constitution, a well-developed personality and a solid mind and nerves must be prepared first.

The great secret of the Integral Yoga is intrinsically related to our difficulties : the higher we want to fly in the divine skies, the lower we have to plunge into the sea of darkness; or using a metaphor we could say : the higher we want to build a skyscraper, the deeper we have to lay the foundations. While ordinary man lives in a very limited and shallow range of consciousness, the aspirant who wants to conquer the peaks of Light must also plunge into the hell of his subconscious nature, one of the main sources of the aspirant's difficulties.

That is why the attempt of a sadhak to appear virtuous and pure is hypocritical. Experience of universal nature-forces shows that we are all subject to certain elementary currents and that the impulses of the lower obscure consciousness cannot

be completely foreign to any man. "None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell,"¹ says Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*. The first tangible result of the action of the higher Force in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga can be the awakening of new powers and faculties on the mental and higher vital levels; this is often followed by an upsurge of the lower vital and physical impurities from their subconscious source as well as from the ignorant universal Nature. This close and strange interaction between the supraconscious and the subconscious is at the root of all yogic difficulties and integral progress. The Mother in one of Her talks with the disciples stresses the same phenomenon : "When you represent the possibility of a victory, you have always in you the thing opposed to this victory, which is your perpetual torment. When you see a very black shadow somewhere, something that is truly painful, you may be sure that you have the possibility of the corresponding light."² The same point is explained by Her in the following report based on a talk by Her :

"The nature of your difficulty indicates the nature of the victory you will gain, the victory you will exemplify in Yoga. Thus, if there is persistent selfishness, it points to a universal realisation as your most prominent achievement in the future. And, when selfishness is there, you have also the power to reverse this very difficulty into its opposite, a victory of utter wideness.

"When you have something to realise, you will have in you just the characteristic which is the contradiction of that something. Face to face with the defect, the difficulty, you say, 'Oh, I am like that ! How awful it is !' But you ought to see the truth of the situation. Say to yourself, 'My difficulty shows me clearly what I have ultimately to represent. To reach the absolute negation of it, the quality at the other pole—this is my mission.'

"Even in ordinary life, we have sometimes the experience of contraries. He who is very timid and has no courage in front of circumstances proves capable of bearing the most !

"To one who has the aspiration for the Divine, the difficulty which is always before him is the door by which he will attain God in his own individual manner : it is his particular path towards the Divine Realisation.

"There is also the fact that if somebody has a hundred difficulties it means he will have a tremendous realisation—provided, of course, there are in him patience and endurance and he keeps the aspiring flame of Agni burning against those defects.

"And remember : the Grace of the Divine is generally proportioned to your difficulties."³

Therefore, let us take the hurdles of the obstacle race of terrestrial existence with sportsmanlike enthusiasm and let us be happy and proud to be graced with the elixir or progress : difficulties and obstacles.

In order to turn difficulties into opportunities for progress it is essential not to

¹ *Savitri*, Book Two, Canto Eight, p. 257.

² Quoted by Satprem, *The Adventure of the Consciousness*, p. 224.

³ *Mother India*, May 1965, p. 6.

identify ourselves with them, because it is much easier to conquer a difficulty by detaching oneself calmly from it. As long as you speak of "your" difficulty it will be extremely hard and painful to surmount it. So the Mother says : "When you have, for example, thoughts, feelings or reactions which you do not like, a movement of anger, spite or insincerity which you want to get rid of, your effort in this direction is painful, it hurts you like a tearing...You feel the pain, because you are under the illusion that the thing that you pull out is a part of your own self. But it is not true. The same thing may happen exactly in all the details and yet you would not feel the shadow of a pain; on the contrary, it might fill you with an ecstatic joy.

"In one case you identify yourself with the adverse forces that you want to throw off and so lay yourself open to their influence; in the other case you have sufficiently detached yourself from them and they have no effect upon you. Then, instead of feeling the negative side that they represent, you feel the positive side which the Divine represents in the experience. It is the Divine Grace that makes you progress and with the Grace comes the Divine Joy. But if instead of identifying yourself with the Grace that makes you progress, you identify yourself with the ugly thing you want to get rid of, naturally you feel like it and you suffer."¹

Each depression is an indication that one is not sufficiently detached from "one's" difficulties. It is also a sign of pointed egoism: our weak but proud ego revolts and goes on strike because it has failed to conquer alone without the Divine's help. When we are before a so-called unsurmountable obstacle or when a depression tries to take hold of us, let us become quiet and offer our troubles to the Divine. If the offering is made sincerely and with confidence, the Divine will take over the responsibility and do whatever is needed.

The vital, the dynamic realising life part, is in many of us one of the principal sources of difficulties, because it tends to jump to extremes : it may be overenthusiastic, expecting that the transformation will happen the very next day. Obviously, this does not happen. Then it becomes depressed and retires into a corner, refusing to collaborate, telling that one's aspiration is a utopia not worth bothering about. This is one of the pitfalls one must avoid with care. As the Mother advises : "As soon as there is the least sign of discontent, of displeasure, the vital must be spoken to like this : 'My friend, you must keep quiet, you must do what you are told to do, otherwise you will have a bad time with me.' If it is on the other hand over-enthusiastic and says : 'Everything must be done now, right away', you reply, 'Just be calm. Your energy is excellent but you must not spend it all in five minutes. We shall have need of it for a long time, conserve it preciously and as the need occurs, I shall call upon your good will. You will show that you are full of good will, you will obey, you will not grumble, you will not protest, you will not revolt, you will say, yes, yes. You will make a little sacrifice when one asks it of you, you will answer with a heartfelt Yes.' " And the Mother continues in the same talk : "Take note, it is

¹ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, April 1956, pp. 61-63.

very important—when you have to deal with your vital, be very careful to keep in a good mood, that is to say, when you see anger is rising, start laughing. Instead of getting depressed and saying, ‘Oh, in spite of all my efforts, this begins again’, you begin to laugh and say, ‘Well, so we are not finished with it yet ! Come now, don’t you see you are being ridiculous ? You know quite well that you are being silly; is it worthwhile getting angry over ?’ Good-humouredly, you teach it this lesson. And, you’ll see, after some time it does not get angry any more.”¹

To overcome a difficulty can be a very long and laborious job and even when we are sure that we have finally got rid of it, a subconscious impulse might bring it suddenly to the surface again when we are off-guard. In such a case it is of no use to wring one’s hands in despair. A strong and unfaltering perseverance is the remedy. We should be ready to persevere any number of times, even, if necessary, for one or several lives; with such an attitude we would surely reach the goal by the most direct road. The important thing is to be prepared to fall a million times if necessary and to get up each time with more perseverance and sincerity. Our outward nature may be a very recalcitrant and slow learner, but if we open ourselves and offer our mistakes and falls calmly, sincerely and in a detached manner to the Divine, we shall be victorious in the end. Let us remember that each fall can be a further step towards perfection. Many falls are inevitable and necessary if a baby wants to learn to walk :

“As a child who learns to walk can walk not long.”²

The Lord, or the supreme Diplomat, as Sri Aurobindo calls Him in the following *Savitri* passage, lets us fall down into the dark abyss so that we may rise higher consequently :

Only a while at first these heavenlier states,
 These large wide-poised upliftings could endure.
 The high and luminous tension breaks too soon,
 The body’s stone stillness and the life’s hushed trance,
 The breathless might and calm of silent mind;
 Or slowly they fail as sets a golden day.
 The restless nether members tire of peace;
 A nostalgia of old little works and joys,
 A need to call back small familiar selves,
 To tread the accustomed and inferior way,
 The need to rest in a natural poise of fall,
 As a child who learns to walk can walk not long,
 Replace the titan will for ever to climb,
 On the heart’s altar dim the sacred fire.

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, November 1965, pp. 53-55.

² *Savitri*, Book One, Canto Three, p. 40.

