

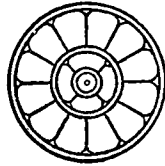
# MOTHER INDIA

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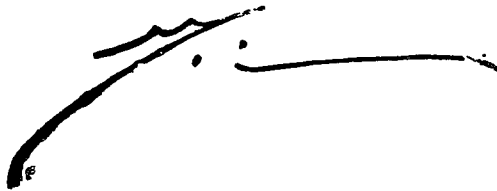


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XVIII

No. 3

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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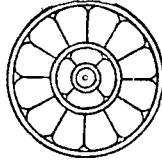
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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

I approve of your continuing this practice in the Arya Iti Soma provided those who live there are absolutely free to attend or not according to their own conviction. Practices of this kind have no spiritual value if they become a habit or a compulsion, even if it is only a mental compulsion. I mean to say that no propaganda spirit must be used.

With blessings  
/

## THE INTEGRAL CULTURE OF MAN

If in man the seed  
of aspiration is watered  
with true spirituality  
then he will grow into  
Divinity.



THE Mother has graciously given this message for the special issue of *Mother India* which we propose to publish on August 15, 1966.

“The Integral Culture of Man” is a master idea of Sri Aurobindo’s, propounded long ago and becoming dynamic today and needing a larger clarification. We shall try to answer the need by presenting the fundamental vision and the evident cultural influences and trends moving in the same direction.

We shall study the various helpful attitudes towards man, nature and God developing today, as well as their modes of external behaviour and their expression in art, literature, science, socio-political life, business and industry.

We shall be happy to receive articles, advertisements and advance orders for the issue.

For further particulars please write to or inquire from :

MOTHER INDIA  
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM,  
PONDICHERRY-2

## 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 30, 1940

N : X was converted from tapasya to Grace by the effectivity of Grace in stopping his chess-playing ! He says that all his resolutions were of no avail and so he prayed and prayed one night for help to stop it. From the next day till now he has played chess only two or three times. The result, he says, can't but be due to Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO (*enjoying the story*) : The salvation from chess was the starting-point of his belief in Grace ! Is that the only instance he has had ?

N : He remembers particularly this one. Now to return to the subject of poetry. Did you not say that, taken poem by poem, Villon's work is as great as any other poet's while, taken in a mass, one can't justify the comparison ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I didn't speak about mass. Villon is considered a great poet in France and certainly he is the greatest that preceded Corneille and Racine.

N : But I thought you said that his poems taken singly are as great as those of any other poet.

SRI AUROBINDO : I didn't put it in that way. That is the impression he creates. (*After a pause*) His life is very interesting. He was a murderer, robber, vagabond. It was almost his profession. He was a profligate of the worst type throughout his life, belonging to the lowest criminal class.

N : Maupassant also was like that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Like that ?

N : I mean a loose character.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, many writers are pretty loose in character.

N : Dilip says his idea of the greatness of a poet is still hazy. He wants to know if by writing a single great poem one can deserve to be called a great poet.

SRI AUROBINDO : Haven't we already dealt with this question ? All depends on the poem. If a poet has written a few perfect lyrics he can be called great. Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven* makes him great. We spoke also of Sappho and Simonides.

N : Yes, I told him about Sappho and about the fragments Simonides wrote.

SRI AUROBINDO : Simonides did not write fragments, but only fragments have been left of what he wrote. And from them one can judge that he is a great poet.

N : Dilip says these are Greek poets and we know nothing of Greek and so we can't judge them.

SRI AUROBINDO : But we know about them and by that we can call them great.

N : Now take the Bengali Govind Das, he says. The poem of Govind Das beginning, "I love you with your bone and flesh", is regarded as a great poem. It has much power but this is the only poem that is great in his works. The others are no good. Can we call him a great poet ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, that Govind Das ! I have read some of his poems. But I don't think this poem of his is as great as *The Hound of Heaven*.

N : When I said that Petrarch is considered second in greatness to Dante, Dilip replied, "It may be, but surely there is a vast difference between their greatnesses."

SRI AUROBINDO : Still, both are great.

N : The difference is that Dante has reached a very great height which Petrarch hasn't.

SRI AUROBINDO : Petrarch is a great poet all the same. There are people who hold that Petrarch has a greater perfection of form than Dante.

N : But, say, if Tagore had written only *Urvashi* and nothing else, could he have been called a great poet

SRI AUROBINDO : *Urvashi* is not such a great poem as could take its place in world literature.

N : Dilip's idea of a great poet is that he must have what he calls "girth" (*parishar*), wideness, volume, just as Wordsworth and Shelley had.

SRI AUROBINDO : Poetry can also have height, depth and intensity : it need not have "girth". Besides, nowadays people consider that mass, volume, is a heavy baggage that weighs poetry down.

N : Dilip says he does not know how to define greatness but one can say that Shakespeare, Dante, Wordsworth, Shelley are great and one should reserve the epithet for such only.

SRI AUROBINDO : Shakespeare and Dante are among the greatest. But a poet like Browning has plenty of mass, volume, "girth", as you say, but he is a different case. Once he used to be rated a great poet.

N : Browning ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. Both Browning and Tennyson ranked as great — they were just below Shakespeare and Milton. But can Browning be taken to be a greater poet than Thompson ? Has he any single poem as great as *The Hound of Heaven* ?

N : Satyendra Dutt was also called a great poet once in the same way.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is he equal to Browning ?

N : Dilip says English critics don't think of Thompson as a great poet, certainly not as being on a level with Wordsworth and Shelley.



SRI AUROBINDO : Who are these English critics ? Wordsworth and Shelley have an established reputation. I consider Thompson a great poet because he has expressed an aspect of Truth with such force and richness as no other poet before him has done, and he has dealt with one of the greatest subjects the human mind can take up. But what is the general opinion about his other poems ?

N : I don't know. Dilip doesn't find much in them. Thompson is known by this one poem only, he says.

P : His other poems also are very good.

SRI AUROBINDO : Amal also says that several of Thompson's poems are original and inspired.

N : Apropos of Madhusudan you seem to have written to Dilip that to be a great poet power is not enough.

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the content of the power. The subject Madhusudan deals with is poor in substance. I don't say he is not a great poet but with that power of style, expression and rhythm he should have got the first rank like Milton; but he didn't because of the lack of substance. He has said things in a great way but what he has said is not great.

NIRODBARAN

# LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## MENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND SADHANA

*Q : Do you suggest that people here should have some mental development if they could ? Would it really help the sadhana, broadening one's self, diminishing the ego ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know that it helps the sadhana and I don't quite understand what is meant by the phrase. What is a fact is that mental like physical work can be made a part of the sadhana,—not as a rival to the sadhana or as another activity with equal rights and less selfish and egoistic than seeking the Divine.

*Q : One has to do some physical work as part of the Karma Yoga, then some personal work. One does meditations too. Where is the time then for study or mental development except at the cost of long meditations ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : If the power to meditate long is there, a sadhak will naturally do it and care little for reading—unless he has reached the stage when everything is part of the Yogic consciousness because that is permanent. Sadhana is the aim of a sadhak, not mental development. But if he has spare time, those who have the mental turn will naturally spend it in reading or study of some kind. 25-12-1936

For one who wants to practise sadhana, sadhana must come first—reading and mental development can only be subordinate things. 25-12-1936

*Q : It seems my mind is very undeveloped, obscure and unplastic when left to itself. I can write something good or fine only when the Mother's knowledge acts through it. Are its defects likely to go at least to some extent by study and reading ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : They may, but they are more likely to go by an increasing capacity coming from above. 27-12-1936

*Q : How can one have a well-developed intellect ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : By training it to see, observe, understand in the right way. Reading and study are only useful to acquire information and widen one's field of data. But that comes to nothing if one does not know how to discern and discriminate, judge, see what is within and behind things. 9-10-1936

Study is of importance only if you study in the right way and with the turn for knowledge and mental discipline. 29-10-1936

*Q : I have been asking you so many questions, from different angles, about study. That subject confuses me a bit. I came here very young, without much schooling. Any mental development was foreign to me.*

*X is about my age. He was asked to continue his studies here, I to give them up and take up physical work. Consequently his mind is more developed. He can reason much*

*better than I. There are instances when people show me how my mind is stupid, often lacking even in common sense. Well ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Intelligence does not depend on the amount one has read, it is a quality of the mind. Study only gives it material for its work as life also does. There are people who do not know how to read and write well who are more intelligent than many highly educated people and understand life and things better. On the other hand a good intelligence can improve itself by reading because it gets more material to work on and grows by exercise and by having a wider range to move in. But book-knowledge by itself is not the real thing; it has to be used as a help to the intelligence, but it is often used only as a help to a big man's stupidity or ignorance—ignorance because knowledge of facts is a poor thing if one cannot see their true significance.

29-10-1936

*Q : Is it true that with a well-trained intellect there won't be so much inertia rising up ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : A well-trained intellect and study are two different things—there are plenty of people who have read much but have not a well-trained intellect. Inertia can come to anybody, even to the most educated people.

5-10-1936

*Q : A question often stirs in my mind : Why is the Ashram atmosphere so full of mental activities ? If people thus remain engrossed in them where will be the chance for Yoga ? And why are so many allowed to remain like that ? In other Ashrams, I think, one feels a natural push for meditation or sadhana.*

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no obligation on any one to be engrossed in mental pursuits; sadhana must be done by one's own choice, not by rule or compulsion.

3-1-1937

*Q : How can I have a strong, firm and clear mind ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : That can only come either by mental training or by a working of the higher consciousness on the parts from above.

27-10-1936

*Q : What sort of "mental training" do you mean here ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : Reading, learning about things, acquiring complete and accurate information—training oneself in logical thinking, considering dispassionately all sides of a question, rejecting hasty or wrong inferences and conclusions, learning to look at all things clearly and as a whole.

28-10-1936

*Q : Is it not true that a proper mental training helps much the higher action to work upon a sadhaka ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : If so, it should have been done before taking up sadhana; for in sadhana the mind has to be quiet, not active.

28-10-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

# LEAVES FROM MY ENGLISH DIARY

A PERSONAL RECORD

*(Continued from the March Issue)*

THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF CULTURE : 62 QUEEN'S GARDEN, W-1  
21ST OCTOBER 1955, 8.15 p.m.

WE two — Alan Cohen and I — started earlier to reach Queen's Garden in time; as the place was not known even to Alan who, I thought, was omniscient about London. Even a taxi cannot help as one has to guide the cabman. We started by the tube-train when it began to rain with a strong, cold wind. The trees in the park opposite shed their leaves by the basketfuls. We tried for 20 minutes to find the street; there was no sign of a 'Queen' or of a 'Garden' ! There was only myself drenched in rain and shivering but a firm Alan. At last we found the house; the secretary was surprised to find that even in such weather a lecturer could manage to come 15 minutes before time !

She led us into a warm room. After some time people came in, among whom were some literary and prominent persons like Mr. Richter. Miss Quigly, a good student and devotee of Sri Aurobindo, was in the chair.

I began by emphasising the unity of aim between the Institute of Culture and Sri Aurobindo. In his programme the unity of mankind and the establishment of peace figure prominently as a necessary condition for founding the Life Divine on earth. Such a goal can be realised only by a psychological change in man—not by economic or political or constitutional means.

I also dwelt upon my disappointment with the Oxford Colloquium and examined some basic ideas of Russell and Moore. I stated too that organised religions would not be able to help man to achieve those aims. An effort to reach behind Mind was necessary.

Dr. Kenneth Walker and Mr. Richter came to speak warmly to me at the end. Miss Quigly was very happy.

Talking to the small group after the meeting it became late, 10.30 p.m. We had thought that there would be no problem of transportation in London. But the secretary found on phoning for a taxi that there was no chance of having one at that hour when it was raining and the wind was blowing. I was afraid that the last bus for Anerley would be gone. Miss Beswick was dwelling on the vagaries of the weather when I assured her that we would be all right in spite of it. She advised us to go to Paddington Station and take the train.

When we came out, London was like a desert; no one walking on the streets, the inhuman reflections of the electrical lamps falling on the dark road and motor cars or

motor cycles rushing and spreading their bizzare lights on the same. At last by good luck we caught hold of a motor cyclist who was starting, and found our direction to Paddington Station. We managed to get a taxi there and drove to Queen's Gate in the desperate hope of catching the last bus to Anerley. I got the last bus but that was not going to Anerley but to the stable at Stratham Com, halfway to my destination. Anyhow I took the chance and sent away the weary Alan.

The conductor was very much concerned when he knew that my destination was Anerley. How on earth could a man, past his 60th year, think of reaching it at 11.30 p.m. under a downpour of rain half the way? I tried to allay his anxiety by saying that if it came to the worst I could walk down to Anerley. Getting down at Stratham Com I found Clapham Station nearby and actually got a train, the last one, at 11.30 nearly, which reached me to the Crystal Palace at midnight. From there I walked to Anerley, which is not very far.

Next day Alan pleaded he was not well — there was solid reason for it! — and could not attend to work. Some grace saved me from any physical ailment after the wind and lecture and rain and knocking and I attended to my schedule as usual.

\*

\*\*

The following letter was received from Miss Beswick, Secretary of the Indian Institute of Culture.

The Indian Institute of Culture

62 Queen's Garden, W-2.

28-10-1955

Dear Sri Purani,

A week has gone by since you spoke here but very often during the days I have thought of your talk. We were all so very interested and helped.

One thing struck me very forcibly: we so complain over here of the weather, and Friday night was an awful night! Yet, linking up with your mention of Nature during your talk, I was struck by your full acceptance of the wet and the cold when you were leaving. It seemed a perfect example of making oneself "one with Nature" and enjoying her in one of her difficult moods — apparently difficult!

So, for the talk, and the practical example, I do for myself and the branch thank you very much indeed. With my sincere wishes.

Yours—Ethel Beswick  
(Secretary.)

Miss Pauline Quigly who had presided wrote the following letter :

Allencote, Limsfield  
Surrey,  
25.10.1955.

Dear Sri Purani,

...It has been a great pleasure to read "Sri Aurobindo's Message to Philosophy" and to have heard your address the other evening at the Indian Institute of Culture. It is a great occasion, since I began my studies of Sri Aurobindo five years ago, there has been rarely an opportunity of hearing the Message expounded. To have been in the chair on that occasion, was indeed a privilege and I was encouraged to find that my reasonings and interpretation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, acquired only through reading, were in accord with the interpretation of one of the Master's own disciples.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy seems to offer the one reasonable, scientific and spiritual solution to mankind's manifold problems....

yours sincerely,

E. Pauline Quigly.

DURHAM. OCTOBER 30TH TO 4TH NOVEMBER 1955

From King's Cross Station, London, to Durham the journey is from 12-15 to 6-00. p.m.

The train was late, so I reached at 7. Prof. A. Basu was on the station; we went to his recently purchased house, "Lydstep", between England and Scotland. It is on a height. It has a fort where all things—the chief's place, the underground cellars, arms—were so similar to those in the Rajputana Forts in India! Warwick Castle which I saw is also similar, it gives sheer on the river, the fort wall at places is five to seven feet wide.

During my stay I met Sir James Duff, Warden of the Oriental Faculty, whom I had met as a member of the University Commission in India. I also met Dr. Clifford, Professor of English, and had a long talk on English poetry. Sri Aurobindo's poetry figured in it. I gave him a copy of Sri Aurobindo's essay, *On Quantitative Metre*.

I also met Mr. Randolph Quirk, Professor of English in Hatfield College, and Mr. D. E. Webster who works in the College of Physical Culture. There emerged in our talk a complete identity of views with regard to the need of a spirituality divorced from current religions, of practical steps for uplifting the consciousness of man. They were tired of the dry and monotonous sermons in the churches. It is true that there is a good percentage of men in Europe who want a rational spiritual viewpoint advocating voluntary practice of psychological methods divorced from outer ceremonials and rituals.

I also met Mr. Arthur Yeuchinson, Professor of Music, who had once come to Pondicherry. He had taken many records of Indian music with him to Durham.

Incidentally, on the 4th of November there was a dance recital by Ramgopal at Newcastle-on-Tyne, which was not very far from Durham. There are some Indians in Newcastle. The performance was rather ordinary, but for an English audience it was all right. I took the train at night from Newcastle and reached London in the morning.

*(To be continued)*

A. B. PURANI

---

## **HIGH TIME**

Is twenty-four too many hours  
    To give a day to Thee?  
Is seven days too many days  
    To give each week to Thee ?  
Is fifty-two too many weeks  
    To give per year to Thee ?  
No, all my time is just enough  
    To give my life to Thee.

