

# MOTHER INDIA

SEPTEMBER 1966

Price: Re. 1.00

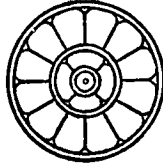
All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers, except for short extracts as quotations.

Contributions accepted but previous correspondence is advisable. A stamped self-addressed envelope must accompany all manuscripts. Writers abroad should enclose international reply coupons.

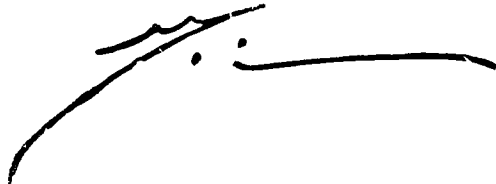
Subscription rates: Annual Rs. 10/-, Sh. 20/-, \$ 3/-  
Single copy Re. 1.00 in India.

All correspondence to be addressed to  
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India.

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.



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. 8

---

*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

---

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 5
WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO	... 6
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 7
IMMORTALITY (Poem)	<i>Venkataranga</i> ... 10
PANTHEISM AND ITS POINTERS : SOME GENERAL NOTES	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 11
A PILGRIM, A VULTURE AND SOME ARROWS : A Short Story	<i>Neville</i> ... 14
FIREWALKING IN MAURITIUS	<i>Don Marsh</i> ... 16
SWEET OPPRESSION OF UNSHAKABLE REMI- NISCENCES (Poem)	<i>Bibhash J. Mutsuddi</i> ... 18
SPARK OF FIRE (Poem)	<i>Kamalākanto</i> ... 20
THE MOON (Poem)	<i>Harry Harcharan</i> ... 21
THE DESTINY OF THE BODY THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherji</i> ... 23
WHOM GOD PROTECTS THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT (Translated by Kalyan K. Chaudhuri from the Bengali)	<i>Pramode Kumar Chatterji</i> ... 29

## CONTENTS

ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>Romen</i>	... 35
THE TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS	<i>Prithwindra Mookherji</i>	... 42
MOTHER DIVINE (Poem)	<i>P. Agarwal</i>	... 47
THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE		
XII. LORD CURZON AND HIS WORK (I)	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 48
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
INDIAN LITERATURE (Vol. IX, No. 2, 1966)		
	<i>Review by Prithwindra Mookherji</i>	... 51
PRATISHTHA (Poem)	<i>Norman</i>	... 53

## Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
SEVENTH SEMINAR, 20 FEBRUARY 1966 :		
HOW TO SERVE THE TRUTH ?		
(Speeches by Srijit and Tarun, followed by		
a Quotation from Sri Aurobindo)		
	<i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	... 54
SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF		
EDUCATION : DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION		
AND RESEARCH : NEWSLETTER	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	... 58

---

Edited by: K. D. SETHNA

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY—2

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry—2

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No: R. N. 8667/63

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

DEPUIS la naissance jusqu'à la mort, la vie est une chose dangereuse.

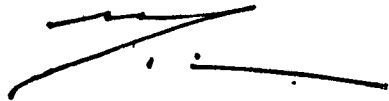
Les courageux la traversent sans se soucier des risques.

Les prudents prennent des précautions.

Les poltrons ont peur de tout.

Mais en fin de compt il n'arrive à chacun que ce que la Volonté Suprême a décidé.

19-6-1966



FROM birth to death life is a dangerous thing.

The brave pass through it without caring for the risks.

The prudent take their precautions.

The coward fear everything.

But ultimately there comes to each one only that which the Supreme Will decides.

19-6-1966

## WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

WANTON waste, careless spoiling of physical things in an incredibly short time, loose disorder, misuse of service and materials due either to vital grasping or to tamasic inertia are baneful to prosperity and tend to drive away or discourage the Wealth-Power...

Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of this Yoga, but self-control in the vital and right order in the material are a very important part of it—and, even, an ascetic discipline is better than a loose absence of true control. Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.

5-1-1932

I MAY say, generally, that in the present condition of things it is becoming increasingly necessary to do the best we can with what we have and make things last as long as possible. There are many kinds of things hitherto provided, for instance, which it will be impossible to renew once the present stock is over. The difficulty is that most people have no training in handling physical things (except the simplest, hardest and roughest), no propensity to take care of them, to give them their full use and time of survival. This is partly due to ignorance and inexperience, but partly also to carelessness, rough, violent and unseeing handling, indifference; there is also in many a feeling that it does not matter if things are quickly spoilt, they will be replaced; one worker was even heard to say to another, "Why do you care? It is not your money."...All this is *tamas* and the end of *tamas* is disintegration, dispersal of forces, failure of material. And in the end, as this is a collective affair, the consequences come upon everybody, the careful and the careless together. Our ideal was a large, not a restricted life, but well-organised, free from waste and *tamas* and disorder. Now there has to be a tightness, a period of retrenchment till people learn and things get better.

17-1-1932



## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

FEBRUARY 6, 1940

N : Anilbaran has sent you a philosophical letter from Ardhendu's friend, you remember ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There are so many philosophical letters coming to Anilbaran that it is difficult to remember which is which. *(Laughter)*

N : This man is a sannyasi. Anilbaran replied to him. He was very glad with the reply and wants to come to have Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO : Anilbaran's darshan ? *(Laughter)*.

N : But he has no passage money. So he has requested Anilbaran to pay for the passage just as he has found spiritual passage for him.

SRI AUROBINDO : Anilbaran can write that he has just as much money as his correspondent. *(Laughter)*

EVENING

N *(waving a foolscap sheet)* : Anilbaran has sent a specimen of the kind of letters he receives from people. The man has asked from Anilbaran Rs. 10,000 to help him out of this difficulty and has asked for your blessings.

SRI AUROBINDO : Blessings can be sent, but Rs. 10,000 ?

N : It seems this man did some good to Anilbaran a long time ago and Anilbaran in return offered to help him, if he needed help any time. It was 16 or 17 years ago.

C : Anilbaran says the man has been very honest but has been cheated by everybody.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the fate of honest people. The rule is : you shouldn't cheat but you should know how it is done. *(Laughter)*

FEBRUARY 7, 1940

EVENING

N : I find in the *Life of Barodi Brahmachari* that he tried to cross the "Sun-world" three times but failed. It seems those who cross don't again come to birth.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the Upanishad's saying—the Upanishad speaks both of the rays of the Sun and the gate of the Sun. Those who can't pass through the rays come down to the earth and are born again.

N : When he was leaving the body he said that if the day remained bright and not clouded his disciples should know that he had succeeded in crossing the Sun. Is it the Supermind that is spoken of in the Upanishad ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. It is only on going to the Supermind that the birth ceases. But I don't know what is meant here. In the subtle world there are many suns and moons.

N : We find an example of Barodi Brahmachari's unusual eye-sight. Once when he was taken to court as a witness and asked about his age, he replied : "100." "In that case," the pleader said, "you couldn't see that incident from such a distance." He asked the pleader, "Look through that window at that tree. Do you see anything?" "No," the pleader replied. Then Barodi Brahmachari said, "But I see a large number of red ants climbing up the tree." All people were startled to find that it was true !

B : Is that outer vision or inner ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It can be either. By training one's vision one can see things at a distance. Training of inner vision may produce a corresponding effect on the outer as well.

N : He used to read other people's thoughts by separating the mind from the body.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is by going to the mental plane.

N : When asked if he remembered the circumstance just previous to his present birth he replied, "All I remember is that at a certain stage I felt a great pressure jamming me from all sides. I was crammed for space. As I tried to get out, I suddenly discovered a passage and rushed out." This is the description of his factual condition. What interests me in this is that medical science doesn't know so many things—for example, the exact cause that starts the labour pain—why it should start at the end of some particular month, etc. The doctors can't give any scientific reason.

SRI AUROBINDO : There may be two reasons. Either the body consciousness of the mother feels by some subconscious instinct that it is time for the foetus to be expelled or the foetus feels that it has reached the last stage of development and must now come out. Science, of course, doesn't take count of these factors; tries to explain by mechanical laws.

N : One queer incident about Barodi Brahmachari's life rather puzzles me. He



wanted to see by the actual sex-act if he had really conquered the sex-impulse. He found that he had conquered it and his lack of sex-impulse was not due to any incapacity of old age because he saw that his reactions were quite normal. Now why should a realised man test himself in that way ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Realisation is a vast field. Until one knows what this man has realised, it is difficult to say anything.

FEBRUARY 9, 1940

N : We are confronted with a difficult diagnosis. Although chemically the case looks like septicaemia, the blood culture is negative.

SRI AUROBINDO : What does it mean ? It is not septicaemia then ?

N : One can't say that. Dr André says that there is something in the blood—some infection, though the culture is negative.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then why is it negative ? Even if it is negative, can the case be septicaemia ? If it can, medical science is not very exact.

N : It may be septicaemia. Sometimes one has to make repeated examinations. For instance, in TB one has to search for the bacillus plenty of times.

P : Even if they find the bacillus, it may not be TB.

N : That doesn't happen.

P : Why ? In stools they sometimes find the TB bacillus.

N : Stools are a different matter.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is thought that bacilli and germs are the cause of a disease. But they may have nothing to do with it.

N : If not the cause, they are an instrument. In diptheria, for example, when the antitoxin is given, many patients are cured.

SRI AUROBINDO : That may be a coincidence.

N : Coincidence in thousands of cases ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ?

P : If not, why in some cases does the antitoxin fail ? Or why are some people attacked by a particular germ when exposed to it while others are safe ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Doctors don't recognise any factor beyond the organisms.

S : In homoeopathy, something prior to the disease is said to be there. In allopathy, this is called "low resistance".

SRI AUROBINDO : The yogic view is also of something prior. There are unseen or unknown factors which operate in the causation of a disease and the germs are only concomitant factors.

P : Otherwise I don't see why among people working in cholera epidemics some are attacked and others escape. I myself worked in their midst but nothing happened to me.

SRI AUROBINDO : I lived in areas where there was plague all around.

S : I have myself removed with my own hands plague-infected rats,

P : Medical men sometimes build up their theories and then try to fit facts to them.

N : Everybody does this sort of thing—including the philosophers !

SRI AUROBINDO : The difference between medical science and proper science is that in medical science one negative instance doesn't disprove the theory, while in proper science a single negative example will throw out a whole theory and the scientists will have to work on a new basis.

NIRODBARAN

---

## IMMORTALITY

OH Mother, when I say I am Your child  
My heart is ever filled with joyous gold !  
Wherever I may go, whatever I do,  
My eyes are set upon Your wondrous hue.  
I am Your child, that is enough for me.  
I seek no other immortality.

VENKATARANGA

# PANTHEISM AND ITS POINTERS

## (Some General Notes)

PANTHEISM has three aspects. The first is that of parts and whole. Here finites are imperfect when viewed apart from the infinite whole : within the whole they are elements of perfection and faultlessly contribute to the wholeness. But, of course, unless the finite can experience the whole, it can never know its own perfection : so, outside that experience, the finite remains imperfect. All the same, within each finite we can distinguish something that points towards that experience and towards what the finite would be and what the whole must be in that experience. Direct experience of the whole is mystic pantheism : intuition of the pointer in the finite towards such experience is poetic or aesthetic pantheism : intellectual conception or understanding of the pointer is rational pantheism *à la* Spinoza.

The second aspect of pantheism is that there is an experience in which every existent is the sheer substance of the Supreme Being—an equality of divine substance is in all : not only God is all but all is God. Here distinctions and degrees become illusions—a unitary uniformity of the Divine is everywhere and in everything. Parts are discerned but they are all divine with the self-same stuff although they have various configurations and functions : a single tissue of light is here with a manifold design.

The third aspect is that there is a divine presence in all, a divine immanence which is the same whether the form and the finite inhabited by it be a harlot or a saint. This presence has to be experienced by an in-drawing of the consciousness, and in this pantheism there are various degrees and distinctions of manifestation—higher and lower, expressive and obstructive.

What the European mind commonly understands by pantheism is the Spinozist type. But even this type must really imply the second and the third aspects. When a whole is there with every part transfigured into perfection by being contributory to the total perfection, the whole should be apparent through every part, in every part, as every part, revealing a single tissue of perfection multifariously designed. Again, if a rational pantheism requires an intellectual effort, it is a truth which is *to be realised* by mental understanding : the metaphysical judgment is of a mandatory character, however limited that character from the spiritual viewpoint : one is asked to proceed towards a realisation. And to be thus asked means that there are degrees and a passage from a lower to a higher state of being.