An old pull of subconscious cords renews;
 It draws the unwilling spirit from the heights,
 Or a dull gravitation drags us down
 To the blind driven inertia of our base.
 This too the supreme Diplomat can use,
 He makes our fall a means for greater rise.¹

No obstacle on our way can be too big for us. The more we become conscious of the obstacle, the more the Grace is there to give us the capacity and the force to resolve it. Let us therefore be heroic soldiers of the Truth and face, fight and finally overcome ! A cowardly attitude, suppression or evasion bar all progress. We should also not fall into the other extreme by looking for difficulties or by creating them deliberately as many ascetics do, for this may lead to serious unbalancing. Difficulties shall come all by themselves when the time is ripe and we are ready to face them.

And when they come (and they will certainly come) we must widen our consciousness as much as possible, because difficulties are ultimately the result of our ego, of our narrow-mindedness. So instead of becoming tense, let us relax, widen, offer ourselves before the Light. Then, as the Mother assures us, three-fourths of the knot is already undone and the rest will be untied by our call to the Light.

Let us also focus as much as possible on the highest and most luminous goal we can conceive, the marvellous promise of an integral transformation. To dwell too much on one's difficulties or to be depressed by falls whose ultimate function is to teach, is unhealthy.

Concluding I would like to mention the sunlit path of our Yoga, *i.e.*, the state when, after a long and arduous Sadhana and purification, our whole being becomes a manifestation of our soul or of the Spirit. Then the ananda of Yoga really starts : all our actions and works are turned into a joyous and spontaneous Divine play and the grey fog of our difficulties is burnt up in no time by the joyous and intense rays of the manifest Divine in us. "For he on honey dew hath fed/ And drunk the milk of Paradise." (*Kubla Khan*, Coleridge). This need not be so far-off as we perhaps think.

As the Mother says :

"Some follow the straight path and quickly arrive at the goal. Others, on the contrary, prefer labyrinths and need longer time, but the end is the same ..

"Note this particularly, you are given a full freedom of choice. If you decide within yourself that you will reach the goal in this life, you will do so. I do not mean that you will have to hold your decision constantly in your consciousness or repeat it continuously—in that case you would succeed in twelve months. I mean if you are suddenly taken up by this resolution : 'This is what I want'—even once, in a flash—that is a seal put upon your life.

¹ *Savitri* Book One, Canto Three, p. 40

“It is no reason, however, to lose your time on the way; it is no reason why you should follow all the meanderings of the labyrinth and arrive at the goal, decreased by all that you have lost, spent, wasted on the way. But in any case it is a reason why you should never despair whatever the obstacles and difficulties.”¹

OSCAR

VIII

This is a practical question and needs a fitting answer. We know that difficulties always come to those who want to progress and achieve something. Many more besiege those who have taken up Sri Aurobindo's yoga because nothing short of perfection is the goal set before us in every field on all the planes of consciousness. In such conditions I think the first requirement is faith that the defects in our nature and the difficulties we come across, whether physical, vital or mental—and however great they may seem—can be conquered and changed by aspiration, perseverance and the action of the Divine's Grace.

But of course, we must be able to recognise the thing as a difficulty to be overcome; and not accept it as an inherent part of ourselves, an unchangeable constant. Or, erring in the other extreme, how often do we not make a mountain of it, as if the whole responsibility of its existence in us and its continued influence were ours. Everyone has to fight against something or other in his nature and as difficulties come always in proportion to our individual capacity, to each one his difficulties seem very great.

It is very important, therefore, not to take the side of the difficulty, feeling as if we were entirely that and identifying ourselves with that little part of our being. We have to try to widen our consciousness each time we come across something unpleasant, a barrier, a hindrance to our true development. If we can put ourselves on the side of that part in us which is luminous and full of goodwill and aspiration, the rest can turn more easily to the Mother's Light and change in its own pace.

Above all, we must not try to force a change in us by setting up rigid rules. Every progress comes in its own time, when the whole being is ready to make it. It is interesting to note, however, that when we start feeling the need of the change it is usually the right time to do something about it. We, on our part, could only accelerate the movement by a clear insight into our shortcomings and a constant aspiration to surpass them.