DAVID KRAUSE

## LOGIC AND REALITY

Is the world rational, is reality logical ? This is a question often asked, but the correct answer to it is seldom found. To find the correct answer we must understand first the nature of logic.

Logic is the procedure from given premisses to a conclusion that cannot be avoided : the conclusion follows by necessity. This necessity constitutes logical truth. A conclusion is logically untrue or false when, from the premisses that are given, it does not necessarily follow. Logical truth has no meaning apart from the data set forth as premisses. In any particular example of procedure to a conclusion, it is not concerned with the validity of the data : the premisses *qua* premisses stand undisputed, we never ask whether they are logically true. We provisionally accept their contents and start drawing our conclusion. Logic only prescribes procedures like : If all men have two legs and if Bertrand Russell is a man, Bertrand Russell is a biped. It begins always with an "if." In other words, logic is formal or normative and does not commit itself to what reality's content is.

The formal or normative operation of logic is governed by three principles called "laws of thought" : 1) whatever is, is; 2) nothing can both be and not be; 3) everything must either be or not be. Considering these principles, some thinkers tell us that reality cannot conform to logic, since everything is changing : whatever is, stays never the same. Other thinkers tell us that reality need not be logical since it may be the expression of a consciousness more than merely mental and what may seem impossible to the mind's logic may be quite possible to this divine consciousness. All these thinkers use the word "logic" in a sense other than the formal or normative which is the strictly correct one. Logic is not concerned with definitions or classes. It is quite willing to admit that things are in a state of change and cannot be rigidly classified, or that what seems to a mental being one kind of thing may reveal itself as many kinds or an entirely different kind to a higher consciousness. Logical procedures are suited by any definitions and classes, and the three principles governing these procedures are misinterpreted when they are taken to be statements about the way things are to be defined or classified. Their proper interpretation is : 1) If a thing is such and such, it is such and such; 2) If it is such and such, it cannot both be and not be what it is, 3) If it is such and such, it must either be or not be what it is. The three principles do not prescribe what a thing is. Within the generality of "such and such" we can pack anything we please—anything in earth or heaven or hell or "the Cloud of Unknowing." The laws of logic are prepared for all eventualities and revelations. They are never surprised because they never make assertions about the content of things.

They are thus not limited to a world without change. Nor are they limited to what we call the mental consciousness: a world which is the expression of God's



consciousness is quite acceptable to them. Any consciousness which by any process arrives at or else possesses conclusions holds these laws implicit in it. A consciousness higher than our mind may not need to argue from premisses to a conclusion, much less to go through the numerous paces to which our mind is accustomed when we work out a complicated logical truth, but if that consciousness has the capacity to come to or possess correct conclusions it can never exceed logicity or rationality as such. It is never ultra-rational or ultra-logical by being ultra-mental. If, granting that all men have two legs and that Bertrand Russell is a man, the ultra-mental consciousness concludes that Bertrand Russell, within the universe of discourse to which he is here confined, is a quadruped, then we have reached not mysticism but chaos.

In this precise point the difference between the mental and the ultra-mental is simply that the latter proceeds logically by a different movement and on the basis of a different knowledge. As Sri Aurobindo, who is a master-mystic as well as a profound philosopher, observes : "The being and action of the Infinite must not be ...regarded as if it were a magic void of all reason; there is, on the contrary, a greater reason in all the operations of the Infinite, but it is not a mental or intellectual, it is a spiritual and supramental reason : there is a logic in it, because there are relations and connections infallibly seen and executed; what is magic to our finite reason is logic of the Infinite. It is a greater reason, a greater logic because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations; it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize, it deduces from them results which neither our deduction nor induction can anticipate, because our conclusions and inferences have a meagre foundation and are fallible and brittle."

Besides an insufficiently analysed mysticism or a muddle-headed change-mongering, there is yet another argument urged against reality being logical. We are told : "The world has no logical necessity in it. Water flows down a hill. Heated water becomes vapour. What logical necessity is here ? Tomorrow we may discover that water flows up a hill or freezes when heated. In the world we come upon brute facts which are simply 'given.' Events just happen. They are, to use technical language, contingent and not necessary. Observational findings yield ever new facts and when new facts go against old ones we would cease to be realists if we adopted the attitude of the man who said of the ostrich, 'There's no such bird.' The world may be any thing and not what we think to be logically necessary. How, then, can it be logical ?"

There is confusion here, too. Logic, we repeat, does not presume to give us any content of the world. It informs us that if the world is found to have such and such a content, this or that consequence must follow. The deduced consequence may get contradicted by another brute fact and then we have to see what features in the original fact or in the new fact have been overlooked. But logic *does* insist that if no features in the original fact have been overlooked, no new fact can ever contradict the deduced consequence. It is in this sense that the world may, if at all, be called logical. What we have to ask is whether, given a brute fact as being ge-

nuinely revelatory of what the world is, we are justified in deducing a consequence by logic and expecting it to be verified. In short, are the formal laws of logic the formal laws also of things ?

This alone is the proper question before us when we ask : Is the world logical, is reality rational ? The answer lies in what exactly we do when we make a deduction by the formal laws of logic. Take the syllogism, the procedure to a conclusion from two premisses, which we have already cited about Bertrand Russell. When we suppose that *all* men have two legs we presuppose that a man called Russell belongs to the class we have called men and that nobody who can be called a man can be anything except a biped. In our conclusion we only unfold what is already implicit in the first or major premiss. The second or minor premiss conditions what conclusion out of several possible of the same type is derived from the major. The premiss that all men have two legs does not contain implicit the conclusion only that Russell is a biped but also conclusions such as that Whitehead is a biped, and Wittgenstein too. The minor premiss, therefore, has a conditioning role : it gives direction to what is already implicit in the major.

Now, to unfold what is already implicit in the major premiss is to bring out nothing save an identity. What is said in the conclusion is identical with what is already said in a covert way in the major premiss. But the unfolding of an identity is just the right seeing of what the nature is of the thing which is mentioned and how it will exhibit itself. Logic does not make such and such the thing mentioned in the major premiss, but, if logic consists in seeing rightly how, when a thing is such and such, it will exhibit itself according to its nature, then the laws of logic give us the form and manner, as distinguished from the content and matter, in which all reality carries on its existence. What all reality does is to manifest its own inherent possibilities, exhibit its own nature. We can thus declare that the laws of logic are the formal or normative laws not only of every precise coming to or possessing a conclusion but also of every kind of existence, be it material, mental or ultra-mental. The relation between one state of the whole existence of a world and another state of it is the same as the logical relation between the conclusion and the premisses of a syllogism.

This view gives us a new "slant" on what is termed causality. In the widest connotation, causality means nothing else than that one state of the whole existence of a world is related by necessity to another state of it; so that, given the one, the other must necessarily be. If the relation is logical, causality is consonant with any definition or classification of things. It is purely formal, operative with an "if" and leaves open the question of a thing's nature. The thing we speak of need not be a materialist's universe with no room for soul or God. God Himself is not exempt from causality if causality is purely formal, for under such causality God has to be thought of as merely acting according to His nature. If His nature is omnipotent, then He acts with utter freedom. This is logical, for utter freedom of action means the manifestation of the power we ascribe to Him when we define Him as omnipotent, the

power for anything. God's bondage to logical causality does not contradict His utter freedom to act. If we ask whether His own Being is caused, the answer according to logical causality is that an omnipotent Being needs no cause other than Himself in order to exist. Logical causality *per se* does not prove the existence of such a Being, but His existence is not ruled out by it any more than His utter freedom is : both are in perfect conformity with it, since it does not dictate the nature of things but applies to whatever that nature may be.

It should be clear that logical causality renders innocuous the idea of accurate prediction so vehemently contested by thinkers who label themselves as indeterminists or those who are styled freewillists. Accurate prediction by logical causality has no bias against indeterminism or against freewillism. Suppose our knowledge of present conditions is inexact. Then from this inexactness we can accurately predict by logical causality how much inexactness there will be in our future knowledge. Again, suppose the present conditions include freewilling agents. Then, we are able to predict accurately that many of our calculations about the future are going to be inaccurate. Logical causality does not in the least imply that the universe is mechanical or that it is nothing but matter in motion or that terms like "life", "soul", "spirit" are without meaning.

On the other hand, we must not interpret the logicity of the world to favour the view that reality is analogous to consciousness. When we discover logic to be applying to things, we must not at once conclude that there is a Logician at the back of things. Rightly to see the identities implicit in a thing is only to see how a thing having a certain nature must exhibit itself : this *per se* does not render the thing alike in nature to the consciousness which is seeing rightly. If a thing is found exhibiting itself according to its nature, surely we have no inevitable ground to attribute consciousness to it.

Mathematics is a special operation of logic. It is a system of symbols logically connected. Therefore, interpreting the implications of logic as we do, we must beware of the pitfall of regarding the universe with a mystic's eye if we find it behaving mathematically. The world's being understandable in terms of mathematical equations does not show it to be a Super-mathematician or even a mathematical formula in a Super-mathematician's mind. All mathematics merely implies that the universe has a particular structure which we can state in mathematical equations as well as in a system of such equations connected logically. Inasmuch as mathematics discovers logic in the behaviour of reality it only discovers that the universe behaves according to its nature : no necessary implications are there of a mathematical consciousness in or behind the universe.

Nor have we ground to believe that when we find things behaving or exhibiting themselves according to the laws of logic we are imposing upon an unknown behind material appearances a structure and process which are mind-cooked and do not belong to them. The structure and process need merely be what our mind, when it sees correctly, reflects of the possibilities of a thing exhibiting itself according to its

nature. No doubt, the vision we formulate of the structure and process is mental and a different kind of consciousness would have a different kind of vision, but what our mind sees and what the different consciousness would see do not become impositions on things merely because the laws of logic are the formal laws of things. No a-priorism can get sustenance from the formal laws being the same. To say that they are a-priori and not valid of an objective material reality's own nature we should have to get hold of other arguments than such a reality's logical behaviour.

All this does not mean that the study of what logic is gives no argument for a non-material mystery behind the appearance of materiality and no argument for a World-intelligence. The study of what logic is heads us away from materialism as soon as we ask whence the compelling "therefore" of logical truth. What is the basis of logical necessity? Do we derive it by observing the world? There is indeed a logicity in the world, but merely by observing the sequence of events we cannot derive the compulsion constituting logical truth. The sequence has a logical necessity, since this necessity only means that a thing must act according to its nature and exhibit its own identity; but what makes us sure that a thing must act according to its nature? The universe is not uniform so far as observation is concerned. New facts swim into our ken and constantly modify past assumptions from experience. Every assumption is bound to be provisional, for we can never claim to have exhausted the fund of possible discovery of facts. What we can describe as non-provisional, as uniform, as always applicable, is the formula that *if* a thing is such and such, it will behave in such and such a manner and cannot behave otherwise. Without uniformity in the universe of our observations, the sequence of events can never lead to the realisation of the all-pervasiveness of this logical necessity. So in the absence of observed complete uniformity, the realisation cannot be said to be derived from observing the world. How then does it come about?

Do we argue it out logically? To claim that we argue it out logically is to set up a vicious circle. To argue out anything, we already take for granted that there is a logical necessity. Arguments are justified by the presence of logical necessity: the presence of logical necessity cannot be justified by arguments. We cannot use logic to prove logic. Logical necessity is beyond proof. Its basis lies simply in self-evidence. It is a direct intuition of the form or manner in which existence behaves. The logical operation of the mind is, as Olaf Stapledon remarks, intuitive through and through.

Of course, the mind in its general functioning is not a directly intuitive agent. It has no open possession of perfect knowledge: it is an ignorance laboriously constructing tentative and uncertain knowledge by various indirect means. The truly intuitive consciousness of an ultra-mental sort would have a different texture and a different activity. It carries the seal of its own knowledge and the intellectual mind is in no position even to be a reliable arbiter of what the ultra-mental intuitive consciousness may disclose. But, as Sri Aurobindo says, the intellectual mind itself "really relies on a camouflaged intuition for its conclusions—for without that help it could not

choose its course or arrive at any assured finding—it hides this dependence from itself under the process of a reasoned conclusion or a verified conjecture.”

Yes, though the mind is generally a fallible non-intuitive agent, its logical operation is based on unrecognised intuitiveness. This intuitiveness is independent of the content of existence : the content has to be given either by sense-observation or by observation through other means—aesthetic or mystical; but, whatever the content, the law of the unfolding of it is found by logical intuitiveness. Here is divination. And divination implies sheer insight into reality. Nor is it here just the reality of the mind itself that the mind “insights.” For, then, logical necessity would be limited merely to the mind’s nature and characterise the form or manner in which that nature is exhibited. No omnipresent extension to the nature of everything can be made from such insighting. What we have before us is insight into *all* existence.

Can this insight fit into a materialistic scheme of the universe ? Most certainly not. Even the other kind would argue against materialism : in materialism there cannot be genuine intuition, by anything, of its own manner or behaviour, since this implies a true self-awareness and hence an indivisible authentic self as distinguishable from a composite or pseudo self. But insight into all existence implies that somehow the mind is able to be one with all reality and know it from within, as it were. The oneness, the knowledge from within, argues for all reality being at bottom analogous to the mind. This is the least we can say. From this, we may proceed to the question whether the ultimate consciousness should be called mental or ultra-mental. But in either case materialism is impossible and a World-consciousness in whose being we share and which is the Self of our self is established.

Now let us sum up. The laws of logic apply always with an “if.” Once we understand that they are formal or normative and do not dictate content, we can assert that no kind of consciousness, not even the most superhuman, can transcend them in its functioning and that they are the explicit or implicit laws of all existence, of all reality’s nature. We can also assert that, though reality by being proved logical is not shown to be conscious in nature or having an unknown non-material nature on which consciousness imposes its own pattern, the sense of logical truth turns out to be intuitive and the intuitiveness of this sense shows all reality in a non-materialistic light and proves it to be consciousness. In the final analysis, therefore, the world is not only logical but also expressive of a World-logician whose consciousness-stuff constitutes it.

K. D. SETHNA

## THE ROOTS OF EDUCATION

WHEN a country or its government seeks to formulate New Foundations for its future society through the medium of a National Education one inevitably comes up against the ancient questions man has asked himself since the beginning of recorded time.

In seeking a sincere answer to them we naturally turn to the most ancient of the quests for truth—the Vedanta. Here we find, not some deep mystical treatise on the philosophy of life but rather a charming spring of truth that might have issued from the snows of the mighty Himalayas themselves. We are told that “*a child is a guest in the house to be loved and respected—never possessed since he belongs to God.*” This should remind us that the parents are the first teachers, and that the roots of education are established in the home.

Alongside this simple yet illuminating statement, which tells us not only what our attitude towards the child should be but also what it should continue to be towards the growing individual, we have to deal with the more inclusive question of “What is man ?” Plato could give us only an indirect answer : “Man is declared to be that creature who at every moment of his existence must examine and scrutinize the conditions of his existence. He is a being in search of meaning.”

The most important thing we have constantly to remember is the one inescapable fact that the search for truth and meaning comes from within, so the roots of all education must begin with that premise : *truth and meaning are within*—whether we be concerned with learning, teaching or manifesting a truth.

Man today is confronted with the compelling need to find some basis of identification between what he *is* and what he *does*. He can only return to the old spirit of *a quest for experience*, recover his *appetite for knowledge* if he can bridge the gap between the transitive and the intransitive, between the creator and the process of creativity. Man has forgotten the symbols of his past which kept him united to his origin of thought. He has, therefore, to recover the meaning of his existence and equate that with the purpose of his work in life.

We have to find a new dimension of morality; not one of prohibition but of creativity—a morality of creativity based on inner experience which will be recognised as the true authority for all our scientific, artistic or philosophic activity. Without a recognition of this authority—which is essentially the authority of the soul—there will be no true basis on which to build what we in India could call a National Education. If we want man to think in this way we must educate the child accordingly. As Wordsworth says : ‘The child is father of the Man’ : the child must father the future ideas of man and those ideas must come from within.

Certainly we can learn from the greatness of man’s past, for the roots of education recognised by the outstanding personalities of old times are little changed from what would serve us today. For example, Aristotle and that great Spanish-Roman educator

Quintillian both taught that the first need of children is a closely knit family life, where they live under the example of parents themselves, obedient to the natural standards of moral integrity and responsibility; where there is the vital sense of security and a discipline without tyranny, held together by a growing affection. The Latin poet Martial, who was also a Spaniard, calls Quintillian 'the supreme guide of wayward youth,' and his conception of the purpose of education—'*to produce not a pedant but a man of high character and general culture*'—is, as far as it goes, in harmony with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's views on education.

But the question is : how to implement these high concepts and theories ? All would perhaps agree that our education should be based on the highest possible ideals but how can they be put into effect ?

We must, first of all, be ready to break all conservative ideas about what is possible and what is not possible so as to allow a new sense of creativity to enter our thinking. For instance, TV programmes have now been initiated in New Delhi. This could be a great boon to a country in urgent need of a wide and extensive channel of communication to propagate the immediate needs of awakening in all Indian parents the consciousness of their duty to their children, a duty and a responsibility that they should bear to teach their children obedience and uprightness through love and affection and their own example of right attitude and truthfulness.

As television grows more and more popular in the country such programmes should grow increasingly as moral propaganda and as a National Policy to educate and instruct the people—activities which are responsible for the material from which its leaders are eventually to emerge but which now are the responsibility of the Government. This, of course, should be implemented before Big Business or some interested Combine gets hold of the medium for their own benefit. Television is a gift of the gods if used wisely for the benefit of the Nation but it can be a double-edged sword to cut off the head of all culture past, present and future, if left in the wrong hands.

### *Education is Growth*

It was, perhaps, Plato who had the view of education as growth but it was Froebel who made the analogy of the child and the plant—'*God neither excises nor engrafts, He develops....*' So, the next need of a National Education is to decide the type of school which will supply *the suitable environment* in which the child can grow. For children, like plants, must be protected from those evil influences that impede growth toward that 'self-mastery' which Plato so vividly describes as man's 'peace with himself'.

The importance of a right start in life, home, and early school is emphasized by his most Froebelian declaration that 'the first shoot of any plant, if it makes a good start towards the attainment of its own excellence has *the greatest effect on its maturity*.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* (tr. B. Jowett), vi, 165—the italics are mine.

This is an ancient truth which is not at all outdated, which is in fact precisely in harmony with the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on education. The Mother says, "A truly progressive evolution, that which can lead man towards the happiness which is his birth-right, does not reside in any external means, any material amelioration or social transformation. It is the perfection of the individual, internal and deep, that constitutes real progress..."<sup>1</sup>

*Environment—the Soil*

We have to remember that environment includes all the physical, emotional, moral and intellectual influences that impinge upon the growth of a child, both good and bad. When we consider the impact of the cinema, TV, the radio and the press on the modern child and in what way they contribute to the making of a human being, one wonders if the problem is so very different as when Socrates asked the same sort of question :

"Whenever the populace crowds together in any public gathering...booing and clapping until the rocks ring—in such a scene what do you suppose would be a young man's state of mind ? What sort of special education would give him strength to hold out against such a torrent, or will save him from being swept away down the stream, until he accepts all their ideas of right and wrong, does as they do, and comes to be just such a man as they are ?"<sup>2</sup>

We know only too well how a boy of fifteen, attracted to adult life, is so easily caught up into the torrent of false values and shoddy habits that make up the greater part of an ordinary adult life, where men only live to die. But this does not have to be so in a newly developing country like India. All these boons of modern civilization, these wonder-channels of communication, could be the nation's greatest assets if a very strong stand was taken at the head not to allow them to be used to the detriment of the urgent educational hopes and requirements of the country. It is a national question which has to be answered now : What are the ultimate objectives of a TV organization ? Are they to sell cosmetics to an unwilling public or to contribute to a better way of life ? There is also the question of whether the school can become discriminative, more protective, more in control of the life of the child so as to resist the penetration of adverse influences while the child is growing. Can it ensure that care which will surround the child with good examples and beautiful things even in the most simple manner, but which will point the way to truth and a higher concept of life ? In this also television has a most important part to play in the future education of the children of India.

<sup>1</sup> *Words of Long Ago*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic* (tr. F. M. Cornford), vi, 492.



*The Aim of Education*

Plato's system of education aimed at training an élite class who were to govern the rest. Aristotle favoured a system of state education that was 'one and the same for all'.<sup>1</sup> But although democracy requires leaders, and education should serve all the needs of the community, we have to recognize the basic inequalities in children and so form the best kind of appropriate education for all, which does not mean that all can be fitted to enter the university or that all need obtain a university qualification to do their particular job in life.

It is certain, however, that we must educate our most gifted students, as well as those less gifted, to the utmost of their intellectual and their moral capacity. Research shows a very promising condition, that highly intellectual students usually correlate with originality, imagination and a high moral stability.

*A Democratic Education*

Is our aim to educate for democracy ? Then what sort of person ought a good democrat to be ? Do we wish to educate for creative freedom ? Then what do we wish to create ? Do we want to educate for a technological age ? Then what do we intend to do with our inventions ? If we want to educate our children for a higher concept of life and a spiritual existence, then what, we should ask ourselves, do we mean by a higher life or a spiritual existence ?

I am afraid these questions are yet to be answered, truthfully by those who would create an *appropriate* system of education that would serve the nation as a whole. Our problem is urgent and perhaps the one problem bearing the gravest responsibility, for we are really concerned with the youth of the world in all the uncertainties that beset the complex age in which we live. Jacques Maritain describes this youth with great sympathetic insight in his book *Education at the Crossroads*, 1944 (Yale U.P.), p. 86 :

"I like and respect contemporary youth,... They have a sort of confident candour that rends the heart. ...they are good indeed and generous and free, and they even display, in noble as in immoral deeds, a kind of purity that resembles the innocence of birds and deer. In reality they are just at the stage where the acquired structures of moral and religious tradition have been taken away, and man still remains playing with his heritage.... They stand in goodness upon nothing."

If it is true indeed that the youth of today stand in goodness upon nothing it is because we are, as Sri Aurobindo reminds us, 'transitional beings'—we must evolve out of the past traditions of conflicting dogmas and religions into the oneness of a

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, viii, i, 3, 1337a.

higher spiritual existence and freedom which is the future heritage of the human race. We stand on the threshold of that heritage and if India would listen to the Voice of her Soul she would know that it is her destiny to lead the world to its future peaks of spiritual fulfilment, the realization of Man.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

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## INVOCATION TO SRI AUROBINDO

LET Thy Silence come, O Master,  
 Let Thy Silence grow,  
 Row upon row,  
 In my fields of mind—O Vaster  
 Than space—and blow,  
 My tiny spark aglow !

Let Thy Peace come, O Lord,  
 Let Thy Peace settle,  
 Little by little,  
 In my heart's chamber, bereft of word,  
 To build, petal by petal,  
 A Rose-Pedestal !

Let Thy Feet-Lotus come, O Love,  
 Let Thy Feet-Lotus, a Kiss,  
 Touch the abyss  
 Of my waiting soul, and move  
 Its time-bound darknesses  
 With Eternal Bliss !

VASANT K. KULKARNI

## NARADA—SANATKUMARA

(Chhandogya Upanishad)

RISHI Sanatkumara was once approached by Narada (evidently not yet become a Rishi), who said, "Lord, I desire to be taught by you. Please teach me." The Rishi replied, "Very well, but first tell me how much you know; then I shall tell you if you need more." Narada thereupon made out an inventory of his learning; it was a formidable list. "My Lord, this is what I have learnt : Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, the Fifth Veda comprising History and Mythology; next, Grammar, Mathematics, Logic and Politics, the Science of Computing Time, Theology, Fine Arts and the Ritual Lore; Demonology, Astrology, and the Art of Predicting Fate; the Knowledge of Ancestors and of Serpents. I know all this, my Lord, and very well. This has made me master of the Word, but has not given me knowledge of the Self. I have heard that only by the knowledge of the Self can one pass beyond sorrow and pain. I am immersed in sorrow and pain, please reach me to the other shore."

Sanatkumara said, "All that you have studied and learnt is nothing but 'Name', no more than words. You have reached as far as 'Name' can take you, giving you as fruit the power to roam at will, that is, you can go unimpeded where you will. But that is about all." Then Narada asked, "Is there anything superior to Name?" "Of course, there is," replied Sanatkumara. "Then tell me about it." "Superior to Name is Speech, that is, Name with form and meaning." Thus he went on replying to the series of Narada's questions. Speech, Mind, Will, Thought, Meditation, Knowledge—these are the ascending grades, each higher than the one preceding. And each carries with it the power to move at will. The goal of this ascending series is, to use our own terminology, a widening of the consciousness. As we rise from grade to higher grade, our consciousness gains in width and depth and intensity.

But after Meditation comes Power. It seems that marks the end of one series and the beginning of another. The first seven of the earlier series represent the line of our externalised consciousness already manifest. But these powers or functions cannot get their full play by remaining confined to the field of our inner being. In order to make them active and fruitful and effective in practice, Power is needed, the power of work. Hence, under this category of Power, are grouped the fourfold series that constitute in essence the material world in its forms of solids, liquids, energy and air—the fifth or ethereal element is omitted for it is not relevant here. The solids form the body's material substance, the liquids give it life and mobility, energy is stamina and prowess, air gives it the sense of width and expansion. What sustains them all as their basic support has been termed Power, which ordinarily conveys the sense of capacity and strength.

But beyond this second series there is a fresh turn which takes us round to the third. Here we get to the realm of the subliminal, with its silent movements behind our ordinary consciousness. This series consists of Memory, Hope, Life-force and Truth. In our language, Memory is constant remembrance, Hope is aspiration, Life-force is energy at work, and Truth means the rejection of falsehood and the unreal and the acceptance of what is real and true. Beyond this there is yet another series, the ascent to which lies in taking a further turn from behind. The first step on this path is Knowledge, that is, knowledge of the Vast and the Particular. The second step is Contemplation, implying a concentrated one-pointedness. The third is Faith, an unwavering trust. Faith implies steadfastness and, to make the latter effective, there is need of action, its application in life, making it concrete. Finally, action leads to joy, it is indeed the mainspring of action. We know that joy alone is the essence of creation, joy is its source, joy the ultimate end. But the Rishi says, this joy is no ordinary pleasure; its other name is the Vastness—the Vast verily is the Delight, there is no joy in the smallness, says the Text.

Starting from “Name”, outermost expression and most concrete figure of gross physical substance, we have risen by stages to another Name of substance, to the Supreme Name, into the Highest Consciousness, from the uttermost division of the individualised ego to the endless infinity of Being. This progress or ascent of the consciousness or being has not been in a simple straight line, it has taken a zigzag serpentine path. First to develop were, as I have said, the parts of the externalised or manifest being; this is the stage of the waking mentality. On this level, the highest attainment is Knowledge. From Name or gross physical Word as our starting-point, we arrive in the end at its culmination as the knowledge of particulars, what we call the power of discrimination. But the growth and cultivation of the mind alone is not enough. For its sufficient development and capacity there is needed a physical capacity that has the body as its base. That is why, in the second stage of our progress, there is a turning back from the mind down to a lower level, for the cultivation of this physical base, in order to attain mastery there. Once the base got firmly established, the consciousness had to take another turn and enter upon a new stage of its progress. This was in the realm of the inner being. In this stage, there was gained the acquaintance and control of the functions and powers that work from behind the physical mind. From here there is the ascent to the fourth step while still keeping behind the veil, on to the gates of the spiritual consciousness, crossing beyond the limits of our ordinary state. Already, as we reached the level of the life-force, the Rishi had something new to say : one who gained entry into the inner or universal life became “extraordinary”, in that he had passed the limits of his ordinary consciousness, crossed over to the other side. And one who got firmly established in the integral Truth of the final stage attained the state of superconscience.

According to our present-day Science there is no such thing as motion in a straight line, all movement has to take a zigzag serpentine path. The reason is that the created universe is actually spherical in shape, all lines on it must be curves. And

because of the gravitational pull, all motions in it must be wave-motions. All progress or forward movement in the consciousness of man or in the lines of creation must likewise be a spiral movement. In the course of an ascent or forward movement, one can notice one thing, namely, that one has to pass again through the same place or condition which one has already crossed once. In actual fact one does not return to precisely the same place or condition, but certainly to an analogous place or situation : it is as if a replica of the earlier state appearing once again in the next higher stage or forward position.

We know that the same process applies to our spiritual endeavour or even in ordinary training, when a particular quality or state has to be made more firmly and fully established. If, for example, peace is established in the first state of mind, in its physical functioning, the same state of peace has to be established over and over again in the depths of the inner being and on its ascending peaks. A somewhat similar method or process of working is noticeable in the path shown here by Rishi Sanatkumara to Narada. At the beginning of the series is the physical mind, at the end is the spiritual mind. The physical mind is the slave of sense, the spiritual mind is to become centred in God. The first series ends with Knowledge, Knowledge again begins the last series. It seems that the first is the knowledge of particulars, the last is that of the Vastness.

Narada started on the march of consciousness with "Name". He has passed from stage to stage, from level to higher level, till at last he has crossed beyond the material "Name" to the Supreme Name, Brahman. Thus surpassing the state of mortal man, he has at last attained the status of Rishi.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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

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## WEALTH AND YOGA\*

MODERN civilisation is largely Western civilisation; the great historic civilisations of Asia have not yet succeeded in reasserting themselves. The keynote of this modern civilisation is material well-being *par excellence*; an external opulence is its *raison d'être*. As Sri Aurobindo observes: "Commercialism is a modern sociological phenomenon; one might almost say, that is the whole phenomenon of modern society."<sup>1</sup> Man, while ceasing to be a physical barbarian, has, sadly enough, become a vitalistic and economic barbarian, who, in the words of Sri Aurobindo "makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism... His idea of civilisation is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialised industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organisation, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry, are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society."<sup>2</sup>

I make no apology for quoting Sri Aurobindo *in extenso*; what he wrote of society nearly fifty years ago is at least as true, if not more true, of society today. We can readily understand why Sri Aurobindo asserted: "I cannot give to the barbarous comfort and encumbered ostentation of European life the name of civilisation. Men who are not free in their souls and nobly rhythmical in their appointments are not civilised."<sup>3</sup> The Mother has expressed the same truth—concerning this great flaw of modern society—in equally cogent terms: "In this material world, for men, money is more *sacred* than the Divine's Will."<sup>4</sup> We see, then, that man's

\* A speech delivered at the Second Annual Conference of the New Age Association on 12th September 1965.

<sup>1</sup> *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> *The Human Cycle*, pp. 94-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Mother India*, April, 1965, p. 5.

life in modern times is centred mainly on wealth; he has become so enamoured with money and material possessions that he has made them an end in themselves. Wealth has been turned into an almost universal criterion; the worth of an individual and a group is counted largely in terms of the wealth they possess. In earlier civilisations, the learned and priestly as also the warrior and governing classes were given precedence over the rest of the people; today the wealthy man is all too often revered. In our times, even wars are the result to a considerable extent of economic clashes between nations keenly and often unscrupulously striving to achieve economic superiority. The excessive and unrestrained desire for wealth has almost proved a bane to our civilisation, not only morally and spiritually but also materially.

All this represents an extreme approach to one of the essential constituents of civilisation; probably as a violent reaction against it there exists another approach, entirely its opposite. Asceticism and an austere bareness and simplicity of life are preached and practised by not a few who endeavour for a life of religion and spirituality. Indeed, as Sri Aurobindo declared, "It is a common device to support one's pretensions to spirituality by speaking contemptuously of material life."<sup>1</sup> It is regrettable that very many, especially in the West, are under the impression that asceticism is part of Yoga. Even the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines Yoga as a "Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to effect the reunion of the devotee's soul with the universal spirit."

To believe, however, that asceticism and a recoil from money and material possessions constitute a necessary part of spirituality is to be under a severe illusion. The Mother elucidates this point definitively : "The attitude of the ascetic who says, 'I want nothing', and the attitude of the man of the world who says, 'I want this thing', are the same. The one may be as much attached to his renunciation as the other to his possession."<sup>2</sup> The urge towards asceticism becomes particularly disastrous when it is made a general rule for all to follow. Again I quote Sri Aurobindo : "The acceptance of poverty is noble and beneficial in a class or an individual, but it becomes fatal and pauperises life of its richness and expansion if it is perversely organised into a general or national ideal."<sup>3</sup> A renunciation of the various aspects of life is an overhasty and ill-advised step for one, such as the dynamic spiritual seeker, who is seeking to improve and perfect life. The Mother clearly says : "True spirituality is not to renounce life but to make life perfect with a Divine perfection."