A full pantheism must hold all the three aspects together and if any one of them is missing the pantheism is incomplete and to that extent false. Nor is there any illogicality in holding the three together; for, no aspect really contradicts another, but is valid in a different sense—and each sense calls for the rest,

However, even such a three-aspected complete pantheism is incomplete as a mystical philosophy. The third aspect opens towards the transcendent Godhead, for some perfection which is not in evidence has to be brought forth, some perfection which exceeds what has been manifested. And this perfection is not only an immanent divine Oneness in all. Since there is a diversity in manifested things and beings, there must be a truth of divine Manyness. We are pointed to some world of Archetypes, Ideal Realities, Godlike Individualities that are yet identical, a world of perfect multiplicity and unity or, rather, of flawless multiplicity which is at the same time absolute unity.

One may conceive this world as that of Universal Soul and Individual Souls and call it a Cosmic Within. But, if we examine the nature of the Cosmos, we see that its principle is not of the One who is the Many or of the Many who are the One; its principle is of the One and the Many held in some sort of mutual complementariness. When the One is fully stressed, the Many tend to disappear. When the Many are fully emphasised, the One tends to fade away. As an example, on the plane of politics we have the opposites : Totalitarianism and Anarchy. Democracy tries to strike a balance and it is the best possible practice under the circumstances, but no plenitude of harmony seems possible in it. On the plane of philosophy we have the extremes of Monism and Pluralism, and the best we can achieve is a compromise, for always the problem of relating the one and the many is set up by the nature of the cosmos. Whatever terms have to be related cannot be truly fulfilled in each other : an element of residual difference will remain.

It is only by going beyond the cosmos, beyond Universal Soul and Individual Souls, that a solution can be hoped for. Not a Cosmic Within but a Transcendent Above, so to speak, can be the realm where the One and the Many may escape the necessity of being "related" and be the same Existence doubly at work. This realm has to be other than the mental, however vast or basic the mental might be made. And it is other than a pantheistic reality.

Indian pantheism clearly recognises the opening which the third aspect of pantheism has towards the transcendent Godhead. It therefore brings in not only an In-world but also an Over-world—a fact that is forgotten by those who, like Teilhard de Chardin or even Albert Schweitzer, are, as Sri Aurobindo says, "moved by the associations of Western philosophy to read a merely pantheistic sense into the more subtle and complex thought of the ancient Vedanta."<sup>1</sup>

However, we may add that even in Eastern philosophy this Vedantic thought has not been properly developed. Brahman without qualities, passive Brahman, the principle of divine Oneness, has never been quite reconciled with Brahman with qualities, active Brahman, the principle of divine Manyness. They have been held in a general relation which is never entirely at ease. There has always been a disposition to fall into the former or the latter. Hence conflicting systems like those of Shankara and

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (American Edition), p. 671, fn. 6.

Ramanuja, either of which attempts a kind of plenitude yet succeeds merely in setting up a gradation of ultimate truth and proximate truth. The one makes Monism and Impersonalism the goal, Pluralism and Personalism a ladder or a prop. The other takes Pluralism and Personalism as the concrete reality, Monism and Impersonalism as an abstraction from it. A new philosophy, more plastically affined to the ancient Vedanta, is needed for the completion of the insight that pierced through the Cosmic towards the Transcendent. A fusion of three Vedantic intuitions—"All is One", "All is in One", "One is in All"—demands acceptance and accomplishment. To take these three intuitions as a single experience in a Supermind which is the Transcendent emanating and manifesting the Cosmos and bearing in itself a supreme model of what is evolving here, a model waiting to be realised in evolution—this is the step necessary for a satisfying spiritual philosophy.

Approached from the profoundest pantheistic standpoint, it would be what is perhaps hinted in the French phrase : "*Au dedans de là*", the Within Beyond. It is essentially the basis of the inlook and uplook and downlook and outlook and onlook of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

K. D. SETHNA

---

# A PILGRIM, A VULTURE AND SOME ARROWS

## (A SHORT STORY)

ONCE upon a time a lone pilgrim was slowly making his way across a great desert towards a distant Ashram. He was weary and very thirsty and he had no idea where he would come across water. However he felt quite confident and happy, for he said to himself, "If my true destiny is to reach the Ashram then the Lord will look after me; so why should I worry?"

A vulture, circling high overhead, was watching the pilgrim with great interest, thinking that a man who looked so exhausted could not last much longer.

At that moment the pilgrim stumbled over a pile of stones that lay in his path and fell to the ground. The vulture immediately drew in his wings and swooped down upon his prey. But just then a great gust of wind swept over the desert and carried the vulture off as he was about to claw at the fallen pilgrim.

The vulture battled and fought as hard as he could against the wind, but struggle as he might, it was too strong for him and he was carried farther and farther away.

At last, tired out, he could fly no more and, closing his wings, he fell to the ground.

But the sand did not feel burning as he had expected and, looking around, he found himself lying among a patch of beautiful tall flowers.

For a long time he lay there motionless, too exhausted to move wing or feather, until at last the flowers took pity on him and, pouring little drops of dew that had collected overnight from one to another, finally offered the vulture a flower full of water to drink. After they had repeated this several times the vulture felt greatly relieved, but when he tried to move he immediately became aware of his ravenous hunger.

So again the flowers took pity on him and, passing their seeds from one to another, they eventually collected together one flower-full, which they offered to the vulture.

But the vulture, who had only devoured meat all his life, was very reluctant to accept, though finally his hunger got the better of him; so he ate the magic grains.

On reflection he realised that the seeds were not so bad after all, in fact they tasted a good deal better than his usual meat.

And so the flowers fed the vulture until he regained his full strength. Then he looked around for a perch to sit on, for he wanted to admire the flowers that had helped him in his hour of need. But there was only a sharp pointed post standing in the ground which offered him no footing; so he remained sitting between the flowers, waiting for a branch to grow from the post.

★

★

Far away in a small town, an angry looking little man was busy making arrows. First he made some small ones, which he shot at a target, and then he attempted some larger ones, which he shot at the trees growing in his garden. He did not seem to notice the pain and suffering he caused them.

Delighted with his success, he took his largest bow and, going out into the street, shot at some birds, which he missed. This seemed to annoy him, for on catching sight of a small girl in a white bonnet, who was passing by, he shot at her. But just at that instant a great gust of wind passed by and, deflecting the arrow from its target, carried it up into the air. Farther and farther off the arrow flew over the hills and valleys, until it finally struck a post and remained there quivering.

This noise made the vulture look up and to his delight he saw that a perch had appeared for him as if by magic. Thanking the Lord from his heart for having answered his prayer, he flew up and settled himself on the arrow from where he could admire the beautiful flowers. And to acknowledge his thanks they moved their slender necks to and fro in the breeze as if enacting a delicate dance.

The angry little man, enraged by his failure, shot his last and biggest arrow at an old lady who was passing with a basket full of apples. But again a gust of wind sprang up and, deflecting the arrow by a hair's breadth from the old lady's head, carried it off up into the skies.

The exhausted pilgrim still lay where he had fallen, too weary and thirsty to move, thanking the Lord for having saved him from the clutch of the vulture, and wondered if he could muster together enough strength to raise himself again.

Suddenly something passed close over his head and stuck into the rock behind him. At first he thought it must be the vulture returned, until looking around he caught sight of the arrow.

Leaning towards it, he tried to pull it out of the rock to inspect it closer. Suddenly it came away in his hand, and water began to gush out from the hole it had made in the rock.

It was the clearest and purest water he had ever tasted and it not only gave him strength, which he needed to continue his journey, but from that day on everything around him seemed to reflect the joy of existence.

And the vulture, who up to that time had only been able to make vulgar noises, now began to sing the softest and sweetest melodies to the flowers.

NEVILLE

## FIREWALKING IN MAURITIUS

BEFORE firewalking is attempted weeks of fasting and praying in the temple take place, because the condition of the body and the resistance of the flesh has to be lowered, for firewalkers believe that the consciousness of the senses, so to speak, must be withdrawn. This would account for the firewalker not feeling the heat; but the miracle is that the feet do not get burnt.

With the fasting completed, there comes the cleansing at the nearest river to the fire. The firewalkers are decked in yellow robes and completely immerse themselves in the flowing water. To prove that the time has come, each devotee has to stand on the sharp edge of a sabre without getting cut. The sabre is held waist-high by two assistants, and the man balances himself on this like a bird on a perch.

Before the procession is ready to move off, open lamps are lit; the area is sprinkled with coconut milk; and cow's milk is made ready to carry, in an urn decorated with lilac leaves. Then the drummers set up a monotonous tattoo, and the chanting procession moves off preceded by the circle of youths who rap batons together, to the monotonous rhythm of the drums. I have not the slightest doubt that the firewalkers have achieved a state of trance before they lift up the main idol which they must carry back to the temple.

Meanwhile, in the temple grounds, the fire pit has been made holy by ritual and the bonfire burnt down to a cinder. The heat is so terrific that long-handled rakes are used, and these sometimes catch fire. The chanting of hymns greets the firewalkers, who circle the pit before they line up to cross over the fire. Only one thing remains to be discovered before each man takes his terrifying plunge forward. Is God present in the fire? To make certain, the priest throws on the red surface of ashes a bouquet of orange-coloured blossoms. If these should shrivel up to nothing the firewalking would be cancelled. But the amazing thing is that the blossoms do not even lose any of their lustre. Seeing this good omen the walkers are prepared to cross.

Firewalkers face, across the pit, a stiff flag with an image of a particular deity painted on it. They dare not take their eyes off this image from the time they sink their first foot into the glowing ash until they have received the priest's blessing as they stand in the water pool on the far side. Here many collapse from sheer exhaustion. Some women carry their babies across, with the flames licking around their heels. I have seen only one man fail to get across; he was badly burnt when he stumbled halfway. Each firewalker now expects to be granted the favour he has walked for.

Now we come to the sad case of Sergeant Watts, a soldier in the garrison at Vacoas. He had watched the firewalking performance at Rose Hill and had returned to camp boasting that there was nothing to it: it was all a question of mind over



matter : you have only to convince yourself that you are walking on a sheet of ice to reach the other side unharmed.

Boasting never lasts for long in the army without a challenge being thrown out. Strangely enough, Sergeant Watts accepted : as he said to himself : "Anything that a fakir can do—I can do. No Hindu can do better than me."

One Saturday afternoon the sappers prepared the fire, without ritual—for Sergeant Watts had said that it was just a question of mind over matter. A good crowd turned up to see the spectacle, or to jeer at it; but the sergeant was quite calm as he prepared to cross, even though the rake actually caught fire. The sappers had made it really hot for him : and no one could stand anywhere near the edge. He really was a hero to be able to face it without shrinking. The time had come to show "these trash" what a white man can do—without all that mumbo jumbo. The spectators applauded as he took off his boots, puttees, and long socks. He refused to take off his topee saying that the sun was rather hot for the time of the year. His first mishap was to tread on a burr on his approach to the furnace. He danced a jig on this, so what would he be like on the flames ?

He shielded his face with both hands as he went forward. He was no coward. He really believed he could do it. His two feet crunched into the burning hot embers. His comrades held their breath, and then rushed forward to hold him. And I am afraid that Sergeant Watts spent the next two months in the garrison hospital growing soles back on to his feet.

DON MARSH

*(With acknowledgements to The Listener, June 16, 1966, p. 874)*

## SWEET OPPRESSION OF UNSHAKABLE REMINISCENCES\*

“...a small patch of water which shows us the whole sky, all the spaces,  
the whole dream, and where pass the flights of birds.”

—GUY DE MAUPASSANT

“My mind only sees it; for this little fellow is a shadow : it is the shadow  
of my own (past) self...”

—A. FRANCE

I AM drunk with the past  
sweet sighs  
of live oblivion  
insensibly  
intoxicate me.

Especially the old abandoned text-books  
secret witnesses  
enchancing bonds  
faithful guardians  
of heaven  
past emanations of my being.  
College life  
Sleeping Beauty...  
La Belle Dame Sans Merci...  
many a walk many a talk  
in delightful company  
and the gnawing nostalgia  
deepened by music—  
all cast a disturbing joy upon my soul.

All that I have been  
all that I have seen  
all that I have read  
said  
and met  
appears and disappears  
like a drunken ivory boat  
upon my water-silk memory.

\* This is a free rendering of my French poem entitled : *Douce oppression des souvenirs obsédants*.

A name recalled  
 an incident recreated  
 an emanation refound—  
     all these lost joys  
     relived  
 break the silence of the still heart  
 like the soft moan of the oars  
     through the dead of the night.

The wireless of memory  
     with its pitiless echo  
     sifts the Consciousness  
 Stars of past joys  
     sparkle through the sieve.  
 My heart is taut  
 for soon they shall  
     disappear  
     in the abysm of being.  
 My lurid soul can neither  
     blot out  
     their phosphorescence  
     nor grip forever  
     their fugitive eternity.

But  
 in the midst of all this storm  
     something  
     somewhere  
     stands aloof  
     drinking deep  
     the bitter-sweet liquor  
     of this elusive Beauty—  
 Reflection of things remembered  
 upon the dark dazzling mirror of memory  
     where dances  
     the dream  
     time  
     and the whole cosmos.

BIBHASH J. MUTSUDDI

## SPARK OF FIRE

SPARK of fire—spark of fire,  
Body sheathed in gold !  
What divine desire  
Did your beauty unfold ?

Spark of fire—spark of fire,  
Mounting to God's High,  
Freed from Time's gyre,  
An elect of the Earth and Sky !

Spark of fire—spark of fire,  
Angelic in your flight !  
What hands with strokes dire  
Shaped you so regally bright ?

Spark of fire—Immortality's gleam,  
The Eternal's child fair-free !  
Come to me, as in a dream,  
From your region of infinity.

Make me your love's playmate,  
O beauteous spark of fire !  
I shall, with mind elate,  
To the blue heavens aspire.

Like you, from the ashes of desire  
I shall build me a home,  
Always with you, O spark of fire,  
Haunts of God will I roam.

KAMALAKANTO

## THE MOON

THE moon, swan of an ebony ocean,  
Swims in delight  
Through the night  
In happy seraphic motion.

Shepherding the snow-fleece clouds,  
Her beams go lancing,  
Steadily advancing,  
Rending the wolfish darkness' fearful shroud.

Pilgrim of the night pacing alone,  
Through the cosmic dome  
Her silver shafts roam  
And on earth joy and peace are shown.

From the grey horizon she wakes,  
The ball of gold,  
Glorious and bold,  
Changing to pearl as her journey she makes.

When the world is awake she goes to sleep  
Beyond the distant rim :  
Her light grows dim  
From her to here by steeping steep.

And when the toilsome day is curled,  
She starts her watch,  
With rays to catch  
In tranquil glow the sleeping world.

The diamond stars recede beyond  
When her beams appear.  
Full of love and cheer  
She touches earth with her magic wand.

Then all the fairies come out to play,  
Climbing each flower;  
Bathing in her shower  
Their hearts bloom beatific-gay.

The rabbits clap, the grasshoppers sing,  
 The serpents wine,  
 The insects dine,  
 For the radiant moon is on the wing.

Lovers on the beach, hand in hand,  
 Pledge her their love,  
 And from there above  
 She breaks a smile, blessing their stand.

And gentle ones in deep repose,  
 She fills their dreams  
 With mountains and streams  
 And birds and bees and many a rose.

No more the winds tearfully moan,  
 For now their wings  
 Play on her ray-strings,  
 Plucking out rhythms in ecstatic tone.

With laughing ripples she shines the streams,  
 Rocks made into gems,  
 Flowers, leaves and stems  
 Are painted anew with her gleams.

Her illumined awning mothers the town—  
 Guides home the drunk,  
 Consoles hearts sunk,  
 As she, Love's Queen, looks down.

Diadem on the infinite breast,  
 From crescent to full,  
 Then crescent to null,  
 Fortnight gloom brings her back in new-born zest.

Round and round in the celestial cold,  
 She's never old,  
 Silver, pearl, gold,  
 Her beauty fills the heart with bliss untold.

HARRY HARCHARAN

# THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

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

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

(Continued from the July issue)

#### IX. THE EVOLUTIONARY CLUES

Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal.

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

It is evident that spontaneous motion or locomotion, breathing, eating are only processes of life and not life itself; they are means for the generation or release of that constantly stimulating energy which is our vitality and for that process of disintegration and renewal by which it supports our substantial existence; but these processes of our vitality can be maintained in other ways than by our respiration and our means of sustenance.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 165)

Evolution, being...continuous, must have at any given moment a past with its fundamental results still in evidence, a present in which the results it is labouring over are in process of becoming, a future in which still unevolved powers and forms of being must appear till there is the full and perfect manifestation.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 630-31)

IN spite of their wide diversity, all living things, we have seen, have three major nutritional requirements : energy-yielding organic compounds, structure-producing organic compounds and a few mineral trace elements. In particular, carbohydrates, proteins and fats are the three categories of organic foodstuffs demanded by all higher living forms, along with oxygen as the energy-releasing agent.

But are *all* these things *absolutely* essential for the maintenance of life-process ? Also, cannot a living body manage to synthesize *in situ* all its nutritional requirements out of materials gathered solely from the inanimate inorganic realm ?

In an attempt to seek for possible answers to this double question, when we scan

the whole gamut of living physical existences, we find here and there important clues which show unmistakably that Nature has experimented in exceptional circumstances with all sorts of possibilities. The results achieved, although partial, have from our point of view far-reaching significance. Let us mention *en passant* only a few of these glimmering sign-posts.

*Phenomena of interconversion* : Experimental investigations have demonstrated the fact that in case of exigency a living body can transform in however small a measure any of the three classes, carbohydrates, proteins and fats, into any other form.

Thus *proteins* can cause formation of *carbohydrates* under certain special conditions. "In a diabetic animal or in an animal poisoned with the drug phlorizin, there is a great loss of sugar from the body....In such an animal, the carbohydrate stores are rapidly depleted. If now carbohydrates be withheld from the diet but protein be given it is found that the excretion of glucose continues, and this must have been derived from protein."<sup>1</sup>

*Carbohydrates* on their part can be converted into body *fat*. This was well demonstrated by the classical experiments of Lawes and Gilbert. "Young pigs were fed on a diet of barley containing very little fat, and it was found that the amount of body fat present when the animals were killed was greater than could have been obtained from the fat supplied or even the fat and protein together, thus proving that carbohydrates can be converted into fat."<sup>2</sup>

That *fats* in their turn can undergo metabolic transformation into *carbohydrates* or even into *proteins* has been definitely shown by means of ingested fats previously labelled with radioactive carbon. Indeed, so far as *carbohydrates* are concerned, these can be produced in the body, in the forms of glycogen and glucose, out of *protein* and *carbohydrate foods*. "The process of formation of glucose from non-carbohydrate sources, which is conveniently described by the word 'gluconeogenesis', is responsible for the maintenance of the blood sugar concentration when carbohydrate is not being ingested at a rate sufficient to supply the needs of the body; that is during post-absorptive conditions, starvation, and when the animal receives a low-carbohydrate diet."<sup>3</sup>

*Needs secondary and incidental* : We have seen in Chapter VII that almost all chemical reactions in the body are mediated by enzymes and the effectivity of these biocatalysts is in many cases absolutely dependent on their coenzymes or prosthetic groups.<sup>4</sup> Now these coenzymes may consist entirely or in part of metallic elements such as Iron, Copper, Manganese, Zinc, Vanadium or Molybdenum. On the other hand, elements like Potassium, Boron or Chlorine activate several important enzymes. Thus, from the nutritional point of view, these trace elements that function as components of enzyme systems are not the *primary* or *absolute* needs of the body; their necessity arises because of the special metabolic machinery provisionally set in

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Winton & L. E. Bayliss, *Human Physiology* (1955), p. 200.

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

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* Chap. VII : "Why Material Alimentation?" in *Mother India*, June 1966.



operation by Nature and these intermediaries can be very well discarded if another physiological base is devised for the body.

*The non-essentiality of oxygen* : A few creatures like the parasites in the intestine where the availability of oxygen is almost nil, can live without this vital oxidising agent by tapping "the energy from chemical processes, such as the formation of lactic acid from glucose, which do not require oxygen."<sup>1</sup> This type of metabolism has been termed *anaerobic* (from GK. *an*, not; *aer*, air; *bios*, life) and, as we shall presently see, the photosynthetic formation of carbohydrates by green plants from carbon dioxide gas is such an anaerobic process.

Also, since it has been demonstrated that the terrestrial atmosphere at the time of the appearance of the first organism upon earth was reductive in nature, containing no oxygen, the first forms of life must have found some means of circumventing the need for this element.

*Organic synthesis from inorganic raw materials* : We have seen that carbohydrates, proteins and fat are somewhat mutually convertible so that *all* of them may not be absolutely needed at the same time. But they are *all* organic foodstuffs; so the very first category that may theoretically give rise to the formation of the other two has perforce to be organic and thus must have its source in the bodies of other organisms. Because of this necessity for *preformed* complex *organic* compounds as their food, all complex forms of life including humans are *absolutely* dependent upon other living things for satisfying their nutritional requirements.

But the fetters of this dependence are loosened in the case of some lower forms of life. Thus some micro-organisms require for their viability "no complex organic material whatsoever. Nitrogen (usually as an ammonium salt), carbon (as a simple salt such as carbonate) and minerals are sufficient to provide optimum growth and reproduction in such organisms."<sup>2</sup> Some of these organisms such as purple and green bacteria meet their energy-needs by fixating the energy of sunlight by means of special bacterial pigments : for this reason, they have been termed *photosynthetic organisms*. Some other micro-organisms (*e.g.*, *chemosynthetic* bacteria), instead of drawing upon solar energy, obtain their energy "by harnessing the chemical energy of some inorganic process such as the oxidation of ammonia to nitrite or nitrate, the oxidation of hydrogen sulphide to elemental sulphur, or that of ferrous compounds to the ferric state."<sup>3</sup>

Apart from these self-supporting micro-organisms, all green plants are extremely modest in their nutritional needs. As is well known, these plants can produce by photosynthesis an astonishing variety of organic compounds including proteins, vitamins and hormones—in fact all the complex organic stuff that they require for their life-processes—from a handful of simple inorganic materials such as water, carbon dioxide, a few mineral salts and ammonia or nitrate.

*The mystery of nitrogen fixation*: Green plants are indeed so versatile in the matter

<sup>1</sup> Knut Schmidt-Nielsen, *Animal Physiology* (1963), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Article entitled "Nutrition" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (1966) Vol. 16, p. 650.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Baldwin, *Dynamic Aspects of Biochemistry*, p. 230.

of organic synthesis ! But even they fail to utilise the nitrogen present in such huge abundance in the earth's atmosphere, and have to depend for this essential element upon ammonia or nitrate. And this is so because nitrogen is present in air in the form of very stable nitrogen molecules. These molecules must somehow be destabilized and cleaved before nitrogen can be made available for utilization by life.

But Nature has experimented with this process too and the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen by a living organism—"one of the most important, yet one of the least understood, reactions in all biochemistry"<sup>1</sup>—has been a realised fact. "This complex of reactions is achieved by certain bacteria that live on the organic matter in the soil...and also by certain associations of bacteria living in swellings, or *nodules*, of particular plant roots.... In addition, certain blue-green algae (such as *Nostoc*) and photosynthetic bacteria (such as *Rhodospirillum*) are capable of fixing atmospheric nitrogen."<sup>2</sup>

*Variability of need for organic compounds* : We have found that most organisms absolutely require in their dietary regimen the provision of some 'growth factors'. These have been defined as organic compounds which are essential for the maintenance of a particular organism but which the organism cannot synthesize within its body from other available materials. Amino acids, constituents of protein molecules, and various vitamins are typical growth factors for many living bodies and hence must be provided from outside.

But what is of great significance from our point of view is the discovery that the dietary needs for these growth factors vary widely from species to species and, in some special conditions, even from member to member of a single species. And this divergence arises from the fact that different organisms differ enormously in their ability to synthesize organic compounds. Most organisms are capable of making *many* of the growth factors themselves, but not *all* of them. Thus what is an absolute dietary essential for one species may be without effect in another since the latter may be capable of synthesizing it from other materials.

Thus the nutritional requirements for the essential amino acids can vary from zero, in the case of plants and some micro-organisms that synthesize them all, to the complete list of 20-25 known amino acids in the case of an organism that has lost all power of synthesis. Man's body cannot synthesize eight of these amino acids; so these must be provided in a human diet.

The same sort of variability one finds in vitamin requirements of different species, the need for a particular vitamin indicating a synthetic disability of the organism.

The foregoing study reveals that, in the last analysis, it is solely a question of synthetic ability or disability which will determine whether a particular type of organism can be independent of any external supply of organic foodstuffs. And this

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Galston, *The Life of the Green Plant* (1963), p 44.

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

brings us to the characterization of what have been termed *autotrophic* and *heterotrophic organisms*.

*The autotrophes*<sup>1</sup>, *the heterotrophes and food chains* : On the basis of the synthetic ability manifested in various degrees by different organisms, living bodies have been broadly divided into two groups : *autotrophes and heterotrophes*.

The *autotrophes* are those organisms that, like green plants and chemo- and photo-synthetic bacteria, are "competent to synthesize all the structural, catalytic and storage materials they need for growth, maintenance and reproduction : everything their life requires can be produced from the simplest of starting materials, the necessary energy being collected from the external world."<sup>2</sup> Since, in the case of these autotrophes, 'food' has not to be brought in from outside the organism but can be produced *in situ* in its own body, out of *inorganic* materials alone, these organisms are absolutely independent of other organisms for their nutritional requirements.

The *heterotrophic* organisms stand in sharp contrast to the autotrophes. For "not even the most versatile of heterotrophic forms can live except by exploiting the industry and synthetic ingenuity of other organisms. Only by fermenting, oxidizing, or in some other way degrading complex *organic* material can the heterotrophes obtain the energy required to maintain themselves."<sup>3</sup> Heterotrophic organisms are incapable of synthesizing their basic constituents such as amino acids, vitamins, carbohydrates and so forth, and are thus dependent upon other organisms for a supply of these essential organic 'foods'.

Generally speaking, all plants excepting those few lacking chlorophyll, such as mushrooms, are autotrophic in nutrition. They fixate the energy of sunlight to produce all that they themselves need and all that animals need; for, all other organisms being heterotrophic have to secure their food *directly* or *indirectly* from the autotrophic vegetable kingdom.

It is because of this difference in bio-synthetic capabilities that Nature has had to devise the process of mutual devouring and set up what has been called '*food chains*'. "A food chain typically begins with green plants, which are exploited by by *herbivorous* animals and these, in their turn, by *carnivores*. These become the prey of larger and more powerful carnivores and so on.... Always in these food chains the starting-point is with autotrophic organisms. Herbivorous animals rely at first hand, and carnivores at second or third hand, upon the autotrophes for supplies of their numerous essential substances which they require, as well as for a sufficiency of complex energy-yielding organic foodstuffs. Gathered together in the first instance by herbivorous beasts *these essential materials are passed stage by stage along the food chains.*"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> '*Autotrophe*' = self-nourishing; '*heterotrophe*' = gathering food from other sources; from GK. *autos*, self, *heteros*, others, *trophe*, food.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Baldwin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 230-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

We see then that bio-synthetic disability is not an attribute universal to all life nor is it the same, qualitatively or quantitatively, in all those organisms that manifest it. These findings of modern biological sciences are indeed of great import; for they show that the central goal envisaged in our essay, *i.e.*, how to make a human body autotrophic in nutrition—is not, even from the point of view of present-day science, altogether chimerical and impossible of accomplishment.

*Step-wise loss of synthetic ability* : Indeed, experimental work conducted by Beadle, Tatum and others on mutant strains of some micro-organisms has demonstrated beyond any doubt that, in the course of evolution, the original versatile bio-synthetic capability has been supplanted by its progressive loss incurred in a step-by-step process.

As a matter of fact, modern researches have shown that the actual metabolic pathways by which various living bodies synthesize or degrade biologically important particular organic compounds like the vital amino acids are the same in all cases. "Biosynthetic mechanisms thus appear to have developed soon after the origin of life, and to have remained unchanged throughout the divergent evolution of modern organisms."<sup>1</sup>

Now the different links in a particular pathway of biochemical reactions are mediated by different enzyme systems and if for one reason or another a particular link is snapped or the pathway blocked in the living system of an organism, this organism will be incapable of synthesizing the whole series of later products and require them to be supplied artificially in its diet. This is what has happened in the course of evolutionary elaboration of the organic realm.

The original organisms could synthesize all their needs *metabolically* and none were required *nutritionally*. But "as evolution progressed, food chains developed, and some forms of life became adapted to obtain many of their organic nutrients at the expense of other living forms, either directly or indirectly. In the dependent types, mutations had occurred causing the loss of specific biosynthetic enzymes and hence the gain of [nutritional] requirements."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the loss of biosynthetic capability is only *fortuitous* and *incidental* and not at all *intrinsic* to the very life-process. And this fact opens wide the gates to future evolutionary possibilities, and the ultimate conquest of the body's food-needs becomes a feasible proposition. Let us see how.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

## WHOM GOD PROTECTS

THE LIFE-STORY OF A SPIRITUAL ADEPT

*(Continued from the July Issue)*

25

PARVATI was so frightened that all her curiosity to see the Yantra was gone. She said, "Terrible ! It is dangerous to keep such a thing. Who knows what calamities it may plunge one in ? I don't want you to keep it with you any longer. Throw it into the Ganges. Aren't you afraid ?"

Arka said, "I have never before seen such a powerful Yantra. Would you care to hear another strange thing about it ? No sooner did the Bhairav hand it over to me and decide to give up his idea of keeping it than he was at once cured of his illness. This happened before our very eyes. He got up and started to walk about freely as if he had never been ill. That is why I did not dare to leave it with him. I have it with me."

Parvati said, "Strange ! I have never heard of such a thing. However, what are you going to do with it now ?"

Arka smiled softly and said, "I must make all arrangements about it and that is why it has, by itself, come into my hands. I cannot rest as long as what is proper has not been done. It is a very living Yantra. It is still more strange to think that it has come to me and I must do all that is necessary for its disposal."

"I am very frightened," said Parvati, "Please tell me what you intend to do with it. I shall not be at peace till I have heard."

"Let us not talk about it now," said Arka.

"I am sure you are hiding from me your intention, thinking I would hinder you," said Parvati. "But don't you see how my anxiety is increasing as you try to conceal ?"

"Possibly," said Arka and kept looking in a thoughtful expression at the heap of rubble that was the ruined temple.

This made Parvati even more anxious. But since the Avadhuta was reluctant to speak out, she decided that she would not in any manner hinder him or heap obstacles in his way, no matter what he decided to do about the Yantra.

As Arka felt her thoughts, he became cheerful. He said, "Listen, Parvati, I can feel tangibly the blessings of the Supreme Mother on me in this affair of the Yantra. Devi, listen—on the second day of Baishakh<sup>1</sup> I shall leave for Tibet through Nepal to return this Yantra to its rightful owner; and when I shall have done so, only then can I rest. Why I call it a blessing from the Divine Mother is that this will give me the occasion and opportunity to visit and know something about that

<sup>1</sup> April.

great region of Yoga and the Tantras—Tibet. I have often spoken to you about Her wonderful methods; now, hear how She has managed this affair. For a long time I have cherished in me the idea to visit Tibet, to study the Tantras in their original home. With that idea I had been to Nepal on my last travels. I have friends there now, two members of the royal family who have taken a liking to me. They, unasked, have promised to facilitate my passage into Tibet whenever it would suit me to go. Don't you see, Parvati, the amazing coincidence of circumstances ? The very moment this Yantra came into my hands, I received the Mother's direction to return it to the owner. I shall have to go to Tibet with this noble intention. The secondary purpose would be to see and know and hear many things there. Tell me, Parvati, She who has brought all this about, made me what I am, is not Her love for me great indeed ?”

Although Parvati felt sorry that he would be leaving again, yet she was comforted by the thought that the Yantra would be disposed of. She said, “Who can possibly hinder you in your good deeds ? But the great work that is going to start here, who will take charge of it ?”

Arka said, “That work is Loknath's, he is the chosen instrument and the World-Mother has endowed him with all powers to prosecute it. Don't worry, all that will run very smoothly, Parvati; be patient for a year and then you will see the vast field of action that will be built up by Loknath's efforts; and, what is more, you will have to be the Great Shakti at the centre—the symbol of the World-Mother.”

Parvati replied, “I know full well who is the power at the centre of this great enterprise; I know, too, whose is the skill in action at the root of all this, you can't deceive me with sweet words. That person could easily have built all this huge affair by setting up that broken brick yonder instead of me as the symbol of the World-Mother : this, too, I know. However, let that be for the moment, I would like to know where you will be.”

Arka said, “I shall remain the same untouchable that I am in society. Do you know how it was in ancient times ? All the untouchables could enter the town during the day and work there but had to retire beyond the walls after sunset. My place will be likewise beyond the centre of activity. I shall occasionally come as the need for it would arise.”

Parvati said, “You have returned after such a long time; it is only a fortnight now, and you are preparing to go away soon. I, on my part, was not ready for it.”

Arka said, “Alas ! Parvati, you have not yet grasped the true meaning of the World-Mother's work nor who is the elected one for it. Can those men, who understand their self-interest only, be ever fit for Her work ? Those who work for Her know that they have no time even to prepare themselves nor do they know what work they have to undertake and when—but they do know that there is no respite for them till the work is done. The real mystery is known to Her alone and only Her very chosen instruments get a faint glimpse of it. Mysterious are Her methods ! Enough for today. Parvati, my best wishes to you all.”

According to his previous promise, he paid Karali Bhairav another visit. The Bhairav was beside himself with joy to see him. After explaining to the Bhairav all that he had to do, Arka told him at last that he was going to Tibet to return the Yantra to its rightful owner. Loknath, in the meanwhile, had come to explain all to the Bhairav who was now thoroughly recovered from his illness. He asked the Avadhuta for precise instructions as regards his own part in the work. The Avadhuta promised to make in consultation with Loknath all the necessary arrangements for the Bhairav. Then he took leave of all those there.

When everything was ready Arkavadhuta came to the ashram temple of Parvati, carrying a packet in his hand.

Parvati said, "I knew that you would come once at least to the ashram to bestow your blessings on us before leaving. What is that you have in your hand?"

Arka said, "The thing that is in this packet, Parvati, will be the cause of rejoicing among the sadhaks of Tibet and, as a result of its reaching Tibet, whatever is glorious in Bharatvarsha<sup>1</sup> will also be firmly established there. There, where I am going, is no dearth of scrolls and scriptures of various shastras, the ancient history of philosophy, Yoga and the Tantras. Probably I shall find there much that cannot be found in our country. But this scroll that you see in my hand is unknown there, unknown to them is the truth contained in it. I spoke to you the other day of the wonderful discovery in Yoga that I received from my Guru. I have made two copies of his discovery, one is meant for the royal library at Nepal, the other I shall carry into Tibet. These will be a gift from Bharatvarsha. The ties of love in the world are strengthened by such mutual interchange of knowledge. Now, wish me a happy journey with a cheerful heart and plunge deep into the joy of your work with a perfect trust in Him."

## 26

Tibet is a vast region but its population is meagre compared to its size. Its provinces are well protected, each having in the middle a bigish town; several of these provinces have more than one town. There are no towns without their big monasteries, which again have many smaller ones under them.

Our tale unfolds now in the principal monastery of a big and ancient town named Tigachchi, situated in central Tibet. The name of this town in maps is given as Shugatse. The chief Lama of the principal monastery in his youth, when he was about twenty-five, went on a pilgrimage to the ancient pilgrim centres of Mongolia. In his travels he visited all the centres and monasteries there; living in each one of them for a few days; he undertook and completed his practices at the proper places; finally he came to the principal monastery at Urga as a guest.

Urga is an ancient town, renowned as a centre of learning and spiritual practices.

<sup>1</sup> India.

The chief Lama of the monastery was a realised Yogi and a pundit of a very high order. His Yogic power was well known there. When this great Yogi noted the ardent aspiration for Yoga in the young Lama from Tigachchi he was extremely pleased and instructed him in several practices of a high level. He was still more happy to see that the youth, acting according to the instructions, quickly assimilated them. This gave him the certainty of the youth's success in the future, and now he initiated him in the most secret and powerful mantra of Tara. As soon as the mantra was given some extraordinary indications in the youth charmed him still more, so much so that he gave him his bejewelled Yantra of siddhi as a sign of his appreciation and love.

The Yogi, before showing the youth how to use the Yantra, extracted first a promise from him that he must never show this Yantra to anyone, till he himself had attained full realisation. After his realisation he should give it to some sadhak fit for the Tara practices, and he in turn should part with it as soon as his realisation was attained. This was the rule as regards that Yantra of siddhi. He had pointed out that the central ruby was more valuable than a kingdom and therefore should never be detached from the Yantra as then the power of the Yantra would inevitably disappear. He had also said that none but a sadhak of considerable power of Yoga would be able to keep it; if by chance someone took it by force, disaster would come upon him, even death might result.

After three years of strenuous practising, he obtained permission to return home. On the eve of his departure the Guru held him that if by any misadventure he were dispossessed of the Yantra, it would come back to him again and lead him to his full realisation. He gave the youth many valuable ancient books as a token of his love and bade him adieu. In this way, the youthful Lama returned to Tigachchi after five years. The news of his long travels spread to all corners, even very distant ones, wherever there were those who practised Yoga. In a few months after his return, while he was intensely concentrated in his practices, he was summoned to Lhasa by the Dalai Lama. It was also known that he had brought some valuable ancient books from Urga. The Dalai Lama was eager to meet a Lama of such vision and learning. As no one in Tibet can ignore the summons of the Dalai Lama, he was obliged to go.

Lhasa was a journey of a month and a half from Tigachchi. Accompanied by the messenger of the Dalai Lama and five attendants, he started on horseback for Lhasa; a donkey was carrying the books and his necessaries. The bejewelled Yantra he hid near his heart among the clothes he wore.

A week's journey still ahead of him to Lhasa saw him with his companions as the guests at a monastery in a fortress named Chir Lang. That very day a band of robbers had encamped in a field a little way off below the monastery. These robbers disguising themselves as traders in wool used to rob people all around the area.