But, as Sri Aurobindo says : “These fluctuations in the force of the aspiration and the power of the sadhana are unavoidable and common to all sadhaks until the whole being has been made ready for the transformation. When the psychic is in front and active and the mind and vital consent, then there is intensity. When the psychic is less prominent and the lower vital has its ordinary movements or the mind

¹ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, February 1956.

its ignorant action, then the opposing forces can come in unless the sadhak is very vigilant. Inertia comes usually from the ordinary physical consciousness, especially when the vital is not actively supporting the sadhana. These things can only be cured by a persistent bringing down of the higher spiritual consciousness into all the parts of the being.”¹

The only way seems to remember always :

“The road of yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhak than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures.”²

Thus we shall achieve that inner progress towards which all external happenings point—if they are seen in the true light of the soul.

AMITA

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After all the speeches were over, Kishor Gandhi read out the following extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pertaining to the subject of the Seminar, to which he had referred in his introductory speech :

(1)

“In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and Night itself carries in it the burden of the Light that has to be.”
(Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, II, Tome Two, p. 716)

. (2)

“In the play of the cosmic forces, the will in the cosmos—as one might say—does not always work apparently in favour of a smooth and direct line for the work or the sadhana; it often brings in what seems to be upheavals, sudden turns which break or deflect the line, opposing or upsetting circumstances or perplexing departures from what had been temporarily settled or established. The one thing is to preserve equanimity and make an opportunity and means of progress out of all that happens in the course of the life and the sadhana. There is a higher secret Will transcendent behind the play and will of the cosmic forces—a play which is always a mixture of things favourable and things adverse—and it is that Will which one must wait upon and have faith in; but you must not expect to be able always to understand its workings. The mind wants this or that to be done, the line once taken to be maintained, but what the mind wants is not at all always what is intended in a larger purpose. One

¹ *On Yoga* II, Tome Two, p. 36.

² *On Yoga* II, Tome One, p. 609.

has to follow indeed a fixed central aim in the sadhana without deviating from it, but not to build on outward circumstances, conditions, etc., as if they were fundamental things. (Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, II, Tome Two, p. 716.)

(3)

There can be no failure; for whatever happens is the intention of the Master of the worlds, not final, but a step on his way, and if it appears as an opposition, a defeat, a denial, even for the moment a total denial of the aim set before the instrumental being, it is so only in appearance and afterwards it will appear in its right place in the economy of his action—a fuller supramental vision may even see at once or beforehand its necessity and its true relation to the eventual result to which it seems so contrary and even perhaps its definite prohibition. Or, if—while the light is deficient,—there has been a misinterpretation whether with regard to the aim or the course of the action and the steps of the result, the failure comes as a rectification and is calmly accepted without bringing discouragement or a fluctuation of the will. In the end it is found that there is no such thing as failure and the soul takes an equal passive or active delight in all happenings as the steps and the formulations of the divine Will. The same evolution takes place with regard to good fortune and ill fortune, the pleasant and the unpleasant in every form, *maṅgala amaṅgala, priya apriya*. (Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga* I, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 831-32)

(4)

For in all happenings we shall see the will of the Master of all works and results and a step in the evolving expression of the Divine. He manifests himself, to those who have the inner eye that sees, in forces and their play and results as well as in things and in creatures. All things move towards a divine event; each experience, suffering and want no less than joy and satisfaction is a necessary link in the carrying out of a universal movement which it is our business to understand and second. To revolt, to condemn, to cry out is the impulse of our unchastened and ignorant instincts. Revolt like everything else has its uses in the play and is even necessary, helpful, decreed for the divine development in its own time and stage; but the movement of an ignorant rebellion belongs to the stage of the soul's childhood or to its raw adolescence. The ripened soul does not condemn but seeks to understand and master, does not cry out but accepts or toils to improve and perfect, does not revolt inwardly but labours to obey and fulfil and transfigure. Therefore we shall receive all things with an equal soul from the hands of the Master. Failure we shall admit as a passage as calmly as success until the hour of the victory arrives. Our souls and minds and bodies will remain unshaken by acutest sorrow and suffering and pain if in the divine dispensation they come to us, unoverpowered by intensest joy and pleasure. Thus supremely balanced we shall continue steadily on our way meeting

all things with an equal calm until we are ready for a more exalted status and can enter into the supreme and universal Ananda.

(Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 257-58)

(5)

THE UTILITY OF DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties are sent to us exclusively to make the realisation more perfect.

Every time we try to realise something and meet a resistance or even a failure—what appears to be a failure—we must know and never forget that it is there exclusively, absolutely in order that the realisation may be more perfect !

Therefore this habit of getting dejected, discouraged or even uneasy, or cursing yourself or telling yourself : “There I have again committed a blunder...”, all that is complete stupidity.

Say simply : “We ourselves do not know how to do things as they should be done; well, things are done for us, come what may !” If we could only see to what extent that which seems indeed to be a difficulty, a blunder, a failure, an obstacle is there just to help us that the realisation may be more perfect.

Once you know that, all becomes easy.

(The Mother,—*Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, Feb. 1959)

(6)

...every one possesses in a large measure, and the exceptional individual in an increasing degree of precision, two opposite tendencies in the character, almost in equal proportions, which are like the light and the shadow of the same thing. Thus a man who has the capacity of being exceptionally generous suddenly finds rushing up in his nature an obstinate avarice; the courageous would be somewhere a coward and the good suddenly have wicked impulses. Life seems to endow everyone, along with the possibility of expressing an ideal, with contrary elements in him representing in a concrete manner the battle he has to wage and the victory he has to win so that the realisation may be possible. (The Mother,—*On Education*, p. 80)

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Finally, on behalf on the New Age Association, Kishor Gandhi thanked all those who had come to attend the Seminar and also those who had participated in it.

After that the Seminar ended.

WALLACE STEVENS

(Continued from the January Issue)

3. THE CENTRAL CONCERN WITH METAPHOR

Three Academic Pieces, consisting of a lecture entitled "The Realm of Resemblances" and two poems, "Someone Puts a Pineapple Together" and "Of Ideal Time and Choice", was read at Harvard and first published in 1947 by Stevens. In the essay, "The Realm of Resemblances", Stevens says that poetry is built around reality as its central reference, and is related to reality by the resemblance between things. As he elsewhere says :

"Take, for example, a beach extending as far as the eye can reach bordered, on the one hand, by trees and, on the other, by the sea. The sky is cloudless and the sun is red. In what sense do the objects in this scene resemble each other ? There is enough green in the sea to relate it to the palms. There is enough of the sky reflected in the water to create a resemblance, in some sense, between them. The sand is yellow between the green and the blue. In short, the light alone creates a unity not only in the recedings of distance, where differences become invisible, but also in the contacts of closer sight. So, too, sufficiently generalized, each man resembles all other men, each woman resembles all other women, this year resembles last year. The beginning of time will, no doubt, resemble the end of time. One world is said to resemble another" (*The Necessary Angel* : Wallace Stevens).

Resemblance, then, binds together all the various aspects of nature. Poetry, too, binds parts of reality together,—but through metaphor—a general term for any kind of image in Stevens's vocabulary. Stevens remarks in his essay, "The Realm of Resemblances":

"Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblance. As the mere satisfying of a desire, it is pleasurable. But poetry if it did nothing but satisfy a desire would not rise above the level of many lesser things. Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it. If resemblance is described as a partial similarity between two dissimilar things, it complements and reinforces that which the two dissimilar things have in common. It makes it brilliant.

"Metaphor is 'the creation of resemblances' by the imagination, a process in which all things undergo a transformation. In metaphor, the resemblance may be, first, between two or more parts of reality; second, between something real and something imagined...as, for example, between music and what may be evoked by it; and third, between two imagined things as when we say that God is good...

"A poetic metaphor appears to be poetry at its source. It is. At least it is poetry at one of its sources although not necessarily its most fecundating."

In the third section of the poem, "Someone Puts a Pineapple Together", Stevens gives an example of the way in which the imagination may *extend* an object. Once his imagination is free to play around the pineapple sitting on the table the pineapple *becomes* :

1. The hut stands by itself beneath the palms
2. Out of their bottle the green geni come
3. A vine has climbed the other side of the wall
4. The sea is sprouting upward out of rocks
5. Symbol of feasts and of oblivion
6. White sky, pink sun, trees on a distant peak
7. These lozenges are nailed up lattices.
8. The owl sits humped. It has a hundred eyes
9. The coconut and the cockerel in one
10. This is how yesterday's volcano looks
11. There is an island Palahude by name
12. An uncivil shape like a gigantic haw

Not all of these resemblances are equally good. Stevens admits that between resemblances one is always a little more perfect than another. But it is a considerable feat merely to conceive twelve images which resemble a pineapple. It is an achievement frequently repeated in Stevens's poetry.

"If the things compared are in most respects unlike we think of the comparison as a conceit, in Samuel Johnson's terms, a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. The conceit is commonly thought of as being of two kinds, condensed and expanded. Of the former we may instance some from *Owl's Clover* :

The envoi to the past
Is largely another winding of the clock.

Of the latter, the extended conceit, we may instance such poems as *Peter Quince at the Clavier*, *The Bird with the Coppery Keen Claws*. The description of the bird is delusively simple.

Above the forest of the parakeets
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,
A pip of life amid a mort of tails.

As soon as we suspect the literal meaning is not all, the underlying meaning suggests itself, detail by detail. Why parakeet instead of parrot? Because parakeet suggests Paraclete. Why 'forest of the parakeets?' Because men make God in the image of man. Why parakeet and not some other bird? Because the parakeet speaks, and speech is the source of our delusion of understanding the meaning of the universe. Why 'parakeet of parakeets?' Because of the echo it suggests with King of Kings, or

Lord of Lords. Why 'mort of tails' instead of many tails ? Because mort is a pun on death and relates to the ironic commentary on our senses of understanding the meaning of death." (O'Connor)

(To be continued)

C. SUBBIAN

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 2

February 1966

I.

International education received unusual attention throughout 1965 and is likely to receive a good deal more during the coming year. Today we can say the whole world is education conscious, and we see that the Great Need for Improvement is necessary not only in the developing countries with their millions of illiterates but also, if not to the same degree, in countries like Britain and America where improvement should have been initiated fifty years ago, and probably would have been if two world wars had not intervened.

The problem has been put into the hands of many contemporary experimental psychologists of the first rank but they are either unwilling or unable to translate their discoveries into a language that will make them useful to teachers who must apply the principles of learning in the classroom.

Research into the methods of learning has to be made possible in the classroom or in close co-operation with the teacher and his work. Preferably, research on method should be carried out in Teacher's Colleges which are also schools for primary and secondary students. It is always an excellent experience when the teacher learns with the pupils.

There are a growing number of educational theorists today who have come to be convinced that learning has to come from the student; it cannot be imparted by the teacher. Sri Aurobindo reminds us that the first thing a teacher should learn is that "nothing can be taught". This concept goes back to Plato. As Emile Bréhier states in *The Hellenic Age*, "Socrates...possessed no other art but maieutics, his mother Phaenaretes' art of delivering; he drew out from souls what they have in them. ." The student already knows the truth; the teacher merely shows him how to bring it forth—which is the original meaning of the root word of education : *educere* to draw out, lead. However, the point is, how can we implement such a concept into our present day formalised curricula ?

B. F. Skinner, Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, says : "Effective instructional practices threaten the conception of teaching as a form of maieutics. If we suppose that the student is to "exercise his rational powers", to 'develop his mind,' to learn through 'intuition or insight' and so on, then it may indeed be true that the teacher cannot teach but can only help the student to learn."

John Wain, one of the Angry Young Men, in his book *Hurry On Down* answers the question why Charles, having secured his degree at the University, has failed,— "...because the University had, by its three years' random and shapeless cramming, unfitted his mind for serious thinking .." Later he gives us a glimpse of the known but unremediable fault in the words : "In a swirl of resentment Charles saw the faces of those who had 'tried to help him' : and behind the faces flickered a radiance, the colour of dawn on snow-capped hills, that might (he suddenly knew) have been in his life if he had been left alone to make it without 'guidance' : if all the people who had cloaked their possessive fumbling under the words 'trying to help you' had been, by a miracle, persuaded to leave him in peace."

A truly effective educational system cannot be set up until we fully understand the process of learning and teaching—not by the jug 'and the mug' method or the 'potter and the clay' method—but by the 'Gardener and the Plant' approach. At the moment processes of learning are left to individual teachers, to casual experience, or organized experience limited and restricted to the environment of formal classrooms, into which the distinguished learning theorists and educational psychologists hardly ever venture.

One positive contribution which has been made, however, is that of Programmed Instruction, especially where worksheets have been devised to make the student think for themselves, and where such worksheets have been built around problems and interests apposite to the student's environment and culture.

An important factor that educators have always to remember is that teaching should ever be an arrangement of contingencies in an environment where behaviour is at any time likely to change, and that these changes can be the most significant indices to methods to be employed or attitudes to be taken.

2. Discipline

We still talk of educational reforms, as did most probably Comenius and Rousseau, who well knew the shortcomings of teaching methods in their day and tried to improve them. But have we really escaped from the 'necessity' to use aversive control ? We have, we say, evolved beyond corporal punishment, which has always played an important part in education. As H.I.Marrou says in *A History of Education in Antiquity* : "Education and corporal punishment appeared as inseparable to a Hellenistic Greek as they had to a Jewish or an Egyptian scribe in the time of the Pharaohs ..When the men of antiquity thought back to their schooldays they immediately remembered the beatings."

Maybe we have, for the most part, given up using the cane, but there are still

many teachers and instructors using intellectual browbeatings which, psychologically, may have more serious and far-reaching results towards states of inner revolt, non-co-operation, lack of response and truancy,—truancy, incidentally comes from an old Celt word meaning 'wretched'—and many more subtle forms of escape, such as forgetting all one has learned; and who has discovered a form of control to prevent ultimate break for FREEDOM ?

3. *Soviet Russia*

First steps towards breaking with the rigid class lesson technique of instruction and adopting a more individualised approach are being taken in the Soviet Union. The new approach is called "differentiated instruction" which has something in common with what is known elsewhere as "setting". Classes are broken up into three groups : weak, average and superior pupils, and each group receives tasks commensurate with its level of attainment.

4. *Canada*

In Quebec City and Province, under By-Law Number One, a new system of administering education is operating whereby each teacher is free to choose the teaching methods he judges to be most in accord with his training and abilities.

5. *United States of America*

In his speech at Independence, Missouri, on the 20th January, President Johnson said :

"The International Education Act of 1966 will help build partnerships between American and foreign schools. It will recruit teachers for overseas work. It will make possible long-term commitments by American universities toward solving the problems of international education. It will launch a series of projects to attack illiteracy and find new ways to teach basic skills—and it will begin to provide for an exchange Peace Corps to bring able young people from other countries to live and work with us."

6. *Thought for the Month*

Have we come to that point in our evolution where man is beginning to live globally, ..with minds turned toward world-economy, world-society, world-education ? Sri Aurobindo says in *The Human Cycle*, in the chapter, "The Coming of the Subjective Age" :

"The characteristic note of these tendencies (towards the subjective and psychic dealing of man with his own being) may be seen in the new ideas about education and upbringing of the child...Formerly, education was merely a mechanical forcing of the child's nature into arbitrary grooves of training and knowledge in which the individual subjectivity was the last thing considered..."

These words were written, it should be remembered, in the *Arya*, in 1916.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT