

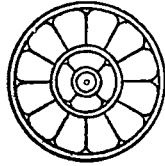
# MOTHER INDIA

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**Mother India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2**



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVIII

No. 2

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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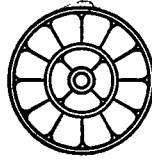
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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

ça ne fait rien ! les difficultés sont là  
pour le plaisir de les  
surmonter

Va de l'avant, garde  
confiance et tout ira  
bien.

That does not matter ! The difficulties are there for the pleasure  
of surmounting them.

Go forward, keep confident and all will be well.

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

JANUARY 28, 1940

P : Some astrologers have said that Gandhi will see India realise her freedom during his lifetime.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is quite possible. If by freedom is meant Dominion Status, India can get it tomorrow if Jinnah comes round.

N : It seems Gandhi is ready to accept Dominion Status.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course. That is common sense. If after Dominion Status you can secede from the British Government any time and thus get without fighting what you want, what is the sense of fighting now ? Only the Defence question and British interests will remain. After a few years, when these problems have been solved, you can get rid of the British Government.

N : As Ireland did ?

P : Yes. See how England can't force Ireland to enter the war. The Irish are quite independent though so near to England.

SRI AUROBINDO : Only, there is a Northern Ireland there. That is due to people—the Southerners—who didn't want to join the British Empire. Otherwise the British Government would have been willing to concede full Dominion Status to Ireland as one whole. In India, if Jinnah had had the good sense to come to an agreement with the Congress, the British Government would have granted Dominion Status. The real problem then would have been: after Dominion Status, what ?

N : How ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There would have been a fight between the communities, and also the extreme socialists would have had to be fought.

JANUARY 29, 1940

We had with us Krishnaprem's letter to D on Grace *versus* Tapasya. N was looking up a word in the dictionary.

S : Are you wanting to know the meaning of “androgynous” in Krishnaprem’s statement : “Male and female are the two elements of our androgynous psyche” ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at S*) : How do you feel about it ?

S : It may be true. Receptiveness, it seems, characterises the soul and that is a feminine quality. Krishnaprem says Newman calls the soul a woman and Krishnaprem also speaks of the Vaishnavas trying to identify themselves with the Gopis in order to love Krishna.

SRI AUROBINDO : The soul, he says, may be considered a marriage of receptiveness and tapasya—it is a married couple. The Upanishad also speaks of *eko vaśī*.<sup>1</sup>

P : Can receptiveness be said to be the same as Grace ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, Grace is conditioned by receptiveness.

P : What Krishnaprem means by receptiveness appears to be the same as bhakti, devotion.

SRI AUROBINDO : The people who follow the path of love and bhakti rely most on Grace.

P : We hear that Grace is always present : whenever one opens to it, one gets the response.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, you have to open to it.

N : Krishnaprem makes a division between power, which is the reward of tapasya, and Grace, which is the reward of receptiveness. Does it mean that only receptive persons get Grace ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How can you have Grace without receptiveness ? Even if there is tapasya, the result doesn’t depend on tapasya. As they say, only the Grace of Brahman can give the result.

P : The Upanishad also says : “To him whom the Spirit chooses, He reveals Himself.”

N : The Buddhists don’t believe in Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. They say you have to do everything by yourself. They don’t believe in the soul : so male-female don’t count.

C : If a man is not receptive, the Grace won’t act ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It acts in order to make him receptive.

C : He receives Grace then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but it doesn’t descend into him.

C : How is that ?

N : It means it acts only from above.

S : From behind also—till he gets an opening, and then it descends.

B : Just as, whether a man is conscious or not, the Agni burns in him, doesn’t Grace act irrespective of everything ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It doesn’t follow that there is no difference in its action in a conscious man and an unconscious one.

<sup>1</sup> One controller.

N : You mean there is a difference in the degree of action ? A man who is more conscious receives more ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course. That goes without saying. Otherwise there would be no difference between a worldly man and a seeker. Grace could as well make the worldly man realise the Divine and it would act equally in both. As the consciousness increases, one becomes more and more receptive and the progress also is quicker.

N : How does it act more effectively ? Because it creates faith ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It acts in every way.

C : There are some people who have no faith in you or the Mother. Even then they receive something from a flower sent to them.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, even if there is no faith, Grace can act. You know about St. Paul. He used to persecute the Christians. Once in the midst of his persecution he suddenly got a vision and was converted. Sarat Chatterji had no faith; yet he was saved twice by a flower and he came to believe and feel that there was something. Everybody is receptive in some way or other.

C : Sometimes one finds that an outsider who has come here feels or receives something from a flower while a sadhak doesn't. Does it mean that the outsider is more receptive ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, in that particular respect.

P : Krishnaprem's distinction is rather strange, because Tantra implies just the opposite of what he says. Tantra makes the female the active part.

SRI AUROBINDO : There are two ways of seeing. In the one the masculine is active and the feminine is passive, while, in the other, Prakriti the feminine is the executive force and Purusha the masculine is the witness.

S : In the Veda you have interpreted the Supreme as male, female and neither.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : Yes—the Gita also makes the Divine appear variously: the Divine says, "I am in everybody", and then, "Everybody is in me", and at last, "Everybody is in me but I am not in them."

S : Krishnaprem's view is that one element should not be subordinate to the other.

SRI AUROBINDO : It doesn't rule out the fact that one element may be predominant and outweigh the other.

N : I somehow don't like the clear-cut distinction made by him. He says that the flow of power comes to male tapasya. But that itself is due to the receptivity of the one who does the tapasya and consequently due to Grace.

S : He himself doesn't say that it is the whole truth.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it is not the whole truth, it contains only an element. The truth is infinite, and Krishnaprem states one aspect of the infinite truth. Infinite factors enter into it and there are infinite ways of action.

Krishnaprem has objected to the word Grace as taken and understood by the Christians. The Christians say that nothing can be done or achieved except by Grace and they leave everything to it.



## EVENING

The morning's talk did not quite satisfy N : there were still some points to be cleared up, especially regarding Grace *versus* Effort. N told C that he would raise the topic again and inform Sri Aurobindo that C also did not believe in tapasya. C said that N could tell this to Sri Aurobindo but when C was present and not when he was away. In the evening C himself was in the mood to ask something and everybody saw he was slowly approaching Sri Aurobindo and his expression made N laugh. P had not come yet.

SRI AUROBINDO : What's the matter ?

N : C is going to ask something.

C : No, no. (*Immediately afterwards*) Can a person receive without his knowledge ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes; man doesn't know everything. He doesn't know what he is or can be.

C : Sometimes is it not better that he shouldn't know ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling and with a stress*) : Sometimes.

Later, after P had come, there was an expectation that N would ask a question. All were looking at one another. The situation was so funny that N burst into laughter.

P : N is on the point of asking some question.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is it a formidable question ?

N : Oh no. But did you say in the morning that the female element Krishnaprem speaks of corresponds or is equivalent to love, devotion, etc ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, I didn't say that. Why should it be so ?

S : Yes, why ? Doesn't Sachchidananda love ?

N : As Krishnaprem speaks of the Vaishnavas' self-identification with the Gopis, I thought it comes to that. Otherwise, why does he associate receptiveness with the female element ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because the female is passive, dependent—though she may be passively active ! The male is active, strong and self-reliant. That, at any rate, is the English suggestion of the word "male".

S : Receptiveness includes these things and is a way of representing the inner life and working.

P : If you accept that, you can't say that the male aspect is without love.

SRI AUROBINDO : The male aspect also loves—it is devoted to a woman—but in a different way. Similarly the female also has other aspects than love.

P : We have to consider the Tantric idea of Shakti.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so.

N : At the end of his letter Krishnaprem says that both the elements should be equal; one mustn't stress more one aspect. Is this true ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What do you mean by "true" ? If you mean true as a fact, then it is not. But he says : "It should be."

N : But is the idea correct ?

P : Perhaps he means that in an ideal case there would be equality.

N : But why ? There may be people, even if exceptional, who don't believe in the male element, that is, in tapasya. For instance, Girish Ghosh refused point-blank to take Ramakrishna's name when asked. He said : "I can't. You have to do everything for me." And, as far as I know, there was a great change in his life.

P : I have heard he hadn't been able to give himself completely to Ramakrishna.

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean that he made some personal effort ?

P : He found at the end that he hadn't left everything to Ramakrishna.

SRI AUROBINDO : That means he himself put in some effort of his own.

N : I haven't heard of such a thing.

S : Then he must have had entire faith in Ramakrishna.

N : Yes. So I say that if one has a living faith, one is not required to do tapasya. Isn't that true ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

S : But aren't some effort and straining inevitable ?

N : As for myself, I have found that many things have dropped away—maybe temporarily—from me without my making any effort worth the name.

SRI AUROBINDO : But you wanted sincerely to drop them.

N : Yes, I did want, but without doing any effort. So I say it was due to Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO : That may be so in your case.

N : No. In many cases I have known things have happened this way.

P : There was some effort. Only, you can say that the effort was negligible in proportion to the success.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not a question of proportion. One may have put in a great deal of effort and yet there could be no result because there was not a complete and total sincerity. On the other hand, when the result comes with little effort it is because the whole being has responded—and Grace found it possible to act. All the same, effort is a contributory factor. Sometimes one goes on making effort with no result or even the condition becomes worse. And when one has given up the effort one finds suddenly that the result has come. It may be that the effort was keeping up the opposite resistance too. And when the effort is given up, the resistance says : "This fellow has given up effort. What is the use of resisting any more ?" (*Laughter*)

N : C also doesn't believe in tapasya.

C : By that I don't mean one must indulge in the lower nature. But otherwise I don't believe in tapasya—it's true.

SRI AUROBINDO : But when one wants something, one has to concentrate one's energies on a particular point.

N : That, of course; but is that the sense of the word "tapasya"? By "tapasya" we mean something done against one's nature, something unpleasant and requiring effort.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the popular idea of tapasya. People think of it as standing on their heads, sitting on nails, etc. It is not the correct idea. The correct idea is : concentration of all one's energies in order to gain a particular object or aim which a man wants and this is not always unpleasant or difficult.

P : Why does N think that effort is always associated with struggle, unpleasantness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Tapasya can surely be for something one likes or wishes to have.

N : But when I sit in meditation, for instance, I have to make an effort to gather up my scattered mind which is moving about. And it is an unpleasant laborious effort.

SRI AUROBINDO : But something in you wants to do it. Otherwise you won't do it. You gather up your energies and put them on a particular point.

N : Yes, but even for that gathering up, some effort is necessary, which is not always easy.

SRI AUROBINDO : When you want a thing, effort will always be there to get it. It is more a concentration of energy, I should say.

C : A man may find it easy to meditate for many hours.

SRI AUROBINDO : But there also you have to concentrate all your energy. A man who is playing cricket has to concentrate on the ball, the bat, the wicket, etc., gathering up all his energies from other fields.

N : That is comparatively easy because he finds interest in the game.

P : But it won't be easy for a man who doesn't like cricket but likes hockey.

N : A sportsman can shift his interest without much difficulty.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is said in the Upanishad that God created the world by tapas. I believe he didn't find it difficult, though he had to make an effort. (*Laughter*)

N : If you bring in God, we mortals have no chance.

P : That is only an illustration.

SRI AUROBINDO : I myself have to make an effort to read and interpret the Vedas, and don't find it unpleasant : another may. (*To N*) When you write poetry, you have to make effort, but it is not unpleasant.

N : Sometimes I am on the verge of kicking away pencil and book.

S : There are instances in literature to explain some points about concentration of energy. For example, a woman goes about doing various works while she keeps a pitcher on her head. Her inner mind is concentrated on that though the outer is engaged otherwise.

N : But she had to practise keeping the pitcher on her head.

S : In the case of the Gopis, it was not that they had to make a difficult effort to remember Krishna : they spontaneously fell in love with him and something in them was on fire. So when something in the being is touched the concentration doesn't require labour or effort.

By the way, at times one may make an effort for a thing, but the result comes in quite a different way.

SRI AUROBINDO : That very often happens. In my case, Lele wanted me to get devotion, love and hear the inner voice, but instead I got the experience of the silent Brahman.

S : And he prayed and prayed with incantations, etc., to pull you up to the other condition. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : No rigid rule is possible to make in these matters.

N : That is why I don't quite like the last part of Krishnaprem's letter where he says that male and female must be equal and that one can't go without the other, and such things.

SRI AUROBINDO : He says "should be", not "must be".

N : But why should it be ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is his point of view. He is free to hold it.

NIRODBARAN

---

## A DISCUSSION WITH SRI AUROBINDO

### A LATINISED ADJECTIVE IN ENGLISH

(In my lines—

*This heart grew brighter when your breath's proud chill  
Flung my disperse life-blood more richly in—*

*a terminal d will at once English that Latin fellow "disperse", but is he really objectionable? At first I had "Drove" instead of "Flung"—so the desire for a less dental rhythm was his raison d'être, but if he seems a trifle weaker than his English avatar, he can easily be dispensed with now.)*

"I don't think 'disperse' as an adjective can pass—the dentals are certainly an objection but do not justify this Latin-English neologism." (12-6-1937)

*(Why should that poor "disperse" be inadmissible when English has many such Latinised adjectives—e.g. "consecrate", "dedicate", "intoxicate"? I felt it to be a natural innovation and not against the genius of the language: I discover from the Standard Dictionary now that it is not even a neologism—it is only an obsolete word. I have a substitute ready, however:*

*Flung my diffuse life-blood more richly in.*

*But is not "disperse" formed on exactly the same principle as "diffuse"? By the way, does "dispersed" make the line really too dental, now that "Flung" is there and not the original "Drove"?)*

"I don't think people use 'consecrate', 'intoxicate' etc. as adjectives nowadays—at any rate it sounds to me too recherché. Of course, if one chose, this kind of thing might be perpetrated—

O wretched man intoxicate,  
Let not thy life be consecrate  
To wine's read yell (spell, if you want to be 'poetic')  
Else will thy soul be dedicate  
To Hell—

but it is better not to do it. It makes no difference if there are other words like 'diffuse' taken from French (not Latin) which have this form and are generally used

adjectives. Logic is not the sole basis of linguistic use. I thought at first it was an archaism and there might be some such phrase in old poetry as lids<sup>1</sup> disperse, but as I could not find it even in the Oxford which claims to be exhaustive and omniscient, I concluded it must be a neologism of yours. But archaism or neologism does not matter: 'Dispersed life-blood' brings three d's so near together that they collide a little—if they were farther from each other it would not matter—or if they produced some significant or opportune effect. I think 'diffuse' will do. (13-6-1937)

*(What do I find this afternoon? Just read :*

*Suddenly  
From motionless battalions as outride  
A speed disperse of horsemen, from the mass  
Of livid menace went a frail light cloud  
Rushing through heaven, and behind it streamed  
The downpour all in wet and greenish lines.*

*This is from your own Urvasic, written in the middle nineties of the last century. Of course it is possible that the printer has omitted a terminal d—but is that really the explanation?)*

"I dare say I tried to Latinise. But that does not make it a permissible form. If it is obsolete, it must remain obsolete. I thought at first it was an archaism you were trying on, I seemed to remember something of the kind, but as I could find it nowhere I gave up the idea—it was probably my own crime that I remembered." (29-6-1937)

*From AMAL KIRAN*

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<sup>1</sup> Uncertain reading—Editor.

# LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

## A PERSONAL RECORD

(Continued from the issue of February 21)

### B.B.C. TALK

ONE of the most important things I had to do in England was to make a broadcast on Sri Aurobindo in London in the Third Programme of the B.B.C. The Third Programme is intended for the intellectuals in England. The B.B.C., though an independent organisation, follows closely the policy of the government. So in their work England comes first, and then the continental countries including Russia and the United States. Asia and Africa are generally left to the overseas broadcasts.

Ever since I reached England I had been trying to meet the Director of the B.B.C. Being new to the town I went to the B.B.C. and met the Director of the Overseas Broadcasts, who was very sympathetic. From him I learnt that the Third Programme was under a separate department whose office was close by. Inquiring on the phone I learnt that the Director was out in Switzerland and would come after two or three weeks. I had a lot of other work to do and I had to be travelling out of London constantly. Whenever I was in London I tried to fix up an appointment. The secretary and his assistant wanted to find out my purpose. But I had decided to meet the Director and no one else. I felt it better to risk even a negative reply from the top rather than from subordinates. So the appointment with the Director took time. But in the meantime I had met the adviser to the Director at Oxford in the Colloquium.

At last on 13th October 1955 I got an appointment with the Director. I went with six or eight works of Sri Aurobindo's in an attaché case on a cold morning to the office and was introduced to him. The adviser, whom I knew, was also present.

I began by stating that the relations between England and India after independence should be the beginning of an era of cultural exchange and co-operation. I added : "England stands to gain by such a process." I then dwelt on Sri Aurobindo's life in England and in India, his grand synthesis, his two great epics—*Savitri* and *Iliad*. I suggested a broadcast on Sri Aurobindo in the Third Programme.

The Director listened; I then proceeded to show him the books I had taken with me. I noticed that he was not looking at the two books I had put on the table. I stopped showing the other books and sat down in my chair.

Then he asked me about the subject of *The Life Divine*. Having the opportunity I went on for more than 15 minutes in a non-stop attempt to achieve the feat of compressing 1100 pages into that tiny bit of time. He seemed impressed, I don't

know whether by the originality of approach or by the language or by both. He asked me about the other works. I spoke about *Savitri* and told him : "You don't seem to realise the cultural tragedy involved in the fact that I, an Indian, have to come thousand miles to tell you that there is an epic in *your* language written by this great seer. As for his prose I would like to know how many writers can command that chaste style of his, maintaining throughout a height of thought. He has enriched the English language not only by literary works but by making current new words in it."

He asked me : "Do you remember any such word ?"

I : "Yes, I do. Can you tell me what the 'bar dexter' means ?"

He tried for a minute—he was an M.A. of Cambridge—and acknowledged his ignorance.

I : "Do you know what the 'bar sinister' is ?"

Of course, he knew the meaning. Then I explained to him that Sri Aurobindo had coined the term 'bar dexter' to mean a sign that indicates one's claim to a higher birth, as 'bar sinister' indicates a mixture of lower strata of society in the family.

At last I said : "I am ready to lend these books to you; your assistant and the adviser can go through them and you may also read some work of his. If you find after reading that his books contain solutions of some of the basic problems of mankind and the thought-content is original, then you may make a broadcast yourself. I am not keen on doing it myself. I have done that in India several times. But if on any account the broadcast is not done, I will not be sorry for Sri Aurobindo, I will be sorry for England."

He said he would give the most sympathetic consideration to my request. Only, he wanted that I should meet him again. The day fixed was 22nd October. On that day I had to answer a barrage of some thirty questions prepared by the assistant and the adviser. I answered them all without any difficulty.

Then the conversation became light and the adviser, Gregory, told me : "Do you know why the Director asked you questions about Sri Aurobindo at King's College ?" I said : "No." Gregory : "Because he himself is from King's." I got up and extending my hand said : "Shake hands—all great men from Sri Aurobindo to John Morris came from King's." Director : "You should have been in the Diplomatic Service." Pointing to the adviser he said : "Do you know he was born in India ?" I : "No." I turned to Gregory : "Now, you have been keeping a secret. Where were you born in India ?" He said : "In Benaras—my father was a missionary."

I : "You should be holy, Gregory, it is a holy city."

Then the Director said : "It is all right, you are the best fitted to prepare the broadcast we will give you the full time, twenty minutes."

I spent anxious hours at night—for that was the only time free from all engagements. To condense Sri Aurobindo and his work into a text of about three thousand words and within twenty minutes seemed impossible and even absurd. Besides, the



broadcast was for the British people whose cultural background is so different from that of India. But I was not alone, I was helped by His Light. I prepared the text in two or three days working overnight. The day of reading the text was fixed. I consulted the adviser, Mr. Gregory, who had become friendly with me. In my text I had quoted a passage from *Savitri* at the end. He was frank; he said : "It is your broadcast, you are free to keep the passage from *Savitri* if you like. But if you ask me, knowing the British public as I do, I would not end the broadcast with that passage."

That day I sat overnight and changed the ending, and practised reading my piece aloud within twenty minutes. It is an important thing because generally one is too slow or too fast. At last the reading was done on the 16th of November. My greatest delight was that it sounded very well and it ended exactly on the 60th second of the 20th minute !

Gregory who was present shook hands with me and congratulated me, saying : "This happens very rarely, either it is 18 minutes or 22 when we have to cut off at 20." I replied : "In His Work things happen like that."

*(To be continued)*

A. B. PURANI

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

(Concluded from the issue of February 21)

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### *Summary*

This individualistic age is, then, a radical attempt of mankind to discover the truth and law both of the individual and of the world to which the individual belongs. In its development it was guided first by the light of the mind and reason and by life experience and a demand on life.

In the West and in modern times this quest has taken the form of a clear and powerful physical science that discovered the laws of the physical universe and, viewing man as a physical being, applied science to the sociological conditions of his life. But it seems that man was becoming aware that a knowledge of the physical world is not a whole knowledge, that he is essentially more mental than physical or vital; although he is psychologically affected and limited by his physical being and environment, he is not determined by them and can discover new powers behind his mentality and surface psychology. A discovery of the subjective secret of himself and things would make his life over : make his actions dynamic, enlighten his reason, —develop his whole life towards a creative and full realization of its potentials.<sup>1</sup>

### *Conclusions*

The hypothesis of the study was that “the truest most comprehensive psychology was existential and of dynamic spiritual magnitude.” It is felt that its validity has been demonstrated. If Sri Aurobindo has not revealed the reality of human nature and the true method of individuation, he has certainly provided theories that can be investigated.

Since the thesis is ultimately based upon experience, future research might be done among individuals developing themselves by the method Sri Aurobindo has provided. The writer has spent four years at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and met many people, adults and children, who seemed to be living heightened and creative lives; many seemed unusually developed in their abilities and personalities and in the tenor of their lives. Perhaps research among such people, those who are employing Sri Aurobindo's psychology “for being's sake” in the West or in India, could provide real evidence for the possibilities of individuation along these lines.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (New York : Sri Aurobindo Library, Inc., 1950), pp. 29-31.

....the individual who wants to look forward, to overcome his limitations, to grow and to change his nature receives no help from Psychology. This is the most serious deficiency of this branch of Western Science and it is, therefore, no wonder that more and more people are seen turning towards the East for truth and inner guidance.<sup>1</sup>

(Concluded)

MILIANA DRACHMAN

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## TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

### HIS SPIRITUAL-SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT AND ITS MEETING-POINT WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(A Paper, originally in French, read by M. André Monestier to Members  
of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the Sri Aurobindo International  
Centre of Education)*

THE thought of Teilhard de Chardin is immeasurably rich. Any attempt to comprehend it in its full extent involves a task of *longue haleine*, likely to take up years of study and reflection.

There are therefore, for a speaker, two different ways of dealing with Teilhard. He may select from amongst his works some special theme, study its development and draw lessons from it.

It is thus that one proceeds in the conferences and colloquies devoted to the study of Teilhard.

But one can also get back to the starting-point and, leaving aside the problems in detail, seek to bring out in the work of Teilhard the great basic ideas, the "idea-forces" that would help us to comprehend better the World around us.

This climb back to the sources is always productive and ever enriching, even for minds who have studied for long the works of Teilhard de Chardin.

It is this second method that I shall strive to employ today before you.

And, so doing, I shall try to communicate the longing to know and fathom Teilhard, to those amongst you who might not have as yet entered upon this experience—or who perhaps might have been daunted by the initial difficulties encountered.

My plan shall then be to utilise the allotted time to provide you, first of all, with a summary account of the man and his work and the most characteristic aspects of his thought.

Afterwards, I shall select from this work and expound before you the two fundamental conceptions of Teilhard on Evolution : "Where do we come from?" *i.e.*, the scientific and biological aspect, and then "Where are we proceeding?", *i.e.*, the sociological and spiritual aspect.

And this will naturally lead us to the evocation of that striking phenomenon of the coincidence on essential points between the thought of Sri Aurobindo and that of Teilhard de Chardin, and to the results one may expect from it in the matter of a dialogue between the Eastern and Western spiritualities.

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Teilhard de Chardin came from a family of landed aristocracy in central France, imbued with sound traditions of Christian culture.

Brought up by a pious mother and a father at once of staunch Christian beliefs and of very great culture, he entered at the end of his studies the Society of Jesus, and completed there the 14 years prescribed for the formation of a Jesuit. It was then that the First World War broke out.

He participated in it from the first to the last day, serving at the start as a stretcher-bearer and afterwards as a corporal in a regiment of Zouaves. He won several honourable mentions in dispatches, the Military Medal and the Legion of Honour.

After his return to the monk's life in 1919, at the age of 38, he was entrusted, according to the tradition of the Jesuits, with the work most consonant with his aptitudes and taste "for the greatest glory of God." For Teilhard de Chardin this happened to be Palaeontology.

From this moment onwards, his whole scientific career was devoted to the study of geological strata and the fossils that are found in them, more particularly the human fossils.

In 1923, he sailed for China where he was destined to stay for the next 23 years. He participated there in the discovery of *Sinanthropus* or "the Peking Man", the most ancient ancestor of man known to this day (700,000 to 1 million years). He led till his death, in the strict discipline of his Order, the life of an eternal wanderer roving in search of prehuman fossils. After China, on to India and Java and lastly to South Africa in 1951 and 1953. Kept by his religious superiors more or less at a distance from France and forced to renounce the Professorship of Palaeontology that was offered to him in the Collège de France, he found his haven of rest in the house of the Jesuits of New York, where he died from a heart-attack on the Easter Day of 1955, at the age of 74—11 years ago from now.

During the 50 years of his intensely active life of a scientist, Teilhard de Chardin never for a moment ceased directing his thought beyond the immediate scientific fact towards its philosophic and spiritual interpretation. Nor did he cease writing down his observations, sometimes in the form of compilations containing the subject matter of a veritable book (*Le Phénomène humain, Le Milieu divin*), at other times in the form of essays and articles, or of addresses.

Convinced of his duty as a scientist and a Christian to transmit his message, and conscious of the value of this message for the enrichment of human thought, he wanted to publish it, but he never got the permission of his religious superiors.

This prudence on their part need not elicit any wonder. As a matter of fact, in the Society of Jesus, all writings of any of its members, whenever published in book-form, involve the Order's responsibility. Now, *in the period in which he would have liked to publish them*, the ideas of Teilhard stood for innovations that were still considered revolutionary.

I may add that it is ever so much the better for us that this was so, for many alterations would surely have been imposed upon them by his timorous superiors

and these alterations would not have failed to weaken the work and take away much of its vigour.

The principal works of the Father were thus issued during his life-time in a limited number of cyclostyled copies, but these aroused a keen interest in their rare readers.

A few years before his passing away—feeling himself gravely sick, Teilhard de Chardin asked of his superiors—and he easily received from them—the permission to bequeath his writings to the old lady who had been his secretary for the few preceding years.

This lady, soon after the death of the Father, undertook the publication of his works. Ten books have since then come out spaced over a period of ten years, and some more remain still to be published. But, even from 1955, there has been literally an *explosive diffusion* of Teilhardian Thought throughout the world.

*Le Phénomène humain*, first to appear, was soon printed in more than 150,000 copies, *Le Milieu divin* in more than 100,000 copies, etc., etc., and today Teilhard de Chardin is regarded as the equal of Einstein and as one of the greatest thought-leaders of all time.

Such was then the man. Let us now say a few words about his method.

As a man of science Teilhard observes the facts—or, to use the language of the philosophers, the phenomena—as they appear in the unfoldment of history. He is thus primarily a scientist, an undeniable and undisputed scientist. But a true scientist cannot but be a philosopher : after having seen the *How*, he seeks after the *Why*.

Teilhard applies then to the interpretation of observed facts the whole penetrating power of his mind and his intuition; and, little by little, there grows up in him a coherent conviction which he tries to make us share.

He does this, not through arguments and didactic reasonings, but by appealing to our intuition, *in attempting to make us see* for ourselves. This very characteristic way of Teilhard of approaching the thought of his interlocutor he has commented upon in one of the last writings of his life in terms that I would like to read out before you. After drawing up a comprehensive picture of his vision of the Universe, Teilhard thus expresses himself :

“Without caring for once to save in my utterances any orthodoxy whether scientific or religious, and yet in the consciousness of not acting except in utmost fidelity to my double vocation human and Christian,—here is thus the wonderful spectacle of which I would like to bring out the evidence striking the eyes by a simple adjustment of view of what we already see.

“Not at all a proposition, but a presentation; or rather, if one so wishes, a call. The call of the traveller who, having left the beaten track, has chanced upon a new point of view from where everything lights up, and who cries out to his companions : ‘Come and See ! ’ ”

Gaston Berger, another great philosopher and an admirer of Teilhard, has said

about him : "Teilhard has not written so that we might feel satisfied with reading him but that we might view the happenings with the attitude that he advises us to take."

It is in this sense, as much as for the content of his works, that we can avèr, as I did a little while ago, that Teilhard de Chardin *is one of the greatest thought-leaders of all time.*

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Let us now see what emanates from *the work of the scientist.*

In the scientific field, the name of Teilhard de Chardin is intimately linked to the theory of Evolution.

Marshalling his own observations and those of all the investigators since Darwin on the same problem, Teilhard has first shown that the hypothesis of progressive creation of the World, beginning with matter and ending in man, in 5 to 10 billion years, must be regarded as a scientific truth.

Out of the colossal energy that existed in the beginning, first, the genesis of atoms and molecules, a process that continues even now in the sun and in many other stars.

Then, after the cooling set in, the genesis of living creatures, both vegetable and animal, through *successive mutations*, without any *new creation of matter.*

Finally the genesis of man, equally through successive mutations and without any creation of matter.

Such is the process—I was almost going to say, being carried away by my professional bias as an engineer, the method of construction—that has been employed by the creative puissance animating the cosmos, to bring into appearance, out of the original energy and inert matter, this prodigiously perfected creature that is man.

Upto this point, nothing more than a synthesis of knowledge already acquired. But the genius of Teilhard lies in the fact that he has perceived and brought to light, in this process of creation, what seems to be one of the structural laws of the Universe, a fundamental principle of Nature, and this he has termed : *The law of complexity-consciousness.*

Here is what it is :

When we examine in detail how the appearances of the diverse species have succeeded in time we note that Evolution has not stopped producing new species provided with a more and more complex nervous system and, correlatively, endowed with a growing measure of psychism, this very general term signifying consciousness or instinct or thought.

For example, the most ancient of the vertebrates, *i.e.*, the fish, of which the first representatives appeared in the second geological period 400 million years ago, are endowed with a rather elementary nervous system and, correlatively, with an elementary psychism reduced to the level of manifestation of a rudimentary instinct.

In proportion as the complexity of the nervous system increases, for example with the appearance of the mammals 80 million years ago, the faculty of psychism—



to put it more simply, the intelligence—grows, to culminate in the end in man whose nervous system, made up of an arrangement of 14 billion interconnected cells, becomes the generator of thought.

Pushing his analysis still further and riding backwards upto the mineral realm, Teilhard shows that everything happens in the creation as if matter possessed a universal tendency to *organise itself in more and more complex arrangements, and as if the development of consciousness was conditional upon the complexity of arrangements.*

For him, the mineral substance is itself already in its start endowed with an embryonic consciousness : Life, says he, potentially exists already in inanimate matter in the state of Pre-life; life is as it were acting *under pressure everywhere in Nature* : it is a fundamental property of the universe, a potential that permeates the entire cosmos, and is always ready to manifest, as soon as the favourable conditions are combined.

There is then—be it noted—not a relation of cause and effect but a *link-up*, a *basic interdependence*, between Thought and the material structure of the organism that is its support.

The stuff of the Universe is not the substance of matter or the energy condensed in matter, it is *Spirit-Matter* and there is already “a grain of consciousness” in the elementary particles of the atoms.

This represents then an altogether novel conception of things that upsets all notions so far held of the separation of matter and spirit. Between the two Teilhard builds a bridge and this basic principle of nature represents for him the guiding line of the entire creation and the coherent explanation of the Universe.

To sum up : Father Teilhard de Chardin explains all, through his principal work *Le phénomène humain*, thus :

1) Creation is an operation conducted by an intelligence greatly superior to us, of whom universality is the essential character : the believers see in it God, a God who is no abstraction, but a person : a personal God. The materialists are satisfied with seeing in it the basic plan of nature.

2) This operation that confers on the abstract concept of Time its true significance has been unfolding without any break for the last 5 to 10 billion years according to a specific guiding idea : this shows itself to be a continuous expansion towards material arrangements that are more and more perfected and complex, and are endowed with more and more thought. In other words the World has been evolving since its commencement by perfecting itself not only *physically* but *psychically*.

*Evolution*, says Teilhard de Chardin, *is a continuous ascension in the scale of organisation and of consciousness.*

Such is, in its broad outline, the *structure of the world* as presented by Teilhard de Chardin.

Most certainly, each one of the great ideas I have just now mentioned before you—the law of complexity-consciousness—the link between Matter and Spirit—would deserve a more ample treatment. It is only a very brief account that I have been able

to offer you—but I think that this short review roughly represents all that “a gentleman”, taken in the sense of the 17th Century, should know about the scientific thought of Teilhard de Chardin.

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Let us now turn our gaze from the scientific field, that is to say, from the view of the past, to the philosophic and social field, that is to say, to the problem of the future.

Having brought to light, through the observation of the past, the fundamental law of evolution, and having noted that this law represents a universal movement that carries the totality of things, Teilhard turns towards the future and seeks to know where this forward march is going to lead us.

For him the answer is almost self-evident : one has only to apply to the human collectivity the same basic law of evolution, the law of complexity-consciousness. “Without any valid scientific reason,” says he, “but only by the sheer habit of routine, we have got into the habit of differentiating between cellular groupings and the groupings of individuals....Surmounting this popular illusion, let us simply follow the opposite course.”

Thus, he explains, just as the living cells are irresistibly moved to join together in more and more complex groupings so also men are irresistibly moved to organize and perfect their social relations.

Teilhard actually views as a *biological necessity* the relentless march of humanity towards forms of *socialisation* that are more and more extensive and more and more complex.

A *biological necessity* because of the fact that we stand at this moment at a turning-point of Evolution brought about by a double phenomenon : on the one hand, an overwhelming growth of the population of the earth and, on the other hand, the unparalleled perfection of the means of communication and the rapidity of transmission from one end of the planet to the other. The earth *seems to be shrinking*—to borrow the expression of Teilhard—and the result of this dual phenomenon of “geographical compression” and “mental compression” is the relentless *socialisation* of humanity.

But just a word of caution here ! This term ‘socialisation’ must not be taken in its restrictive sense of the socialisation of the means of production or of the realisation of socialism.

Teilhard de Chardin has given it a new meaning—much more large and much more profound—and Pope John XXIII has in a way endorsed Teilhard’s conception when he adopted the same sense in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* and devoted several pages to this phenomenon of modern times. Socialisation is the organisation of relation between men.

This march of Humanity towards the perfecting of its bonds and the inter-

dependence of social groups and, in the last account, towards unification—Teilhard de Chardin analysed this process in 1945 in a masterful manner in a paper bearing the title: *A great happening is taking shape: the human planetisation* (Volume V, *The Future of Man*).

I would like to read out before you an extract from it. This citation will at the same time give to those who have not yet read Teilhard de Chardin a glimpse of his admirably constructed sentences and of the profundity of his style. One cannot surely read Teilhard as one would read an ordinary book.

“An enveloping ascent of the masses, a constant tightening of the economic bonds, the jostling, as in a crowd, of the individuals as well as of the nations, a growing impossibility of being and acting and of thinking alone.

“Upon the geometrically limited surface of the earth, constantly narrowed down through the increase of their radius of action, the human particles are not only multiplying day by day, but, through reaction to their mutual rubbings, are developing automatically around them an ever more dense ‘tuft’ of economic and social ligatures. Much more exposed, every one of them, even in their very centre, to the numberless spiritual influences emanating all the time from the thoughts, the wills and the emotions of all others, they find themselves constantly subject to a forced order of resonance. Under the pressure of these factors which never relent even for a moment, because they result from the most general and the most profound conditions of the planetary structure, is it not evident that only one direction remains open to the movement that sweeps us along, the motion of an *ever growing* unification?”

Here is again on the same subject an important extract from one of the unpublished writings of Teilhard, entitled: *The Spirit of the Earth*.

“During hundreds of centuries, men have lived like children, without understanding the mystery of their birth, or the secret of the obscure impulses whose great waves came upon them at times from the depths of the World.

“Under the stimulus of repeated discoveries that, in the course of a single century, have revealed to our generation in rapid succession, firstly, the unlimited spiritual profundities of Matter and, finally, the power of associated living beings, it appears that our psychology is in the process of a change and that man is approaching what one might call the crisis of his puberty. A new and victorious passion is beginning to form, which will sweep or transform what have been till now the whims and puerilities of the earth...”

In the view of Father Teilhard de Chardin, we have now reached a new turning-point of Evolution, a *third threshold*. After the appearance of Life—the first threshold—and the appearance of reflective Thought—the second threshold—Evolution would now proceed to a third threshold characterized by a spiritual progress and the slow birth of a collective consciousness of humanity.

Teilhard de Chardin considers that the human spirit is steeped in some sort of psychic field, analogous to the electromagnetic field in which are steeped the material particles.

We know today that no human mind can remain insensitive to the currents of thought—to those “obscure impulses whose great waves come upon us from the depths of the World.” Now—and herein lies the audacious anticipation—Teilhard firmly holds that love represents a formidable spiritual energy that would little by little—and more fast today than yesterday—flood the World and some day unify all men in a unique spiritual unity.

It is very interesting, for a convinced Teilhardian, to note that this conception of the coming together of men in a feeling of brotherhood is very akin to Sri Aurobindo’s conception of what he calls the *future religion of humanity*. And this leads me to speak to you about the striking coincidence between the conceptions of Teilhard de Chardin and those of Sri Aurobindo.

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During the First World War, while the corporal stretcher-bearer Teilhard de Chardin was composing inside the trenches of his regiment the broad outlines of *Le phénomène humain* and *Le Milieu divin*, 10,000 kilometres away the Indian revolutionary leader Sri Aurobindo was developing in the same way in the pages of the monthly review *Arya* the essential ideas of his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*.

It appears as if the same unique pressure was exerted at the same time on two men who did not know each other, on two persons each one of whom was the heir to a distinct but separate civilisation and tradition and culture—so that they could, either of them in his own way, delve deep into the idea of Evolution, which they had received from their century.

This simultaneity in the discovery of novel horizons, destined to upset our vision of the World, deserves dwelling upon for a moment.

I think indeed that the simultaneous emergence in two separate regions of the globe, isolated from each other for thousands of years, of the same capital progress in knowledge, cannot be deemed to be a simple coincidence or the result of mere chance.

This occurrence is allied to the great changes that have blazed the history of man for the past half-century : scientific discoveries, new currents of thought, oecumenism, etc.... It shows, as the rest of them, all the traits of a direct intervention in the march of Evolution, of what the modern metaphysicians term the organising External Intelligence and what we would simply call the Divine Will. And it is not at all impossible that the emergence in the East of the epoch-making thought of Sri Aurobindo coinciding with the emergence in the West of the same epoch-making thought of Teilhard would some day be considered to be the most important event of the century in the realm of the Spirit.

These two philosophers will no doubt be in the line of the galaxy of great names—Plato, Aristotle, Galileo, Descartes, Newton—that shine out in the history of Knowledge for the last 2500 years.

But there is more—and this is the most important point on which I would like to lay stress—Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo mark, for the first time in history, the meeting-point of the spiritualities, so long held in isolation, of the two greatest segments of Mankind.

Let us indeed cast a glance back upon the march of history, and discover therein how the Creator has moved to raise little by little the human spirit from the ignorance of the savage tribes on to the level of the perception—now widely held—of an Evolving Deity who will lead Mankind to its final destiny.

Till the end of the 17th Century, that is to say, less than 300 years back, the populated world remained divided into three segments, each of which knew almost nothing of the other two :

First of all, the two continents that remained unaware of the divine message : to wit—the not-till-then discovered America, and Africa with the exception of its Mediterranean fringe.

Then, the environs of the Mediterranean wherein developed the Judeo-Christian civilisation, and which we shall term the Occident in what follows.

Finally, the Asiatic continent which we shall call the Orient, for the sake of simplicity.

A barrier of mountains and deserts, insurmountable with the means of the epoch, separated this Orient from the Occident. (Let us not forget that the rivers and the seas were then the only means of communication between different peoples and there existed between Asia and the Mediterranean girdle no waterways allowing of this penetration.) The plan of the Creator appears very clearly today to have been pivoted upon the parallel development of two spiritualities so far isolated one from the other, and India has played for Asia the same role as the “fertile crescent” has done for the Mediterranean lands.

It is at these two distant points of the planet, and almost simultaneously, that man was initiated through Revelation into the existence of a single Deity who is the “Creator of the heaven and the earth, of the Universe visible and invisible”, and he received from Him his ethical code.

The Vedas on the one hand and the Bible on the other have recorded and conveyed this divine message to the following generations. From these Sources, in each of the two different zones, were born religions which have followed the general law of Evolution, termed by Teilhard the “shrubbing” ; that is to say, all these religions have moved away from one another, in course of the centuries, in some sort of a divergent beam.

Both Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin consider that the hour has come when the religions have stopped “shrubbing”—this phase seems to have ended 2 to 3 centuries back—and they have now started on their way to “convergence”.

It is sufficient to turn our gaze towards Rome in order to see that this phenomenon of convergence, defined by Teilhard in 1927, is in the process of realisation in the Christian group.

The second Vatican Council has started the process of reconciliation amongst the various Judeo-Christian spiritualities. This is what is nowadays called oecumenism.

The question that then comes to our mind is : This longing for a dialogue, this movement of drawing together—will it some day equally happen between the group of Judeo-Christian spiritualities and the group of Asian spiritualities ? Will the East and the West hold, in their turn, an oecumenical dialogue ?

To this question I believe that we must answer *Yes* with Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo.

It suffices for one simply to note that the World is evolving in the direction of a general growth of the spirit : it is unthinkable that this growth might lead to two different spiritual units. This World one day must perforce be "One".

The task of the coming generations will be to help in this drawing together and to engage in the dialogue, and India is called in this matter to fulfil its historic role of the lighthouse of Asia.

Men of the East and of the West, we will thus merely follow—and that is my conclusion—the path chalked out in Bombay on December 3, 1964, by Pope Paul VI.

The Pope, landing on Indian soil, quoted this prayer from the Upanishads : "Lead me from the unreal to the Real, guide me out of the darkness to the Light, lift me from death into Immortality." And, commenting upon this prayer, Paul VI added these words of his own :

"This prayer equally belongs to our epoch. Today much more than ever before, this should rise from every human heart. The human race is going through profound changes and is in search of the guiding principles and the spiritual forces that could lead it in the World. We should thus approach one another, not merely with the modern means of communication, the Press and the Radio, the ships and the planes, but equally with our hearts in *mutual comprehension*, in the spirit of *Adoration* and *Love*."

May I ask if one can add any word more to this definition of the oecumenism of tomorrow ?

ANDRÉ MONESTIER

*(Translated by Jugal Kishore Mukherji from the French)*

# TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND SRI AUROBINDO

## A NOTE ON THEIR MEETING-POINT

### I

M. ANDRÉ Monestier is admirable on the thought of Teilhard de Chardin so far as its richness and penetrativeness can be caught in a brief survey. At once clear and suggestive, M. Monestier moves a spotlight through a wide range. It is also exhilarating to read his comparison between Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo, with its hope that a single world-spirituality will emerge from their meeting-point. But this part of the article by a Teilhardian needs a Note by an Aurobindonian if its import is to be correct and complete. One may be sure M. Monestier himself will welcome our comment since he has shown, both in his writing and in his personal contacts and inquiries during his recent stay in the Ashram, a warm sympathy for the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo.

M. Monestier writes : "During the First World War, while the corporal stretcher-bearer Teilhard de Chardin was composing inside the trenches of his regiment the broad outlines of *Le Phénomène humain* and *Le Milieu divin*, 10,000 kilometres away the Indian revolutionary leader Sri Aurobindo was developing in the same way in the pages of the monthly review *Arya* the essential ideas of his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*."

To say that Teilhard was composing the broad outlines of his two most influential books might imply that he was writing a sort of systematic approach to the main theses of these works. But we doubt if M. Monestier quite means such a thing. Most probably, what he intends by his words is that Teilhard was revolving in his letters and essays of the period many of the unconventional ideas that later took precise shape and made a connected whole in *Le Phénomène humain* and *Le Milieu divin*. But would it not be more accurate to say that he was striking upon the general rudiments of some of the themes running through these two books ?

Perhaps *Le Milieu divin* (written in 1926-27) was more concretely present in a foreshadowing form than *Le Phénomène humain* (dating to 1938-40). For, it grew in greater continuity with Christian religious tradition, whereas the latter book broke new ground almost everywhere and the theories of it germinated slowly from Teilhard's increasing interest and proficiency in the scientific field he had been permitted by his Superiors to choose in conformity with his own individual bent. *Le Phénomène humain*, with its manifold and complex scheme and its abundant neologisms to cope with novel notions, was too far a cry yet for any broad outline of it to emerge in the years 1914-18. We can at most affirm that there were a few well-defined signposts to this scheme and that Teilhard, towards the end of the war, was trying to give them some kind of organisation.

Even if a broad outline may be taken to have existed, there cannot be very much of a genuine comparison with the type of exposition the *Arya* was from the commencement. A full-fledged philosophical system is evident from the first notes struck in the pages of that monthly review. Nor is it a fact that the masterpiece, *The Life Divine*, was written at a later date and only its "essential ideas" were developed during the war-years. *The Life Divine* started in the *Arya* itself: the initial feature in the earliest issue of the *Arya* was the opening chapter of this *magnum opus*. And, although the book was expanded when it subsequently appeared as an independent volume in three parts, nearly the whole first part remained exactly as it had been in the *Arya*, and there the vast vision of Sri Aurobindo is active in a state of elaboration more advanced than all of Teilhard's working out of his own theses in *Le Phénomène humain*.

This should show that Sri Aurobindo was not developing anything *in the same way* as Teilhard in the war-years. And, to crown the difference, Sri Aurobindo had already attained the direct spiritual experience of the fundamental realities he was expounding intellectually in his journal. His writing was only a large as well as detailed and interconnected setting forth of it in philosophical terms. Teilhard, even in his maturity, was not putting into intellectual language the results of any comparable inner compassing of hidden truths. All that he had to go upon was a number of vivid intuitions and intense feelings in boyhood and in subsequent years. Surely, these intuitions, these feelings were of great value and they distinguish him from the mere philosopher and give to his argued *exposé* a vibrant life unique in the philosophico-scientific literature of modern Europe. But they are worlds apart from the realisations of a Master of the *via mystica*, a supreme Yogi.

Finally, whatever affinities themselves can be traced between the entire *weltanschauung* of Teilhard and the complete message of Sri Aurobindo in "the idea of Evolution, which they had received from their century", as M. Monestier phrases it, are very far from total. Even apart from the distinctions in the midst of similarities, the very similarities extend only a little way. This little way is of importance enough to the coming-together, which M. Monestier foresees, of western and eastern spiritualities by means of a new vision of the evolutionary process. Yet we must not lose sight of the immense ranges Sri Aurobindo opens up of the future evolution of man beyond the utmost envisaged by Teilhard.

Teilhard looks forward to the emergence of a World Soul, as it were, a unification of all minds in a collective consciousness of humanity culminating in a mighty directly operative God-presence—a God-presence that would pervade every being without destroying its true personality. To use language in tune with his own religious make-up, we may speak of a manifested Cosmic Christ enfolding all. But, actually, Teilhard, adopting Christian terminology, is just demonstrating as an inevitable product of evolution a sharing by all mankind in the Universal Consciousness simultaneously active and passive, the essentially indivisible yet numerically manifold Cosmic Self, which is one of the master lights of Indian spiritual experience from the most ancient times. Every man a *jīvan*



*mukta*, a living liberated soul open to the basic Oneness as well as to the multiple centres of this Oneness's world-expression—every man a *bhakta*, a devotee, in direct touch with the Divine Presence who is all, *vasudeva sarvam*, and also the Lord of all, *Ishvara*, no less than in touch with the myriads of *bhakta* souls put forth by the Lord's supreme nature-power : this double-aspected evolutionary consummation of ancient Indian spirituality, on its so-called "pantheistic" side plus its "hyper-personalistic" one, is what Teilhard has intuited and argued out as the world's fulfilment in the "Omega Point" that has secretly been also the "Alpha Point".

Here his vision joins up with Sri Aurobindo's—but only in its general and overall outlook. For, there are several details that he misses. The most important among them is the evolution of individual souls through repeated births in form after form rising from the lower living orders up to man and again and again in human shape until the divine consciousness is realised. Indian spiritual thought, which he quite misunderstood and grievously underrated, would have helped him fill this *lacuna* : in India's antiquity no less than in her later ages the gradual rise of the incarnating soul from the lower to the higher grades of life was recognised though evolution in the modern sense—change of one species into another—was not conceived.

As a spiritual philosophy of evolution, Teilhard's thought cannot be quite satisfactory to an Aurobindonian in even those aspects where the French Catholic and Sri Aurobindo have things in common. Apart from the "cosmic sense" at the back of it, its chief interest and value lie in the fact that it is worked out on a scientific basis with great insight and brilliance. But its real shortcomings appear when we look at aspects of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which go far beyond anything elucidated by the Jesuit priest and palaeontologist in his attempt to make a bridge between science and Christianity. I am referring to Sri Aurobindo's concepts of Supermind and Transformation—concepts which, as we shall explain, are jointly called for by a complete spiritual-scientific understanding of evolution. They are the heart of the Aurobindonian message and there is not the slightest glimmering of them in the Teilhardian *weltanschauung*.

## 2

In a highly simplified manner we may state the heart of the message of Sri Aurobindo as follows.

First we may glance at it scientifically. Not that Sri Aurobindo claims to give a philosophy of science or makes science the foundation of his philosophy. But certain scientific observations get illuminated by his vision and, when we concentrate on them, we may be considered to be looking scientifically more than spiritually.

Evolution, as Teilhard has rightly judged on a panoramic survey, is a continuous ascension in the scale of organisation and consciousness. "Continuous" does not signify what is ordinarily dubbed "orthogenesis" : evolution is not in a single direction

or along one sole line: we have swirls and side-streams and even backflows and we have many lines proceeding together and even competing with one another. Yet through the host of complications there persists, there continues, on the whole an evolution of consciousness in more and more organised form. But this is not all that we see. We see also the achievement of a harmony of what seem to be opposites. Out of apparently non-living matter inertly in motion living forms emerge with their activities of response, instinct, desire. Out of living forms endowed only with a seeking sentience and at most an automatism of practical intelligence but with no apparent thought-power or self-awareness we find the emergence of a body which thinks and plans and evaluates, looks before and after, within and above, as well as senses, feels and hungers. Two levels of harmonised opposites have been achieved. What should we expect the next level to be ?

When we review the agelong urge of human beings we mark several extremes of aspiration : a quest for complete knowledge, a search for unalloyed bliss and flawless beauty, an endeavour to possess all power of effectuation, a longing for lasting health and perpetual existence, a cry for a universal unity and an infinite freedom. These aspirations have many moods and modes : they can be sacred or secular, spiritual or scientific. But they are always there and distinguish the full stretch, as it were, of the human evolutionary experiment. They also constitute the potential opposite of the actual *phénomène humain*.

The capacity we have for knowledge is, in spite of its varied successful application, sadly limited in grasp and method. Again, however exquisite our sensations and emotions, we are yet exposed at each moment to pain and sorrow, deformation and disequilibrium. Strain, fumbling, weakness and frustration too are repeatedly ours in the midst of our conquests. Further, our bodies, with their innate efficiency and acquired ability, are born still subject to disease, degeneration, death. Finally, for all our codes and creeds and councils, individual cannot help clashing with individual, nation with nation; and, for all our expansions and associations, finitude irks us at every pace, we feel constantly pent up within ourselves. In the face of these conditions of our being, the achievement of a godlike status is the most natural step of future evolution—a godlike status upon earth arising out of our chequered career, a divine perfection within the very terms which seem its fallible opposite.

An utterly transformed mentality, vitality and physicality—yes, even physicality—with a fulfilled soul, a liberated spirit, a realised unity-in-multiplicity : such is the goal awaiting us by the paradoxical logic inherent in evolution. The Life Divine in the most literal sense should be in prospect from the scientific discovery of an evolutionary process everywhere.

But what should we think of the ultimate reality which is evolving ? Immediately we may well call it divinity in the making. However, when the end-product is going to be the limitless and the perfect, might we not rather believe that what is being made is something which is gradually coming into its own—the limitless and the perfect released from its envelopment by slow degrees ? Indeed, we should be

justified in speaking of divinity evolving in matter because of divinity's involution in it.<sup>1</sup>

And this again leads us to ask : Can divinity be ever involved except by its own will ? If the answer is No, it must be superior to its own involution and may legitimately be conceived as, on the one side, in a state of involution seeking its own self and, on the other, eternally self-possessed in a full manifestation beyond the evolutionary process. Evolution itself, then, would be the consequence of an interaction between the involved divinity pushing upward and the self-possessed divinity pressing downward. The double hypothesis of divine involution and divine self-possession would explain all the lengthy and difficult and devious history of evolution as if in a blind wasteful Godless world, all the wonder of the higher evolving from the lower and of the ever-rising scale of organisation and consciousness, all the "immortal longings" that are inalienable part of human psychology, all the triumphant cries of the mystic and Yogi uniting with the Infinite and Eternal.

Our double hypothesis provides the general picture. Within this picture we must discern smaller designs. Between the two poles of divinity we should posit lesser powers self-possessed as well as involved. They would be indicated by the levels already reached of harmonised opposites. Life, evolving from matter, must have been involved in it and hence existent there in some fashion; but it has a distinction of its own when it has evolved, a characteristic asserted against the properties common to it and the mould from which it emerges. Life is a distinct principle from matter : it renders dominant what matter keeps suppressed. Similarly, mind must have been involved in life; but, evolving, it is a principle distinct from it : what remains ineffective in life gains top place here. More correctly, we may state : matter is veiled life, life veiled mind, just as mind is the veiled condition of a still greater consciousness. But the veiling in each case constitutes a different characteristic mode of working. And, logically, if life and mind have their typical operations distinct not only from matter but also from the ultimate reality, there should be a self-possessed life and a self-possessed mind aiding from their hidden dimensions life and mind evolving from the material involution : they would strive to establish their rights as best they can within contrary-looking moulds.

The supreme principle of divinity would be the origin of all these lesser principles : it would put them forth from the divine mentality, vitality and physicality held in its own supra-mental, supra-vital, supra-physical being. And by gradations it would bring out from the utter involution life and mind by an action of them from below and above, permit them to enjoy their play for ages and then help them to grow ripe slowly for the final stage in the evolutionary series—the Man-God.

Thus suggestions drawn from science may be said to invite spirituality. But it should be clear to us that none of the old spiritual revelations have shown any aware-

<sup>1</sup> Teilhard also uses the term "involution", but he means a concentration, a convergence, a gathering inward, a folding back of something upon itself, which leads not to self-loss but to progress.

ness of what Sri Aurobindo terms the Life Divine. Some purification of ordinary human nature, some irradiation of ordinary human activity, some supernormalisation of ordinary human existence have marked the limit of divine living so far. The final fulfilment has always lain beyond—in an extracosmic Nirvana or a supracosmic Heaven. The possibility of an integral transformation, an absolute divinisation of all one's members, including St. Paul's "body of this death", has never been properly conceived, much less explored with any rigour. It lay outside God's purposes in the world, it had no place in God's revelation of His powers.

Why ? Here we come to glance spiritually at the heart of Sri Aurobindo's message.

According to Sri Aurobindo, integral transformation had no place in past spiritual programmes because God was not yet realised in His full depth or height or wideness. If the universe has proceeded from God, there must abide in Him the supporting luminous truth of it, the divine counterpart or original of the universal movement. This philosophical consideration is ancient. Plato's theory of Ideas or Archetypes is one facet of it; the Gita's sense of *parā-prakṛti* or Supernature, of which *prakṛti* or Nature is a lower formulation, and the Upanishad's intuition of a Subtle Plane behind the Gross and a Causal Plane behind the Subtle are other facets; the Vedic vision of an originative world of perfect Consciousness, a creative Sun-world, *satyam-ṛtam-bṛhat*, the True, the Right, the Vast, is a fourth one and the earliest. But none of the insights disclosed a power to transform the flux of phenomena, the play of earth-nature, the subtle and gross planes, the cosmic intermixture of light and darkness. An Ideal either to be distantly contemplated or to be imperfectly imitated is all that has been glimpsed. Of course, one might inwardly rise into it, and stay there, but that would be a move away from the world, even though one might act to the best of one's ability upon the world from that high station.

To Sri Aurobindo, a supporting truth in the Divine to all that is here must stand for a goal to be manifested in all that this truth supports. We are in a world of effort and aspiration : the attempt to progress is the law of our being, progress not only in unrealised realms of the Beyond but also in the terrestrial sphere, in all the terms of the earth-nature. So the divine counterpart or original without which none of these terms could come to be is the glory to be brought forth in them. Indeed, what would be the point of a long series of the soul's rebirth in time, in a vitalised and mentalised and psychicised body if the soul has ultimately to pass away from the scene of its millennial labour after a little basking in the light of the Ideal ? Loose strings, torn fibres, useless strainings—such would be the end. Surely, a poor conclusion to a divinely planned epic of the soul unfolding across a physical universe of gigantic dimensions in space and time ! The conclusion should be the full embodiment of the Ideal in the individual aspirant.

And, when we live in a universe which science has discovered to be evolutionary, this conclusion forces itself on us as all the more logical in a divine dispensation. There is physical evolution along with vital and mental and psychic : the physical

should share in the realisation of the Ideal. Spirituality must lead to a divinisation of everything in the aspiring individual. But evolution is not just an individual movement : a vast collectivity evolves. A few individuals totally transformed cannot be the fulfilment of evolution. A totally transformed group, society, humanity : such must be the aim of evolution in a God-governed universe : nothing short of a godlike race could be the future of the world directed secretly by the Divine Consciousness.

And yet where is the spiritual dynamism to realise this logical aim? Sri Aurobindo could see it in no light vouchsafed by the great religions, although most of them carried in their prophecy of "last things" some vague pointer to its ultimate operation in our midst : for example, Zoroastrianism's and Christianity's Resurrection of the Body and Kingdom of the Just on earth—Hinduism's Advent of the final Avatar Kalki to establish Heaven in the world. Sri Aurobindo saw that he must sweep beyond every spiritual experience of the past. Gathering up in himself the splendid results of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Tantra and the essence of Buddhism—realising the unnamable Absolute who is at once the All and the Void, experiencing the Personal Supreme as the directive Lord and the creative Mother, compassing the Yogas of Knowledge, Devotion and Work—Sri Aurobindo pressed forward to a hitherto unmanifested power of the Divine, which he came to call Supermind or Truth-Consciousness or Gnosis, the perfect dynamism of the Spirit whose presence had been fragmentarily reflected in the ancient wisdom which saw in the depths of the unknown some pristine pattern of all that gropes and gleams and fades in the spatio-temporal immensity. He found in the Supermind the key he was searching for, and with this key he has hoped to open every lock barring the way to individual and collective fulfilment : with this instrument of a new life he has toiled to break the deadlocks confronting humanity, the inner and outer complexities with their counterpulls which cut across its dream of One World.

Holding the Supramental Light in himself Sri Aurobindo has shown to others the path to the same divine dynamism—a practical method of self-development by self-surrender to the Supreme. He designates his method as the Integral Yoga, the Yoga of the Supermind, the Yoga of Transformation. Teilhard de Chardin speaks, as M. Monestier tells us, of love as the energy that would little by little flood the world and some day unify all men in a unique spiritual unity. No doubt, love is a great unifying force, but how is it to be generated in a form that would weld all to oneness? An emotion ethicised or religionised cannot be the answer : it would only be love under a stress of mental discipline or in the grip of a blind fervour. A mysticised love, drawing upon a secret "cosmic sense", fired by a profound "resonance to the All", seems to be what Teilhard had in view, but he hardly appears to gauge the possibilities of a sustained mystical life for the whole race or to preach it as the true task mankind should take in hand. A divine love born of a Yoga such as Sri Aurobindo teaches is the sole unifier, especially as it will be for a disciple of Sri Aurobindo a love charged with spiritual knowledge and power and beauty—all four welling out of an inherent harmony of eternal being in which the one is the many and the many are the one and

all moves towards ever-new formulations of the Perfect.

So, in every respect, Teilhard can only be a potent introduction for the West to the Aurobindonian integrality of vision and work. But the West will miss this introduction and be shunted into a specious progress and a superficial meeting with the East if Teilhard is sought, as mostly at present by Western thinkers, to be assimilated altogether into historical Christianity and proved after all to have emphasised and lit up by a novel approach religious truths which were always there in Roman Catholicism and which would now help the Church to hold a dialogue with other religions. Insights of St. Paul and St. Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa rediscovered and amplified and reorientated are not enough to do justice to what is original and forward-looking in him. Unfortunately Teilhard himself was not very clear about his own drift : on the one side he pushed into strange surprising tracts of light and on the other he tried to cover the strangeness and the surprise by stretching old Christian terms over those tracts and achieving a happy-faced compromise. His natural connections are with spiritual India through scientific Europe and, by an inspired gathering up of several strands of spiritual India, his system provides pointers in the direction of the luminous largeness of Sri Aurobindo. Teilhard can be fulfilled in his proper role by nothing except this largeness which overpasses all religions and their possible dialogue and ushers in a new age of comprehensive spirituality—both individual and collective—where the Phenomenon of Man will be a part of a Divine Milieu in the most explicit, concrete and complete sense.

K. D. SETHNA

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# THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

## VII

### MACAULAY'S MINUTE

WE are in no position to judge what effects were produced in the minds of the Company's representatives in India by the memorial presented to the Governor General in Calcutta by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in December 1823. It seems to be clear however that the point made in that memorial created an impression in London. Within a couple of months, in a dispatch dated 18th February 1824, we find the Court of Directors expressing almost identical views on the uselessness of Sanskrit learning—views, it may be presumed, which were obtained at second hand from the Raja who had already earned a reputation for oriental scholarship.

Commenting on the proposal of the General Committee of Public Instruction that the moneys allocated out of the Company's revenues for the education of Indians should be devoted to promotion of "useful learning", the Directors observe: "With respect to the sciences it is worse than a waste of time to employ persons either to teach or to learn them, in the state in which they are found in the Oriental books.... We apprehend that the plan of the institutions to the improvement of which our attention is now directed was originally and fundamentally erroneous. The great end should not have been to teach Hindoo learning, but useful learning....In professing...to establish seminaries for the purpose of teaching mere Hindoo or mere Mahomedan literature, you bound yourselves to teach a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was purely mischievous, and a small remainder indeed in which utility was in any way concerned." It is for the first time that we hear the authorities in London, far enough away from any direct acquaintance with oriental literature, pronouncing magisterially on the worthlessness of Hindoo or Mahomedan learning. Our Raja is to be assigned his responsibility for this sudden change of face.

The supporters of the Anglicist view in India now grew bolder. The General Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal where the battle raged fiercest came to be divided into two camps. Prinsep, who was one of the influential members of the Committee and had been the chief spokesman of the Orientalist viewpoint, makes an interesting note on this subject in his diary. "There was however," he notes, "a class of Anglo-Indians [this was the usual appellation of those Englishmen who had come out to serve in India and had made it their semi-permanent home], and the younger civil servants mostly joined it, who were opposed to Government's assisting to give instruction in any kind of Eastern literature or science, the whole of which they declared to be immoral, profane or nonsensical. Several of this party were now in the Council of Education...and I found there a contest to be raging whether in the

Calcutta, Madras and other institutions maintained by Government, English should be preferentially taught and the study of that language made obligatory on all, or as hitherto be left optional under the inducement of the benefit in after life which the knowledge of it would confer. I took part of course against the innovations which this party wanted to introduce and I carried with me the vote of the majority of the Council of Education."

But Prinsep and his supporters were now fighting a losing battle. Not only did his opponents have the tacit support of the Directors in London, who being in ultimate charge of the Company's purse would in any case have the last say in the matter. The position of the Orientalists was seriously compromised when Thomas Babington Macaulay, the florid pamphleteer, came to India as Law Member of the Governor General's Council and was appointed to be Chairman of the Committee on Education. As Prinsep sadly comments, "The English Party, as it was called, entertained high hope that his influence and authority would turn the scale against me and my supporters." That is what actually happened.

Matters came to a head in 1835, on a technical question of interpretation of statute. It will be recalled that the Charter Act of 1813 contained a clause directing that a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees be expended every year for "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India". The Committee of Education were divided on the question of the exact intention of this clause. Macaulay as Chairman of the Committee did not pronounce his own view, for he knew well enough that the matter would again be referred to him for advice in his capacity as Law Member. When the papers were sent to him for comment, he produced his famous Minute (dated 2nd February 1835). This was to decide the issue.

Macaulay took up the question of legal interpretation first, as he was expected to do in his capacity of legal adviser to Government, and he disposed of this question exactly as might be expected of him—in a summary manner and with little regard for the other man's point of view. What he said in effect actually amounted to this. The word "literature" occurring in the section obviously meant "English literature" and no other, "a learned native of India" could well be one versed in the learning of the West, and the "sciences" were those recently developed in Europe, since India had none.

Having thus proved to his entire satisfaction that he was right and the others were wrong, he proceeded to give his real reasons. "The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language [English], we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own, ... when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance at public expense, medical doctrine which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns



thirty thousand years long, and geography made of seas of treacle and seas of butter." Macaulay of course did not know a word of Sanskrit or Arabic, as he himself admits. But this did not in any way deter him from uttering the precious dictum, "A single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." One wonders if he is trying to outdo Shakespeare in his "perfume" passage in *Macbeth*, or was it just another instance of Macaulay's sublime nonsense? This passage remains one of the masterpieces of Anglo-India, and one that did in the long run a vast amount of good : it gave us the English language.

*(To be continued)*

SANAT K. BANERJI

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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram** By *Narayan Prasad*. Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram 1965. Pondicherry 2, India. Rs. 12/-

“What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world history is not a teaching, not even a revelation, it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme. And I am just trying to fulfil that action.” —THE MOTHER

“I am concerned with the earth, not with the worlds beyond for their own sake, it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not flights to distant summits.”

—SRI AUROBINDO

The keynote of these quotes and the essence of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is action and, true to the title, the book under review is a strictly factual representation of what “that action” is, how it is going on and taking shape in various aspects of life in the Ashram and how its influence is spreading around the earth, tending to culminate in the oneness of all dispartes. Naturally enough the picture is mostly objective and will more than satisfy those who want to be satisfied with a surface look or a mere peep-in. But the subjective is so inalienably intertwined that the reader is again and again led into the depth of his soul, into the wonderland of the beauty and the divinity that reside in him. The elevating influence and the celestial delight born of the inner and the outer views of the Ashram, presented in the book, take the reader from page to page with no snag anywhere except where the soul-gripping appeal of the higher worlds and of the new truths arrest or slow down his pace and make him pause and ponder.

It is a book of history of an Ashram unlike any other in the world, a combination of the past and the present preparing for a future destined to be infinitely greater than either, guided in its continuous march by an infallible vision and a force of certitude towards the goal of a new world order and a new race in the Spirit. The essential resources are spiritual and abundantly available both in the yet unexplored regions in man and in the uncharted regions above and below him. The book, rich in all this information, more or less detailed, is a living illustration of the great beginnings of the new truth that is taking shape on earth during this century-old crisis in human civilisation. A delicate and a forbiddingly difficult subject, no doubt.

But the author, far from being discouraged by the magnitude and of the gravity work or by the sense of his own incapacity, tiptoed into the adventure, heart within and God overhead. And, to the good of all, neither failed him : in response to the intensity and sincerity of his desire to prepare a correct record of the formation and growth of the Ashram, not merely of its activities but of the why of things, he received

the help needed at times from the Mother, at other times from the Master, both through yogic ways. Consequently, when the book appeared serially in *Mother India*, Ashramites, visitors and readers of the magazine in India and abroad gave it a chorus of welcome. It was possible because the series kept on coming out when people everywhere were getting more and more interested in Sri Aurobindo and his work for the world.

After it was sent to the press with the Mother's approval of its publication it had to wait there for about two years and a half before being taken up. In the meantime the author improved upon the typescript in various places, put in more facts and more valuable food for the soul. Hence the book in its present form is richer than the *Mother India* serial.

The book consists of three parts. Part One of four chapters deals with a glimpse of the Ashram, its multifarious activities, Reshaping Education, Spirituality in Action, Way of Sadhana, Its Progress. Part Two is mostly matter of fact and yet will go down in history as a valuable record of commonplace things with depths only for a Yogi to sound. Part Three of eight chapters (pp 159-310) deals with shaping the future in the present, the Ashram Atmosphere, the Master's touch through letters, the Mother's evening talks, Sri Aurobindo and World War II, his gifts to the world, his deeper retirement and the growth of world culture. This Part forms the cream of the book, and gives to the world a great deal not known till now. For instance, why and how Sri Aurobindo saved the Allied Powers in World War II, in particular England, from the impending destruction, how Spirituality plays on money, trade and industry, wonders and yet unchallengeable facts of history.

A book of this type and of such importance should have a wider circulation in India through a cheaper paperback edition at an early date. The printing and get-up are in happy conformity with its substance.