The attendants of the Lama from Tigachchi visited the encampment of the robbers for some drinks and merry-making, because in the monastery there was no



possibility of such revelries. Drinking was prohibited in a religious establishment. These attendants mingled freely with the robbers, and in their cups they divulged to the robber-chief all they knew of the journey.

The next morning the Lama set out again with his party; the robbers too struck their tents and followed. On the second day in a wide field they attacked. The robbers were twelve in number. The five attendants, as soon as the attack came, surrendered themselves without any fight at all. Consequently, the Lama was looted of all he had. After taking all their monies, the robbers stripped them of all their clothes, the five attendants included; and, taking all from them, not forgetting the donkey as well, they tied them up and left. All they left behind were the books.

It later came to be known that these robbers were Muslims from Sikkim; it is well-known that Tibetan robbers rarely attacked Lamas. Succour came two days later, when they were nearly half-dead. In that miserable condition they reached Lhasa with only the books and scrolls. The Dalai Lama did all he could to capture the robbers but to no avail. In this manner the bejewelled Yantra fell into the hands of robbers of a different religion.

Eighteen years after this incident, Arka Avadhuta arrived in Lhasa after travelling all over Nepal for two months, at the beginning of the month of Ashara.<sup>1</sup> The Government of Nepal had sent him with a Nepalese merchant who had business at Lhasa, and had given him a letter of introduction to a monastery close to Pochila.

The chief of the monastery was all attention when he came to know that he was an Indian Yogi. For one whole year he concentrated on learning the Tibetan language, without even divulging the purpose of his visit, and during that period won the hearts of all there by his excellent behaviour. Everyone in the monastery was astonished at his command of the language in such a short time.

The head Lama had a great respect for Sanskrit and was delighted to find Arka a vastly learned pundit and a profound Jnani. In Tibet a Yogi is esteemed much more than a Sannyasin. Tyagis and Yogis are frequently met with there. Tyagis are more numerous, and it is they who live in monasteries and teach and preach also, and are given large sums of money for that purpose. The Yogis rarely live in monasteries, though they are never restricted or prevented if they do. However, the head Lama, seeing the Avadhuta's remarkable knowledge of a new method of Yoga still unknown to him, became his disciple. Gradually his new truths of Yoga became a subject of deep discussions among the Lamas of Tibet. In this way, the news of Arka's Yoga and his powers reached the ears of the Dalai Lama. Soon a written order from the Dalai Lama reached the head Lama, commanding that he should come to Potala as soon as he could and bring the Indian Yogi with him. This was what the Avadhuta was waiting for.

As soon as the Dalai Lama saw him, he was attracted by his handsome looks, then was still more charmed by his conversation and surprised at his marvellous

<sup>1</sup> Mid-June.

command of the Tibetan language. He was still further amazed when he realised the extent of his sadhana and profound knowledge of all the Shastras, specially Yoga. He then called together a big assembly of learned teachers in dharma and arranged for a discussion between them and the Avadhuta. In that very assembly Arka solved, in such a facile manner, three complex problems of Buddhism that his reputation as a great master was recognised not only by the other Lamas but also by the Lord of all Tibet, the Dalai Lama. From that day the Dalai Lama began to address him at times as his friend, at others as his instructor. The discussion of that day lasted for more than three hours. At the moment of dispersing, the Dalai Lama to honour him presented him with the full uniform of a Tibetan head Lama. The Avadhuta at first accepted it with great humility, then touching it with his forehead returned it and said, "I shall never forget your kindness in my life but my Guru strictly forbade me ever to accept anything as a present from anyone, as such presents may make me proud as regards my personal knowledge, wisdom or saintliness. Thus it is impossible for me to accept this."

There was such a powerful ring of truth in his words that the Dalai Lama immediately grasped the idea. He at once admitted him to be the greatest Tyagi he had ever met and bowed to him in great veneration.

*(To be continued)*

PROMODE KUMAR CHATTERJI

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

# ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

*(Continued from the April issue)*

## METHOD AND STYLE (*Contd.*)

Now we shall examine how Milton and Sri Aurobindo describe a mood. Here is anger in Milton :

So frowned the mighty combatants that Hell  
Grew darker at their frown; so matched they stood.

And here is amazement :

Adam, soon as he heard  
The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed,  
Astonished stood and blank, while horror chill  
Ran through his veins and all his joints relaxed.

Also other passions are depicted :

Nor only tears  
Began to rise, high passions—anger, hate,  
Mistrust, suspicion, discord—and shook sore  
Their inward state of mind, calm regions once  
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent.

The first two examples are vivid but the last lacks vigour and reads like a poetical statement instead of a graphic presentation. Milton excels in describing violent moods; but he is not so successful in finer or subtler ones.

The amazement of delight in Sri Aurobindo runs :

O Thou who com'st to me out of Time's silences;  
Yet thy voice has wakened my heart to an unknown bliss—

and love :

She felt her being flow into him as in waves  
A river pours into a mighty sea—

and fear :

She in her dreadful knowledge was alone.

Still another mood :

She like a pantheress leaped upon his words  
And carried them into her cavern heart.

And Savitri facing death :

All grief and fear were dead within her now  
And a great calm had fallen. The wish to lessen  
His suffering, the impulse that opposes pain  
Were the one mortal feeling left. It passed :  
Griefless and strong she waited like the gods.

This is not only a mood, it is a state of soul. In fact, all that Sri Aurobindo describes are not fleeting moods; they are expressions of conditions of soul and deeper life, that feel the passing wave of moods like something vibrant and something that can inaugurate a great event. Milton's moods are more linked to the earth and hence they are more gross. He does not penetrate deep enough like Sri Aurobindo to feel the inner core of a mood. He is too preoccupied with the external aspect to have room for subtler vibrations. Had he the Aurobindonian power of penetration, his characters would live like living personalities, having a distinct soul, and he would give a sense of reality far beyond that which a physical or a mental presentation can.

More than description are the words themselves the very bases of all poetry, the stones of sculpture, the colours of the artist. Upon the choice of them depends the success or the failure of the poet. Words in themselves are neutral; but when used rightly and in their proper place they can wield great power as instruments of expression, as revealing moods, or states of poignancy of feeling or modes of the intensity of poetical creativity. They embody something elemental in their vibrations and can, by their manifestation, call down superhuman vibrations. That is why the Veda calls the word the primal power, a god.

Now we shall examine how words are used by the two poets, and the effects they achieve. Take Milton's

Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs  
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze  
Far round illumined Hell.

Mark how each word is carefully chosen. Each adjective is most apt; the arrange-

ment of vowels and consonants goes on to express the effect of wonder, power and splendour. If Milton had used "Thousands" in place of "Millions", both the tonal effect and the word-suggestion would not have achieved that finality of effect. "Flaming swords" suggests a heavenly origin. But any other epithet would not have borne the same vigour. Suppose he wrote :

Unnumbered vigorous blades, drawn from the thighs  
Of splendid Cherubim; the titan flare  
All round enlightened Hell.

These lines are not bad; but they do not convey the same effect as Milton's original lines. Here are other four lines :

To sit in hateful office here confined,  
Inhabitant of Heaven and heavenly-born—  
Here in perpetual agony and pain,  
With terrors and with clamours compassed round.

There is a roll in these lines. This is due to words that are inevitable in their places and hold the exact shades of sense—all go to create a particular effect of pathos. To "brood" would not convey the same as "sit". "Hateful" is very suggestive; "distasteful" or "abhorred" is either too weak or too strong to be in this position. "Office" has a peculiar sense which "condition" or "state" cannot give. "Confined" conveys a sense of imprisonment, but suggests a state created by the speaker's own will and not as an imposition. "Inhabitant", a four-syllabic word coming after shorter words, conveys a sense of difference, a sense of an alien. So too "perpetual" is a very suggestive and apt word and, joined with "agony" and "pain", stands out in contrast to the preceding "heaven" and "heavenly-born."

Milton is very conscious, as a poet, of the value and power of the words, as we see in the examples given above. But he is most effective while speaking of proper names and he uses them with great skill. The proper names assume an exotic beauty, adding a rare charm. He discloses in them a vibration that we ordinarily miss or pass by; we are not drawn to their real beauty of tone. This Milton by his skilful use discovers for us. Thus he speaks of all who

Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisonde,  
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabbia.

The roll of sounds and the vibrations evoke a strange and remote atmosphere. It

makes of historical and legendary hell a living citadel of romance. Here is another example :

Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate;  
 Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep;  
 Cocytus, named of lamentation loud,  
 Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegeton,  
 Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.

Milton conjures up the atmosphere by proper epithets that increase the power and significance of the names. The word "Styx" seems a cruel word, its hard consonants recall hate. "Acheron" appears to be, by its open vowels, reminiscent of sorrow, the choking sound of grief. "Cocytus" carries a sharp yet prolonged burst of suffering breath. "Phlegeton" reminds one simultaneously of fire and water by its fricative and cutting consonants followed by a nasal sound. All these names he had culled from Grecian legend, adding a fresh beauty to the Biblical lore. Now here:

The unchanging blue reveals its spacious thought.

This example from Sri Aurobindo evokes a different atmosphere. There is a natural felicity in this line. Suppose he had written thus :

The constant sky unveils its measureless thought

I have kept the meaning the same—but the new words do not call down that atmosphere. This proves that no thought-substance alone creates great poetry. It also proves the inevitability of the words; when we get the right ones, the greatest poetry is created. Here again :

He seemed the wideness of a boundless sky,  
 He seemed the passion of a sorrowless earth,  
 He seemed the burning of a world-wide sun.  
 Two looked upon each other, soul saw soul.

Here there is no such exotic beauty as Milton evokes. The whole passage reads like a great spiritual discovery. Each word seems to bear a weight of divine felicity; each word, even in its utter simplicity, opens up a world of undiscovered beauty. If Milton uses his words like a great and conscious craftsman, a connoisseur of tonal values, the value of vibrations, Sri Aurobindo uses them as a prophet; he not only uses the magical tones, but touches the source from where words have their birth, thus getting something primal, something veridical and rare. Yet the simplicity seems magical. The unsophistication is garbed with a heavenly felicity. He does not need any verbiage, any sonorous diction to create a lofty effect.

The words Milton uses are chosen for their tonal content and he masses them together and groups them for their music and effect. But Sri Aurobindo does not choose his words : they come to him packed with the power, the bliss, the grandeur, the richness of another world. He invokes them, and makes silent his vessel for their reception.

How is the style of these two poets a departure from other poets ? We shall examine this briefly. Here is Tennyson :

The great band  
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,  
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,  
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock  
By night, with noises of the Northern sea.

Compared to Milton, these lines lack the grandeur and the severity. They appear facile; Tennyson's poetry does not soar, it lacks the music in which we revel in Milton. With strength and splendour gone, blank verse loses half its dignity. Even the intense lyricism is lacking which can compensate the loss of grandeur.

In comparison to Sri Aurobindo, Tennyson's example appears lacking in depth and intensity. It seems to skim the surface and not dive deep to give us the pearl of felicity that Sri Aurobindo possesses.

Wordsworth, the godson of Milton, wrote his blank verse thus :

Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
Beneath him :—Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces could he read  
Unutterable love.

The beauty of Wordsworth lies in his thought and his description of Nature. Here he is more deep than Tennyson. Compared to Milton, he can stand his ground by his contemplative strength and his love of Nature. He has no power; but he attempts sublimity. As blank-verse form, his poetry lacks the architectural hand of Milton, the conscious hand of the artist. Here he allows the thoughts to lead him and form becomes a secondary matter. But in Milton there is balance of form and substance. Also the physical element that is in Milton is absent in Wordsworth.

Wordsworth stands between the spirituality of Sri Aurobindo and the rationality of Milton. Yet Sri Aurobindo is nearer to Wordsworth than Milton in his subjective approach to things. Wordsworth's style is that of a contemplator, Milton's is that of a conscious artist, Sri Aurobindo's that of a seer. In greatness either of thought or style or form Tennyson does not come near to these three poets. Here is Shelley :

Mother of this unfathomable world !  
 Favour my solemn song, for I have loved  
 Thee ever and thee only; I have watched  
 Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,  
 And my heart ever gazes on the depth  
 Of thy deep mysteries.

Shelley comes nearest to Sri Aurobindo and is farthest from Milton. His approach is that of an intuitive poet, a half-way to a seer. Here too he is not conscious of his form and does not employ it as a conscious medium. But he is not so apparently loose like Wordsworth or facile like Tennyson. One example from Matthew Arnold :

But the majestic river floated on  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved  
 Rejoicing through the hushed Chorasmian waste,  
 Under the solitary moon...

This is Victorian blank verse at its best. There is felicity of description and a beauty belonging to the romantic order. Arnold too is not so austere as Milton, but nevertheless has a capacity for description. But we miss the heroic grandeur which is replaced by a depth of feeling and a happy artistry. Arnold is deeper—and he comes more near in profundity to Sri Aurobindo. As an artist employing the blank-verse form, he is conscious of the form and uses it with care. But the mastery and craftsmanship we find in Milton are absent. Let us pass to Keats :

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
 Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star,  
 Sat gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,  
 Still as the silence round about his lair;  
 Forest on forest hung about his head  
 Like cloud on cloud.

What strikes one is the difference of approach : if Milton is grand, Keats is entrancing; one has the intensity of power, the other has the intensity of beauty. Both are great; but the greatness of both are poles apart. But while Milton's verse has the breath of a true epic, the poetry of Keats is essentially lyrical. This comment holds true for Shelley and Wordsworth as well. Length does not determine the real characteristic of an epic. It is the approach and the style, the subject treated and the way of treating it. Wordsworth's poems are long—but they are of a contemplative nature and do not encompass a global subject. His approach is personal; this takes away his claim to epic poetry. Tennyson is voluminous, but his style is lax and the



narrative quality is too narrow in scope (dealing with English heroes only) and this debars us from calling his *Idylls of the King* an epic. His verse seems undignified and lacking in self-restraint. Shelley and Keats are too romantic and purely lyrical; they never had the ambition to write an epic. Their approach and method were not suited for this purpose. Matthew Arnold has written admirable long poems, but they are mere episodes and not concerned with any event that changed fate or created history.

Thus we come back to the two poets we started with. We brought in these poets and their short examples purposely to show the difference of approach, the difference in style and the difference in managing the blank-verse form.

Sri Aurobindo, we have seen, conforms to the standards of the above poets, not to those of Milton, and yet he is the only poet who can be successfully compared with Milton owing to his original blank-verse style, his word-music, his great artistry of seeing all things from a subjective viewpoint, his grandeur, his felicity and lastly his world theme that is at once cosmic and intensely personal. He is lyrical on one side and epical on the other but avoids the heroic drum-beats of Milton. This blending of two opposite methods is his special feature. Milton can never be lyrical. His heroic approach debars this. But Sri Aurobindo can be lyrical without losing his epic dignity. Milton is severe as a rule and on this is based his element of strength. But Sri Aurobindo is ever felicitous, and on his felicity are based all other elements: beauty, music, grandeur and power. Both use words for a special end and both differ from other poets in their approach and style. But the chief difference lies in the rationality of Milton and the spirituality of Sri Aurobindo. This rationality is based on physicality, and objectivity is its aim. The spirituality of Sri Aurobindo does not debar physicality as such, but avoids its grossness; also it encompasses in its scope all phases of life, mind and consciousness. This is the fundamental difference of the two. Milton has attempted to be universal; but his universality is limited by the limitation of technical knowledge of his age and the sensuous physicality which, along with Christian scriptural lore, he terms truth. Sri Aurobindo's universality is the universality of consciousness and spirit and he is not limited by any religion or idea, the objective knowledge of the age, the dependence on mental reasoning, or deductive logic. In style he is utterly simple and this simplicity is not monotonous. His effects are not manoeuvred or guided by the law of rhetoric. His inspiration creates the needed effect, creates the necessary variety. In style Milton is sonorous. His mastery of language, metre and his awareness of the tonal value of words create the heroic style—a thing that never has been equalled in its austerity, power and grandeur by any other English poet. Only Sri Aurobindo, at the other pole of felicity, by his sustained role of overhead poetry equals him and surpasses him in sheer flights of inspiration, in heights of grandeur, in the sweep of his magnificence and delight.

(*To be continued*)

## THE TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS

(Continued from the June issue)

QUEEN *Atossa* in *The Persians* comes to the Elders' chorus to narrate a dream to them, which torments her :

And care is plucking out my heart,  
O friends and faithfuls, to your ears  
I trust a tale, not mine alone; the tale  
Of one beset with fears  
Lest fate, our master, overturn, on sweeping  
With relentless stride  
The splendours that Darius reared  
When, sure, some god was at his side.

It concerns her son, king Xerxes, who is away from Persia, busy fighting against the Greeks. The way Aeschylus portrays the cares of a worried widowed mother is rather modern in the expression :

I rose and quickly in a flowing stream  
Cleaned me, and with an incense-bearing train  
Approached our altar-stair, to pour amain  
To them that avert Evil their full meed  
Of offering. They it is whom now we need.  
When, lo, an eagle in the air, which fled  
To Apollo's temple ! Dumb I stood with dread...

Soon after, when the Messenger enters and breaks down in tears, the Queen remains silent and lets him recover a little as he talks with the chorus. Then after a long time she can no more control herself and asks,

Long have I held my peace, as one struck dumb  
With sorrow. When so vast a thing is come  
Upon us, who can tell it, or who dare  
To ask the story ?...Yet since man must bear  
What the gods send, be still, thou, and unroll—  
Albeit thy tears yet run—thine evil scroll  
To the utter end...

When she hears that Xerxes himself yet lives, she exclaims :

That word is joy to all my house, a bright  
Gleam, as of morning after starless night.

But, as gradually the Messenger artfully unfolds the disastrous story, the Queen remarks,

Alas, thy tale is as a mountain steep  
Of grief; yea, shame and lamentation deep  
In Persia...

And further, stricken with more of it,

Ah me, a flood of suffering deep and wide  
Hath broken on Persia, yea, and all the east.

When the tale is over, the Queen can no more bear it, though she shows no outward manifestation of her grief, and leaves instructions to comfort King Xerxes and lead him inside if he returns while she is gone, and she retires into the Palace with her retinue.

The Queen is deeply religious and devoted to the memory of her husband, the late King Darius. Very soon she re-enters with only two attendants, perhaps not as Queen this time but as the loyal widow of the late King, proud of his greatness, looking up to him as the guardian spirit of the empire. As she re-enters, we hear her revealing her own psychological state deeply concerned with the evil that has befallen :

He who hath walked the hard ways of the world  
Well knoweth how, when once the storm is hurled  
Upon him, man sees terrors everywhere,  
Even as before, when fate was flowing fair,  
He deemed for ever the same wind would blow.  
Where'er I turn my world is full of woe.  
Against mine eyes shapes of God's anger stare,  
And in mine ears ring voices of despair,  
Such depth of fear hath cast all reason out.

And to appease God's anger and the late King's possible displeasure she has to invoke the spirit of her husband who serves as a sort of intermediary perhaps between her and the Will of God, somewhat in the manner of an oracle :

Therefore without my chariots, and without  
The pride I came with, from the house I bring

To my son's sire in peace this offering,  
 Meet to appease the dim hearts of the dead :  
 White milk and sweet from kine unblemishèd,  
 Pale honey that the blossom-thieves distill;  
 With water blended from a virgin rill;  
 And here, true offspring of a mother wild,  
 An ancient vine's bright essence undefiled;  
 And she whose leaves makes spring of all the year,  
 The olive, lo, her fragrant fruit is here,  
 And Earth's fair children, flowers, engarlanded.

The enumeration of the offerings does not only show us the exact way they used to be placed and the exact items prescribed by the rites, but also shows us behind each item the presence of such a deal of love and reverence and care from a humble wife, a dutiful queen, and an affectionate mother praying to her husband for the good of her son. The delicately chosen details of the offering are so well woven that we are reminded of our own Oriental rituals, both in their sanctity of emotion and in their tender conscientiousness.

The King's Ghost rises slowly from his tomb. The Elders prostrate themselves before him. And he, perhaps conforming to a King's duty, addresses them first of all;

O ye among the true supreme in truth,  
 Elders of Persia, comrades of my youth,  
 What ails my land ?  
     Why groans she thus forlorn,  
 Her brow sore bruised and her body torn ?  
     .....Hard is the road I tread;  
 Hard every way, and They that hold the dead  
 Have swifter hands to grasp than to let go.  
 Seeing I have some power among them, lo,  
 I am here. But haste. I may not linger late.  
 What strange affliction boweth down my state ?

This shows what a mighty King was Darius in his life-time : even among the sentinels of the dead he has retained "some power". And we can very well see that quite a lot of his wisdom too, as he philosophically says,

Affliction is man's lot, and needs must  
     come to things of mortal birth.  
 Evils abundant from the seas are born,  
     and evils from the earth,  
 To fall upon mankind, as life draws  
     onward in its lengthening span.

Next we have a conversation between the King and the Queen. Darius, surprised to hear the purport of Atossa's visit, exclaims, amazed at his son Xerxes' rash decision :

And this he wrought ! With prison bars  
he curbed the living bosoms ?

The Queen replies,

'Tis so. Methinks there wrought with him  
some daemon that he ventured thus.

And Darius confirms it,

Surely, some daemon great in power  
to shed such darkness o'er his thought !

Later he says,

...truth,  
A young man's thoughts are but the  
foams of youth...

The charge I gave him Xerxes hath forgot.

And he advises :

No more against the regions of the Greek  
Send forth your hosts, whate'er their force  
and might.  
For Earth herself fights with him in his might.

The reason for the last statement is :

Numbers too great by famine she will slay.

Gradually, before sinking beneath the Tomb, the tone of Darius' Ghost becomes intenser as he advises,

And piles of dead dumb warning shall advance  
Even to our children's children, that the eye  
Of mortal man lift not his hope too high,

Pride in her flower makes full the barren ears  
 Of Ate, and no harvest hath but tears.  
     ...Nor let any man,  
 Scorning the lot wherewith his life began,  
 For lust of what he hath not, wreck this bliss.  
 Zeus sitteth judge above us. His it is  
 To check the uncurbed dreams of man, and weight  
 Is in his arm to bend the crooked straight.  
 Therefore do ye, being warned of God to move  
 In wisdom's way, advise my son and prove  
 With grave admonishment, that he may still  
 The voice of pride, nor war against God's will.

Along with the duty of a king, he is aware of this duty toward his wife and his son too. He fondly addresses Atossa, "thou, mine aged and beloved, thou Mother of Xerxes," and asks her :

Go, comfort him. From none but thee, be sure,  
 Counsel or comfort will his heart endure.

And then, his parting word to the Elders,

And ye, old friends, even in this hour of wrath  
 Grant your soul day by day, what she may crave  
 Of joy. Man takes no riches to the grave.

Then the Ghost disappears.

And am I fallen, O woe is me,  
 In this dark coil of misery  
     Pathless ? O Fate,  
 How hast thou trod beneath thy hate  
 The neck of Persia's chivalry !  
 What cometh yet of grief to bear ?  
 My limbs are melted under me..."

With this state of mind, enters Xerxes the present King, defeated, lamenting, accepting generously the blame for his country's defeat. 'The invasion of Hellas is a crime, the crime of *Hubris*, dark but heroic; the crime of one who claims to be, for some fantastic reason or no reason at all, above human kind and above the law.' This, according to Aeschylus, is the sin of sins, 'the forbidden fruit always tempting the proud man to his destruction'. For the truth is against him; he is not what he imagines. He

is but a man like other men, and above him is the eternal law of God. 'One can hardly help reflecting', says Murray, 'how deeply our world of today is overshadowed by the presence of that same inhuman *Hubris*, and how it still sits wondering whether it dare believe as the Greeks did.'

*(To be continued)*

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJI

---

## MOTHER DIVINE

MOTHER Divine,  
Sun of heaven,  
Sea of Bliss,  
I pray to You,

Mother Divine,  
Love of my heart,  
Beauty of my eyes,  
I offer to You.

Mother Divine,  
Force of all life  
Light of all mind,  
I work for You.

P. AGARWAL

# THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

(Continued from the July issue)

## XII. LORD CURZON AND HIS WORK (I)

WHEN Lord Curzon took over the reins of government in 1898, Indian education came in for a drastic change. Whether it was to outlive his reforming zeal, only the future could show. But one thing was clear to discerning Indians even then. Whatever the specious colours he wished to give to his measures in this field, as in every other, his sole underlying purpose was to strengthen and perpetuate the British hold on India. Here he failed of his purpose; for he had not reckoned with a Power that was soon to make its appearance and upset all his plans in spite of their apparent momentary success. This lends a peculiar interest to his story.

He had come to India with the avowed purpose of civilising the benighted East, and education was to be a potent instrument. What he found on arrival was that his predecessors had bungled the whole business. Perhaps they should never have given India an English education. "There exists," he says—the quotations here are taken from his official biographies—"a powerful school of opinion which does not hide its conviction that the experiment was a mistake, and that its result has been disaster. When Erasmus was reproached with having laid the egg from which came forth the Reformation, 'Yes,' he replied, 'but I laid a hen's egg, and Luther has hatched a fighting cock.' This, I believe, is pretty much the view of a good many of the critics of English education in India." But the "fighting cock" in this particular instance was largely the product of Curzon's own policy. If Indian nationalists changed their methods from supine protest and petition to active Swadeshi, Curzon was to blame in large part.

Nothing seemed to him to be right. "As soon as I looked about me, but little investigation was required to show, in the words of a familiar quotation, that there was something rotten in the State of Denmark. For years, education in India had been muddling along, with no one to look after it at headquarters or to observe its symptoms.... There was a vagueness as to fundamental principles; slackness had crept in, standards had depreciated, and what was wanting was the impulse and movement of a new life...." The "slackness" was really the *laissez faire* policy of the Government in India, in keeping with the general trend in contemporary England, allowing education to develop through private enterprise with an occasional guidance from the authorities in charge. The "new life" needed was to be provided by a series of Government regulations intended to put a stranglehold on nationalist aspirations. Curzon was to be the rejuvenator.

But, before he could act, he must get the facts correct. He therefore called a con-



ference of experts, in 1901. The experts met in Simla for about a fortnight and produced a report which was to form the basis of the projected change. There was, as might be expected, no Indian expert available, and Curzon had to find an excuse. "When I read the proceedings of the conferences and meetings that are always going on in all parts of India, I am far from deprecating the intellectual ferment to which this bears witness....But I sometimes think that if fewer resolutions were passed and a little more resolution were shown....the progress of India would be more rapid." The rapidity of this progress was now fully assured by the Simla conference of non-Indian experts; they passed a meagre hundred and fifty resolutions and the Viceroy proceeded to act on them.

It is not our purpose here to discuss in detail the various measures he adopted in the different fields of education. They covered nearly all the fields, primary, secondary, college and university, and touched on practically all aspects of education including the moral and religious training of pupils. But an outline may be helpful.

The first thing necessary to save Indian education from ruin was to appoint someone "to look after it at headquarters" and "to observe its symptoms". This was the easiest thing to do: a post of Director General of Education was created and one Mr. Orange was appointed to the post. What his qualifications were we are not able to judge. Perhaps he was not an educationist at all, for all that we know; Curzon himself had declared, "I don't want an Imperial Education Department, packed with pedagogues."

He had also said in that connection, "I do not want anything that will turn the Universities into a Department of the State, or fetter the Colleges and Schools with bureaucratic handcuffs." But this is precisely what he now set about to do. The Indian Universities Commission of 1902, consisting mainly of non-Indian "experts"—it had only one Indian member, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court—hurriedly toured the country and produced a report which formed the basis of the Indian Universities Act of 1904. The ostensible purpose of the Act was to remodel the Indian universities so as to make them worthy of the name. As Curzon had said, "If, then, we have got not the ideal University, and are not in a position by a stroke of the pen to create it, at least let us render it possible in the future." The Act tried to make it possible in the future by authorising certain changes in their organisation. They were now empowered to impart instruction, in addition to conducting examinations as in the past. The size of the Senates was reduced to reasonable proportions and the principle of election was introduced. The Syndicate came into existence as the main executive agency of the university. All this was to make the universities more efficient and popular. But this was coupled with a new proviso that the regulations framed by the universities could be freely amended by the Government, who also reserved the right to frame new regulations which the Senates must accept. In other words, the Indian universities now became practically a department of Government.

Nobody believed that the older universities would ever undertake all the teaching at either the under-graduate or the post-graduate level; Calcutta, for example,

had also to look after Burma, Assam, Bihar and Orissa. The bulk of this work would have to be performed by the affiliated colleges. The Universities Act took care of them too. Most of these colleges were run by Indians and neither the universities (as examining bodies) nor the Government had so far paid much attention to what was actually done in these colleges. Curzon discovered to his horror that many of these institutions were developing into seedbeds of sedition; unless the rot was stopped in time, he could not hope to save the Empire. The Universities Act now provided that all affiliated colleges must be subjected to regular inspections by the Syndicate of the University. Stricter conditions of affiliation were at the same time laid down, and the ultimate decision as to whether a particular college should continue to be affiliated would now rest with the Government. If in any instance the Government was satisfied that the continued affiliation of a college would be "injurious to the interests of education or discipline", the affiliation could be withdrawn.

The same policy was adopted with regard to secondary schools. Hitherto, any school could send up candidates for the entrance examination of the University, and neither the latter nor the Government bothered to see what sort of school it was; the Government came into the picture only if the school wanted financial help. But a large number of young pupils were now found to be indulging in patriotic sentiments; some of them even ventured to take part in "seditious" acts. This had to be stopped at once. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1904) saw to this part of Curzon's programme. The Resolution said, "Whether these schools are managed by public authority or private persons, and whether they receive aid from public funds or not, the Government is bound in the interests of the community to see that the education provided in them is sound." It must among other things satisfy itself that "due provision has been made for the discipline of the pupils"; the teachers too must be "suitable as regards character, number, and qualifications". Any school not fulfilling these conditions to the satisfaction of Government, and the Government could always trust to police reports for finding grounds for dissatisfaction, would not only not be "recognised" for the purpose of the university entrance examination and forfeit any grant-in-aid it might be receiving; it would find it impossible to continue at all. For, under the more stringent regulations now prescribed by the universities, no unrecognised school could grant a valid transfer certificate to its pupils enabling the latter to join a recognised institution.

Thus were the colleges and schools fettered with bureaucratic handcuffs as never before. This was one of the prime factors in the movement for National Education during the first two decades of this century, to which we shall turn later.

*(To be continued)*

SANAT K. BANERJI

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Indian Literature (Vol. IX, No. 2, 1966)** : Editorial Board : Zakir Hussin, Humayun Kabir, K. R. Kripalani; Editor : Lokenath Bhattacharya. Published quarterly by Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the present issue of this journal to all lovers of literature. For, rarely do readers come across such a number of select articles within the covers of a single periodical these days.

This issue, for instance, begins with its *pièce de resistance*, a section containing writings on and by Toru Dutt (1856-1877) who, according to E. J. Thompson, "remains one of the most astonishing women that ever lived, a woman whose place is with Sappho and Emily Bronte, fiery and unconquerable soul as they." Everybody knows that though Toru died at a young age and wrote in English and French only, even so seasoned a critic like Edmund Gosse hailed 'this fragile exotic blossom of songs' not without unusual warmth: "Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who at the age of twenty-one and in languages separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth." In 1894, Sri Aurobindo in his *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee* wrote apropos of the Young Bengal highlights, "And as was their reading, so was their life. They were giants and did everything gigantically. They read hugely, wrote hugely, thought hugely..." And specifically about Toru Dutt he wrote, "...that unhappy and immature genius, who unfortunately wasted herself on a foreign language and perished while yet little more than a girl, had, I have been told, a knowledge of Greek. At any rate she could write English with perfect grace and correctness and French with energy and power. Her novels gained the ear of the French public and her songs breathed fire into the hearts of Frenchmen in their fearful struggle with Germany."

Alokeranjan Dasgupta, the renowned poet and essayist, admirably brings out what I would call almost the essence of Toru Dutt's literary genius in his article. Speaking of Toru's *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, he raises "a legitimate problem : whether a translator is a creator", and writes, "But it was Toru, the first of major Indian writers, who proved that the translation is not an isolated phenomenon but an index of personality meaningful in its relatedness with a greater heritage, cultural and literary. She gave a status to translation." Himself a translator of merit, Dasgupta snatches a grateful smile from all those who have experimented with translation as a challenging medium of art. He has given afresh a status to translators at large.

Also, talking about Toru's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindusthan*, Dasgupta further shows the power and promise in Toru's original writings too, and says, "Toru's original poems in the narrative form are reinforced with this uncanny spirituality. The episodic garb she chose as her objective correlative was to express this

vision." And, according to Dasgupta, "the most characteristic testimony of Toru's genius is her letters to Mlle Clarisse Bader, the French authoress, and Mary Martin, her English friend." Taking into consideration the two Mary Martin letters reprinted in this issue and from the extracts of Toru's letters quoted by Mlle Bader in her preface to Toru's novel, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (which I translated and serialised in 1963 in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* under the new title *Marguerite*), I do not think Dasgupta is far from the truth.

The above mentioned two letters are followed by three of Toru's poems ('Jogadeya Uma' 'The Lotus' and 'Our Casuarina Tree'). I wish the editor had added a few more poems to this section, especially 'Buttoo', that long poem on Ekalavya.

The very title 'The Writings of Toru Dutt' on page 33 explains the purpose of the article, and I really feel thankful to the writer, Dipendranath Mitra, for having taken so much pains to furnish us with accurate data blended with critical observations here and there about Toru's works. But I doubt if Toru's novel *Le Journal de Mlle. d'Arvers* was published by the Paris firm Didier; as far as I can recall, it was published by La Librairie Académique. Also Mitra is not aware of the fact that this novel has been translated into English too, by the same translator who published a Bengali rendering of it in 1958.

Next we enter the general section of this quarterly, with two excellent studies on Puran Singh (the great pathfinder in Punjabi literature) and on Manoj Basu (one of the sovereign story-writers in Bengali literature). The writers of these two studies are respectively Balbir Singh and Bhavani Mukhopadhyaya, both writers of distinction. The study on Puran Singh is well supplemented by excerpts from his autobiography *On Paths of Life*, so little known to the average reader; in the portion under 'Japanese Reminiscences (1900-1904)', the writer has recorded events of great historic and cultural interest like his meeting with the illustrious Okakura Kakuzo, the father of the motto 'Asia is One' and friend of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath. There is a sequel to the study of Manoj Basu too : a short story by this maestro, *The Truth He Couldn't Tell*, translated from the Bengali by a genius of no mean repute—Sachindra Lal Ghosh, whose translations too, especially of Saratchandra Chatterjee's novels, have gained considerable popularity.

There is a fine poem by Mikhail Lukonin, translated by Valentina Jacque, 'Wells of Loneliness'. Here are a few lines :

Vast spaces spread ahead  
And feeling gay and grateful  
We too keep walking on  
As those who tread on earth  
With tiresome flight behind.

Prof. Amalendu Bose's article on 'Teaching of Shakespeare' touches upon a serious aspect of our methods of teaching —not only of Shakespeare, but of literature

in general. Speaking from thirty years of experience at various college levels, the learned professor suggests that by turning the students' attention to the *actability* of the Shakespearean plays, the teachers and professors would not only develop a quick and genuine response in them to Shakespeare but also help them think *originally* about the plays, instead of depending helplessly on the professional 'notes' that make the understanding dry and much too mechanical. This will no doubt be a resurrection of William Shakespeare, as well as a serious factor in reforming our system of education.

Had L. H. Ajwani's article 'Kavi Bewas: A Landmark in Sindhi Poetry' been also followed by a few poems from the poet's pen, the readers could have entered deeper into the atmosphere of the poet's Ideal.

S. N. Bhattacharya's portrayal of Gandhiji as a journalist, a report of the Writer's Conference in Kerala by Gurumukh Singh Jeet and the Book Review section are at once interesting and informative.

On the whole, this issue of *Indian Literature* leads me to assume enthusiastically that in course of time it is likely to become an indispensable companion both to readers and writers. Particularly under the editorship of Dr. Lokenath Bhattacharya this journal is sure to fulfil our expectations. For, who can forget his contribution to the editing of the spick-and-span Indo-American publication, *Span*? I wish the Sahitya Akadami all success.

PRITHWINDRA MOOKHERJI

---

## PRATISHTHA

THERE are worlds within worlds  
 And forms out of forms—  
 Each one to challenge the mind;  
 But if the heart, the true heart sincere,  
 Sees the need of a god  
 It is the knowledge of forms unseen  
 And paths—to others untrod.

NORMAN

# *Students' Section*

## **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

### SEVENTH SEMINAR

20 FEBRUARY 1966

*(Continued from the July issue)*

### HOW TO SERVE THE TRUTH ?

#### IV

I DO not propose to deliver a scholarly lecture giving an abstruse philosophical exposition but to give a simple straightforward presentation of a few ideas that passed through my mind as I pondered over the subject which the Mother has chosen for this seminar. For, I believe that to approach a problem in a straightforward direct manner takes us more easily and swiftly to the heart of its truth than any amount of abstract thought-spinning and word-spinning around it.

Everybody, it seems, utters the word 'Truth', even the persons who have the least understanding of it. But what does it mean? Usually when we speak of Truth we assume that it is something connected with our earthly existence and human life, but I believe that Truth in its essence is something which is higher, deeper and more powerful than the creation itself. It is something infinite and eternal, something which both transcends and contains the past, present and future. It is in its highest sense nothing but the Supreme Reality or God who has not only created the world but at every moment guides and governs it. Generations flux and reflux, time and space change, but Truth is ever living, permanent, stable and unaltered. It is not evident on the surface but is the hidden light secret behind our ignorant thoughts, feelings and actions.

This Truth, which is the source of all our aspirations and ideals, has unfortunately become a strange guest to humanity to-day. Though it pervades all the spheres and movements of our life, the ignorant mind of modern man fails to appreciate its real value and consequently becomes incapable of receiving and containing its presence. The human mentality today is to worship happiness for happiness' sake, and not Truth for Truth's sake, which, in fact, is the only source of all enduring happiness and

delight in life. This has happened because the mind of modern man has become utterly materialistic and rationalistic and his very nature has turned so insincere, selfish and obscure that it has lost all the qualities needed to realise the Truth, love the Truth and serve the Truth. Mankind in general to-day is in a most chaotic and disastrous condition, and unless and until it becomes conscious in the depths of its heart of the real aim and value of its existence, which is of course, to know the Truth, to live in the Truth and to identify itself with the Truth, it will never be able to emerge from the catacombs of Ignorance and falsehood. The first and foremost step to serve the Truth is, however, to know the Truth; and sincerity, simplicity and an ardent aspiration, I believe, are the three indispensable guides needed in this direction. Sincerity, which the Mother defines as the 'Key of the Divine doors,' must be present in all the three instruments of our life, *i.e.*, physical, mental and vital. Our thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions should express nothing but perfect sincerity. It is relatively easy for these instruments to show sincerity in their outward actions, but to be sincere in their inner intention is rather a difficult task to accomplish, and the most difficult is to control the vital being which is the seat of desires, passions and violent impulses and has an inherent tendency to roam about like a fickle-minded child.

Secondly, when the question of serving the Truth arises a vivid image of a sincere worker serving his master comes to the forefront, who in order to obey his superior carries out his will with all his head and heart. But Truth is not generally a normal fact of life, but a secret essence. So to receive the impulsion of Truth and obey it depends entirely on the discernment of the man who is on the way to serve the Truth. In this position, if the man has a simple and straightforward mind, with a pure conscience, then he will not be misled in his discernment. The third and final merit needed is, of course, an ardent aspiration, the absence of which would make meaningless and futile all his attempts in this direction. But on the contrary, if the traveller is aspirant, determined and persistent, he is bound to be victorious in his journey towards the Truth. When these qualities are well-developed in a man, he is fully ready to serve the Truth. While serving the Truth he should think of the Truth and *Truth alone*, rejecting all that is false, inexact, exaggerated and deformed. Whatever may be the outer circumstances, he should deal with the Truth scrupulously and love it for its own sake. Truth neither hides nor proclaims itself, but when such a seeker welcomes it, it manifests within him, making him a perfect image of 'सत्यम् शिवम् सुन्दरम्'<sup>1</sup>

SRIJIT

## V

Before we can serve the Truth with any consequence we must have some tangible contact with it by our psychological faculties. For, our means of attaining and serving

<sup>1</sup> Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, (the True, the Good the Beautiful).

the Truth become effective in proportion to our clear psychological perception of it. But when we seek for an answer to the question "What is the Truth?" what we get is more often than not either ponderous polysyllables like "Consciousness", "Eternal", "Infinite", etc., or a disheartening blank. For indeed the Truth is incomprehensible to the mind, much less approachable by it. Either it seems to be a philosophical speculation and postulate or a cold and intangible abstraction—particularly to those parts of our being which need some concreteness as a prerequisite for serving anything with an effective dynamism. How then to serve the Truth?

To reduce this embarrassment the Mother says: "However, to help at the beginning, one can take as a guiding rule that all that brings with it or creates peace, faith, joy, harmony, wideness, unity and ascending growth comes from the Truth; while all that carries with it restlessness, doubt, scepticism, sorrow, discord, selfish narrowness, inertia, discouragement and despair comes straight from the falsehood".

No doubt the Grace to stand face to face with the Truth is given only to a few, but no doubt either that the Grace to experience these agents of the Truth, *viz.*, "peace, faith, joy..." is given to all without exception. And that is enough for our present purpose. For, the service of the Truth is automatically carried out if on the one hand we can follow these agents of the Truth and on the other stand adamant against the intervention of the agents of the falsehood, *viz.* "restlessness, doubt, scepticism..." The very nature and purpose of the Truth is to manifest and embrace the whole earth with its power and light till all becomes Truth-conscious. And how best can we serve the Truth if not by letting its agents prepare in us the ground to make the Truth's full play possible, and by dispelling the falsehood and its sickening representatives which try to oppose the Truth's great endeavour?

TARUN

\*  
\*\*

After all the speeches were over, Kishor Gandhi read out the following extract from a letter of Sri Aurobindo which gives an explanation of the subject of this Seminar and which, as he had mentioned in his introductory speech, was found by the Mother to be its perfect explanation:

"The only creation for which there is any place here is the supramental, the bringing of the divine Truth down on the earth, not only into the mind and vital but into the body and into Matter. Our object is not to remove all 'limitations' on the expansion of the ego or to give a free field and make unlimited room for the fulfilment of the ideas of the human mind or the desires of the ego-centred life-force. None of us are here to 'do as we like', or to create a world in which we shall at last be able to do as we like; we are here to do what the Divine wills and to create a world in which the Divine Will can manifest its truth no longer deformed by human igno-



rance or perverted and mistranslated by vital desire. The work which the sadhak of the supramental yoga has to do is not his own work for which he can lay down his own conditions, but the work of the Divine which he has to do according to the conditions laid down by the Divine. Our yoga is not for our own sake but for the sake of the Divine. It is not our own personal manifestation that we are to seek, the manifestation of the individual ego freed from all bounds and from all bonds, but the manifestation of the Divine. Of that manifestation our own spiritual liberation, perfection, fullness is to be a result and a part, but not in any egoistic sense or for any ego-centred or self-seeking purpose. This liberation, perfection, fullness too must not be pursued for our own sake, but for the sake of the Divine.”

(*On Yoga II*, Tome One, pp. 477-78.)

SRI AUROBINDO

\*  
\*\*

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

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

**NEWSLETTER**

Nos. 8-9.

August-September 1966

*1. Educational Research*

Research in education means a constant search for new methods of teaching; new ways of creating interest in all subjects; a continual search for new material and an ever-present awareness to the changing world which requires a plasticity of purpose which says: "Today or tomorrow we shall find a better way of doing this which will lead to a greater facility, a more meaningful method, a more perfect beauty and harmony." But to attain to anything new, even if it is recognised as being better, is no easy task. It requires patience and perseverance and a constant endeavour against ignorance, sloth, and misunderstanding, an endeavour which can only be maintained by having before one a higher ideal and the freedom to work for it.

Here, in this Centre of education, The Mother has put us on the Path to the Ideal which Sri Aurobindo has set before us. She has given us the freedom to work in as many new ways as are at all possible. We would indeed be ungrateful if we did not embrace this glorious opportunity to co-operate among ourselves and take every advantage to explore all the avenues of help offered to us so that our students and teachers of the future may truly benefit. The key-note to the future is *co-operation*, a co-operation born of sincerity that will ensure that we do not waste our efforts on ignorant methods of the past; that we concentrate our collective energies for the good of all; that we put aside our personal preferences so that the work becomes more important than the man and the ideal stands out more clearly than the work; that our work being now a consciously collective co-operation becomes more powerful, more effective, more perfect in its manifestation towards the goal, the ideal, the truth.

*2. The Means to the Ideal in Education*

Free democratic people who are to take part in their own destiny are people who are educated, that is, they are strong in mind, body and soul. Strength in mind is essential to stability, critical thinking, confidence and security. Strength in body is necessary for work, effort, and the freedom from fear. Strength in soul is essential to maintain faith in the values of life that lead to the goal and the inner courage to pursue it. Acquiring and developing the necessary strength is a concern of education. None of this strength or these values can come about without hard work, self-discipline and a faith in the ideal.

### 3. *The Ideal in Education*

The ideal in education presupposes the delight in working for it, for the ideal in education can only be the constant search and working for a more perfect body, a more perfect mind and a more perfect understanding and experience of the soul.

### 4. *The Mind—Past and Future*

To the early Greeks the mind of man was simplicity itself: the mind was the organ concerned only with ideas. Plato denied that it had any connection with sensation. In his view, sensation was the function of the body which had no connection with intellect whatever. Aristotle had more respect for the body. He believed it to be governed by psychic powers that were worth the philosopher's notice, powers associated with motion and sensation. He believed the physical seat of mental life was the heart rather than the brain. As we know, Sri Aurobindo has placed the seat of the psychic being behind the heart centre; so Aristotle, however ignorantly or intuitively, anticipated modern thought when he stated that the living flesh was mysteriously animated by psychic powers.

After Aristotle, 2,000 years went by before another great philosopher reopened the old question with a new spirit of inquiry. He was René Descartes, born in France in 1596, founder of the school of philosophy known as Cartesian. There followed a spate of mental genius: William Gilbert's studies of magnetism, Johannes Kepler's planetary laws, Galileo Galilei's law of mechanics, William Harvey's blood system, Francis Bacon's rules for scientific investigation and Isaac Newton's discovery of the basic laws of physics. But we should remember that Descartes' active mind took the whole province of knowledge as his study. He worked in mathematics, physiology and mechanics as well as philosophy. His philosophy was a bold attempt to reconcile scientific methods with faith in God. He sought scientific methods to prove truths about the mind as well as about matter. Hence his famous dictum, "I think therefore I am;"—the existence of the mind was not revealed doctrine, but clearly observable fact.

The birth of experimental psychology is generally dated from 1850 when the German professor, Gustav Theodor Fechner, endeavoured to bring science and philosophy together. He was said to be a mystic trained in scientific method. It is now a hundred years since he published his *Elements of Psychophysics*.

The first psychological laboratory was founded by Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig. Wundt's prime interests were in sensation. His goal was to break down experience into elements of sensation. Psychology soon became an international science and the giant figure among American psychologists was William James, that literate and intuitive analyst of consciousness, as he was called. His great work *The Principles of Psychology*, published in 1890, is still in use.

During this same period in Vienna, Sigmund Freud was writing detailed case histories of emotionally disturbed patients; his conclusions on the enormous importance of the unconscious influenced psychology and the thinking of all the Western

world on the subject.

Thinking, memory, learning, understanding and higher forms of appreciation, are all different terms of mental life which put man on a level above the animal from which he evolved. Today man finds himself in a position where the demands life makes on his mind become increasingly complex and he needs more and more computers to solve his day-to-day problems for him. He has come to an impasse as far as the human mind is concerned. He must either go forward into the future and transcend mere mind as it is or drop back to an animal existence. This is the true significance behind the *urge for education at any cost* movement in the world today; the mad rush for seats in the schools and universities, even the ignorant prestige motive of some types of politician who believe it incumbent upon them to make education a part of every speech. But it is not science and technology that will enable man to transcend his animal nature or even his human nature, it is an understanding of his true nature in relation to the whole universe and an experience of the inner with the outer being, a true knowledge of spirit and matter as *one* in a universe of multiplicity, ever changing towards a greater and more perfect Harmony.

Two thousand years ago Lucius Annacus Seneca declared, "Man is an animal who thinks." Now psychologists ask, "What is thinking?" Obviously thinking is something to do with consciousness, since we do not think (at least not in the popular sense of the word) when we are in unconsciousness. Then what is the nature of consciousness? The answer can only be satisfactorily answered through the fifty-six chapters of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*.

We have yet to give spirit, the soul, consciousness their rightful place in our systems of education.

##### 5. *The Educational Complex*

Education has become far too complex and vast a field to be left solely in the hands of the teacher or a board of teachers. The growing problems that arise in education today need the help of specialists in many different disciplines. In planning a school curriculum it is most necessary to know the definitive requirements of the social or community groups involved, their needs and their aspirations. Today, technical and scientific progress is so rapid that any kind of training or textbook learning soon becomes inadequate or outdated; new information is constantly needed that some arrangement must be made to obtain specialist knowledge from various sources. This should be collected and collated and made ready and available for both teacher and student so that the increasing volume of material, which increases as our communication improves with other countries and sources of knowledge, is absorbed into the working syllabus of the modern classroom. If this situation of the growing need of the classroom is ignored we arrive at a point where the extra-curricula reading pattern of the students exceeds the reading pattern of the classroom, and what follows is a gradual or a landslide break-up of confidence in the students for those values the school always strives to maintain ; respect for the teacher and the institution, respect

for learning, for knowledge, for truth, for the ideal. If this confidence goes, there usually follows open or covert revolt which makes it almost impossible to maintain order and discipline of direction. The student of today is much more aware of the adequate and inadequate methods of teaching and is constantly reading in journals and magazines of the different changes that have come about in the field of education in all the countries of the world. It is only to be expected that he will react to the inadequacies of his opportunities if they exist.

6. *Thought of the Month*

“...all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind.”—Sri Aurobindo<sup>1</sup>

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

---

<sup>1</sup>. *The Life Divine* (New York Ed.), Chap. 1, p. 4.