We find, then, that both these attitudes to wealth are unsatisfactory and undesirable, the attitude which makes the acquisition of wealth the goal and purpose of life, which involves desire and avarice for the sake of material possessions and comfort, and the attitude which rejects all wealth as a thing evil by its very nature and something that is incompatible with a religious or spiritual seeking. To have the right attitude to

<sup>1</sup> *On Nationalism*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Conversations*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 32.

wealth necessitates a knowledge of what money actually is and what part material things can play in a spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo points out : "Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose. This is indeed one of the three forces—power, wealth, sex,—that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them."<sup>1</sup> "It is true," the Mother says in the same vein, "that money is a force and a means, but it must never be allowed to become a ruler and a tyrant."<sup>2</sup> The Mother further explains the present state of money : "The power of money is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world. It is because of this influence that you never see money going in any considerable amount to the cause of Truth. Always it goes astray, because it is in the clutch of the hostile forces and one of the principal means by which they keep their grip upon the earth."<sup>3</sup> Money, then, is a force and a means, indispensable to the richness and fullness of the outer life, a richness and fullness that should be worthy of the inner life. In the words of the Mother, "Money is not meant to make money, money is meant to make the earth ready for the advent of the new creation."<sup>4</sup>

What, then, should be the place of wealth in Yoga, how should it be treated ? Sri Aurobindo gives excellent guidance :

"To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the Sadhaka.

"You must neither turn with an ascetic shrinking from the money power, the means it gives and the objects it brings, nor cherish a rajasic attachment to them or a spirit of enslaving self-indulgence in their gratifications. Regard wealth simply as a power to be won back for the Mother and placed at her service...

"Any perturbation of mind with regard to money and its use, any claim, any grudging is a sure index of some imperfection or bondage.

"The ideal Sadhaka in this kind is one who if required to live poorly can so live and no sense of want will affect him or interfere with the full inner play of the divine consciousness, and if he is required to live richly, can so live and never for a moment fall into desire or attachment to his wealth or to the things that he uses or servitude to self-indulgence or a weak bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates. The divine Will is all for him and the divine Ananda.

"In the supramental creation the money-force has to be restored to the Divine Power and used for a true and beautiful and harmonious equipment and ordering of a

<sup>1</sup> *The Mother*, Ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> *White Roses*, Enlarged Edition, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Conversations*, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> *Mother India*, August 1965.



new divinised vital and physical existence in whatever way the Divine Mother herself decides in her creative vision.”<sup>1</sup>

I need elaborate no further on what Sri Aurobindo has so well expressed. Only let it be said that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have stressed that in our use of material things we should deal with them with care and gentleness. “It is very true,” says Sri Aurobindo, “that physical things have a consciousness within them which feels and responds to care and is sensitive to careless touch and rough handling. To know or feel that and learn to be careful of them is a great progress of consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> Further, “Material things are not to be despised—without them there can be no manifestation in the material world.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus we are given clear guidance on what our attitude should be towards wealth, how we should regard it, how treat it. It is only a whole-hearted adoption of this approach to money and material possessions that can solve the taxing problems invariably involved in the acquisition and use of wealth. No mere external change can suffice; it would be quite illusory to believe that any socio-economic system whether it be *laissez-faire* or capitalism, socialism or communism, could ever be a panacea in this respect. Here, as in other fields, a change in the psychology of man is the only solution, a change in the mentality, a change of heart.

I consider it most fitting to conclude with a paragraph from *The Life Divine* :

“It is almost universally supposed that spiritual life must necessarily be a life of ascetic sparseness, a pushing away of all that is not absolutely needed for the bare maintenance of the body; and this is valid for a spiritual life which is in its nature and intention a life of withdrawal from life. Even apart from that ideal, it might be thought that the spiritual turn must always make for an extreme simplicity, because all else would be a life of vital desire and physical self-indulgence. But from a wider standpoint this is a mental standard based on the law of the Ignorance of which desire is the motive; to overcome the Ignorance, to delete the ego, a total rejection not only of desire but of all the things that can satisfy desire may intervene as a valid principle. But this standard or any mental standard cannot be absolute nor can it be binding as a law on the consciousness that has arisen above desire; a complete purity and self-mastery would be in the very grain of its nature and that would remain the same in poverty or in riches : for if it could be shaken or sullied by either, it would not be real or would not be complete. The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there would be

<sup>1</sup> *The Mother*, Ch. IV.

<sup>2</sup> & <sup>3</sup> *On Yoga* II, Tome I, p. 691.

the same plastic principle; a rigid standardisation, however necessary for the mind's arrangement of things, would not be the law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying unity might well become manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order."<sup>1</sup>

PRAKASH PATEL

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Edition, pp. 944-45.

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## TRUTH

“SOURCE of all existence,  
Magnificent reality,  
Speechless, alone, I stand  
Upon the summit of silence.

“I exist and, by existing, speak.  
No proof or support I need.  
To deny is to affirm me more.

“Vast open ocean, endless horizon—  
To plunge in is to lose yourself :  
To lose yourself is to become Me”.

MOHANLAL

# THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

## THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 21)

### PART THREE : THE CONQUEST OF FOOD-NEED

#### V. THE EVOLUTION OF HUNGER

The law of Hunger must give place progressively to the law of Love, the law of Division to the law of Unity, the law of Death to the law of Immortality.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 180)

Our life, a breath of force and movement and possession attached to a form of mind and body and restricted by the form, limited in its force, hampered in its movement, besieged in its possession and therefore a thing of discords at war with itself and its environment, hungering and unsatisfied, moving inconstantly from object to object and unable to embrace and retain their multiplicity, devouring its objects of enjoyment and therefore transient in its enjoyments is only a broken movement of the one, undivided, infinite Life which is all-possessing and ever satisfied because in all it enjoys its eternal self unimprisoned by the divisions of Space, unoccupied by the moments of Time, undeluded by the successions of cause and circumstance.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Kena Upanishad*, pp. 92-93)

What is desire here must there be self-existent Love; what is hunger here must there be desireless satisfaction; what is here enjoyment must there be self-existent delight.

(*Ibid.*, p. 88)

We have seen that the bane of individual existence in its ordinary ignorant functioning is its false notion of itself being separate from others, also from the All-Existence that constitutes all that comes into form. But it is in reality the One that is all and is therefore secretly aware of its all-embracing and all-possessing infinity. Spurred by the 'lust of the embodied Self within every individual creature', the separative individual seeks to establish its empire of enjoyment over the whole of cosmic existence. But its means are wrong, the approach is crooked and the ego has lost its way in a blind alley. It looks upon the world as a means to sate awhile its lusts and desires and seeks

.....to conquer and have, to seize and keep,  
 To enlarge life's room and scope and pleasure's range,  
 To battle and overcome and make one's own.<sup>1</sup>

But this predatory hunger brings its own retribution, and the individual life organised in the body, that has cut itself off from All-Life and

.....made a tiny circle of defence  
 Against the siege of the huge universe,<sup>2</sup>

is constantly exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the ceaseless hammering of the surrounding Life. As a matter of fact, "its devouring capacity being insufficient or not properly served or there being no right balance between the capacity of devouring and the capacity or necessity of providing food for the life outside, it is unable to protect itself and is devoured or is unable to renew itself and therefore wasted away and broken."<sup>3</sup>

In order to obviate the necessity of this Hunger that is Death, *āsanāyā mṛtyuh*, the individual existence has to annul its ego-isolation and rediscover and re-live its secret unity with all. But uniformity or an amorphous oneness is not the law of cosmic becoming; universal life exists by diversity and "insists that...every being shall be, even while one with all the rest in its universality, yet by some principle or ordered detail of variation unique."<sup>4</sup> Thus the individual is called upon to preserve even while he seeks to universalise himself to the full "a mysterious transcendent something" of which his sense of separate personality conveys an obscure and egoistic representation. The individual existence has therefore to reconcile an apparently incompatible dual urge, the urge to strive for infinite self-expansion and possession of the world and the urge to seek an integral unity with others in a growing movement of self-giving. These two urges are indeed the two poles of the truth of all individual existence; and one of the essential purposes behind the colossal evolutionary movement, this dynamic world-play of Sachchidananda, is to arrive at a supremely harmonious equation of Unity and Diversity, Freedom and Order, individual Growth and collective Cohesion.

Thus, unity being the very basis of existence, "the oneness that is secretly at the foundation of all things, the evolving spirit in Nature is moved to realise consciously at the top."<sup>5</sup> But "the evolution moves through diversity, from a simple to complex oneness."<sup>6</sup> And in this movement, the principle of hunger too metamorphoses and

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Book Two, Canto 4, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life Divine*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>4</sup>, <sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 296.

evolves from form to higher form till it reaches its culmination in the inalienable all-possessing delight of the Divine.

The essence of hunger of which 'a restless hungry energy of will'<sup>1</sup> the strainings in 'echo caverns of desire',<sup>2</sup> and finally 'the need called love'<sup>3</sup> are but derivative forms, is, as we have pointed out, widely pervasive and evident everywhere in Nature. In the very atomic existence there is something that corresponds to this hunger, and under its subterranean pressure the entelechy of union manifests in various ways in the atomic constituents uniting into atoms, atoms uniting into molecules, and the aperiodic organic molecules uniting to form unicellular living bodies. These are the first three levels of self-expansion in the elaboration of a cosmic evolutionary force. They represent the first status of Life in which the material substance infinitely divided seeks infinitely to aggregate itself.

The dumb but potent urge of physical energy governing the interchange between material aggregates and their environment is the form that hunger assumes in the inanimate world.

When Life reaches its second status in the subconscious animal existence, hunger takes the form of an aggressive vital craving, "a Beast grazing in its pasture, a force of devouring desire that feeds upon earth's growths, tears and ravages all upon which it feeds and leaves a black and charred line to mark its path where there was the joy and glory of earth's woodlands."<sup>4</sup> Death and mutual devouring, an enjoyment that consumes the object enjoyed, an instinct of self-assertion and aggressive living, that struggles to expand, to conquer and to possess and, if need be, 'to swallow up entirely the egoism of the other in its own egoism' : these then are the traits of this second status of Life.

But this mutual destruction through mutual feeding, this fierce and battling play of energy in which 'every breath of life is a breath too of death'<sup>5</sup> cannot be the highest status of Life. So Life has to proceed on its path of ascension and Hunger to evolve into a more glorious form.

In the third status of Life, the status of developed mental life, we reach a condition where mutual devouring is more and more replaced by an urge to mutual help, mutual adaptation, conscious joining and interchange. Hunger changes into the principle of love, although at first love may be no more than an extended selfishness and, still obeying the law of hunger, may "enjoy the receiving and exacting from others rather than giving and surrendering to others",<sup>6</sup> the latter process being admitted and indulged in only as a necessary price for the fulfilment of the first.

But as love progresses and attains more and more its essential law, *svadharmā*, it seeks "to establish an equal commerce in which the joy of giving is equal to the

<sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>, <sup>3</sup> Expressions from Sri Aurobindo's Epic Poem *Savitri*.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, p. 443.

<sup>5</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 516.

<sup>6</sup> *The Life Divine*, p. 189.

joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in its life-origin, “the law of love is the impulse to realise and fulfil oneself in others and by others, to be enriched by enriching, to possess and be possessed because without being possessed one does not possess utterly.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately all problems of life are problems of relations between self and not-self, and these problems can never be adequately solved unless and until one comes to experience the not-self as one’s own self. And this is, in essence, what the evolutionary ascent of life is seeking to realise here upon earth : a simultaneous mutual possession of the self and the not-self.

But Mind in its nature being a separative consciousness cannot solve this problem within its own borders, and the solution has to be sought in a Power still beyond Mind. Indeed, “the end of the road, the goal itself can only be reached by Mind passing beyond itself into that which is beyond Mind, since of That the Mind is only an inferior term and an instrument.... Therefore the perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by association, interchange and accommodations of love alone or through the law of the mind and the heart alone. It must come by a fourth status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit, and conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid no longer in the divisions of body, nor in the passions and hungers of the vitality, nor in the... imperfect harmonies of the mind, nor in a combination of all these, but in the unity and freedom of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus if we would seek to be delivered from the delusion of separate existence and establish a sense of conscious oneness with all other existences in the universe, —a real oneness and not merely “a pluralistic unity, the drawing together of similar units resulting in a collectivity or solidarity,”<sup>4</sup>—we must enter spiritual consciousness. For when man identifies himself with the One inhabiting all bodies and manifesting Himself in everything, he sees oneness everywhere, *ekatvamanuṣāyataḥ*, and becomes one with the cosmic and transcendent Self and therefore with all His becomings. The walls of ego crumble down, the external ceases to exist any more and all forms, all energies, all movements, even the whole world with all that it contains, become to his consciousness internal and intimate.

And he, who sees his true self everywhere in all existences and all existences in his true self,<sup>5</sup> transcends at last the law of ravenous hunger; for, as we have seen in the course of our study, the genesis of hunger with all its derivative forms such as desire and lust lies in the sense of not being this or not having that, this latter sense of non-possession arising in its turn from the incommensurability of the ego’s impulse to possess and enjoy infinitely and its limited force and capacity for seizure. That which is free, One and Lord, which is all the time all-possessor, *samrāt*, and therefore all-enjoyer, *sarva-bhūk*, need not and does not hunger or strain, but inalienably

<sup>1, 2</sup> *The Life Divine*, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life Divine*, p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> *Yastu sarvāṅi bhūtāni ātmanyevānuṣāyati. Sarvabhūtesu cātmānam (Isha Upanishad, 6).*

contains, possesses and enjoys. We, too, by establishing a conscious unity and union with the Cosmic Enjoyer, will become in our turn possessors and enjoyers of the universe and our hunger and thirst will be replaced by the active beatitude, the free and 'causeless' delight of existence. And since this delight is in its essence the delight of the One in His own existence, it is by its very nature infinite and inalienable and there is nothing whatsoever in the world that can diminish or hurt or hedge it in. In Sri Aurobindo's luminous words :

"By transcending Ego and realizing the one Self, we possess the whole universe in the one cosmic consciousness and do not need to possess physically.

"Having by oneness with the Lord the possibility of an infinite free delight in all things, we do not need to desire.

"Being one with all beings, we possess, in their enjoyment, in ours and in the cosmic Being's, delight of universal self-expression."<sup>1</sup>

Delivered from Hunger, the spiritual man will at the same time overcome the law of Mortality. For as he does not seek to devour or disrupt anything, *na tadaś-nāti kiñcana*, nothing can devour or disrupt him too, *na tadaśnāti kaścana*.<sup>2</sup> By finding at last the clue to the establishment of a free play of commerce, uninterrupted and harmonious, with the Universal Life all around, the individual succeeds in absorbing and assimilating all the currents and cross-currents of life and never again becomes a helpless food for others, with the attendant doom of death and dissolution, *annatvam na punarupaiti*.

But by renouncing all motions of hunger and lust one does not or need not withdraw from existence; rather he becomes the sharer in the divine and integral enjoyment of "the entire sweetness of existence, the honey, the delight that is the food of the soul, *sukṛtamā madhuno bhakṣam āsata*."<sup>3</sup> For the secret of real and integral enjoyment in its truth and in its infinity lies in the process of utter renunciation; 'by that renounced thou shouldst enjoy', *tena tyaktena bhunjīthā*, is the injunction of the Isha Upanishad. And when the individual attains to this status of enjoyment of all by renunciation of all through the total extirpation of hunger, he 'becomes the master of food and its eater', *annavanamādo bhavati*<sup>4</sup>, 'enjoys all desire', *so'snute sarvān kāman*,<sup>5</sup> 'eats what he wills', *kāmānnah*, but still remains a non-eater, *anaśnan*<sup>6</sup>, although 'eating' all the time.

Have we then come to the solution of the problem that has been the theme of our present essay ? When the individual being through a process of spiritual transformation gets *subjectively* established in the unitary consciousness of the Spirit and

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Katha Upanishad*, II.3 14: "When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man, has been loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality." (Sri Aurobindo's translation)

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, pp. 410-411.

<sup>4</sup> *Taittiriya Upanishad*, III. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 1.1.

<sup>6</sup> *Mundaka Upanishad*, III.1.1.

thus transcends the law of hunger and therefore the law of death, does his body too, as a necessary consequence, become delivered from the compulsion of food intake ?

Unfortunately it is not so. For the subjective liberation from the rapacity of hunger is no doubt an all-important *necessary* prerequisite, but by no means a *sufficient* condition, for the ultimate cancellation of the body's material needs. Let us see why.

*(To be continued)*

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

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## ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

(Continued from the February issue)

### METHOD AND STYLE (Contd.)

OUR next topic is the metaphor. Milton is not as rich in this rhetorical device as Sri Aurobindo. Metaphor makes palpable and real all that would otherwise be abstract imagery. It is not so much an analogy as a transference of an alien image to the subject. This device is largely used in Sanskrit. Its purpose is to harness the imagination to untracked fields of figures whereby the subject acquires a different status and personality. It is, to use psychological terms, transference of the personality of one to another which may have no distinct relation or association with it. Such a process is indeed necessary in mystic poetry owing to its very nature that is opposed to the epic or dramatic and needs aids to undo its effect of abstraction. Milton employs it as a rare and passing feature but Sri Aurobindo utilises it to strengthen and make clear his experience. The reason why Milton does not employ it is obvious. This transference of quality, personality, character of an object was to him in itself a falsehood. While he found similes stimulating and entertaining he found metaphors an unpractical and false device that created an unreal impression. A cloud was a cloud, a flower a flower. The character of the one could not be passed on to the other in his view—all the more so because he stood against all falsities in any form of mode, and most of all in poetry.

Further, the physicality and the objectivity that are in Milton oppose this psychological method. It needs imagination and a strong living power of visualisation to conceive the sky as a sea and the stars as its foam. Also, such metaphors have no place in descriptive poetry like *Paradise Lost* where we find recounted event after event, action after action, one wave of deeds following another wave of deeds. In such poetry metaphors would not only be out of place but hamper the swift progress of incidents. In *Savitri*, where the subjective has a larger and prominent share, metaphorical devices aid, for they point to something deeper by their transference, and their subjective tone and psychological make-up help create a mystical atmosphere. We feel the passage of parallel realities : the inner and the outer.

Metaphors in themselves are not false, as Milton conceives them. Things and objects, as we see them and sense them, reveal to us one side of their character, the material and the formal. In that formal aspect there is no possible interchange of character or personality. But seen from a subjective point of view, a deeper way of looking at things, these formal natures, these hard crusts of forms are replaced by a fluid interchangeable stuff that permeates all things, and then the sea does not shut out the sky and the hills do not hesitate to become the supine body of a god. Then

names do not become impermeable walls of idea but all things grow symbols of one single undivided reality. Because the thing behind is real, its representing symbols too are real; only the hard, unchangeable characters that we impose on objects by our mental idea vanishes. Take the lines :

In tapestried chambers and on crystal floors,  
 In armoured town or gardened pleasure-walks,  
 Even in distance closer than her thoughts,  
 Body to body near, soul near to soul  
 They were tied in the single circling of their days  
 Together in love's unseen atmosphere,  
 Inseparable like the earth and sky.

The whole turn is metaphorical. Or consider :

Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,  
 Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.

The metaphor is clear, the image if it were used as a simile would not achieve this directness of expression. Another example :

Her youth sat throned in calm felicity.

The metaphor is not obvious, but its indication is clear. Further :

His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres  
 Into our province of ephemeral sight,  
 A colonist from immortality.

This metaphor brings home the truth of the divine descent. How revealing is :

Her lifted finger's keen unthinkable tip  
 Bared with a stab of flame the closed Beyond.

It looks like a simile, but its use is as of a metaphor. Her finger-tip is the dagger of flame that cut open the veils of the Beyond—such a supernatural labour no far-fetched simile could compass. Materially this phenomenon may appear an impossibility. But, seen from the occult point of view, such an occurrence is a tangible reality and Sri Aurobindo is describing it in a most vivid vision which we, in linguistic terms, would call a metaphor. Again another mystic experience couched in luminous words :

She was all vastness and one measureless point,  
 She was a height beyond heights, a depth beyond depths,

and :

The world was her spirit's wide circumference.

Also :

She was the subconscious life of tree and flower,  
 The outbreak of the honied buds of spring;...  
 She was Time and the dreams of God in Time.

Such is the scope of the metaphor ; its direct transference can result in a spontaneous expression of the mystic truth, from which our language as a medium of expression debars us otherwise. In fact, the whole gamut of spiritual experience is opposed to the physical way of looking at things. Language, born from mind's pragmatic need to express itself, and syntax, which has its iron-clad rules to aid this expression, are futile restrictions on the spirit's freedom. Metaphors are modes through which the spirit is freed of the encircling rules of syntax and the result may be a chaos to the physical-minded listener, but to one with mystical learnings they open at once vistas of undreamt-of realities.

A whole epic poem cannot be made up of metaphors or similes; the larger body of it consists of descriptive passages. They not only carry the story along by their ever changing panorama of objects and characters and actions and by their texture of ideas, feelings, moods of all types; they also give a coherence and stability, an organic concreteness. Into their varied context are woven the jewels of similes, the ornaments of metaphors, the dramatic speeches, and the high-lights of tragedy.

In Milton all descriptions are happy even though he may be painting a tragic situation. Nowhere is he more at home than in this—nowhere does his poetical genius stand out better. As a poet of outer action and as an extravert, Milton is at home when describing scenes, people, the struggle of evil, the dramatic gestures of Satanic hordes, and in all descriptions of darkness or light, of God or the Devil, or of justice and law. He is a worshipper of the concrete, and abstractness is his bugbear.

But Sri Aurobindo shines equally great in descriptions and in abstractions. In a real sense, even his psychological, occult and mystical experiences are descriptions; they are a different type of description—the description of inner fields of reality, and of phenomena of psychological being. But there are pure abstract reflections which, because they come as experiences, become living. Nevertheless, whether he is describing physical Nature, or an occult event, he is supremely at ease.

The description of Nature is one of the main assets of a poet. Here is one of Milton's :

Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks,  
 Grazing the tender herb, were interposed;  
 Or palmy hillock; or the flowery lap  
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,  
 Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.

Although Milton does not touch the depths of feeling that is Wordsworth's, his account though objective is felicitous. Now look at the description of Nature in Sri Aurobindo :

The sylvan solitude was a gorgeous dream,  
 An altar of the summer's splendour and fire,  
 A sky-topped flower-hung palace of the gods.

or :

And rain fled sobbing over the dripping leaves  
 And storm became the forest's titan voice.

The description here is not merely an objective one. There is a deeper note : Nature reveals something greater than her plain exterior aspect. For example :

There was a glory in the least sunbeam ;  
 Night was a chrysoprase on velvet cloth,  
 A nestling darkness or a moonlit deep;  
 Day was a purple pageant and a hymn,  
 A wave of the laughter of light from morn to eve.

This description is neither romantic nor heroic—it is typically Aurobindonian, with its suggestive quality, its revealing of Nature as something divine and superhuman, its intensity of visionary feeling. How does Milton describe an event ?—

Ten paces huge  
 He back recoiled; the tenth on bended knee  
 His massy spear upstayed : as if, on earth,  
 Winds underground, or waters forcing way,  
 Sidelong had pushed a mountain from its seat  
 Half sunk with all its pines.

Again :

Light as the lightning-glimpse they ran, they flew;  
 From their foundations, loosening to and fro,  
 They plucked the seated hills, with all their load,

Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops  
Uplifting, bore them in their hands...

The whole is packed with energy and this vigour is typically Miltonic. There is a sense of the dramatic in such impetuous descriptions of events. In contrast is Sri Aurobindo's :

Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart  
Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird  
Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough.  
Hooves trampling fast, wheels largely stumbling ceased;  
The chariot stood like an arrested wind.

This one event changed the life of Savitri—the meeting with Satyavan. The description reveals something that transfigures a life and alters fate. Yet there is no dramatic exuberance, nor any extravagance of feeling. But Sri Aurobindo can be forceful too as when he speaks of Death's defeat :

Assailing in front, oppressing from above  
A concrete mass of conscious power, he bore  
The tyranny of her divine desire.

As a result :

His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.

Power with all its majesty, but without its harshness we feel in these lines. In Milton the power is tangible, something very physical with the image of a crashing hill. There is a vital grandeur in all his energy, while in Sri Aurobindo there is a sublimity and it is subtle as opposed to Milton's physicality. Milton's force is the falling of a cliff; Sri Aurobindo's the sweep of light.

*(To be continued)*

ROMEN

# THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

## VIII

### THE VERNACULARISTS

IN an earlier article in this series, we had occasion to refer to the triangular nature of the controversy that raged during the first half of the nineteenth century in India on the question of the medium of instruction best suited to Indian needs. There was first the Anglicist viewpoint; next, the Orientalist viewpoint that stressed the claims of Sanskrit and Arabic; and finally, there were those, named by us the Vernacularists, who would like to impart education, at least in the primary and secondary stages, through the medium of the local vernaculars. These last had their stronghold in the Bombay Presidency; they were therefore not much disturbed by the debates in the Committee of Public Instruction in Bengal, but ultimately they too had to succumb to the invective of Macaulay. To that part of the story we might now turn.

The Bombay Presidency was formed out of the domains of the Marathas. The third Maratha War between the English Company and the ruling chiefs of the Maratha Confederacy finally overthrew the power of the Peshwa in Poona (1818), made him a vassal of the Crown, and reduced the great Maratha war lords, the Holkar, the Gaekwar and the Bhonsle, to the position of tributary Chiefs with the best part of their territory annexed to the British Empire. Henceforth, the mantle of the Peshwas fell on the British Governors of the new Presidency. Some of these Governors, like Mountstuart Elphinstone, were men of vision who readily appreciated the tremendous change that had just been brought about by the overthrow of Hindu rule; they adjusted their policies accordingly.

“One of the principal objects of the Peshwa’s Government,” wrote Elphinstone in one of his Minutes on education, “was the maintenance of Brahmins. It is known to the Honourable Court [of Directors of the East India Company in London] that he annually distributed five lacs of rupees among that order under the name of Dakshina; but it must be observed that the Dakshina formed but a small portion of his largesses to Brahmins, and the number of persons devoted to Hindu learning and religion, who were supported by him, exceeded what would readily be supposed... Considering the number and the influence of this description of people, it surely cannot be reckoned unimportant towards influencing public opinion that such a sum as could be spared should be set aside for their maintenance; and as it is the object of our enemies to inculcate the opinion that we wish to change the religion and manners of the Hindus, it seems equally popular and reasonable to apply part of that sum to the encouragement of their learning.”

The immediate result of this special pleading was the establishment, in 1821, of the Poona Sanskrit College.

It was largely thanks to the interest taken by Elphinstone in the welfare of the new Presidency that a Society called "The Bombay Native Education Society" was established in Bombay (1823). The Court of Directors sanctioned a grant-in-aid to the Society and made it the main instrument for the spread of education in Western India. The Society had three Indian members, one a Gujarati, Jagannath Shankarset who took the leading part in its deliberations, the other two were Parsi and Muslim gentlemen who seemed to agree on most points with the first member. A Minute, dated 1st May 1847, recorded by Shankarset, is worth perusal. He gave certain reasons for sponsoring the vernacular languages that are of some moment.

"I am persuaded," he writes, "that the Vernacular languages possess advantages superior to English, as the medium of communicating useful knowledge to the people of Western India. It cannot be denied that they must have less difficulty in understanding whatever is communicated to them in their own language, than in a foreign tongue. When a native [this was the word commonly used in the nineteenth century to denote an Indian, until the Swadeshi movement came to substitute the more dignified term] is inclined to prosecute the study of English, his progress is more rapid, and his usefulness doubled, provided he be first well grounded in his own language."

Secondly, he says, "It is...an impossibility to teach the great mass of the people a language such as English, so widely different from their own. The Vernacular languages have been much neglected by the people in Bombay, and this being the centre from which we expect the beams of knowledge to spread, these languages are pre-eminently entitled to our fostering care."

A third point which he stressed has some cogency even now. "The desire of acquiring a knowledge of the English language and literature, evinced by the natives is very great and very prevalent; and this is evident from the efforts which parents make to get their sons as quickly removed from the Vernacular into the English Schools as they can. Their motives for this acquirement are obvious, public employment and a facility of intercourse with Europeans; but it seems to be hopeless that we can ever change the language of a whole country. In reality, how insignificant a portion of the whole population are acquainted with the English [language] or have any prospect or means of becoming so...I repeat, I am far from wishing to discourage the study of English, but I believe it to be beyond the reach of the masses of people."

He concludes, "If our object is to diffuse knowledge and improve the minds of the natives of India as a people, it is my opinion that it must be done by imparting that knowledge to them in their own language... By what other channel can we ever hope to extend the advantages of Education generally to our females?"

Another member of the Society, one Colonel Jervis, put the case for the Vernaculars still more effectively.

"Surely it must be admitted," he writes in a Minute dated 24th February 1847,

“that general instruction cannot be afforded, except through the medium of a language with which the mind is familiar; and...in proportion as we confine Education to the channel of the English language, so will the fruits be restricted to a number of scribes and inferior Agents for Public and Private Offices, and a few enlightened individuals— isolated by their very superiority, from their fellow countrymen.”

There was also the lesson of History. “In our endeavours to make the knowledge of English among the natives so prominent and essential a qualification, we are neglecting the benefit of three hundred years’ experience in Europe, and we are retrograding to the days, in which Latin was the sole language of Literature, and when, in consequence, knowledge, both spiritual and temporal, was confined to a few Monks,—a few Divines,—a few Men of Letters. Until such an exclusive agency was put an end to, —until the modern tongues of Europe were emancipated,—the people could never learn, or know for themselves....Should we then, here, at this day, so far forget this lesson, and insist so much on imposing the burden of the foreign language of a handful of Rulers on the Millions of our Native population ?”

But, immediately a question might arise : were the Indian vernaculars rich enough to serve as media of general education? The Colonel anticipates this objection, but he meets it in a very “modern” manner. “I conceive it a paramount duty, on our part, to foster the Vernacular dialects, and to use every endeavour to free them from the swaddling bands in which they have been hitherto confined. Aided by their cognate classical dialects (Sanskrit, etc.) they would be capable of a copiousness of expression, now unknown to them, and of indicating the dependence,—the connection, the minute diversity and transition of ideas, and the various steps in the process of logical deductions; and they would attain to a vigorous maturity,—in which the highest powers of language to embody every operation of the mind, from the simplest to the most subtle, would be developed. The popular idioms, which have hitherto been employed only in a few meagre productions of the Chronicler and Minstrel, must be summoned under our auspices to act a new part, and consequently to receive a new development. In this way we should endeavour to raise up a new world of Morality and Literature around the whole mass of Native Society, and not contract their advancement solely within the bounds, which the tutelage of our English Government and the medium of our English language would impose....If the people are to have a literature, it must be their own. The stuff may be, in a great degree, European, but it must be freely interwoven with homespun materials, and the fashion must be Asiatic.”

Prophetic words, these, but they were wholly lost in the dust raised by Macaulay’s Minute of a dozen years before.

*(To be continued)*

SANAT K. BANERJI



## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Dramatic Poems** by *M. V. Seetharaman* with a Foreword by Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Vice Chancellor, Annamalai University. Published by Annamalai University, Pp. 99, price Rs. 5.0.0

The world is familiar with Sri Aurobindo's name as the master of Integral Yoga, the exponent of the spiritual significances embedded in the esoteric verses of the Veda, Upanishad and Gita, or the writer of a luminous spiritual poetry of his own. But it is somewhat of an enigma that he should be the author of plays which have no easily discoverable spiritual message and aim at rendering life with all its clashes and jostlings, burning passions, voluptuous luxuries and huge ambitions such as reach out beyond the earth.

No doubt, we must not forget that his is not a world-shunning etiolated spirituality but one which sees life too as "a power of the Divine and not a creation of some malignant chance or dark Titanic impulse". And yet it is not life as it is that he accepts in his yoga. As he remarks, "Life is indispensable to a completeness of the creative spiritual realisation, but life released, transformed, uplifted." What then is the justification for these plays with the stage set in places like Syria, Baghdad and Bassora, ancient India, and the snow-bound regions of Norway? Well, here is what he says: "Our life on this earth is a divine poem that we are translating into earthly language." What could be a better rendering of this divine poem than poetic drama which takes life in all its richness, power and complexity and not only invests it with

The light that never was on sea or land,

but reveals the hidden direction behind its wayward and straggling flow, discovers to us the laws of the inner growth of the psyche towards wisdom, love, beauty and strength?

M. V. Seetharaman brings to his work his deep knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's all-comprehending spiritual gospel and of his views on the nature of poetry in general and poetic drama in particular whose conditions of success are exacting to an extreme degree so that Sri Aurobindo could say of the creators of dramatic poetry: "the entire literature of the world has hardly given us more than a dozen. The difficult evolution of dramatic poetry is always more hard to lead than the lyric which is poetry's native expression, or than the narrative which is its simpler expansion."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Seetharaman unfolds the inner significance of each of the five plays—*Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta* and *Eric*—and gives us 'the interpretative vision' that ensouls each play and imperceptibly emerges from it.

*Rodogune* is a highly sustained tragedy without any comic or tragic relief lighten-

<sup>1</sup> *The Future Poetry*, p. 94.

ing the sombre gloom cast by 'some cold ironic god' and yet, as the author remarks, "it is a poetic play and is typically Aurobindonian in its vision of life, characterization and atmosphere. It is a tragedy of fate working through the passions of human beings and therefore presents the 'mysterium tremendum' of life in this world. But the sufferings of men and women in the play are shown to be purposive and serve evolution of the souls of these human beings. Behind the passions we see the divine element or, as Eunice puts it, "the divinity that sits in man...the power unnameable that struggles with its world". Thus Antiochus, the tragic hero full of hubris, comes to the realization that "the gods break only a body, not this soul; for that belongs to other masters". And Rodogune, the heroine, always strives to make life sweet:

By outward harmony with circumstance  
And a calm soul within that is alone.....

The author has perused each play not only with a view to extracting its hidden meaning but with an alert imaginative vision responding sensitively to the stage effect. Thus he closes his appreciation of *Rodogune* with these words: "The sensitive spectator of the play sees all, undergoes all by imaginative identification with the life (individual and collective) in the drama. He experiences with Cleopatra, Phayllus and their similars the variations on the same theme of Egoism. But he breathes simultaneously in the 'ampler ether', the 'diviner air' of the spiritual, psychic and subliminal with Eremite, Rodogune and Antiochus. And the result is a strange alchemy—purification of his consciousness, *citta śuddhi*. He feels 'the touch of tears in mortal things' but feels also the Divine Master shaping the human flute and making it perfect to breathe through it 'melodies eternally new'. To him is the Peace Eternal, *śāntiḥ śāswatī*."

The author's treatment of *The Viziers of Bassora*, a romantic comedy redolent of the enchanting stories of the Arabian Nights and the Caliph Haroun-al-Rashid 'whose name has acquired a magical halo and mythical significance around it,' combines very deftly perspicacity with imaginative sympathy and insight into each one of the characters some of whom are villainous, self-centred and full of dark machinations against those 'made in God's image and growing more in that image of Love, Light and Grace'. As a specimen we shall quote his summing up of the character of Ibn Sawy, the good Vizier: "Just he is, but powerful he is not. A faithful and sincere instrument he could be, but not an originative force."

Love being the presiding deity of the play, the women characters are most deserving of study. As the author observes, "To inspire love by their beauty of form and character in those who are capable of it is the great privilege of the women in the play who are all of them made in God's image and grow increasingly in that image. The love they bestow on men and on each other draws out the best in all and acts for harmony, sweetness and right...their robust optimism and essential cheerfulness of outlook on life living in the present with full trust in the power of the life-force to dis-

entangle the complications it has got into are contagious and help ease the gloom and murky darkness of life. They could laugh at the incongruities of life and make the men laugh with them and become sane and wise."

"Love", as the author observes, "invokes a greater power than evil to intervene in a world of darkness and evil and that power responds and even rushes with all its puissance and restores the rotten society and gives it a new birth in love and maturity."

On the songs sung by Anice, the heroine, the author comments : "All of them emerge in situations of intense feeling and emotional exaltation when the speaker is liberated from the bondage of her cramping personal self, and voices some great universal idea whose full value even she may not have realized at the moment. Their themes are Love, Life and God."

In the end there is a very remarkable comparison with Shakespeare who, according to the author, "started with the idea of the comedy of the Middle Ages but depleted it of its religious atmosphere. His plays are characterized by the absence of religion. They have more of the Renaissance humanism and zest for life. But *The Viziers* presents in bold relief characters with a well-defined mental love for God and acceptance of His will. They could say in the great crises of their lives the great words of Dante, 'In His will is our peace'...This romantic comedy is the declaration of the soul of the creative artist of Faith in the supreme Architect of life and His master-plan of ultimate victory and triumph over Matter".

The third play is Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer* which, according to the author, "embodies Sri Aurobindo's vision of cosmic evolution from a state of crude and evil religion based on fear and division and violent cruelty presided over by an Undivine and even Antidivine occult power to the condition of a pure and refined worship of a divine light, a compassionate, calm and benignant Force with its law of love and union in relationship with and mastery over the forces of Nature". This play, in the hands of Sri Aurobindo, is the richest in symbolic overtones of revolutionary epochs when great souls descend on earth, alike divine and diabolic, and align themselves either as instruments of the progressive forces or on the side of the forces of retrogression. Seetharaman has analysed each character in detail separately assigning it its role in the great symphony and this is how in a few pregnant phrases and bold strokes he presents to us the whole pageant of characters: "The amorphous and the heterogeneous, the conservative and the deeply rooted, the transitional and the halfway-housed, the revolutionary and the already new-born, the uprooted and the sceptical, the witty and the humorous and the eternally and spontaneously childlike are depicted with remarkable individuality and characteristic mutual responses and orientations to the coming light."

In the same manner the author deals with *Vasavadutta*, an Indian romance of ancient times when the Indian political and cultural life was richly spangled with small kingdoms each developing its own artistic and social traditions vying with rival states for influence and prestige. This play, according to the author, is "a

Dramatic Romance of the Psychicised life-spirit evolving, growing and maturing in this world of earth consciousness guided by the twin values of Love and Beauty and realizing the Delight of Existence, *ānanda*”.

Last in the series is the Norwegian play *Eric*. The author's introductory note to the play is a masterly exposition of the true nature of poetic drama, for in it there is always behind the clash of forces a pressure of the new and higher values of life to emerge and take firm root and usher in a new era of life. “An awareness,” says the author, “of this world of values enveloping all movements and a communication through all the resources of language of this vision of values working themselves out in and through the forces and characters, constitute the essence of poetic Drama.” This recalls to our minds Sri Aurobindo's own words on the subject, unique in their revelatory power in his book *The Future Poetry*: “Drama is the poet's vision of some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul, it is in a way his vision of Karma in an extended and very flexible sense of the word; and at its highest point it becomes a poetic rendering or illustration of the Aeschylean *drasanti pathein*, the doer shall feel the effect of his act, in an inner as well as an outer, a happy no less than an austere significance, whether that effect be represented as psychological or vital, whether it comes to its own through sorrow and calamity, ends in a judgement by laughter or finds an escape into beauty and joy, whether the presentation be tragic or comic or tragi-comic or idyllic.”

This slim volume with a very lucid foreward by Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University, is bound to prove of great value to the students of these plays which are sure to gain more and more attention in India and abroad containing as they do poetic speeches of rare beauty, power and majesty. We whole-heartedly congratulate Annamalai University for this venture and we hope it will stimulate more and more interest in these plays.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

**The Indian Spirit** by *K. Satchidananda Murty*. Published by Andhra University Press. Waltair. Price : Rs. 10.00

Since Shakespeare spoke of the bountiful mines of India, many a brave adventure into them has been conducted from the West and the explorations duly recorded. Indeed, one of the cardinal commands of our time is to explode most of these explorations !

Hence, a title as elevating and as challenging as *The Indian Spirit*, written by an Indian Professor of Philosophy, is destined to evoke immediate interest. Prof. Murty, transparently frank in his own views and often strikingly bold in his assertions, presents an analysis of “India's Past and Present,” “History and Atavism,” “The Hindu Ethos,” “The Greek Image of Indian Philosophy,” “Philosophical

Thought of India," "Experience, Reason and Transcendental Materialism in Indian Philosophy," "Religion and Ethical Practices: The Hindu View," and "Ethics and Politics in Hindu Culture." His attitude is rational as the word is generally understood in the traditional academic spheres, and he has certainly fought his way to that high rung of understanding, high enough to combat successfully the pseudo-rational advancements made by a Marx or a Koestler. Prof. Murty attempts to remove the 'impossible ideas' and the 'wrong ideas' regarding "the Indian mentality, found mostly in some Indian writings", such as: Indians had no conception of history, no awareness of a personal God, and they were other-worldly, fatalistic, passive, and uninterested in the pleasures of the senses, material well-being and progress.

He shows that, according to the Vedic spirit, "man should throughout his life remain in the world discharging his duties and responsibilities" (Ch.1), and that "no other people prayed more fervently than Indians for long life..." etc. (Ch. 2), and that "there is no passage in any of the Hindu classics which dismisses human life and what we do and think in this world as unimportant" (Ch. 3). His account of the ancient *āśramas* must be enlightening to many: "The *āśramas* were not small huts hastily erected with bamboo sticks and leaves: a few of them were huge establishments or settlements with hundreds of families of teachers, and bachelor students, both male and female. At times the head of an *āśrama* could entertain a royal retinue with splendid feasts for days. The wealthy and princes often came and resided with families for a number of days in the *āśramas* in search of rest, wisdom and practical guidance. They were the precursors of research institutes, universities and holiday resorts for rest cures. To ignore all this and to think of *āśramas* as small solitary cottages, dotting inaccessible forests, where holy men only fasted and led ascetic lives and lived in mystic contemplation, is certainly poetic, but ignores the history and description of these establishments as given by the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*."

Further, the author feels that the Indian spirit has always been a synthesising spirit and there is every reason to believe that the Western sciences will find their due place in Indian life.

After all this, it is rather a painful experience to observe Prof. Murty's view on the fundamental issue of India's spiritual role in the world. He writes: "To sum up, India is just like any other country, it conquered and was as well conquered in turn. It has always been a live human nation just like any other nation, and was not more peace-loving and spiritual than others. There was and is no divine *śakti* in it any more than in Germany and Russia, or in Israel or China." A conception of the equality of nations is all right in its legitimate scope. But there must not take place a mechanical and exaggerated application of the same. To put the point in folk phraseology, no amount of extravagance in ideas could claim sameness of function for all the parts of the body. So also, even in the intellectually comprehensive idea (not to speak of the spiritual reality) of the totality of world-progress, all the countries cannot be considered as following an identical scheme of development. Sri Aurobindo,

in one of his articles in *Bande Mataram*, wrote (in 1908): "The peoples of Europe have carried material life to its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been perfected, but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to cure. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear logical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity. Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her. Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates."

In this vision of a significant diversity, all for the purpose of a colourful global unity, each nation has her national personality, her specific contribution, and so far as India is concerned, "The world waits for the rising of India to receive the divine flood in its fullness" (Sri Aurobindo).

The world perhaps has yet to wait to realise the Indian Spirit.

MANOJ DAS

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## THE TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS

(A PAPER READ IN THE ADVANCED COURSE LITERATURE CLASS OF THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION)

THERE was a time when man seemed to be extremely intimate with and deeply aware of the realities that transcend and govern this world of senses. During that fortunate infancy of humanity, The Greeks were one of the most advanced races of the world. They established a rare harmony between material and psychological progress, and led aesthetically a gigantic and passionate life in tune with the Will of Zeus, the Supreme God who, attracted by the beauty of men and women, would often come down himself to enrich earth with his own seed and to dispense justice. And it is men and women of that age who, typified in "action", people the classical Greek tragedies.

Steeped in the glory of the legends and history of that golden age, Aeschylus, whom Aristotle calls 'the father of Greek tragic drama', thrilled men of the 5th century B.C. with his nobility of thought, majesty of style and sublimity in the consummation of art.

Before him tragedy had consisted of the chorus and one actor only; by introducing a second actor, expanding the dramatic dialogue thus made possible, and reducing the lyrical parts, Aeschylus really created Greek tragedy as it is understood today. Like other writers of his time, he too acted in and directed his own plays, and trained the chorus in their dances and songs. Also he gave impressiveness to the performances by his development of the accessories of scene and costume on the stage. In order to make his characters look superhuman, he introduced paddings, masks, dazzling ornaments—the use of which continued right through 800 years or more after his passing. He extended the stage too and used statues, altars and commemorative pillars to add to the imposing atmosphere of his plays.

But "dramatic poetry cannot live by the mere presentation of life and action and the passions, however truly they may be portrayed or however vigorously and abundantly. Its object is something greater and its conditions of success much more onerous," as Sri Aurobindo puts it. "It must have, to begin with, as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit idea of life and the human being; and the vital presentation which is its outward instrument, must arise out of that harmoniously, whether by a spontaneous creation, ...or by the compulsion of an intuitive artistic will, as with the Greeks. This interpretative vision and idea have in the presentation to seem to arise out of the inner life of vital types of the human soul or individual representatives of it through an evolution of speech leading to an evolution of action,—speech being the first important instrument, because through it the poet reveals the action of the soul, and outward action and event only the second, important, but less essential, reducible even to a

minimum, because by that he makes visible and concrete to us the result of their inner action." This is what strikes us in the Aeschylean tragedies : the evolution of speech revealing more the action of the soul, and outward action and event reduced indeed to a minimum. And in these tragedies too, as "in all great drama the true movement and result is really psychological and the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are only either its symbol or else its condition of culmination." We shall see that finally all this has been perfectly "cast into a close dramatic form, a successful weaving of interdependent relations, relations of soul to soul, of speech to speech, of action to action..."—

What then is the Aeschylean vision of "some part of the world-act in the life of the human soul" ? The core of the Aeschylean vision is that man by the excessive growth of one of his passions violates the eternal law of Zeus, the Supreme God, and commits *Hubris* or the crime of pride. He thus invites *Aga* which is often translated as "jealousy of God" and which actually means the profound repudiation and reversal of *Hubris* : this repudiation and reversal is the very law of the Cosmos. It is at the peak of *Hubris* that we are filled with horror against the doer. Then comes *Dike* or punishment since "the doer shall feel the effect of his action"—*drasanti pathem*, to use a phrase of Aeschylus himself—and, by witnessing his extreme suffering, we are filled with pity for him. When *Dike* is over, there comes *Soteria* or deliverance—at which stage we feel like having been emotionally purged.

But this vision is not the poet's own discovery. Gilbert Murray says that it formed the commonest burden of the moralising lyrics in Greek tragedy and even of the tragic myths themselves...."

"But it was a truth of which he had an intense realization. It had become something which he must with all his strength bring to expression...as one devoted to something higher and greater than himself, in the spirit of an interpreter or a prophet."

And, "the majestic art, the creative genius, the instinctive eloquence of these plays—that eloquence which is the mere despair of a translator," says Gilbert Murray, "...are all devoted to the expression" of this great realization.

Moreover, Aeschylus took a further step and added to the mechanical and automatic operation of Justice and Law an intervening Will, an Intelligence that knows and understands man. This 'humanising of the non-human' brought to man the Good News that "the world is not ruled by fabulous Typhons and giants"—nor by blind mechanical laws—"but by One who is a wise Father to all", as Plutarch expressed it. It sought to make religion humane at the expense of making it anthropomorphic. And this Aeschylean vision has been best incorporated in his masterpiece, the *Oresteian Trilogy*, in which he shows how Athene, the daughter of Zeus alone (with no mother), pure undiluted Zeus, passes her judgment in favour of Orestes' deliverance, claiming her judgment to be inevitably the same as her father's.



The characters in these tragedies remind us of the teaching of the Gita : 'Thine is the part to act, and not to claim the fruit.' Each individual is but predestined to act according to the schedule ehaked out by *Moirā* or fate, against which man is helpless. The poet's vision has tried to embrace one of the eternal quests of philosophy : to determine man's relationship with the stupendous order of the universe. And thus this vision teaches man how to choose the right path from the innumerable ones that lead him but to annihilation.

Before taking up details about these characters let us stop a while at the chorus in the Aeschylean tragedies. The chorus, we have seen, was the embryo of Greek tragedy. It has, in tragedy, two roles to play : first of all to set the key for a solemn religious attitude that at once cuts the audience off the common-day atmosphere and, next, to add spontaneous lyrical grace to the dialogue, thus rendering it vivid and colourful. Chronologically taken, *The Suppliant Women* of Aeschylus (the earliest of extant Greek plays) is so full of suggested music and dance and spectacle in the chorus parts that are prevalent, that it is called, owing to its profound and haunting beauty, "a cantata or a religious ballet". The play 'consists in the manoeuvring or interaction of three Chorus and their leaders, and it is hardly accidental that both, the Daughters of Danaus and the Sons of Aegyptus, are fifty in number.' As in all the plays here too each chorus sort of represents one character. For instance, when the fifty suppliant women invoke in unison,

O walls, O soil, O gleaming sea,  
 O gods of heaven above, and ye  
 Heroes beneath the ground, who hold  
 Your honoured graves, our fathers old;  
 And Zeus, O Zeus...

we seem to hear but the voice personified of the distressed Danaids who consider their virginity more precious than life itself—passionately seeking refuge against their demoniac cousins.

Their anxiety is soon changed into a powerful scorn when they utter :

And thrust the Egyptian back—Oh, thrust  
 Proud man and man's outswarming lust  
 Back to the tempest reeling, there  
 'Mid storm and fire and thunder-blare  
 To meet the wrath of the great sea  
 And perish...

Or else, in their reminiscent vein, their words sound much like prophecy as they call upon Epaphus, son of Io their ancestress :

I have called him, and, roaming again  
 In the flowery places, the fold  
 Where our Mother roamed in her pain,  
 I muse on the sorrows of old.  
 I will show to the princes who hold  
 Her meadows a sign ere the night;  
 Yea, things undreamed shall appear,  
 And a great word be spoken aright,  
 When the hour in its fulness is here.

And their prayer addressed to Pelasgus, King of Argos, gains a dignity in spite of their eagerness :

Thou ancient law of pity, that bindest Heaven,  
 This crimeless exile see !  
 The God who ordereth Fate must yet know ruth.  
 Wise king and aged, hearken to our youth...

But the King hesitates to give them his word without consulting his people. And the Danaids, increasingly bold and persuasive before the aged and ideal King, reply :

Thou art the city, thine the people's deed,  
 A judge no law hems in;  
 Thy nod doth move the central altar-stone  
 That is the City's hearth; thy staff alone  
 Decrees the City's act, fulfills her need.

The Chorus of Women in *The Seven Against Thebes*, shortly after the beginning of the play, enters the stage and voices the reactions of the city women when Thebes is attacked by the army of Polynices. Their excitement is vividly translated in lines like:

Nigher and yet more nigh,  
 A winged thing in the sky,  
 It roars, like a torrent's roar  
 In the hills, sweeping all before,  
 Rending the mountain stone.

Or, in this single line :

...Heard ye, or heard ye not the bucklers' clash ?

The Women's Chorus reaches the peak of lyrical grandeur when Eteocles, fully armed, goes out to defend the City from his brother's invasion, as in the second strophe :

And when by their own hands they die,  
 Brother, by brother hacked and slain,  
 When the grey dust in which they lie  
 Has drunk the dark and clotting stain  
 Of slaughter, who shall purify,  
 Who wash those dead hands clean again ?  
 O house of anguish where new woe  
 Is blent with woes of long ago !

This chorus takes almost an Upanishadic echo toward the end of the Epode, on seeing the bodies of the two brothers brought in :

But down the wind, O women, of your wail  
 Beat, beat, the chime that, echoing hand on hand,  
 O'er Acheron guides that ship of sable pall,  
 That sad uncrownèd ship of festival,  
 Where no Apollo treads, no sunbeams fall,  
 On to the extreme land,  
 The land beyond the storm, which welcomes all.

The Women's sorrow becomes almost elemental in the rhythm as they lament :

A groan through all the City flows,  
 The towers groan, the Theban floor  
 Groans for the men it loved of yore...

The same elemental touch is again felt in the rhythm of the Chorus of the Oceanides as they exclaim, in *Prometheus Bound* :

Nay, bethink thee not of ill :  
 It is Love upon the air,  
 With a racing of quick pinions, bears us on.  
 It was hard to bend the will  
 Of old Ocean to our prayer,  
 But the winged winds were waiting,  
 And I panted to be gone !

With eyes full of tears to witness the form of the great Sufferer—'To the rocks and bitter skies, In this horror of the piercings of adamant, outspread'—the Daughters of Ocean tell Prometheus:

Who of all gods hath heart so vain  
 To laugh at these things ? Is there one  
 Who doth not suffer with the pain  
 Thou sufferest, save Zeus alone ?...

Their love for the Hero soon gushes out in highly musical lines, as they say :

The breakers of the sea clash and roar  
 Together, and the gulfs thereof are sore  
 With longing; there is murmur of hearts aching,  
 In Hades and the Cavern of the Deep,  
 And the torrents of the hills, white-breaking,  
 For pity of thy pain weep and weep.

This music grows yet intenser as they hear Io tell them her sad story and they sing before Prometheus :

Wise, wise, was he to whom the thought first came,  
 Whose tongue first owned the Law, that Love should aim  
 Not at the stars but his own lowly kind.  
 Not amid delicate damsels rich with gold,  
 Not in the pride of them with lineage old,  
 The toil-worn hand shall dream his bliss to find.

On the other hand, the Chorus of the Elders in *The Persians* voice in the beginning the peak of pride the nation has reached, from where they are to be hurled very soon to an abysmal despair. Let us first hear the semi-anapaestic movement of pride :

We have turned us to the sea, and no fear is in our mind;  
 With our bridges cable-woven we have climbed from  
steep to steep;  
 We have seen the waves whiten in the fury of the wind,  
 We have faced the holy places of the deep.

But in answer, a voice of prudence possesses them at the same time and they utter :

But the deep craft of God, who shall 'scape from it or hide him ?  
 Can the runner run so swift, can the leaper leap so high ?  
 Man seeth but a smile, and lo, Atê is beside him,  
 With the net none outclimbeth till he die.

And, when the Messenger comes and informs the Women that the Persians are defeated, the tone of the chorus at once falls to a minor scale, and they sigh:

Now riseth up on either hand  
A groan from Persia's empty land :  
Xerxes hath led, Ah, woe is me !  
Xerxes hath lost, Ah misery !  
Xerxes hath wrought his evil thought  
With galleys on the waste of sea !

Towards the end of the play an energetic concerto breaks out consisting of a dialogue between Xerxes and the Chorus; this is a unique concerto in the extant Aeschylean tragedies. It concludes the play so vigorously that the deep feeling of pity, that overwhelmed the readers witnessing especially the Queen's sorrow, melts here into a pleasant wonder as the cadenza takes hold of their admiration.

Thus we see the rôle of the chorus in the first four of the extant Aeschylean tragedies : gradually, chorus gives way to dialogue. But the two never appear to be incompatible; on the contrary, they are extremely intimate, interdependent and complementary. The songs and the descriptions supply the readers, as we shall see in the *Oresteia*, with the gradual unfolding of the plot of the play.

In *Prometheus* the poet has grown almost fully confident of the use of the chorus which he reduces now to quite a minimum : it is no more a factor for supplying missing links to the evolution of the plot; rather like a detached witness or like a passionate admirer it sustains and participates in the flow of the main action. And in this play too, for the first time, the poet has introduced significant external actions on the stage itself like nailing the Hero, and his declaring his attitude toward Zeus, and Zeus' sending a thunderstorm to further punish Prometheus.

*(To be continued)*

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

SIXTH SEMINAR

21 NOVEMBER 1965

*(Continued from the March issue)*

### **WHAT IS TRUE FREEDOM AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT ?**

#### **I**

In this world of toil and strife, at one time or another the force of circumstances leads us to doubt the very existence of freedom. The layman has a vague chimerical idea of total freedom and hence holds it impossible to manifest it in his life upon this earth. Our liberty is restricted by state-laws, social dogmas, our own beliefs, weaknesses, etc. Our entire life is as if compelled to follow a set groove and we know not a way out of this horrible rut which perhaps leads finally to the most dismal abyss. It becomes all the more imperative to discover a kindly light to lead us from dark night to broad daylight.

Before we can take a single step towards the attainment of freedom, we must know what it is. Unfortunately many conceive of absolute freedom to be that state of circumstances where one can indulge in all sorts of whims and caprices and satisfy one's innumerable desires. Once and for all let us shun this idea, for, instead of giving us the joy of being unlimited, it sheds the poison of satiety and makes a slave out of us. Herein lies a very important point. As long as we live in our ordinary consciousness, that is, in the body, heart and mind there cannot be total freedom because the body is subject to pain and disease, the heart is a slave to its passions and the mind is taken by worries and fears. Thus the root cause of all our limitations is the identification with the body-heart-mind complex. To live in this triple formula and seek for freedom is an utopian dream; in no way can it assure a liberty which is not caught within the numerous eddies of our life.

True freedom lies in a fourth principle of our existence. This is the fundamental principle, the principle of our soul. Alone by the total identification of our entire being with the soul can we attain to genuine and perpetual freedom. Once we are one with the essence of our being, no power however formidable can hamper the claim of the soul's liberty. It is only then that the freedom of the body, heart and mind which we vainly seek in external conditions can be achieved. A Divine Consciousness takes possession of these and turns them into perfect instruments of divine expression;

for, "When the soul claims freedom," says Sri Aurobindo, "it is the freedom of its self-development, the self-development of the divine in man in all his being."<sup>1</sup> So the freedom of our soul is true freedom.

The first step towards its attainment must then be the clear realisation that all physical conditions, however ideal, will finally bind us in chains of pain, desire and worry after a temporary pretence of liberty. We must strongly feel the necessity to break off the worldly ties and soar into the Boundless. This urge can be satisfied by the discovery of the liberation of the soul. As the Mother says : "To be aware of the liberation of your soul means that you are sufficiently conscious of your soul to feel that something deep in you is quite free, independent of people and circumstances, untouched by grief, displeasure or anger, always calm and with a quiet contentment."<sup>2</sup> This awareness does not come in a day or two, one has to undergo a disciplined practice. The Mother has clearly given us a process, laid down a *mārga* which enables us to plunge deep into ourselves, cast away the slough of our present self and fuse in the Truth of our being which is eternally free. She says :

"For going within you must sit comfortably or lie down, gather and bring back all the threads of your consciousness which are tied up to all the people and the things around you, all that you think of, all that you want to do—etc., etc.

"Once this is done you focus all your attention inside yourself, deep inside your chest and you concentrate there until you reach a state of peace and immobility. You may not succeed from the first time—but you will try again and again until you succeed.—In the state of quiet and silent immobility, you will be in contact with your soul, unite with it and feel *free*."<sup>3</sup>

SWADESH CHATTERJI

## II

Freedom is the primary condition for making any progress in any field of life, inner as well as outer. It is the mainspring for a total and integral development of our being in its various aspects, for a full flowering of all the capacities and potentialities of the soul through the perfection of its instruments.

True freedom is the state of our being as well as the state of circumstances when we can freely and spontaneously grow up and live in accordance with the deepest truth or law of our own being, in the light of the spirit, unhampered by the obstacles of our ordinary mental, vital and physical nature, and where the psychic being is our paramount leader and guide.

Usually, freedom is mistaken for licence. By freedom, people generally under-

<sup>1</sup> *The Ideal of Human Unity*, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> *White Roses* (Enlarged edition), p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

stand that one is free to move in life just the way one likes following one's own whims and caprices whatsoever. And generally it is one's unruly vital nature which is then in the forefront dominating the whole being, the soul being compelled to recede far behind. Apparently, this goes by the name of freedom. But properly speaking, this is nothing but abuse of freedom. Or, to be more precise, this is slavery rather than true freedom. It is our bondage to the lower impulses and desires, to the forces of darkness and falsehood. Instead of being free, we are actually bound down and ruled by the forces of ignorance and obscurity.

True freedom is spiritual freedom. It consists in vanquishing the lower forces, in getting complete control and mastery over the desires, impulses, greed, anger, jealousy, selfishness, grief, ill-will, inertia, incapacity, etc. True freedom implies a perfect equality and poise of our being and nature totally free from the dualities of Nature, and unaffected by and uninvolved in any happening whatsoever, inward as well as outward; it also implies that one should be a conscious instrument in the hands of the Spirit, the Master of our being and nature. And true freedom not only brings about a harmony in the divergent parts of our own being but a unity with all the other beings, as well as a oneness with the Divine Himself.

In the state of true freedom of the self, our destiny or fate will not lie at the mercy of the ignorant universal forces, ruled and determined by the blind forces of Nature, but it is our freewill, the will of the spirit within us which will consciously control and shape our destiny.

Now, what is the cause of this bondage, this limitation? What are the factors that stand in the way of our true freedom?

Well, in the first instance, this is a self-chosen imprisonment in Ignorance imposed by the Spirit itself with a view to realising itself in multiplicity with its endless possibilities through its gradual evolution from inconscient Matter to its superconscient self-expression and self-fulfilment in the manifested universe.

And once the Spirit has taken a plunge into the Inconscience, separating itself from its source, the fetters that bind us most are ego and desire.

We are constantly influenced and dominated by the modes of Nature, the triple gunas, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. "This triple power is at the same time a triple cord of bondage."<sup>1</sup> The characteristics of tamas are inertia, incapacity and unconsciousness. It binds us by "sloth and indolence and inactivity and mechanical routine and the mind's torpor and life's sleep and the soul's slumber."<sup>2</sup> The characteristics of rajas are desire and ambition, energy and activity. It binds us by attachment to the object of desire, struggle for power, passion and emotion. The characteristics of sattwa are clarity of understanding, light and happiness, peace and poise. But this too has its limitations and inadequacies, being unable to act perfectly all by itself without the aid of rajas, the driving force. Without rajas, sattwa gradually tends to

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 582.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 267.



verge towards tamas; and with rajas, it is likely to be coloured by the imperfections of rajas. The Gita says,

सत्त्वं सुखे संजयति रज. कर्मणि भारत ।  
ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तम प्रमादे संजयत्युत ॥

(Chap. XIV, Verse 9.)

“Sattwa attaches to happiness, rajas to action, O Bharata; tamas covers up the knowledge and attaches to negligence of error and inaction.”<sup>1</sup> The combined actions of sattwa and rajas “may be more exalted in their scope and spirit and action than before, but they are not the peace, the freedom, the power, the self-mastery at which we long to arrive.”<sup>2</sup>

The natural hold of tamas is in the physical, that of rajas in the vital, and that of sattwa in the mind. These gunas are interwoven and intermingled in their working in our nature. All the three modes are present in everybody in varying degrees and shifting combinations. The type and nature of a man is determined by the predominance of one or other of the gunas in him. The combination of the mental, vital and physical stuff constitutes our ego or surface personality.

Due to the intricate interplay of the gunas our being is constantly assailed by the dualities of Nature. And we move between the contrary ideas and feelings of good and evil, love and hatred, joy and sorrow, success and failure, praise and blame, and so on. This creates an instability in the whole being and keeps the being chained to the imperfections of Nature.

From what we have said above, it appears that it is our ego affected and governed by the three qualitative modes of Nature that constitutes the main barrier to our freedom. “There is a sattwic as well as a rajasic or tamasic egoism, at the highest an egoism of knowledge or virtue; but the mind’s egoism of whatever type is incompatible with liberation.”<sup>3</sup>

So, now, what is the way out of this bondage and limitation ? How to attain the integral freedom ?

Some spiritual systems believe in complete withdrawal from earthly life which according to them is full of incorrigible falsehood. In their view, the final liberation can be achieved only in the Abode of the Spirit.

But our way, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is not to reject or renounce life, leaving it to its pitiable fate, but to transform material life and consciousness and attain realisation and liberation of the embodied spirit in the terrestrial manifestation itself.

<sup>1</sup> *The Message of the Gita* edited by A. B. Roy.

<sup>2</sup> *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 786.

In order to attain perfect freedom we must endeavour to rise above the ego sense as well as above the gunas of Prakriti. This, in fact, ensures a two-fold liberation, the liberation of the Spirit and also that of the instrumental Nature.

The ego idea implies a division, a separation from the one Divine, universal and transcendent, whereas true freedom implies a unity and oneness with the Divine in its transcendent, cosmic and individual aspects. So we must strive to rise above our limited ego and realise this oneness with the Divine in order to achieve the liberation of the Spirit.

In order to be free from ego, we must conquer desire which is "the principal sign and knot of ego." "These two things are one, liberation from the will that is of the nature of desire and liberation from the ego, and the oneness which is brought about by the happy loss of the will of desire and the ego, is the essence of Mukti."<sup>1</sup> It means a return of the being to its original free self and divine will.

This can be effected by rising above the gunas, by getting ourselves detached from their play in our nature as also by gaining a supremacy over them. The Gita says,

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टानुपश्यति ।  
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ॥

(Chap. XIV, Verse 19.)

"When the seer perceives that the modes of Nature are the whole agency and cause of works and knows and turns to That which is supreme above the gunas, he attains to *mad-bhāva* (the movement and status of the Divine)."<sup>2</sup>

Now, does this mean a cessation of all action since it is the Nature which through her gunas drives us to act in particular ways ? But the Gita advises us to continue to act and yet be free from the gunas. And the Gita shows the way also by saying that we should do desireless action, by renouncing our attachment to the fruit of action; and the Gita's injunction goes further by asking us to renounce our attachment to the work as well. Instead of doing work out of personal desire or preference, we should work disinterestedly for the sake of the Divine. This will greatly help the purification and upliftment of our nature, which are indispensable for the attainment of liberation.

The soul can draw back from the turmoils of the gunas and observe the play of the gunas, calm, unmoved and uninvolved. And for this what is needed is to establish a perfect equality and undisturbed calm in our being under all circumstances and happenings; and this should be attended with an inner happiness, a serene joy inherent in the spirit. "For without it we can have no solid basis; and by the pronounced lack of it we shall be constantly falling back to the lower status of desire,

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 779.

<sup>2</sup> *The Message of the Gita*, edited by A. B. Roy.

ego, duality, ignorance.”<sup>1</sup> And the gunas, finding no sanction or support of the Purusha, will gradually fall away.

And the soul does not just remain immobile in its static freedom witnessing the action of the Nature; it can at the same time open itself to a higher Will and Knowledge in order to gain a freedom in its dynamic parts as well. For the freedom to be total and perfect must include in it the liberation of the nature. “A divine unity of the supreme spirit and its supreme nature is the integral liberation.”<sup>2</sup>

For this what is needed is a purification of the instruments, particularly of the life-force and the intelligence, *buddhi*, by means of knowledge, work and devotion. “All purification is a release, a delivery; for it is a throwing away of limiting, binding, obscuring imperfections and confusions.”<sup>3</sup>

We shall have to proceed by developing the sattwic quality in our nature to its maximum since sattwa is the power of light and knowledge. “To develop sattwa till it becomes full of spiritual light and calm and happiness is the first condition of this preparatory discipline of the nature.”<sup>4</sup> Sattwa is the mediating link between the higher and the lower nature, and without its intervention there can be no transformation of the qualities of rajas and tamas. And then, finally, we shall have to exceed even the sattwic quality and go beyond to its source, the spiritual light and ecstasy.

In fact, all the gunas are to be transformed into their corresponding spiritual powers. Thus tamas should be converted into a divine calm, rajas into the will of the spirit, and sattwa into light. And this is necessary for the integral perfection in our liberation.

And along with the transmutation of the gunas, the dualities of Nature also will automatically lose their sway in us, and cease to exist. The Gita says,

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।  
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात्प्रमुच्यते ॥

(Chap. V, Verse 3.)

“He should be known as always a Sannyasin (even when he is doing action) who neither dislikes nor desires; for free from the dualities he is released easily and happily from the bondage.”<sup>5</sup> And “the spirit lives in a universal, infinite and absolute Truth, Good, Beauty, Bliss which is the supramental or ideal divine Nature. The liberation of the Nature becomes one with the liberation of the spirit, and there is founded in the integral freedom the integral perfection.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 829.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 781.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 770.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p. 535.

<sup>5</sup> *The Message of the Gita*, edited by A. B. Roy.

<sup>6</sup> *On Yoga, I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 790.

This is a colossal task demanding a whole-hearted sincerity on our part. In order to achieve a total freedom of our self and nature, a total reversal of our present consciousness, of our lower nature and surface being is the only way out.

We must truly aspire for this great change. And at every step we must remain vigilant so as to detect any wrong movement trying to creep in, and reject it forthwith. This is by way of personal effort; but it is not sufficient by itself. A total surrender and openness to the Divine Mother based on a spontaneous faith is indispensable. The Grace of the Divine Mother can alone effectuate the final transformation and liberation of our Self and Nature from the bondage of lower nature, ignorance and inconstancy. As the Mother says, "The only way to be truly free, is to make your surrender to the Divine, total and without reserve. Then you will see that all that ties you, binds you, chains you loses its importance and falls off quite naturally... for with this surrender comes the supreme spiritual freedom."<sup>1</sup>

The Divine alone is truly free. So, in order to attain true freedom, we must rise to the status of the Divine. And to this end we should strive for psychicism and spiritualisation culminating in supramentalisation of our consciousness. And then by a corresponding descent of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness in Matter our lower nature too can be gradually and totally supramentalised.

In fact, the Mother from her personal experience tells us that with the supramental manifestation (which started in 1956) a new freedom has been made possible to the body. She says, "One of the very first results of the supramental manifestation has been to give to the body a freedom and an autonomy which it had never known.... The cells themselves have felt for the first time that they are free, that they have a power of decision."<sup>2</sup>

It is only with the complete divinisation of the earth-nature and earth-consciousness by the supramental Light and Power that true freedom can be attained in its totality and perfection when the present world liberated from the bondage of falsehood and obscurity, ugliness and discord, unrest and weakness, disease and death will be transfigured into a realm of everlasting Truth and Light, Beauty and Harmony, Peace and Power, Bliss and Immortality.

*( To be continued )*

ROSE  
(MANJULA SEN)

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of Physical Education*, February 1958.

## **“HARVARD STEP-UP TEST”**

I HAVE carried out this work of physical examination of my Ashram brethren for several years at the Library of Physical Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, by Groups. There are many groups undergoing various types of physical training. The various tests for finding physical defects have been applied during the course of examination. Out of these tests there is one important test called “Harvard Step-up Test” which is described below for the knowledge of those who have undergone this Test.

### **DIAGNOSTIC TESTS**

The Harvard Step-up Test is diagnostic, not in the usual sense of assisting identification of disease but in the sense of identification of degrees of dynamic fitness. It is a test employed on healthy individuals to assess their capacity for strenuous physical effort. Since it is a severe test, it is normally preceded by routine physical examination to exclude subjects with over-manifestation of cardio-vascular or respiratory diseases.

The test has proved to be of value in the selection of military personnel for arduous duties, in the selection of athletes and in following their response to training, and in the direction of young men and women whose fitness for exertion is so much below average that special physical training is advisable.

Callagher and Brouha (1944) introduced some precision into the rather vague concept of physical fitness by considering it in three categories, viz., (1) static fitness, (2) dynamic fitness, (3) motor skills fitness.

(1) Static fitness is the absence of any disabling deformity or disease;

(2) Dynamic fitness is the ability to perform strenuous physical work of an unskilled nature;

(3) Motor skills fitness is the ability to perform particular co-ordinated movements such as those involved in swimming, throwing or jumping.

A test of dynamic fitness should subject large muscle groups to stress in such a fashion that the subject's performance is limited by circulatory and respiratory embarrassment rather than by fatigue of the muscles concerned. An arm exercise such as chinning is unsuitable as a test of dynamic fitness because the limiting factor is usually local fatigue of the active muscles. More suitable activities are walking, particularly up a gradient, or stepping on and off a bench. The climbing test may be made more strenuous by making the subject carry a loaded pack as in the Harvard Pack Test. Ideally the test should be so severe that about one-third of the subjects fail to complete it; a more moderate test, which can be achieved by everybody is less valuable in distinguishing degrees of dynamic fitness.

### “HARVARD STEP-UP TEST”

The Harvard step-up test fulfils the criterion of a good test of dynamic fitness and has the merit of simplicity.

In the original test the subject steps on to and down from a bench or a platform 20 inches high, 30 times a minute for 5 minutes or until compelled by fatigue to desist. Immediately after the exercise he sits down and his pulse rate is counted for the periods : one, one-and-a-half, two-and-a-half and three, three-and-a-half minutes. After the exercise the fitness is calculated as follows :

$$\text{I.} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{Duration of exercise} \times 100 \\ 2 \times \text{sum of the three and a half mt. pulse count.} \end{array}$$

#### MODIFICATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEST

A useful time-saving modification recommended of this calculation requires only one pulse count, one- one and a half minutes after exercise : it is as follows :—

$$\text{R, f,} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{Duration of exercise in seconds} \times 100 \\ 5.5 \times \text{pulse count one- one and a half minutes after exercise.} \end{array}$$

Fitness indexes calculated by the two methods show very close agreement and the rapid method saves much time when many subjects are to be tested. On the result of the test, individuals may be classified in three categories :

fitness index below 50—Poor.

fitness index 50-80—Average.

fitness index above 80—Good.

The original test was designed for adult men, but with suitable modification it may be used for women, boys or girls. Most investigators have reduced the height of the step for women and children and some have also reduced the period of exercise. It is convenient to have an adjustable stool which can be set at any height from 16 to 20 inches and which is firmly fixed to the platform from which the subject steps up.

#### STANDARDISATION OF TEST CONDITIONS

In order to achieve valid comparison of different individuals and of different groups, test conditions must be standardised as far as possible. The environment should not be uncomfortably hot or humid and the test should not be performed within three hours after a heavy meal. Light gymnastic costume and tennis shoes are worn.

Stepping up and down should be in time with a metronome beating 120 times a minute, the subject stepping up with one leg on the first beat, up with the other leg on the second beat, down with the first leg on the third beat and down with the other leg on the final beat of the cycle. It is permissible to change step from time to time. The subject must stand erect on a bench; if he crouches or fails to keep up with the metronome, the investigator should encourage him to do better and, if the faulty posture or timing is maintained for 15 seconds, the exercise is stopped and the duration to the time of stopping is recorded. Faulty posture is rather a subjective assessment on the part of the observer; so, for direct comparableness, the series of tests should be supervised by the same observer or by observers trained to accept similar standards.

### FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

Body build, degrees of physical activity and personality are three factors which might be expected to affect performance of the step-up-test.

One might expect that taller subjects would achieve more easily the stepping on the high bench, but in many investigations, there has been no correlation between stature and fitness index. One might expect also a lower fitness index in heavier subjects, since the work done is directly proportional to the body weight, but in many investigations no such relationship has been found. But my finding is that lighter men achieved significantly higher scores than heavier men.

Fitness index has been related by various investigators to other Anthropometric measurements and indexes, such as bi-iliac diameter, height, weight, shoulder-hip ratio and chest circumference-height, but these relationships have not been confirmed by other workers.

A high fitness index, which is dependent on a slow pulse, may be related to a slow resting pulse but this is not a constant finding; in athletes the pulse tends to be slow both at rest and after exercise.

Investigators in several countries have found higher fitness indexes in more physically active individuals. I have found that men and women students of physical education had significantly higher fitness indexes than men and women college or school students in the same age-group.

In an exhaustive test such as this, personality plays an important part. An increasing effort of will is usually required to keep going after the third minute; I should like to point out that some women students will not exert a minimum effort from laziness, from feminine dislike of appearing untidy, or from fear of physical injury; these individuals are recognised by a short work period and a slow pulse during recovery. Since it is difficult for the investigator to achieve different degrees of motivation, encouragement should be maximal when there is any indication that an individual may fail to complete the test. Although the element of will-power involved means that the test is not strictly one of physical fitness only, it is still a very useful

test of dynamic fitness, because strenuous exertion demands both physical and mental qualities for achievement.

#### CRITICISMS OF TEST

The Harvard Step-Up Test has been criticised on the ground that its fitness index is based on two unassociated measurements, duration of exercise and post-exercise pulse rate assigned scores based only on the duration of exercise to subjects who fail to complete the test. The double criterion, however, has the advantage of giving a wide scatter of fitness index, the fitness subject completing five minutes of stepping with a slow pulse thereafter, the less fit completing the test but with a rapid post-exercise pulse rate, whereas the least fit have short duration attributable to a low fitness index.

Another criticism is that the Harvard Step-Up Test merely measures the ability to perform the Harvard Step-Up Test and bears no relation to other tests of fitness. I have observed that daily performance of the test raises fitness index but there is ample evidence that systematic physical training, not including high stepping, improves performance of the step test.

In a recent, as yet unpublished, comparative study by me of the physical fitness of groups of students in several institutions, those in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, had the highest fitness index.

#### SUMMARY

The Harvard Step-Up Test is a simple, useful test of dynamic fitness. For valid comparison of the fitness of individuals or of groups, the test conditions must be standardised. The Test has been used to demonstrate the efficacy of physical training in increasing capacity for strenuous physical work. An interesting point which has emerged in several series of tests is that the performance of women during menstruation is as good as that of women tested at other phases of the menstrual cycle. That confirms the modern opinion that menstruation does not impair athletic efficiency.

Average fitness index of men and women students in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, is 80 to 85. In my opinion this figure is above the average in comparison with other Institutions in which I had an opportunity to apply this medical examination for fitness.

DR. C. J. VYAS



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

**NEWSLETTER**

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*1. Information Rooms in Schools and Colleges*

Most schools and colleges aim to have well stocked and equipped libraries or study-rooms, but how many schools and colleges have considered the need for an 'Information Room' ? A room where up-to-date information is collected and collated on all subjects taught, plus subjects of allied interest which will have some bearing on those subjects.

As we see today, no country is sufficient unto itself, so we find that no subject can be isolated from other subjects being taught in the curriculum.

Teachers who are really on top of their job, especially of the middle school, know that there is always a point where each subject touches and meets another and that this meeting point is also the fulcrum point to lift the motivation onto a higher level of interest, and that *it is interest which really stimulates learning*. Such teachers also know that this motivation and interest cannot be brought into the classroom by the sole reliance on a single textbook. The progressive teacher would never consider adhering 'faithfully' to the textbook routine because a 'live' class is never the same two days running; the subject has always to be taught in relation to and with due regard for the environment and atmosphere of the class. Therefore the teacher who is really alive to 'situation possibilities' will always read up his subject and all aspects beyond it so as to present something more than the mere bones, something new, creative, stimulating that makes the student curious and aware that the learning of this subject is really worthwhile.

It is fully appreciated that the teacher's task today is more than enough without extra scholastic reading or wading through piles of books and journals to find something on a particular subject, so the need for an Information Room where such current data on the various subjects is sorted, collated and filed under proper heads, kept up-to-date by establishing channels of information with other educational institutions, Embassies of the various countries, UNESCO, Research Centres, educational magazines, newspaper cuttings, radionews, etc., becomes imperative. Of course, on the university level one automatically expects the establishment of an Information Room and Research Library, but this is an increasingly sought-for need on the lower echelons of school and college life. Especially as such subjects as science are becoming up-graded the need is often urgent. A textbook that was adequate at the beginning of the year can, nowadays, become quite inadequate after a month or two.

The argument that a textbook should be sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the examination is all right as far as it goes, and so long as the teacher is only concerned with preparing his students for the examination. But today's student is so often well read on the subjects himself, especially science subjects, that the teacher is more and more bound to satisfy the needs of the inquiring student. This tendency *to really know* will increase as education potential increases and the teacher of tomorrow would do well to take cognisance of the fact and prepare himself for the next step in our educational evolution. That step will require the mind of man to solve more and more complex problems which only the higher reaches of the mind can cope with. The student of tomorrow will be required to 'think'—to learn how to think at an early age because this is the first requirement of learning of the future.

### 2. *Science—Britain*

It is said<sup>1</sup> that a "revolution in the science lab" has already cost Britain 1,500,000 and will involve the largest educational publishing venture Britain has ever seen. And when the Nuffield Foundation's science teaching project is finally unveiled in April of this year science teaching in schools both in Britain and abroad will get an impetus which in time will seriously alter its character.

### 3. *Secrecy Pledge—Sweden*

Swedish teachers and other educationalists have been placed under an obligation of secrecy concerning the private lives and background of pupils and their families, and the pupil's physical and mental health. This change in school regulations has been made in an order issued by the Board of Education.

### 4. *Computed Marks—U.S.A.*

Project Essay Grade, designed to build into computers enough sensitivity and discernment to put a value on students' essays, is reported to be entering an advanced stage at the University of Connecticut.

### 5. *Reference Library—France*

The Benjamin Franklin Reference Library in Paris, housing 5,000 reference books and over 100 periodicals dealing with the United States, opened its doors last February at 1, Place de L'Odéon.

### 6. *British Council—India*

The exhibition of British books held by the British Council in Delhi which ended last month was a major success. Among the outstanding features of the exhibition were books on agriculture and three specialist exhibitions, including one on printing.

<sup>1</sup> Willem van der Eyken, editor of "New Education".

7. *Teachers Federation—Australia*

At the annual conference, last February, of the Australian Teachers Federation held in Adelaide it was suggested that the Commonwealth Government should establish a fellowship scheme to enable Australian teachers to serve for one year in Asia.

8. *Attraction—Transkei*

African schools in the Transkei, the first semi-selfgoverning African reserve in South Africa, are attracting pupils from all parts of the Republic. This follows the decision by the Transkei Education Department to revert to the use of English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in primary schools in place of the vernacular Xhosa.

9. *Thought for the Month*

Sri Aurobindo says in *The National Value of Art* : “The activity of human thought divides itself into two groups of functions, those of the right hand, contemplation, creation, imagination, the centres that see the truth, and those of the left hand, criticism, reasoning, discrimination, inquiry, the centres that judge the truth when it is seen. In education the latter are fostered by scientific and manual training, but the only quality of the right hand that this education fosters is observation.”

NORMAN C. DOWSETT