TINKARI MITRA

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## AN INTUITION WASTED

### A TRUE INCIDENT

“A PITY he did not listen to his intuition!” These words of the Mother were meant for me. Whenever I remember them, they fill me with remorse. For they bear on the terrible mistake I made in dealing with my only son who died 11 years ago, when he was just six.

At Hardoi an astrologer of high reputation had come. He declared that my child was an extraordinary soul. He further told me that such a soul could not remain long on earth and that soon after his sixth year he would die unless I could do something at that time to ward off the danger. But unfortunately I forgot all this.

When the time came the child was normal. He had shown no sign of illness. There was nothing to make me believe that he would not live till the next day. Late at night, perhaps at 12, he started suffering. He began to cry. We were fast asleep. A servant hearing his crying woke us up. When I asked the child what was ailing him, he said, showing his neck with his hand, “Papa, there is pain here.” To my surprise these were his last words. He became unconscious. His body was burning up with fever.

I ran for the doctor. In small towns we have medical practitioners but most of them are overburdened and are reluctant to come at such an unearthly hour as midnight, especially to a poor man’s house. But my doctor was kind enough to come. He gave an injection to the child and said that the situation was serious enough to call for a senior practitioner and advised me to look for one.

Then began the round of calls from one senior medical man to another. Each one had an excuse to give. Was fate against me? My heart throbbed violently. My nerves were strained to breaking point. But surely something had to be done. My family started assembling, even my mother-in-law came. But still no senior doctor.

In the early morning at 5, as a last resort, I once again went to my family doctor. He promised to accompany me immediately, but made me wait till 7 a.m.

Then suddenly I heard from somewhere the voice of my son, “Papa, I am going. Please do not stay here.”

I told the doctor desperately, “Please, doctor, I must leave, the child must be dead by now, there is no point now in your coming.”

Seeing that I was going, the doctor got up, and took me in his car to my house. We found my family weeping. We were too late. The doctor did inject a medicine but soon pronounced the child dead. Nothing else seemed to matter now. The child was buried a few hours later.

Our grief was indeed heavy. The house was silent. The evening passed. The night set in. We were about to rest. Then something suddenly happened. I cannot

give any reason for it. I do not understand it. But I did hear a voice very distinctly, "Papa, you have buried me alive. Be quick, take me out, I shall live still more." And I could see my son standing near the lamp. I could not check myself and I shouted, "What is it, Bhैया (my son ?)" He repeated three time the same words and then was gone.

My wife had heard me speaking. My explanation did not satisfy her. To her it was only a fancy of mine. I doubted my own experience. But there was no sleep for me that night. The vision kept on repeating in my mind. Finally, not able to check myself anymore, at 4 a.m. I ran to the grave. I placed my ear on it and seemed to catch a feeble voice, "You are late, papa...I am dying. I had asked to be taken out at night."

I ran back to my house and returned with a shovel and spade. A young boy had followed me this time—perhaps he thought I was mad. I dug up the grave. I found my son still alive. His chest faintly heaved at long intervals.

Soon a crowd gathered. And once again the rounds began to the doctors. None came. Some plainly considered me mad. Others appeared not sure of receiving proper fees from a poor man like me. It was impossible to take my child in that condition to the hospital miles away in the big city. We could only wait to see whether God's grace would act to save him. Some visitors were taking photographs of the unusual state of my son.

In the evening the boy vomited blood. Then there was no more doubt of his end. He had definitely left his body. I stood dumb, too miserable for words—repenting my ghastly delay.

KASHIRAM

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## WHOM GOD PROTECTS

### THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

*(Continued from the issue of 21 February)*

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A FEW days later, Parvati was sitting merged in her own thoughts seemingly withdrawn from all outward touches. Arka noticed this from afar; still he deliberately came near her, sat down and said, "Parvati, the other day while talking to you about the true significance of Samyama (control) I may have hurt you slightly..."

Parvati said, interrupting him, "No, it is not that, what you meant to convey to me was something so profound that I have not understood at all nor do I wish to understand it. It seemed to me that if those complexities were not grasped one could not maintain one's peace and happiness of mind. You well understood this thought of mine, that is why you did not allow it to be pursued further and I too understood that. You are a real Guru, an able captain holding firmly to the wheel so that my ship may not founder and drift away. I have clearly seen this; yet, as long as the light does not come to chase away the clouds of my mind, I shall not permit you to leave."

"Very well," said Arka, "but I hope you have understood how much of confusion man himself creates just to appease some of the fleeting pleasures of his mind and body."

Parvati replied, "The pleasures of mind and body are so insignificant to you, but in the world of creatures how great are the excitements and hankerings for those very petty pleasures ! Generation after generation, every individual as he grows, even before he is a complete human entity, is frantic to find these pleasures. Not only that but he considers his birth and life to have been in vain if they were denied. Can you show me one single person without the impulse for these pleasures or without any desire for them ?"

Arka, hearing these words, became very still as if stunned for a while, but soon began to speak in his naturally soft tone, "You see, Parvati, money or wealth, whose another name is gold, is it not something as wonderful as the other? Who is not busy pursuing it ? It is apparent that without money one's daily living would be disrupted. To enjoy a woman can be deferred for a few days or even several months, but without money a man can hardly live a day. Do you see this ? Food is closely allied to money. For money man is undertaking to do the most difficult and responsible actions, yet you could never imagine the terrible crimes that he is not prepared to enact to get money. Do you follow ? Now, can you even remotely replace the Divine by money ?"

Receiving no reply from Parvati, Arka continued, "Parvati, the coming together of man and woman for procreating is a woman's natural aim. In the name of a worldly life you women rush after it without any check and consider your lives have been frittered away if you haven't got it, and that is why you hasten forward to enchain man firmly into it without any compunction whatsoever."

Parvati said, "Is not that desire the highest thing ? Does not the World-Mother perpetuate the flow of creation with this desire as her instrument ? Do you propose to choke up the flow of that primordial, irrepressible, most beneficial desire once for all ?"

At this point Arka said, "What are all these inappropriate words you are speaking, Parvati ? How do you bring the matter of my choking up the current of creation as initiated by the Supreme Nature, into the question of what you or I should personally do ? However, I have an important work to do now and cannot continue our discussions any further to-day."

He left and it seemed that Parvati, too, came back to her senses and blamed herself, thinking how much she must have hurt him by broaching something quite out of context. She further thought and became aware how, in truth, the nature of woman is ever on the look-out to ensnare man to perpetuate the flow of creation and in that act satisfy her own cravings. How little had she progressed and understood, to say all that she did utter ! She was aware that, in fact, she imagined to have understood without really understanding. She was trying to measure the extent of her understanding. The principles of the superior level to which she did rise were not yet intelligible to her and that was why she spoke in that way. She could now see that he was one whose buddhi was fully enlightened and he had spoken very correctly.

There were no discussions for two or three days; then as the occasion arose they again sat down to discuss. Parvati admitted at once her mistake and said so. Then she added, "Now I clearly see that we do not belong to that category of beings, who are impelled by Nature to help continue the stream of fresh creation and who receive from her a strong impulse to satisfy their desires. We are of a higher order aspiring to subtler and greater levels where our consciousness can be more vast and pervasive. Also, our aim is not only for the individual but for the collectivity as well. All this I have understood. Then if we do not harbour within us any desire for a family life, where is the danger of our being caught in the whirlpool of a worldly life ? This I would like to understand now."

Arka laughed and said, "If in any level of your existence that desire did surge up then the World-Mother herself will bring about the proper conditions to fulfil it. She is not to blame for that, since to satisfy the creature is her own job."

Parvati said, "Why should there be an upsurge of desire ? Do you think that I have no control ? We both have it."

Arka said, "You are yet unaware how the bubbles of that desire rise and that is why you are saying this. Look, Parvati,—innumerable such cravings for enjoyment lie suppressed in us, occasionally fuel is heaped on them through the circumstances

of our daily existence. This is how desire and its satisfaction occur in man. Some rise in the mind and for want of favourable conditions dissolve themselves in Nature. When you meet someone who is very happy with her husband and children, does there not arise in you a strong intention to lead a similar life ? It does. Again that wish dissolves itself without the needed favourable circumstances. Then again, when you meet a man, an acquaintance or a youthful relation socially, then in your empty heart do you not feel a certain love for him ? This, too, may dissolve away for want of helpful circumstances or by natural obstacles. These are ordinary, natural things; but, even through one of them, something out of the ordinary may happen. Remember that I say out of the ordinary but not unnatural. Thus, for example, when a special desire is very prominent in one, can you guess how it is worked out ? The mode of operation is clear only to the Yogis. In the mind the object of the craving, by constant thinking of it, becomes at one moment dense and thus quite one-pointed—at that very instant an electric current starts flowing—in the Yoga shastras this is called an upsurge. This upsurge like an electrified particle rises from the navel centre in a thin line, pierces with incredible rapidity the heart centre and rises even above the breath centre and enters the highest centre of Will. From there again it descends with a strong and irrepressible will-force into the heart centre so that the desired enjoyment may be completed. That force is so uncontrollable, producing such a drive to action, that the action for enjoyment becomes utterly irresistible and there is no escape from it. You must surely have understood that thinking of the object of desire and deeply pondering over it reveals this force; and Nature, as a result, is obliged to produce the favourable circumstances for fulfilling it. Just try and grasp it : in the being is born first a desire, which subsequently becomes the will-force; but it is the World-Mother herself who provides the certain and favourable conditions to accomplish it. You can well imagine now how exceedingly puissant must be that force, that it is able even to compel the World-Mother to aid its fulfilment.”

Parvati, in a dazed condition, said in a husky voice, “Is that force so strong that it can compel Nature ?”

Arka said, “The dense state of that desire rising from the navel reaches up to the centre of Will, that I have just mentioned; there is the home of our Self-consciousness or the Brahmbindu. Well, that upsurge touches the Spirit there and uniting with It descends as the Atma-Shakti (Will of the Spirit)—Nature is compelled to fulfil that Will. Of course, all this happens with a rapidity surpassing that of lightning.”

Hearing all this, Parvati was stunned, as if she had lost all outward consciousness.

After a pause Arka spoke again, “So, when you will come down to the lower levels and if then in your mind there arises the strong craving of uniting with my gross physical body and in consequence the mighty Will-force is born, where will your control be ?”

Parvati said, “Then do I understand rightly that true control must be there before the upsurge occurs, because once it has risen no control can be effective ?



Therefore, any craving for enjoyment should never be allowed a foothold in the mind or else there will be a great danger. I never knew anything of all this—oh ! how horrible it is—how very narrow and fragile is the path of control !”

“It is not narrow, but subtle,” said Arka. “And it was this that I was trying to make you understand from the very beginning. I think there is nothing now to be afraid of; there will be something, though, when you will come down to the lower levels—because you have not yet attained the supreme spiritual state.”

Parvati said, “Is it then quite imperative to practise control from the very beginning, in all matters of this world ?”

“Of course,” said Arka. “That is why the first step of the eightfold path of Yoga is Yama (control), then come the other practices in sequence.”

“Tell me how I must reject my desire to unite with you ?” asked Parvati. “What is the harm then in living near you as a friend ? I shall certainly not crave for the worldly life, something that will pull you downward.”

“Why don’t you understand, that as soon as you will come down to a lower level, the level of mundane life, full of those cravings, all these cravings will become strong resolves ? Again at that time your Atma-Shakti will be pushed behind and your mental force will become active. The mind, you know, is turned towards the world—it understands nothing but objects of the senses,” said Arka.

Parvati said, “Objects ? What are objects ?”

Arka said, “You must be unmindful, you surely know what an object means. All that is perceived by the senses is termed by Vedanta, in one word, object.”

“In your absence, how am I to stop thinking of you ?” said Parvati. “Rather, if you stayed near and we met simply and naturally then I will not need to think of you.”

“That, too, I have thought of,” said Arka. “But I must go for some time, When I return some arrangement may be made for us to live near each other. But, just now, you must let me go.”

Parvati remained quite silent. Arka became a little thoughtful, somewhat afraid, as he looked at her. He knew that the feminine nature was something very complex. Allowing a few minutes to elapse, he said, “Then you are unable to let me depart with a happy heart ?”

Catching the import of his words, she said, “What do you take me for ?”

“I look upon you as a wonderful instrument of the World-Mother, the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of all,” said Arka. “You can be the glorious helper to fulfil the mission with which I have embarked upon the boundless ocean of Life, and you can also cause my ship to founder in mid-ocean.”

“I see,” said Parvati. “You are my Guru, my sustainer, my God, all I have and am is all yours. How could you even for a moment harbour the thought that I shall be the cause of anything that may harm you ? However small it might be, if my help were of no use to you what purpose could there be of my living ? The glory to be a friend of yours is to me like realising the Divine in me. Do you believe me ?”

After this, Arka took his leave of her.

What was exceedingly strange was that as soon as Arka went out of her sight, in her eyes came the light of his splendour. She found a new world in the work apportioned to her by the Avadhuta.

*(To be continued)*

PROMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

*(Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)*

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## AN EXTINCT STORY

MY life's resolve was :  
 I would speak only one word—  
 and speak it in such a way  
 that it would burn like the sun,  
 and be a Ganga  
 for hundreds of minds to bathe in...  
 Alas, lost amid many a word  
 is that one single word !  
 Today, like particles of a sunbeam,  
 glow-worms taunt me...  
 Where is the sun ?  
 I aspired with all my body and mind  
 that for one love  
 I would buy up Amaravati, the City of Immortals,  
 and consummate all my life's adoration,  
 the fullness of my life's one aspiration,  
 in one single image.  
 Today there lie dispersed  
 the bits of that broken image,  
 innumerable imperfections !...  
 the ruins of all aspiration  
 written in scattered fragments  
 of many a longing—  
 the extinct story of one single love.

NRIPENDRA KRISHNA CHATTOPADHYAYA

*(Translated by Tinkari Mitra from the original Bengali)*

## LIFE, DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

*(Continued from the issue of February 21)*

THE material mind and its consort physical science are reluctant to admit the profound truth of rebirth without concrete proof. Their demand is to see the same Mr. Prakash of this life in his next birth as well. That means he, at his next birth also, should preserve the characteristics of his previous birth and remember and know all about past events. Otherwise how can it be known that Mr. Prakash himself has become Mr. Tapas in his next life ? Who will give proof of it ? It is a traditionally recognised fact amongst all spiritual figures in the world that remembrance of past life actually persists in certain special cases but not exactly in the same way as the scientists expect it. Such questions on rebirth are practically insoluble unless one admits a greater guidance than the reason. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "The secret Will is not mechanical, but spiritual; the guidance comes from an Intelligence which can use mechanical processes but is not their subject. Self-expression and experience are what the soul seeks by its birth into the body." Here again it may be asked : "If that is the only purpose of the soul behind its taking birth, why does it take birth over and over again and undergo the process of death ? Can it not express itself infinitely and gather infinite experiences by prolonging its single life for an infinitely long period of time ? What purpose is served by thousands of wanton, random and premature deaths caused by flood, famine, pestilence, war and accident ? Why these unnecessary and pathetic shocks of separation hurled to near and dear ones ? Will it be wrong, therefore, to conclude that these are rather brutal compulsions enforced upon the soul by the mechanical forces of universal nature ? Do not all these indicate the victory of falsehood over knowledge and truth ?" No doubt, outwardly this appears to be the fact. But inwardly there must be some significance in each action of nature; and the object of the working of nature is always towards the ultimate victory of the truth. The process of nature's working is evolutionary in character. The evolutionary needs of creation are diverse and manifold and have very complicated objectives and intentions. Moreover, people in general are helplessly under the sway of the lower and mechanical nature. The assertion of their soul principle over the working of nature has not been achieved. Ordinary men are, so to say, puppets in the hands of nature. But this is only one side of the picture. There is another side as well.

We must first clearly understand what death means to our ever-existent soul, not what it appears to our ignorant, fettered and emotionally attached ego. The standard of time to the timeless soul may not be the same as our worldly standard. Again, maturity of soul also may not depend on the number of years lived in a single life. The following sloka from the Katha Upanishad will, I hope, open a new pers-

pective to our thought. "The wise One is not born, neither does he die : he came not from anywhere, neither is he any one : he is unborn, he is everlasting, he is ancient and sempiternal : he is not slain in the slaying of the body." So the question of compulsion over soul by any other inferior mechanical forces cannot be accepted without reference to other facts of existence. Indeed the whole affair is so complex, subtle, flexible and delicate that to try to understand it through a single mechanical formula is bound to create confusion. If the effect of destructive forces of nature is a compulsion on the soul, how can those cases be explained which under the same adverse circumstances escape death ? Rather it has been found on many an occasion that the most dangerous catastrophes failed to produce their full effect on account of the protective influence and presence of powerful souls. Here again it may be asked: "Then what about the cases of Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus and others who could not save themselves even?" Why should they if they did not like to do so, if they knew that the mission of their souls would be better served by the sacrifice of their lives ? A single formula cannot and should not stand good for all.

Now, as to the prolongation of the same life and body for the soul's expression and experience, there are some practical difficulties. For example, the nature-parts of the being, *i.e.* the body, life and mind, become with the advance of age weak, sick, rigid and unreceptive to the soul's intention and will, and refuse to change according to the self-expressive impulse of the deeper spirit. Not only that; at times, their triple formation, even when it is not sufficiently old, goes contrary to the spirit of progress. The greater, better, luminous and progressive spirit finds the mind and life and particularly the body falling short of the necessary plasticity and refinement. As a result, in consonance with the evolutionary urge of the supreme creator, the soul rejects the mental-vital-physical form and goes to take up a new birth in a better-equipped frame or *ādhāra*. What to speak of the individual life ? The ancient scriptures tell that even the whole creation itself undergoes disruption or *pralaya* with the succession of *kalpas*. But under all circumstances the inner Person or the Purusha remains unaffected. "It is the inner Person that survives death, even as it preexists before birth; for this constant survival is a rendering of the eternity of our timeless spirit into the terms of Time," says Sri Aurobindo in his *Life Divine*.

We have seen the position of soul in relation to its nature-parts. We have observed that whatever may be the circumstances our soul is immortal; it is an inextinguishable divine spark, whereas our nature-parts, body, life and mind, are changeable. They perish in course of time. They do not accompany the soul in its next birth, what persists with the soul is the essence of the experiences of its past life, a kind of psychic impression. Why is it so ? Is it the destiny of these nature-parts thus to be taken up and thrown away by the soul according to its sweet will for all eternity or do they also deserve to share the qualities of the soul ? Will they also one day be prepared to enjoy the immortality of the soul ? A very difficult question indeed. It has been already mentioned that modern science is busy experimenting with ways and means in this direction. But it is doubtful if the matter rests only on this material-

istic aspect. Scientists may go very near to making the body immune from disease and other deteriorating influences but they have no hold on the intrinsic needs of the soul. How can it be that they, working on the material plane only, will put an end to the necessity of death which is related with the soul's intention ? However, the world has yet to see the development of science in this line.

From the spiritual point of view the issue depends on the degree of response of mind, life and body to the demand of the luminous spirit. In fact the whole creation is a process of evolutionary ascent, evolution of the forms and also of the secret consciousness and potentialities within the forms. Rather the changes in the physical forms of evolutionary beings take place in answer to the improvement of consciousness within. But there is a limitation to the adaptability of the material structure. As a result, the process of death and rebirth had to be adopted by Nature as a means of renewal or renovation of mind, life and body. "That eternal One breathes out the universe and breathes it in." This profound Vedic expression does not perhaps mean that while breathing out the universe the eternal One remains aloof from what He breathes out and, while breathing in, effaces or devours what He has already breathed out. It is certainly not like a snake's bringing out and taking in of its tongue. Breathing out means : He Himself comes out of Himself from the plenary height of ever-existent Light and Knowledge and sinks into an endless envelope of obscurity and ignorance. Breathing in indicates the return journey of That which came out to its original source not in order to be self-lost in or absorbed by the plenary Light but to be re-awakened from inconscient slumber by gradual steps and stages, to carry the entire obscure strata of potentialities to the height of their maximum self-expression. If this is accepted, the mind, life and body must have their divine destiny, permanence and fulfilment. We see that in each successive evolution, from matter to life and from life to mind, the previous strata cannot be thrown away, they remain as the base for the next to evolve. For example, the mental being, the man, is not constituted through and through by mind only, he is at the same time a physical and vital being. But in the mental stage the physical and vital parts do not remain exactly the same as they were in their previous proper stages. The working of the third higher power, the mind, mentalises the activities and essential qualities of the body and life, just as the emergence of life from the subconscious state vitalised the physical part by making the substance of animal body different in quality from that of plants and trees. Whatever might be the change, the human body has not yet reached its perfection. Were it perfect, it would not be subject to death, disease and incapacity. Mere mentalisation could not give life and body their ultimate fulfilment. It could not because mind itself is not ultimate. The spirit, soul or self is the real reality, which upholds the creation from behind the veil. It has been envisaged that above the mental status there is a fourth status, supermind, which is at work to evolve after mind. The full evolution of that will supramentalise mind, life and body, and then perhaps the body will be transformed in such a way that it will gain infinite adaptability, refinement and plasticity to overcome death. For that final achievement psychic and spiritual trans-

formations are the essential prerequisites. It is a very long process; to shorten it our active cooperation is needed through aspiration, surrender and rejection of the gross defects of the mind, vital being and body. On the one hand we have to reject the attacks of destructive forces, weakness, disease, inertia, desire, which are either inflicted on the body from without or are shortcomings of the body itself on account of its animal origin. On the other hand we should consciously exert our will and add our aspiration to make the body, life and mind more and more receptive to the higher powers and energies of the luminous divinity, the soul, and the descending supermind which is at work to evolve fully the same principle hidden in our nature parts. In this effort medical science, with its ever expanding knowledge and efficiency, may be of some help. Help can be derived too from all kinds of yogic systems practised in the past for mastery over the unregenerated and obscure undivine propensities of nature. But above all are needed a sincere spirit of surrender to the Divine and an intense aspiration to make our body a vessel for the supramental light, love, strength and purity to dwell in. In other words, to enhance the ultimate victory of the spirit over matter we ourselves have to prepare the ground for the future. Here is how Sri Aurobindo conveys the idea in his own words : "The past man was the father of the man now as the present man is the father of the man that will be." It is implied that the future man indicated above is Superman.

*(Concluded)*

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

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# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

### SIXTH SEMINAR

21st November 1965

THE sixth quarterly Seminar of the New Age Association was held on 21st November 1965. The following two subjects were approved by the Mother for the Seminar :

1. *What is the best way of making humanity progress?*
2. *What is true freedom and how to attain it?*

The five members who participated as speakers were :

Swadesh, Rose, Romen, Mita and Kiran Vyas.

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

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

Friends,

The two subjects that we have for this Seminar have been of perennial interest to the human mind through the ages. Several thinkers, philosophers, scientists and men of action of the past and the present have viewed these problems from different angles and provided different answers according to their predilections. We here have the great privilege of having at our disposal the views of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on these problems fully explained in their writings. But it is necessary for us to have a precise understanding of their views; otherwise our ideas about these problems are likely to remain vague and confused. We have chosen these subjects for this Seminar with a view to help us to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of these very important issues.

About the first subject—What is the best way of making humanity progress ? —it is necessary at the outset to define clearly what we mean by progress. Strange though it may seem, the idea of progress is a typical modern idea. In the ancient and

the mediaeval ages the predominant belief was that humanity is constantly regressing in a downward lapse from an original perfect state or that it was moving round in the same circle, repeating the same cyclic movement. It is only with the advent of the age of reason and science in the modern period that man began to have a firm belief in the possibility of a continuous forward progress towards a perfect individual and social existence. But this rational scientific belief, which was so dominant in the 19th century in Europe, has now suffered a severe set-back because it has now become patently evident that all the development achieved in the external sphere of life with the help of reason and science is by itself not only cumbersome and meaningless but even dangerous because it has led to an increasing disequilibrium which may eventually result in a collapse and even self-destruction of the human race. The whole edifice of modern civilisation has been declared by some prominent thinkers of the present day to be an artificial and monstrous overgrowth which must be scrapped if humanity is to regain its natural spontaneity, balance and harmony. This civilisation, they say, is a disease, an abnormality, a malignant perversity which will destroy the human race if left unchecked. The only way to check it is to throw away all the paraphernalia of the civilisation and to revert to the natural simplicity of the primitive man. Go back to Nature, they cry, if you want to regain health of the body, peace of the mind and joy of the heart. Progress lies not in moving forward and upward but in turning backward and downward.

There are others who say that the real cause of the evils of modern life is its excessive one-sided preoccupation with the lower material interests and pursuits and its neglect of the higher values and nobler ideals. The modern man has made an unparalleled progress in specialised science, technology, mechanised mass-production, etc., but has neglected or debased true art, philosophy and other liberal and cultural pursuits. This has brought about an artificiality, an unbalance and an inner malaise in his life. This can only be set right by a radical turning towards the higher aims and pursuits and a greater preoccupation with them than with the lower material ones. That alone can cure the modern man of his inner unbalance and set him firmly on the true path of progress.

There are still others who maintain that this too will not suffice to solve the problem of modern humanity. What is needed, they say, is not merely a turning to higher cultural aims and pursuits but a radical change in the consciousness of man. Man must transcend the limitations of his present mental consciousness and realise the Spirit. But most of those who advocate this spiritual solution give it a religious form. Either some orthodox or reformist religious formula is proposed by them as the sure means of salvation and the true way of progress towards perfection in the Spirit or God.

But according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother this religious solution will not solve the malady of modern humanity. The religious approach to God belongs to man's past evolution and will not serve his present need when a bold leap into his future potentialities is demanded by evolutionary Nature. The spiritual way is the



right way of man's future progress but it has to extend beyond the narrow limitations of the religious formula. The evolutionary conversion of consciousness demanded of the modern man has to be something more radical and drastic than a religious change. A total transmutation of man's entire inner and outer consciousness and life in the highest Truth of the Supermind is the only decisive solution of the present crisis of humanity and the only way of its progress towards its ultimate perfection.

This is the view of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about humanity's progress stated in the briefest manner. But the question still remains : what can an individual who is eager to help humanity actually do to make it progress on the right path ? What is the best way which will prove most effective in his endeavour ? The answer to this question is so obvious that it is surprising that most of the people fail to realise it. If you have arrived at the conviction that the only sure way for humanity to progress is a total spiritual conversion of the human consciousness, then obviously you must yourself first work out that conversion in yourself before you can help others to do so. However eager you may be to help others on the spiritual path, how can you really do so unless you have yourself realised the Spirit ? Even with the best of sincerity and goodwill, is it not presumptuous on your part to try to help others to make a spiritual change without having first worked out that change in yourself ? How can you help others to realise what you have not realised yourself ? How can you give light to others when you are yourself blind ?

It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother stress the necessity of concentrating on one's own sadhana and not to be over-eager to help others. The best way to help others is to help yourself—this is their repeated injunction. This initial preoccupation with one's own spiritual progress is certainly not egoistic; it is in fact the indispensable condition and the best way to make others progress. That is why Sri Aurobindo said : "The Mother's victory is essentially a victory of each sadhak over himself." That is also why, after the manifestation of the supramental Truth, the Mother is asking each one : "Are you ready ?"

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The second subject that we have for this Seminar—What is true freedom and how to attain it ?—can be approached in several ways, but whatever the approach the concluding answer from Sri Aurobindo's standpoint would be the same.

By freedom we generally mean freedom from all external restraints and compulsions. In the political sphere, for example, the individual claims his inherent right to certain fundamental liberties as against the authority of the State. In the wider social life, in his relations with others, he claims the freedom to live and act as he likes without interference from others. But this claim, if it takes an exclusive egoistic form, cannot be considered legitimate because it seeks to justify the individual's demand to satisfy his own desires and interests without any check or restraint and in complete disregard of the interests of others. Any kind of just and harmonious

collective life would become impossible if this egoistic demand is allowed its uncurbed expression.

The individual's claim to freedom from external control can only be justified when he learns to control himself from within. External regulation can be dispensed with only when man regulates himself by an inner law. Self-discipline alone can make external discipline unnecessary. So long as man lives in his ego and seeks satisfaction of his selfish desires and passions he cannot deserve freedom from external compulsion. He must find his true inner self and obey its law before he can outgrow the need of obedience to outer law.

But apart from this question of freedom in social relations, can it be said that a person who tries to live in egoistic freedom is really free? Even if he manages to remain free of all external control, is he not living and acting under the blinding compulsion of the ignorant forces of lower Nature which secretly drive and determine his so-called personal free will?

This brings us to the fundamental question of the reality of human free will. Can human will, so long as man lives in his ego, be ever really free? Well, whatever may be the views of other thinkers and philosophers, and they are legion, Sri Aurobindo's view is that it cannot be free. As He says: "At best we have only the poor relative freedom which by us is ignorantly called free will. But that is at bottom illusory, since it is the modes of Nature that express themselves through our personal will; it is force of Nature, grasping us, ungrasped by us that determines what we shall will and how we shall will it. Nature, not an independent ego, chooses what object we shall seek, whether by reasoned will or unreflecting impulse, at any moment of our existence."<sup>1</sup>

Thus our idea of human free will in the sense of an egoistic will choosing and acting independently is, according to Sri Aurobindo, an illusion. Our so-called free will is in reality nothing else but an unconscious subjection to Nature. But Nature herself is governed by the will of the Spirit or the Divine which alone is really free. As Sri Aurobindo says: "The only free will in the world is the one divine Will of which Nature is the executrix."<sup>2</sup>

The important question then is: if our present human will is not free, can it become free? Can we attain true freedom even though we do not possess it now? The answer is already implied in the extract from Sri Aurobindo which I have just now read. Since the one divine Will alone is free, our own will can become free by union with that divine Will. That is only possible when we cease to live in the ego and find our true self which is eternally one with the Divine. The ego, even in its most exalted and refined forms, will always remain subject to ignorant Nature and will be consciously or unconsciously driven by her impulsion. It is only by the annihilation of our ego and the discovery of our true self and individuality that we can

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* p. 109.

rise above subjection to Nature and find our true and lasting freedom in union with the Divine.

But that union with the Divine comes by surrender to Him and therefore true freedom can be attained only by a total surrender or submission to His Will. The freedom which we realise by the discovery of our self is not anything separate or different from the one divine Will. It is in fact the same Will freely expressed in and through us as a result of our complete submission to it.

We have therefore to say that true freedom consists in complete subjection to the Divine. This sounds like a paradox but it is the only way of stating the truth. The word 'freedom' is in fact a misnomer when used in reference to anyone or anything other than the one Divine or the Supreme Lord. He alone is free. Man, so long as he lives in his ego, is a slave of Nature. When he finds his true self and lives in it he is a slave of God. Spiritual freedom, which is the only true freedom, is nothing else but willing slavery to God. That is why Sri Aurobindo says that there is no such thing as freedom; it is only a question of choosing between two masters—Nature or God.

How to make this choice ? It is very simple. We have only to say to the Lord in all sincerity :

*Let Thy Will be done.*

This is only a very brief statement of the central idea of Sri Aurobindo about human free will, intended to introduce the subject and not to treat it comprehensively. The other speakers at this Seminar will explain several other aspects of this problem and help us to a fuller understanding of it.

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We have 5 speakers for this Seminar. As in the last Seminar the order of their speeches is arranged in the reverse alphabetical order.

After they have spoken I shall read out to you the Mother's own brief answers to the questions which She has specially given for this Seminar. Then I shall read out a few quotations from Sri Aurobindo's writings bearing on the subject. After reading these quotations the Mother remarked : "These quotations are simply *perfect* and after that nothing more can be said." I shall read them at the end.

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After this speech the 5 speakers were called to deliver their speeches.

*(To be continued)*

*Compiled by* KISHOR GANDHI

## WALLACE STEVENS

### 4. SPECIALIZED DICTION

STEVENS knows that a poem is not a proposition, or, as he puts it in 'Man Carrying Thing': "The poem must resist the intelligence/ Almost successfully." He conveys the value of change most compellingly, not by direct statement, but by such devices as his wonderfully effective recurrent symbol of the endlessly fascinating movement of clouds. His greatest resource has always been in the gaiety of his language, in the way he employs also the nonsensical and the grotesque to break through the restrictions of the fixed and dry rational into what he calls 'the lingua franca et jocundissima'. (Matthiessen)

One aspect of Stevens' poetic language is its uncommon but precisely employed diction. The triumph of elegance achieved in style is seen in 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds'. "The ostensible theme is his constant obsession: the relations between inner and outer, observer and object. His object here is clouds in the sky and their reflections in the water. Of their relationship the inconstant observer, confronting inconstant object, makes five things; for he finds five ways of looking at the thing. These are parts of his poem, each different in feeling from the others, but each like the others in tone and structure." (Tindall)

The poem has five uniform stanzas, presenting as many surface effects beheld at breakfast time "after the slopping of the sea by night grew still". The first surface made one think of rosy chocolate and gilt umbrellas; the second, of chophouse chocolate and sham umbrellas; the third, of porcelain chocolate and pied umbrellas; the fourth, of musky chocolate and frail umbrellas; the fifth, of Chinese chocolate and large umbrellas. Nothing could be more discriminating than these details, which induct us respectively into the five fields of observation.

"Parallel structure, persisting through the changes of inner and outer climate, is an important element. Each part begins with the 'slopping' of the sea. In the second triplet of each part is a caesura separating the recurrent but changing analogy of chocolate and umbrella from the changing appearance of the sea. The third and fourth triplets pose a question. The fourth answers it in elegant French that varies according to its circumstances. In the quiet remainder of each part the tensions of the 'tense machine' are relaxed. The poem begins and ends with a concert of opposites. At the beginning Stevens puts November next to tropical Tehautepec. At the end the opposites of sky and sea, now transfigured, are one; and subject, at last, is one with object. Green and blue, his customary tags for nature and imagination, carry the sense, but other colours (yellow, mallow, and clownish motley) seem more important. The telling elements of the form are chocolate and umbrella, the French refrain, the tone, and the insistent structure. Affected by these, the ostensible theme, becoming

an element with the rest, yields to the real theme : a vision of suave civility or what it feels like to be civilized.”

“In the fourth section of the poem there is an excellent example of Stevens’ somewhat specialized diction and his manner of controlling it.

In that November off Tehuantepec  
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.  
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck

And made one think of musky chocolate  
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green  
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank strategem.  
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds  
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine ?

Like blooms ? Like damasks that were shaken off  
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.  
C’etait ma foi, la nonchalance divine.

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn  
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,  
Would....But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green,  
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,  
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

One of the key words is *mallow*. It has associations with 1) the mallow family of herbs —hollyhock, rose mallow; 2) with marshmallow, the candy formerly made from the roots of the marshmallow. There is also a cluster of associations : warmth, sweetness, muted colours, and a suggestion of stickiness both from the candy and the stalks of the mallow plants. Thus the mallow morning readily suggests the musky chocolate. The mild warmth of the morning suggests both dozing on deck and sitting under umbrellas drinking chocolate. There is no new reference until the final line to the word *mallow*. The colours in the water and in the air are muted, like the colours of the mallow flowers. Perhaps the mallow sun helps to mute, to cajole, the glitter and the rolling blooms in the water.

“The word ‘must’ depends much on what precedes it. It signifies both intense sexual excitement and an imperative. It echoes the musk of ‘musky chocolate’. The words around it, ‘damask’, ‘loosed girdles’, and ‘spangling’ also have sexual connota-

tions. 'Spangling' supports excitement and the glittering of lights on the surface of the water. That 'must' is being used in this sense is evident from the 'nakedness' that follows. Suddenly the excitement ceases and the ease suggested by the little cluster of meanings around *mallow* is reasserted. But the new ease is a kind that follows excitement and experience. It is an ease of a different, even a mellow kind. The tone common to Stevens' poetry, a kind of intellectualized language, urbane and perceptive, is here....The theme running through the poem is the power of the imagination, properly stimulated, to transform a given subject." (O'Connor).

"The poem has a calculated complexity, and its technical competence is so high that to study it, if you do that sort of thing, is to be happy. That it has not been studied by a multitude of persons is due to a simple consideration which strikes us at once : the poem has no moral, political, religious, or sociological values. It is not about 'res publica', the public thing. The subject matter is trifling. Poetry of this sort, as it was practised by some French poets of the nineteenth century, and as it is practised by many British and American poets now, has been called pure poetry, and the name is accurate. It is nothing but poetry; it is poetry for poetry's sake, and you cannot get a moral out of it. But it was to be expected that it would never win the public at large. The impulse which led readers to the old poetry was at least as much moral as it was aesthetic, while the new poetry cannot count on any customers except those specializing in strict aesthetic effects. But the modern poets intend to rate only as poets, and would probably think it meretricious to solicit patronage by making moral overtures." (John Crowe Ransom)

C. SUBBIAN

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SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

No. 3

March 1966

1. *The Purpose of Education*

There are quite a few conflicting views on what the purposes and aims of education should be. Most of these conflicts are caused by looking at the problem from different viewpoints.

The purpose of education in the time of, say, Francis Bacon was precisely as Bacon described it : "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability." He meant that the *delight* was individual and private, the *ornament* to be found in discourse, and the *ability* in judgement and the disposition of affairs. It is Bacon also who said : "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. Histories make men wise; poems, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; morals, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend." Hence it appears that the purpose of the old education was to produce a certain kind of man.

As soon as education came under control of the state, however, two developments were certain to follow. Education would enter the field of politics; then sooner or later the system would betray the usual symptoms of bureaucracy.

About the time of the First World War, a new educational philosophy came into being which included three important aspects : 1) that the most important thing about the school is the child, not the subject, 2) a new educational psychology which emphasized the importance of individual interests, abilities, and differences, 3) a combination of these two which stressed the advantages of "doing" over "acquiring data".

The Mother has said : "We are not so interested in producing brilliant students as living souls." But, cry the pragmatists, we have to equip a child for the realities of life where he can earn his living in a competitive world ! The answer to which is : Can educators ever foresee the ultimate needs of a child while the child is still developing at school—ultimate needs that must some time spring from an inner truth, an individual *oestrus* of the life-force which will mark the eventual destiny of the child? Will not these needs be met by *bringing forth* (educing) the truth of his being ?

It is well known today that students who have been outstanding successes in high school or college do not necessarily turn out to be successes in life. The *raison d'être* behind such an apparent paradox is that such students so often only grasp the need to assimilate data to pass exams, and fail completely to acquire the habit of discipline or the delight of learning that would carry them on to a continuing need for perfection and truth.

At the time of examination the average student hardly remembers more than 75 per cent of what was taught. Thirty days later this percentage drops by half. How much he retains after leaving school must surely be problematical. Therefore if a habit of learning, a rule of discipline, or the joy in study has not been acquired, education, as such, has failed.

This gives us enough food for thought if we are concerned with ways and means of educating our children for the great complex of life in the future. Is it not by finding the individual truth which resides in each child, the personal capacity seeking some form of perfection, latent in every human being, that we answer the primary need and purpose of education ?

To bring forth the latent capacities in the child; to find *that* within him which he can do best in life, allowing it to grow towards its own perfection, the activity in the classroom must be of the students, not so much of the teacher. The teacher must stop lecturing and preaching (he is not a politician or a university professor), he must be ready to guide when necessary, choosing the psychological moment of greatest interest, because it is to create interest that the teacher is most needed, his guidance towards truth which is most apt.

## 2. *Science versus Humanities*

The war between Science and Religion was always considered a hot war—the war between Science and the Humanities may now be considered a cold war but still it is a war and will continue to be so until we can find a satisfactory answer to the now familiar charge that science can tell us how to do an uncountable number of things but not which of them ought to be done. Of course the “ought” implies a concept which is purely abstract, but then the scientist can be also a humanist only if he can recognize and accept problems with which he cannot, as a scientist, deal. Science may teach us a great deal about things that are not ultimately very important, philosophy on the other hand teaches us a very little about that which is supremely so. Perhaps Science and the Humanities only become complementary when they both recognize themselves as a constant search for Truth.

## 3. *Academic Affluence*

David Thomson, in the *B.B.C. Listener*, says : “Materially universities<sup>1</sup> are booming. They have all grown in size and they have multiplied in number to forty seven : there were only half that number and they were much smaller when I went to Cambridge a generation ago. Now they occupy more space, employ more people, offer a wider range of studies, attract more public interest and so receive more publicity, good or bad, than ever before in our history. We spend some £200,000,000 a year on them direct, and the University Grants Committee expect to spend another £356,000,000 of public money on new buildings for them in the next five years. Our

<sup>1</sup> In Britain



system of maintenance grants for students is the most generous in the world.”

The Master of Peterhouse, Herbert Butterfield, recently wrote : “I should like to be told a little less often that the university must be a reflecting mirror, and hear more often about its splendour as a shining light.”

#### 4. *France*

Swimming, it has just been announced, will be compulsory in the reformed baccalaureate. French children in what are now called the *classes terminales* will in June face a revised school-leaving examination which will include not only swimming 50 metres but also rope climbing and running.

#### 5. *Sweden*—(World shortage of teachers)

The headmaster of the grammar school at Orsa, in Central Sweden, who retired in 1953, has now, aged 77, returned to teach mathematics and thus help his old school where they are desperately short of staff. His original half-time teaching has even been increased, as younger members of the staff have been absent because of illness.

#### 6. *Russia*—(New Russian Journal)

This year, it is announced, a new magazine to be called *Detskaya Literatura* (*Children's Literature*) will be launched. The Russians claim that there are no similar publications anywhere in the west. It is said that this is one of Russia's measures to control the problems of teenagers and school-children. A special section of the magazine called “Conversations with Parents” will give regular advice from qualified psychiatrists, doctors and educationists.

#### 7. *Thought for the Month*

Let us think deeper than the mere act of imparting knowledge, to the experiences that educe knowledge from the child so that we allow the child the responsibility of his own experience.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT