

MOTHER INDIA

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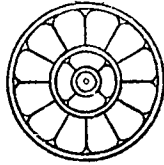
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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Vol. XX

No. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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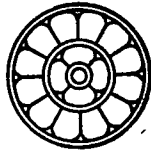
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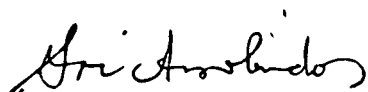
WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Indeed, the good will hidden
in all things reveals itself
everywhere to that one who
carries good will in his
consciousness.

This is a constructive way
of feeling which leads straight
to the Future.

THE MESSAGE OF 4.5.67

EARTH-LIFE is the self-chosen habitation of a great Divinity and his aeonic will is to change it from a blind prison into his splendid mansion and high heaven-reaching temple.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sri Aurobindo".

THE Divinity mentioned by Sri Aurobindo is not a person but a condition to be shared and lived by all those who prepare themselves for it.

4-5-67

A stylized handwritten signature consisting of several sweeping lines.

THE MOTHER ANSWERS A QUESTION ABOUT 4.5.67

Q. Puis-je savoir si l'élévation miraculeuse de Jesus-Christ au ciel célébré par les Catholiques Romains le jeudi 4 Mai a un rapport quelconque avec notre grande journée d'hier ? Ou bien serait-ce simplement une pure coïncidence ? (5.5.1967)

R. Pour Sri Aurobindo "les coïncidences" n'existent pas. Tout ce qui arrive est le résultat de l'action de la Conscience divine. La Force qui est à l'œuvre en ce moment est une Force d'harmonie qui travaille pour l'unité — Unification de tous les symboles qui expriment la vérité divine.

LA MÈRE

Q. May I know if the miraculous elevation of Jesus Christ to heaven celebrated by the Roman Catholics on Thursday 4 May has any sort of connection with our great day of yesterday ? Or else would it be simply a pure coincidence ? (5.5.1967)

A. For Sri Aurobindo "coincidences" do not exist. All that happens is the result of the action of the Divine Consciousness. The Force which is at work at this moment is a Force of harmony that makes for unity—the unification of all the symbols that express the Divine Truth.

THE MOTHER

THE MESSAGE OF APRIL 24, 1967

FOR after all it is the will in the being that gives to circumstances their value, and often an unexpected value; the hue of apparent actuality is a misleading indicator. If the will in a race or civilisation is towards death, if it clings to the lassitude of decay and the laissez-faire of the moribund or even in strength insists blindly upon the propensities that lead to destruction or if it cherishes only the powers of dead Time and puts away from it the powers of the future, if it prefers life that was to life that will be, nothing, not even abundant strength and resources and intelligence, not even many calls to live and constantly offered opportunities will save it from an inevitable disintegration or collapse. But if there comes to it a strong faith in itself and a robust will to live, if it is open to the things that shall come, willing to seize on the future and what it offers and strong to compel it where it seems adverse, it can draw from adversity and defeat a force of invincible victory and rise from apparent helplessness and decay in a mighty flame of renovation to the light of a more splendid life. This is what Indian civilisation is now re-arising to do as it has always done in the eternal strength of its spirit.

SRI AUROBINDO

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

It is very seldom, I should think, that one who has fulfilled himself as a poet takes the useless trouble of doing the same thing over again, in his next life; so with great musicians, great artists etc. Of course it does happen sometimes, but only for some exceptional reason. A poet who has not fulfilled himself in poetry may of course return to it, once, twice or more often till it is done. One already fulfilled, if reborn, would perhaps have the faculty, but he would either not care to use it, or it would be only a byplay or one side of his life—the main stream would run in a new direction. The soul in rebirth does not repeat itself *ad infinitum*. It grows, it develops, it tries new things in order to attain more and more fullness of expression and means for manifestation of the spirit.

1934 (?)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

S : Today is another great day according to Astrology. Nothing happened on the 13th.

M : Why is today a great day ?

P : You don't know ? Jupiter and Venus have come very close and that portends great events.

M : They are always close.

S : No, this is the first time they are so near each other.

SRI AUROBINDO : They are supposed to counteract the influences of Saturn and Mars which foreboded a great event.

S : Saturn and Mars came close to each other on the 13th, but nothing happened. Girdharlal says that it does not mean that the results will be immediate. They may happen long after.

FEBRUARY 21, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO : Something may have happened. Some more Finns were probably killed. And this Altmark incident may be due to Saturn and Mars !

M : The astrologers recommend various ceremonies to propitiate Saturn. This really means only propitiating themselves !

SRI AUROBINDO : If you propitiate Saturn now, by 10 years Saturn will have forgotten all about it. How then will results come long after ?

M : But do these astrological signs mean anything ? What do you think, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I never think. *(Laughter)*

M : What is your opinion then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have no opinion. *(Laughter)* The signs may be indicative or effective. One has to find out the explanations according to one's own light.

M : There are plenty of people who go about as astrologers just to rob people. They know practically nothing. I remember once an astrologer came to my place to cast the horoscope of some baby. He was more after getting some money by saying

he would have to propitiate this *graha* (asterism) and that *graha* etc. But he didn't know that I was a hard master to deal with.

SRI AUROBINDO : He would have to propitiate Saturn before coming to you. *(Laughter)*

P : There was one astrologer of the Gaekwad...

M : Yes, he was a good man. He is dead.

SRI AUROBINDO : And this is a bad man who is alive ! *(Laughter)*

DR. RAO (*who had come for the Darshan after 5 weeks of absence, a delay due to his usual trouble with the officials*) : These astrologers, Sir, are quite accurate about the past but they can't predict the future correctly. Many of my friends have had that experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : I also had that experience with the Bhṛigu Samhita people.

M : One Bhṛigu Samhita man came to Baroda and swindled a lot of people, and many became insolvent.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

M : People began to speculate heavily, relying on his forecasts, and they lost much. Even business people came to grief.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then they deserved it. Business people ought to have some sense.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*soon after lying down in bed*) : I have seen at darshan in the afternoon one remarkable man among the whole crowd : Buddhadev. *(Laughter)*

N : Product of early marriage !

At this time only Dr. B, Dr. M, C and N were present. In the morning we had already indicated to Sri Aurobindo the huge proportions in length and breadth of Buddhadev. That is why he could tell his name now. At sponging time S had again raised the topic. Dr. M was absent then.

S : Could you make out Buddhadev, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I cannot but remember him as the one remarkable man in the whole crowd.

N : Superman !

SRI AUROBINDO : Sample of coming superman. *(Laughter)*

Somebody brought in the question of astrologers again and said that what Naik had learned about an astrologer regarding the Darshan was not correct. It seems some Bombay astrologer had said before the accident to Sri Aurobindo's right leg that there would be no Darshan in November 1938—the month of the accident. Now it was disclosed that the astrologer had said it only after the accident. The whole question

was about the prediction by astrologers of future events. In most cases they cannot predict the future correctly.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Mother told me of a French astrologer whose prediction of the future came out true. He predicted that a particular man would die of sea-water. He gave the time, even the very day. His people took him away from the sea, and on the day the accident was to take place they were dining together. Someone remarked ironically : "Where is the astrologer's prophecy now ? The time he gave is passing away and there is no sea here !" Just at that moment the man who was eating a sea-fish got a fish-bone stuck in his throat and at once died. The hour was exactly the one mentioned by the astrologer.

C : It was fated that he should die.

SRI AUROBINDO : In this case it was.

M : If one is destined to die, one can't escape.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no fixed destiny always. Destiny can be changed. And there are many destinies. Astrologers usually go by rule of thumb. So some cases come out right, most are wrong. In order to be correct, one must have the power of intuition.

M : Cheiro made prophecies, some of which have come very true. For example, he said that Prince Edward, son of George V, would lose the throne because of a woman. He also said that the Jews would be persecuted and driven out everywhere.

SRI AUROBINDO : This prophecy about the Jews is a very old one. According to it, when the Jews will be persecuted and driven out of every country, it will be a sign of the coming of the millennium. Usually, the prophecies that come true are the only ones noticed. Nobody notices most of those that don't come true.

(*After a while*) This time N's intuition is coming to be correct. (*To N who, puzzled, had begun looking at him*) I mean your intuition about typhoid.¹ Today's case, you said, may be typhoid.

N : Oh I see.

SRI AUROBINDO : That kind of intuition is very convenient, as it doesn't speak of any particular case. It can be applied to any case.

FEBRUARY 22, 1940

Sri Aurobindo had finished walking and was sitting in his chair. Dr. M slowly walked on and stood in front of him, evidently to ask something.

N : Dr. M's face is shining.

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at Dr. M who was smiling*) : Luminosity of revelation ?

M : I sat near Dr. B, Sir. He was ecstatic. So I asked him if he had any ex-

¹ A few days back, in meditation N had seen that all were puzzled about the diagnosis of an imaginary case. N had heard Sri Aurobindo saying . "Are you sure it is not typhoid ?"

perience. He said it was a simple feeling of Ananda. Perhaps I may have got something from him by breathing his air.

S : You get more by breathing his air than by breathing Sri Aurobindo's. *(Laughter)*

M : Among us all, Dr. B seems to have profited the most by staying here.

SRI AUROBINDO : I see. *(After a pause, to N)* What does Buddhadev say ? Is he satisfied with the Ashram or does he find the people too small for him ? *(Laughter)*

N : I don't know. I will ask him. *(To M, who was looking side ways at Sri Aurobindo)* Do you know Buddhadev ?

M : Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO : Who is he ?

M : Why, Sir, Bhagawan Buddha ? *(Laughter)*

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, Buddha has come for the Darshan.

M *(on being told about Buddhadev's size)* : Oh I know now. We came in the same compartment. He occupied the top berth just above me. I told him he had better take the lower one.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not safe for you ?

M : No, Sir. He is a Professor of Mathematics.

N : No, of Sanskrit.

S *(to Sri Aurobindo)* : Did you recognise your old friend Charu Dutt, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I was looking out for him, but he went away so hurriedly that I couldn't see him very well.

N : He said he was feeling rather nervous, wondering what account he could give you of his deeds and misdeeds within the 30 years since he saw you last. *(Laughter)* All the same he had a good look at you from a distance and you also gave him a sharp straight glance, he says.

SRI AUROBINDO : I give a sharp glance to everybody who is not a known face.

P : One of his reminiscences of you is that you wrote your name in the Suddhi movement. They were taking down the names of people who favoured the movement and you gave yours in your own handwriting.

SRI AUROBINDO : When and where ?

P : At Delhi ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Delhi station ? When ?

P : After the Surat Congress.

SRI AUROBINDO : Can't be. I don't think I went to Delhi after it. It must have been somebody else and he mistook him for me.

P : You are supposed to have gone about places for propaganda.

SRI AUROBINDO : I never committed the crime of propaganda in my life.

P : Perhaps you were passing through Delhi station.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is conceivable. That is why I asked about Delhi station.

M : You can take your bath now, Sir. It will be more pleasant for you.

SRI AUROBINDO : Everything will come in its right time. *(Laughter)*

শটৈনঃ শটৈনঃ লঙ্ঘতে গিৰিষ্ (Climbing the hills step by step.)

N : My typhoid intuition also seems to have failed.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : I see. How is that ?

N : That fellow came today quite all right : no fever !

(Bala of Atelier was having continued fever for 3 days. We thought it could be anything, even typhoid—so he was not allowed for Darshan. And the next day after Darshan his fever was gone.)

C : So it was only to prevent him from Darshan that the fever came.

N : Looks like it.

C (*to Sri Aurobindo*) : Is it a coincidence ? Or are there such forces which put such obstacles in the way ? They say that forces put these obstacles.

M (*who did not know who was being talked about*) : If a man is keen, he can put down all obstacles or come for Darshan in spite of the fever.

C : Even if a man is keen, sometimes things happen which he can't prevent and he is overcome by them or can't fight against them.

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the case.

C : This particular case, for example ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I have not studied this case,. So I don't know.

M : But he must have been keen for the Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why did he want to come for the Darshan ?

M : As usual, it must be for the elevation of his soul, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Are you sure ? Did he tell you that ? If he wanted to come for that "usual" reason, the fever came as an unusual factor. (*Laughter*)

P : There are plenty of reasons for which one wants Darshan.

M : (*to Sri Aurobindo*) : How did you find this Darshan, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In what way ?

M : I mean, did you find any improvement ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Again, improvement in what way ?

M : Subjectively and objectively, compared to the last Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO : Subjectively—shall I say ?—as per usual. (*Laughter*) Objectively, I saw a greater man than had ever come before. (*Laughter*)

M : Shall we send a telegram to Puranmal ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What for ?

M : He said that when Supermind descended he was to be informed. It is also Puranmal who staggered Hukumchand by saying that he had given Rs. 30,000 and Hukumchand didn't dare to pay anything.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

M : Because he thought that if Puranmal paid so much he must either pay more or not at all. He chose the latter course.

SRI AUROBINDO : I hear he has lost heavily.

C : It is right punishment for him. Not only did he not give anything ; he took away one loaf of bread from here. (*Sri Aurobindo laughed.*)

M : How can it be punishment ? The Divine can't be vindictive.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ?

M : We know of the Divine as protective, kind and benevolent.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is Vishnu. There is also Shiva.

M : Shiva is Bholanath¹.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is also Rudra.²

M : But he can't be vindictive to a bhakta for such things.

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the mood in which the Divine is.

N (to M) : What do you mean by the expression : "such things" ? Go to Dilip. He will say : "Whether a man is a bhakta or not can be judged only by his dealing with money. Money is the test. If you can't offer money to the Divine, your sincerity is not genuine."

C : There are plenty of people who are bhaktas, but when the money-question comes, their bhakti disappears. (*Sri Aurobindo was enjoying the talk.*)

M : If money is the test, then robbers also are bhaktas. Some of them rob people and offer part of their plunder to their god. Is that bhakti ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ?

M : How can it be, Sir ? They get the money by robbing others and offer it as a bribe. Is that true bhakti ?

SRI AUROBINDO : What is true bhakti ? There is no true or false bhakti. Bhakti is bhakti. Commercial people rob others and give offerings to God. Is it not bhakti ?

M : But somehow I can't accept it, Sir, that a robber or murderer who offers money obtained by doubtful means does that out of bhakti.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is a robber worse than a conqueror ? A conqueror does the same thing. Where is the difference ? A robber too may be brave and noble. When Rama on the battlefield prayed to Durga for help, it was not out of bhakti he did it. What you say is an ethical or moral point. It has nothing to do with spirituality. The question is whether one feels the bhakti and, if he feels it, it is quite genuine.

M : According to Jainism, Sir, (*Great laughter*) only that is true bhakti which has no motive in it and any offering acquired in a pure or virtuous way is real offering. The robber is neither motiveless nor is his money acquired in a virtuous way. He offers a small sum of money as a bribe to God.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't understand the point of motive here. There are two kinds of bhakti : *sahetukī*, *ahaitukī*. *Sahetukī* bhakti is of that type which may have a motive but it does not mean that it is not bhakti. *Ahaitukī* is, of course, without motive or demand. If the Divine were to accept offerings from virtuous people only, it would be a hard outlook for the world. (*Laughter*) Your mention of bribe and small amount reminds me of X. He says that people simply thrust the money on him and he can't but accept it. After all, it is a small amount of bribe, he says. I was reminded then of the maidservant story. Have I told it to you ?

M : No. Sir.

¹ Simple-hearted Lord.

² God of violent force.

SRI AUROBINDO : A maidservant got an illegitimate child. The mistress of the house was very angry and rebuked her severely for the baby. The maidservant replied : "But, oh Madam, it is such a small one." (*Laughter*)

EVENING

S (*suddenly*) : Are you taking the same diet as before, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, why ?

S : I thought like that because you seemed to have had more blood formerly.

N : How do you say so ?

S : From the nails. They were more pink. (*To Sri Aurobindo*) Your diet lacks blood-forming substances.

SRI AUROBINDO : The change is good, then ; for I used to feel giddy before ; which may have been due to excess of blood.

N : It may have been due to excess of correspondence. (*Sri Aurobindo laughed.*)

SRI AUROBINDO : Very possibly .

M : Or due to poetry-correction.

SRI AUROBINDO : On the contrary, giddiness comes when I can't write poetry and, as soon as I write it, it disappears.

M : No, Sir, I was talking of N's poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, but he was not writing frequently...What are the blood-forming substances ?

S : Dr. M can tell you of them. Milk is one.

SRI AUROBINDO : Milk I never take.

M : I think what you do take has blood-forming elements—fruits and vegetables, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO : I was taking more stuff before, of course—almond juice and other things.

M : Almond is not good, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ?

M : It is very rich and hard to digest. It has plenty of protein and may give excess of uric acid.

P : How ?

S : Plenty of people take almond. The Westerners take any amount. I take it myself. I don't find it hard to digest.

M : Because it is hard on the digestion wrestlers don't live long. As I said, it is very rich in protein—and in oil—like meat, and therefore harmful.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't agree.

P : It depends on the person. Some people can digest, others can't. Just like wine—some can drink any amount and live up to a long age.

SRI AUROBINDO : Rajen Mitra the antiquarian used to take one bottle of brandy every day and yet he lived up to the age of 80.

NIRODBARAN

MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF MYSTICISM

(A LETTER OF 1947)

PROF. K has fallen foul of the advice I had given my friend B to make an attempt at Yoga under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo before trying to solve the problem of life's misery by taking to social service and philanthropy as the arch-panacea. In a nutshell my plea was that to do real good to the world we must become by a yogic self-transformation conscious channels of God's will and purpose, for otherwise we with even the best intention can never be sure of our work being truly beneficial. We are not sufficiently illumined to do always the right thing in the right way—there is not only our human ignorance as an obstacle but also our human frailty which often interferes with whatever in us happens to be genuinely inspired. And my words to B were coloured by the mood in which he was turning to social service and philanthropy : he was surcharged with an extraordinary idealistic fervour, an intense desire to outgrow the limited ego in him and merge in a larger reality. His state had all the symptoms of a mystical awakening without his knowing it and the milieu of ideas in which he lived was such as might keep him in the dark for quite a long time.

Prof. K says that my argument puts a discount on the whole ethical endeavour of mankind. I am not against ethical endeavours, but in B's case there was a pointer to something else much greater which does not discard ethics but floods it with a more-than-human light. Even apart from B's case, I should opine that ethical endeavours by themselves are not the highest activity possible to a man who wants to do good to the world. If Prof. K were an atheist he might rank them above attempts at God-realisation, though of course he would be hard put to it to produce from atheism a satisfying ground or sanction for the moral passion as also for the aesthetic hunger and the intellect's cry for truth. Since he does believe in the Divine he must automatically imply that God being the highest reality the direct union with Him is the highest value: not only philanthropy but art, philosophy, science, politics, industry fall into a lower place. This is simple logic. My advice to B has respect for sincere social service: what it does not acknowledge is the giving to it a status at the very top. At the very top there can be nothing save union with God.

"There is no guarantee," complains Prof. K, "that the perfect Yogi will be of use to the world." How to be sure that God-union will build a world-worker rather than a world-shirker ? I am suspected of suggesting that from the Yogic point of view "all fight against disease, hunger, ignorance and various other miseries the flesh is heir to may be utterly futile." This is strange, because my entire letter to B was concerned with the best way of helping mankind to get rid of its troubles : I never doubted the need to succour and salvage humanity—I merely doubted the supreme efficacy ascribed to philanthropy and social service without any yogic illumination.

The fight against the ills of the flesh is not futile, but there is a lot of difference between waging the fight humanly and waging it divinely, between a fight full of natural errors as well as subtle egoistic perversions and a fight radiantly guided and free from the insidious ego. My attack was never on action in and for the world—and that is precisely why I chose Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram for B. The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is dynamic, aiming at the world's regeneration, wanting ardently the manifestation of the Divine here and now and in all our parts and in all human creatures. The life its followers are asked to lead is so framed by the Master as to keep them awake to the significance of the earth and prepare them for fulfilling and not rejecting all that the earth has been labouring for through the ages.

Of course there are Yogis who reject the world. Even here it is wise to distinguish between those who do the rejecting from the ultimate standpoint and those who do it from the immediate. The latter are "cave-dwellers" immersing themselves as much as possible in a *samadhi* in which all outward things are lost to the consciousness. They may be considered as of no perceptible use to the earth—but uselessness cannot be charged against those who believe that our goal is to get out of the round of rebirths and be absorbed ultimately in a supracosmic Eternal but who still live in the world and work for it as long as the body lasts. Buddha was such a Yogi; also Vivekananda. Surely these great men did not do less good than ordinary social workers and philanthropists? Even what they did in the specific field of social work and philanthropy was much more puissant; add to that the blissful spiritual light they radiated, uplifting the consciousness of their fellows as no ordinary social worker and philanthropist can ever hope to do, and we see at once how a mysticism that finds earthly values false in the ultimate reckoning can still produce colossal benefactors of the earth.

In an integral vision of reality, the *samadhi*-sunk "cave-dweller" must be pronounced defective, but he is not more defective than those who never do Yoga of any sort. The former seeks the Divine and ignores the Divine's world; the latter acknowledges the Divine's world but ignores the Divine—except in the weak and watery way of popular religion. If God exists, to refuse to be mystically united with Him can be no less a shortcoming than to refuse a share in His world's activity. To say this is not to recommend entranced isolation; it is but to rectify the wrong emphasis laid by Prof. K on the world to the neglect of what is greater than the world. The balanced harmonious course is to accept both—to be a Yogi as well as a world-worker—and this is the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

No Aurobindonian would deny, as Prof. K supposes me to do, that "feeding the poor, clothing the naked, healing the sick and sharing a tear with the stricken neighbour are acts of value." But these elementary acts which do not present much of a problem are not the whole of the philanthropic field: there are many more complicated acts to be chosen from, acts varying according to various consciences and codes. And even if the elementary acts were all, they could not bring the end of humanity's toil and tribulation. What is wrong at the root of things is the lack of the divine consciousness in the inward and outward man. Without the divine consciousness

in toto there will always be the poor, the naked, the sick, the stricken, no matter how much we go feeding, clothing, healing and sharing a tear with them. Over and above practising generosity and charity we must try to impart the divine consciousness, and how can we do this unless we have first done Yoga ? With the help of Yoga we would even do generous and charitable deeds far more beneficially because we would avoid the manner and form which sometimes harm those whom we serve and aid. So the prime necessity from every standpoint is to transcend the half-obscure and semi-stumbling condition of mind which is ours at present. And if that transcending demands that we should withdraw for a while from directly and apparently serving and aiding the destitute and the unfortunate, we surely must not let humanitarian sentimentalism distract us. We do not ask a scientist absorbed in cancer-research to start "slumming" and paying comfort-visits. He is at a job of the utmost importance to the welfare of the world. Similarly, the Aurobindonian Yogi is at a mighty magnificent job—combating an evil far more heinous than cancer, the bacillus of ignorance and selfishness, the germ of man's failure to evolve the god that is involved in him.

Here I may, in passing, draw attention to the truth that genuine world-work does not connote only social service and philanthropy. It includes inspired art, acute philosophy, constructive science, wise politics, fair industry. The *svabhāva* or innate nature of a man should determine his vocation; to ask a Beethoven, for instance, to stint for the problem of bad housing of the poor the time wanted for his symphonies and sonatas and quartets is to rob humanity of priceless boons. Every Yogi, too, is not compelled by the concept of world-work to devote himself to such problems. Only those whose innate nature is cast for social service and philanthropy will tackle them under spiritual impulsion. The rest will be just in warm contact with the world while mainly pursuing under spiritual impulsion the jobs they are best fitted for by their soul-bents.

There is a school of altruistic extremism as there is of egotistic. And it believes that all human beings can naturally labour with unselfishness. I am surprised to find Prof. K naively remarking : "Particularly to-day, after the second great war, we are convinced that mutual service and philanthropy alone can save us from destruction." It is like saying that if the sky fell we would all catch larks. The trouble is that the sky won't fall. The only sense in which it can fall is the Aurobindonian "descent of the divine consciousness." From high above the mere mind the hidden glories and powers and beatitudes of the Supreme have to come down and make us their moulds. When the Spirit's sky falls, the larks of light will be in our hands. But till then we shall not save ourselves from destruction. There is a flaw in our consciousness and out of this flaw derive all our vice and folly. Mutual service and philanthropy cannot be practised by each Tom, Dick and Harriett; when practised by those who can they go a certain way to alleviate our troubles, but can never remove them for ever. Ambition, greed, lust, cruelty, strife will always be with us—they will erupt in even our so-called altruists—as long as we are men and not recast in God's image by a lengthy and difficult and self-consecrated and self-transforming Yoga on Aurobindonian lines:

that is, lines dynamic for world-change and not questful of a supracosmic aloofness. Mutual service and philanthropy to the degree and extent required for saving us from wars like the one we have just gone through are impossible until what Sri Aurobindo calls the Truth-conscious Supermind has been attained and brought down into all our self and all our activity. In the supramental Truth-consciousness lie the basic unity and harmony and egoless infallible compassion by which the ideal altruism that would be our saviour can be born.

I am afraid Prof. K goes off the rails also as regards the psychology of the mystical search. He traces the hunger for God to a feeling of inferiority or a sense of frustration in us : when life does not provide us with the proper mundane satisfaction we want, we fly to God's arms—mysticism is an escape and a hiding from our own failures, a gilded sham substitute for what we really desire and ought to possess. From what I have already said, it should be evident that even if a sense of frustration sets us off towards the Aurobindonian Yoga the result is splendid and just the thing the world needs : the more rampant such a sense the better for humanity ! But it is not true that such a sense is the real motive-power behind mysticism. The real motive-power is the divine origin of us all : we have come from the absolute Godhead* and that is why we seek the absolute Godhead : if the Supreme Spirit is our starting-point, it is also our goal, and because it is our starting-point as well as our goal we ache for the perfect in the midst of imperfection. Our venturing out, in this direction and that, in order to perfect ourselves and our life, is due to the Divine within us waiting to be delivered. Frustration is there because we fail to let the Divine outflower. It is not simply the consequence of our missing one or another of the common joys our outward nature craves. We shall be discontented in the midst of a thousand such joys ! Frustration is of the essence of a life divorced from the all-consummating Divine. It takes diverse forms and, in the last analysis, reveals itself as the outcome of our falling short of the Absolute which is our inmost core. Many people turn to the *via mystica* after disappointments—but disappointments are only the superficial cause: the fundamental cause is the urge in our central being towards God. Since the outward being is hard and crude, it sits up and takes notice of that urge mostly when outward blows fall thick upon it and make it look within. But without that urge the blows would soon be forgotten and a man would return to his ordinary existence. Many would-be mystics fall back upon their old mode of living and never think again of God-realisation : in their case, the inward urge has not taken hold of the outward being and there was just a temporary process of escape. The vast difficulties of a thorough Yogic discipline far outweigh the so-called hardships of the normal routine and they cannot be met by one who has no qualification except that he has been beaten down by life. A lion's heart alone can hunt for God and get Him.

Hence the sevenfold questionnaire Prof. K elaborately draws up to ascertain the source of the mystical turn strikes me as childish, to say the least. According to him, if the feeling is very strong about *any one* of the shortcomings he mentions, then a man is psychologically ready to join Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. Let us look at the very

first question : "Am I getting two square meals a day and am I satisfied with my income ?" It seems that if I am not, my heart is on the verge of saying, "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, I am yours !" But just a minute : is it not a fact stressed again and again that three-fourths of the people of India never have even one square meal a day, that they are always hungry and underfed and that the average income of the Indian is about three rupees a month ? How is it that not even one-fourth of the forty crores of India, leave aside three-fourths, are packed in the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo ? Not all the Yogic Ashrams in our whole sub-continent house even one-fortieth of its ill-nourished and ill-paid population. As a rule, when a man is poor and hungry and feels very strongly about his condition he either doubles his efforts to get on in the world or starts stealing or else drowns himself in alcohol for spells of temporary forgetfulness. The genuine spiritual aspiration does not arise so cheaply. Mere failure and frustration in the matter of food and money never light that exalted flame in the heart and mind, that gigantic ego-devouring passion for purity and perfection that we find in the true God-seeker.

As inane as the question I have quoted are the rest put by Prof. K . To be dissatisfied with one's status in society, to have any serious fault or defect that makes one feel inferior in the presence of others, to lack children or, having them, lack the means of giving them a fair start in life, to be unable to satisfy one's sex properly and adequately, to be conscious of having committed a sin of which one is acutely ashamed, to be insufficiently enjoying social importance—all these conduce mostly to some secular readjustment and not to a single-pointed quest for the Superhuman and the Absolute with the countless trials and hardships natural to a swimming up-stream and against the current of common desires a-flow in the human constitution for centuries. Millions of men suffer from at least one of these defects : several perhaps from all, and yet how few plunge into the unknown abysses of the Divine ! Social anxieties set a man nosing for a better job, personal inferiority makes him vindictive or assertive, childlessness sends him to a long series of doctors or else incites him to divorce his wife and re-marry, sexual infirmities turn him towards aphrodisiacs or self-abuse, sense of sin converts him to church-going or charity. When none of these steps are taken nor any "sublimating" mental or physical activity initiated to pull him somewhat out of himself, there is a smouldering despair which renders him a pest or a drunkard or a listless melancholiac or at the worst a suicide. Sometimes he develops a sort of hysteria with a religious penchant, a semi-deranged pseudo-mystical state. Very rarely indeed does he blossom into a real God-lover, casting aside greed and lust and ambition as well as social attachments, facing the lure and the danger of the undiscovered Infinite, helping humanity not with an ego assuming altruistic colour but as a selfless medium of the Supreme Will that wants to evolve man into Superman. When he does blossom into a real God-lover, it is the sleeping God in himself that has stirred and the failure or disappointment has but served to direct his gaze inward : the failure or disappointment is only the occasion and not the source of the blossoming. If it were the source, the

majority of human beings would be at Sri Aurobindo's feet by now, since the majority suffer from some frustration or other. I at least have not yet come across a perfectly happy man in the ordinary round of life : there is always a strong lack in some place, but I look in vain for a teeming of the mystical mood !

No, Prof. K, mysticism does not take birth from cheap negatives and it is not a flight from life's call. The basic call of life, of all evolutionary Nature, is the struggle for the Divine, the pursuit of a more-than-mortal Truth and Goodness and Beauty. The mystic goes forth in answer to this call—it is the ordinary man, the non-Yogi, who shirks it, keeps revolving in the mortal groove because such revolving is far more comfortable and easy than entering God's mysteries and magnitudes. The peace that passeth the understanding, the ecstasy that never sinks are won through tremendous bravery and endurance : the hero and not the escapist makes the mystic. No doubt, all Yogas are not dynamic in the Aurobindonian way. Several believe, as I have already said, that our fulfilment cannot be totally achieved in earth-terms and so they make the Supra-cosmic their final status. But here too there is no escapism in the sense of running away from earth like a broken-hearted coward. A journey as beset as Yoga with enormous struggles and self-conquests and renunciations of egoistic desire is not escapist in a depreciatory sense of that word. Superficial failures in the ordinary existence provide a mere chunk or fissure for the bursting out of the hidden soul, the concealed divine spark. By that spark essentially is created the Yogi. Nor are superficial failures always necessary. Often the spiritual thirst is there without any measurable occasion of failure. A masterpiece of art, a splendid scene in Nature, an act of human nobility have been known to start a man suddenly on the mystical pilgrimage. There are even men who from their childhood have shown a mystical turn : later circumstances have just brought things to a head, not given rise to them. Modern psychologists who see a mechanism of compensation or flight in the mystical process do not look beyond their noses. At most they catch sight of the morbid imitations. As an Indian, Prof. K should have avoided this western myopia.

And if those whose eyes wait ever for the Supra-cosmic are no escapists but braver than the normal flock of men, though interpreting life's call towards the Divine in a one-sided fashion, how much less of escapism must be in the Aurobindonians who embrace and do not reject earth, who exceed the normal flock both by following with immense difficulty the Divine beyond the human and by bringing with still immenser difficulty the Divine into all our earth-terms ! To dub the Aurobindonians frustrated fugitives from life's demands is the height of misunderstanding.

The three or four queries Prof. K puts about Sri Aurobindo at the close of his article offer a clue to how he could get perched on that obscure height. He has not acquainted himself with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and that is why he has put the queries whose answers have already been given in Sri Aurobindo's books. The don has left a big hole in his learning : no wonder he misunderstands so much. To talk about spirituality in general and the Aurobindonian brand in particular without

getting intimate with the writings of Sri Aurobindo, our greatest modern Yogi, is rather rash. Every point raised will be found tackled in that *magnum opus* from the Ashram at Pondicherry, *The Life Divine*, which even a westerner like Sir Francis Younghusband has declared the most significant and vital book to appear in our day. There Prof. K will read exactly what Sri Aurobindo is doing, what consequences his work will have, what use his vision and realisation will be to the world and how mankind's "ever-increasing misery" which Prof. K laments will be victoriously dealt with if people with faint hearts and bewildered minds will only try to have enough courage and open-sightedness, enough patience and humility to become Aurobindonians.

K. D. SETHNA

O SOUL! MY SOUL!

O SOUL ! my soul ! O child of God-raptures !
 Drunkard of the world's wine of laughter and tears !
 Far from the dust and heat, a world above,
 Even as the gods, hold high the blue flag of love.
 Fail thee thy feet ? then fall upon thy knees.
 Thy failures are indeed God's golden keys.
 Wider than the world, a greater, larger life
 Deeper than death awaits thee, O divine dwarf !
 Let no smoke of desire discolour
 The transparent glass of thy being's core.
 To escape into a void, a featureless Beyond,
 Was that the World-Mother's secret command ?
 Thy song, O beautiful instrument of God,
 Is but the foot-fall of the beloved Lord.
 Thy heart, a play-ground of the deathless dance—
 Thy Self, a bliss-sea of the divine embrace—
 His will is thy kingdom, Eternity the base.

VENKATARANGA

SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

I

THE word 'religion', one of those most in vogue, has various shades and connotations, though not properly distinguished and appreciated by the general reader. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have clarified the distinction between Yoga and religion and have also dwelt upon the subject of religion from time to time. It has, therefore, become necessary to understand the meaning of religion, what it stands for, what it has done and achieved in the long history of humanity. For the religious life has in fact played a very important part in the evolution of mankind.

The Indian word *dharma* which is equivalent to religion is derived from the root word *dhr* and literally means something to lay hold of. In India, perhaps, as compared with other countries, *dharma* has been the most dominant in the mentality of its people as a code of life and consequently here it has found the widest manifestation of its essence, and variations in its theory as well as in practice.

Explaining the difference between the three modes of life Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter :

"The spiritual life (*ādhyātma jīvan*), the religious life (*dharma jīvan*) and the ordinary human life of which morality is a part are three quite different things and one must know which one desires and not confuse the three together.

"The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are the laws of the Ignorance.

"The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness, turning or trying to turn away from the earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue.

"The spiritual life, on the contrary, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters."

And yet what is the true essence of religion ? It is nothing else than the seeking of God. Making the point that religion is above reason Sri Aurobindo writes :

"The deepest heart, the inmost essence of religion, apart from its outward

machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for God and the finding of God. Its aspiration is to discover the Infinite, the Absolute, the One, the Divine, who is all these things and yet no abstraction but a Being. Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status into an uprush of man towards the Divine and a descent of the Divine into man."

But there is another sphere of human life, its infrarational level of vitalistic and unrefined physical elements. Here religion has its limitations.

"...As there is the suprarational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so too there is the infrarational life of the instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from which all human aspiration takes its beginning. These too feel the touch of the religious sense in man, share its needs and experience, desire its satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope, and in what is usually called religion it seems even to be the greater part, sometimes to an external view almost the whole; for the supreme purity of spiritual experience does not appear or is glimpsed only through this mixed and turbid current. Much impurity, ignorance, superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our highest tendencies with our lower ignorant nature."

In course of time religion loses its inner drive, inner sense and inner motive. But the outward forms, symbols, rites and ceremonies continue, lifelessly though, and consequently without the Godward push.

"Religious forms and systems become effete and corrupt and have to be destroyed, or they lose much of their inner sense and become clouded in knowledge and injurious in practice, and in destroying what is effete or in negating aberrations reason has played an important part in religious history."

Too much stress need not be laid on the excesses of aberrations, superstitions and crimes sprouting out of the name of religion. Yet the facts have to be taken account of and an explanation has to be found.

"Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon Religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free hold for their legitimate development; and this because men in the passion and darkness of their vital nature had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive.

"We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans

attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity.

“In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power and because it confused religion with Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class.

“So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence. As if so mighty and inward a power as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by anything so small as the change of a social form or so outward as a social readjustment !

“This error in its many shapes has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.”

The slaughter of persons like Socrates and the growth of institutions like the Inquisition are the grim sanguinary comments of history on this error which is as strong as it is widespread. So much so that even in the wide ocean of Hinduism remarkable for its spiritual broadness and knowledge mutual hatred amongst the various approaches, the Buddhist, Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava, etc. had, though briefly, its periods of existence.

What is to be respected, therefore, is true religion, true theocracy. And this, in essence, means that man has to turn to spirituality and Yoga. For,

“True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit.

“Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual

formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence ; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more, and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light."

The need is for the highest Light, Force and Knowledge, so that the lower and the lowest levels of human life may be illumined, perfected and divinised. This can be achieved by spirituality joining both the ends of existence ; no lesser power can do it. For the imperfect cannot guide and lead to the perfect.

"The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian ideal of the Rishi, one who has fully lived the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within ; he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.

"In spirituality, then, understood in this sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion only in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality."

2

We are now nearing the answer to the question : what is the difference between Yoga and Religion? In answer to the same question put by a young person, the Mother says :

"Well, my child, it is as if you asked me what is the difference between a lion and a dog !

"Imagine a person who has in some way heard of something that is called the Divine or who has a personal feeling that something of that kind exists. And this person begins to make all sorts of effort—effort of will, effort of discipline, effort of concentration—to find this Divine, to discover what it is, to know of it and to be united with it. Then it can be said that this person is doing yoga.

"Now, if that person noted down all the processes that he had used and made of them a fixed system, erected into absolute laws all that he had discovered : the Divine is like this, to find the Divine you must do like that, this gesture, that ceremony and you must admit that that is the truth : I recognise that that is the truth and I must fully adhere to it and your method is the only good one, the only one that exists, and if all this is written, organised, arranged into fixed laws and ceremonies, that becomes religion."

And then the question arises, almost like a corollary :

Can one realise the Divine by this method, that is, religion ?

The Mother continues to reply :

“People who carry in them a spiritual destiny and who are born to realise the Divine, to become conscious of Him and live Him will reach there necessarily, whatever the way followed. That is to say, even in religion there are people who have the spiritual experience and who find the Divine—not because of religion, generally, in spite of it,—because they have the inner urge and this urge leads them to the goal in spite of the obstacles and through them. Everything was good for them.

“But when these people want to express their experience, they use quite naturally the terms of the religion in which they were brought up and they restrict their experience, are compelled to limit it a great deal and make it in some way sectarian. But for themselves it is possible that they may have gone beyond all forms, all limits and conventions and have the true experience in its very simplicity.”

But we see that in the present-day world most people follow some kind of religion. Are they not helped by this pursuit ?

The Mother says, “Perhaps they have just begun again to follow a religion, but for a long time, quite at the beginning of this century, people had repudiated religion, at least the entire intellectual humanity, because they found it contrary to knowledge. It is only now that there has begun a return to something other than unmixed positivism.

“People have a religion by social habit, in order not to be seen in a bad light. In many villages, for example, it is difficult not to attend religious ceremonies, because all your neighbours will point their finger at you. But that has nothing to do with spiritual life, nothing at all.”

In this connection the Mother relates a little story :

“The first time I came to India, I was travelling in a Japanese boat. And on this Japanese boat there were two clergymen of different sects. I do not remember exactly what sects, but both were English ; I think one was an anglican, the other a presbyterian.

“Then Sunday came. A religious ceremony had to be done on the boat, otherwise one would look like a pagan, as the Japanese are. So there must be a ceremony, but who would do it ? Should it be the anglican or the presbyterian ? There was almost a quarrel. Finally one withdrew with dignity ; I do not remember which one, I believe it was the anglican. And the presbyterian did the ceremony.

“That happened in the salon of the ship. One had to come down a few steps to get into the salon. All the men had put on their coats—the weather was hot, I believe we were in the Red Sea—all had put on waist-coats, collars, leather shoes, neckties well tied, hats on the heads and they went a book in hand, almost in a procession from the deck down to the salon. The ladies had also their hats on, even some were with umbrellas, they too had their books in hand, a book of prayers.

“They all entered and were engulfed in that hole. The presbyterian made a speech, that is to say, he did his sermon which everyone heard very religiously.

When everything ended, they all mounted up with the satisfied air of one who has done his duty ; and naturally, after five minutes they were at the bar drinking and playing at cards, and their religious ceremony was forgotten. They did their duty, it ended there.

“Then the clergyman came and asked me, more or less politely, why I had not attended the service.

“—I regret, sir, but I do not believe in religion.

“—Oh, oh ! You are a materialist !

“—I, not at all.

“—Then why ?

“—If I told you you would be quite displeased. It would be perhaps better for me not to tell you.

“He insisted so much that I told him in the end : May I tell you that I do not find you sincere, neither you nor your flock. You all went there to fulfil a social custom, not because you had truly a desire to come in relation with God.

“—Come in relation with God ! But we cannot do that. All that we can do is to say some good words.

“I answered then :— It is exactly for that reason that I did not go, because that does not interest me.

“Afterwards, the clergyman put to me many questions and disclosed to me that he was going to China to convert the pagans. Then I became grave and told him :

“Just listen please, even before your religion was born—not yet two thousand years ago—the Chinese possessed a very high philosophy and knew the way to the Divine. When they think of Occidentals, they think of them as barbarians. Then why do you go to convert these people who know more than you do ? What are you going to teach them ? To be insincere ? To do hollow ceremonies instead of following a profound philosophy and a detachment that leads them to a higher consciousness ?

“The poor man felt suffocated and told me : Oh, I fear I can't be convinced by your words, to which I replied, ‘I am not trying to convince you, I tell you only the situation and I do not see very well why barbarians should go to teach civilised people what they knew before you did.’

“There it ended.”

To the question, ‘What is the value of religious exercises, such as Japa etc. the Mother says in a talk :

“These things, if they help you are all right; if they do not, naturally they are of no use. Their value is quite relative. It is worth only the effect it has on you or the measure of your belief in it. If it is an aid to your concentration, then, as I say, it is welcome. The ordinary consciousness takes to the things through a kind of superstition; one thinks, ‘If I go to the temple or to church once a week, for example, if I say my prayers regularly, something good will happen to me.’ It is a superstition spread all over the world but it has no spiritual value.

"I have been to holy places. I have seen monuments considered as very highly religious, in France, in Japan and elsewhere; they were not always the same kind of temples or churches nor were they the same gods but the impression they left on me, my experiences of them were everywhere almost the same, with but slight differences. There is usually a force concentrated at the place, but its character depends entirely upon the faith of the faithful; also there is a difference between the force as it really exists and the form in which it appears to the faithful. For instance, in a most famous and most beautiful place of worship which was, from the standpoint of art, the most magnificent creation one could imagine, I saw within its holy of holies a huge black spider that had spread its net all around, caught within it and absorbed all the energies emanating from the devotion of the people, their prayers and all that. It was not a very pleasant spectacle. But the people who were there and prayed felt the divine contact, they received all kinds of benefit from their prayers. And yet the truth of the matter was what I saw. The people had the faith and their faith changed what was bad into something that was good to them. Now if I had gone and told them: 'You think it is God you are praying to! it is only a formidable vital Spider that is sucking your force'; surely it would not have been very charitable on my part. But everywhere it is almost the same thing. There is a vital Force presiding. And vital beings feed upon the vibrations of human emotion. Very few are they, a microscopic number, who go to the temples and churches and holy places with the true religious feeling, that is to say, not to pray or beg something of God, but to offer themselves, to express gratitude, to aspire, to surrender. One in a million would be too many. These when they are there, get some touch of the Divine just for the moment. But all others go only out of superstition, egoism, self-interest and create the atmosphere as it is found and it is that that you usually breathe in when you go to a holy place; only as you go there with a good feeling you say to yourself, 'What a peace-giving spot!'

"I regret to say it. But it is like that. I tell you I have purposely made the experiment a little everywhere. Perhaps I came across at times in far-away small corners—like a village church, for example—places where there was real peace and quiet and some true aspiration. Barring that, everywhere it is but a web of adverse vital forces that use everything for their food. The bigger the congregation, the more portentous the vital deity. Besides, in the invisible world it is only the vital beings that like to be worshipped. For, as I have said, that pleases them, gives them importance. They are puffed up with pride and are happy; when they can have a troop of people adoring them, they reach the very height of satisfaction."

To conclude.

"The spiritual spirit," the Mother explains, "is not contrary to a religious feeling of adoration, devotion and consecration. But what is wrong in the religions is the fixity of the mind clinging to one formula as an exclusive truth. One must always remember that formulas are only a mental expression of the truth and that this truth can always be expressed in many other ways."

So a timely warning comes:

“You express your faith in Sri Aurobindo with certain words which are for you the best expression of this faith ; this is quite all right. But if you are convinced that these very words are the only correct ones to express what Sri Aurobindo is, then you become dogmatic and are ready to create a religion.”

The position may be summarised in the following words of the Mother :

“Religion exists almost exclusively in its form, its cult, a certain set of ideas and it becomes great only through the spirituality of a few exceptional individuals ; while true spiritual life, particularly what the supramental realisation will be is independent of all precise intellectual forms, of all forms of life that are limited. It embraces all possibilities and all manifestations, and in the matter of expression, it is the vehicle of the highest and the most universal truth.

“A new religion would not only be useless but harmful. A new life has to be created, a new consciousness has to be expressed, something which is beyond intellectual limitations and mental formulas. It is a living truth that has to manifest.

“And in this realisation everything in its essence and in its truth has to be included. It must be an expression of the divine reality as total, as complete, as universal as possible. That alone can save humanity and the world. That is the great spiritual revolution of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, and it is that which he wanted us to realise.”

S.S. JHUNJHUNWALA

LIFE IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

THE IDEAL OF SADHANA THROUGH WORKS

IN this chapter we shall become acquainted with the question: Where lies the speciality of the sadhana pursued in the Ashram?

The Western nature is always doing, doing, doing; the Eastern tends to suffer meekly.

If things could be done not under the stress of the ego, man would in time radiate spirituality.

Both East and West yearn for a change—change of the world. But no real change can come without change of consciousness, change of nature. And to bring about this change is our sadhana.

The ideas contained in Sri Aurobindo's writings are not mere ideals. To use his own words: "*The Life Divine* is not philosophy but fact. It contains what I have realised and seen."¹

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is not realisation of bhakti or knowledge alone. Its whole stress is upon a remoulding of the external being. And for that, sadhana through works is a "must". God-service must accompany God-knowledge and God-love.

It is because of the ideal of practical spirituality introduced by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that service here does not consist in chanting hymns and waving lamps before any idol. They have taught us that work is worship. "Work done in the true spirit is meditation."

The Mother wrote to Sailen: "If you do your work as an offering which you lay in all sincerity at the feet of the Divine, work will do you as much good as meditation."

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga begins with surrender, but unless one possesses a thing how can one give it to the Divine? The Mother solves the riddle:

"...What one can give to the Divine is one's body. But that is precisely the thing that one does not give. Yes, try to consecrate your work, your bodily labour."²

That is perhaps why the start is made here with work. There may be other reasons which the Mother alone can give, but the first thing one is expected to do on being accepted is to interest himself in some work.

¹ *Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Sri Aurobindo*, compiled by M.P. Pandit, p. 10.

² Nolini Kanta Gupta, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part Eight, p. 133

We have to learn Yoga by being on our feet and not sitting shut up in a cave.

When someone asked how to meditate, he was told : "It is not necessary to tell you how to meditate ; whatever is needful will come of itself if in your work and at all times you are sincere and keep yourself open to the Mother."

Hundreds are here who very rarely sit down for meditation with closed eyes. They are always active. Are they wrong ? Let us not form an opinion in haste. "Those who have an expansive creative vital or a vital made for action are usually at their best when the vital is not held from its movement and they can develop faster by it than by introspective meditation....It is a mistake to think that to live in introspective meditation all the time is invariably the best or the only way of Yoga."¹

Work affords an opportunity to offer the energy we receive from the Divine back to its source—the Divine Himself.

An instance of people giving themselves to the Mother and their work becoming the body's prayer. S was 24 when he sought the Mother's shelter in 1930. His aim had been a brilliant academic career but he missed it. Then he made up his mind to take to the spiritual path like his brother and came to the Ashram. His brother remarked. "You were lazy and shrank from hard labour. Hence your failure." This touched him to the quick. He straightway prayed to the Mother to favour him with the work of grinding wheat. The Mother was pleased to hear this.

"You want to do grinding work ?" She asked making the particular movement with her hand. "Very good," she added lovingly.

He set about the work with great enthusiasm, but not being accustomed to hard work and the new grinding stone not moving smoothly, he felt pain all over the body, so much so that he could not carry even a kuja of water, yet not a word escaped his lips. Not for a few days or weeks but for a year and a half he carried on the work despite its growing volume. He had to grind the wheat twice in order to make it fine, and supply it in time. When Sri Aurobindo came to know of it he said that an electric machine was coming to spare him the strain.

According to S those were the days of extreme physical training. It was the Mother's work, the Mother's word, the Mother's will and he must carry it out; come what might, the work must be done. That was the spirit.

Thus work became the basis of our sadhana and in that form it still continues.

ATTITUDE IN SADHANA

To open the "heart's locked doors" the right attitude is the first requisite. The more one is surrendered in his attitude the wider the opening to the Mother's force. To open a door one must turn the key the right way. Wrong turning will be sheer waste of time and energy.

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Fourth Series, pp. 605-6.

Thus the Mother deals with one in accordance with the inner call of his soul and his past evolution. By way of illustrating the point let us cite two specific cases. The reader may take them in his own light.

M prayed for a few lines from the Mother's pen which he might treasure up for life and try to mould his life accordingly.

There was no reply.

When he prayed again and showed some insistence he was told. "Nothing comes for the moment. I shall remember your demand."¹ And he took it in a spirit of surrender and never repeated his prayer but never got what he wanted.

To S, however, the Mother wrote back almost every time he approached her in writing. He had her free permission to write whatever thought came to his mind, perturbations of the vital being and all that happened during the day. There grew up a heap of correspondence between the Mother and him.

Without hesitation he wrote everything good and evil in his nature. The great benefit of all this was that all the crudities of his nature were laid bare before her, which, if kept concealed, would have thrown him off the Path as was seen in the case of many.

Once he wrote : "Mother, what attitude should I take towards women ? There is a part in me which prompts me to go to X. This recalcitrant part impels me to do so, telling me that this is the best means of overcoming any attraction."

The Mother's reply ran : "This is childish ; it is always the same trap of the adverse force ; if, instead of expressing their advice under cleverly perverted forms, they were to speak of things as they are, it would come to something like this : 'Continue to drink in order to stop being a drunkard' or better : 'Continue to kill to stop being a murderer.'

"If you want to do Yoga, you must take more and more in all matters, small or great, the Yogic attitude."²

"The right attitude is to be devoted and given to the Mother and to wish to be whatever she wants you to be."³

Before coming here, R had made up his mind that he would never accept the work of teaching but when called on to do so he bowed to the Mother's decision, without a word.

Even as a novice he was prepared to do any menial work that was assigned to him. The cheerfulness with which he did the work of pulling the food cart and carrying the tiffin boxes from door to door showed plasticity in his nature, though it was hard as steel in the execution of the Mother's orders whatever they may be. "...the true attitude for a Yogi is to be plastic and ready to obey the Divine Command whatever it may be, nothing must be indispensable to him, nothing a burden."

¹ Quoted from memory.

² *Bases of Yoga*, p. 153.

³ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 727.

“Demand should not be made : what you receive freely from the Mother helps you, what you demand or try to impose on her is bound to be empty of her force...”¹ (8.5.1930)

We have seen what was R's attitude to work when he joined the Ashram in 1938. This letter was written in 1930 and it saw the light of day in 1953 when K put our letters in book form after the passing of the Master. Before this all letters were our personal property and we preserved them as our treasures. I happened to see them long after their publication. But this was the attitude of the inmates of the Ashram when I came in 1932. If I am asked to say, without having a look at these letters, what contributed to our developing such an attitude, straight would be my reply : “The atmosphere of the Ashram, the luminous personalities of the Mother and the Master. That was and is far more than any spoken or written word.”

One or two instances more before we go farther :

In the beginning we had to buy bread from the market. What a relief it was that Indian Chapati was not introduced. How hard it would be to feed an ever-increasing number ! Someone was needed who could prepare bread in bulk. When X prayed to be allowed to join the Ashram he was asked to learn bread-making and then come. With his arrival the bakery was started.

Jotindranath, who was to take charge later, then worked under him. At the time the bakery was in a house in front of the Ashram. Kneading was done by hand as there was no machine for it. So the work had to begin at 4 a.m. Now our bakery feeds 1500 to 2000 mouths.

The love and devotion with which Jotindranath carried out his tedious, tiresome work for years and years was remembered by many when he left his body on July 2, 1965. Relaxing in an easy chair he had been talking with his sister and the children of the Boarding in the evening and of a sudden he breathed his last. On his passing the Mother wrote :

“The sudden departure of Jotindranath is a painful loss for all here. He was perfect in consecration and honesty in his work, a man on whom one could count, a truly exceptional virtue. He has gone into the solar light and is having conscious rest to which he has truly the right.”

(5.7.65)

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Jotindranath P wrote to the Mother a number of questions to which she replied.

Q : “Dans mes rêves je vois Jotindra très heureux. Un jour je l'ai vu penché sur ma table et il me disait, Je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de te rien dire pendant mon départ parce que c'est l'appel de Sri Aurobindo qui m'a obligé à courir tout de suite. Est-ce qu'il y a une vérité dans ce rêve Mère ?”

(“I often meet Jotindra in dream and find him extremely happy. One day he stood before me, inclined on my table and said : I had no chance to tell you anything

¹ Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother, p. 707.

while departing because Sri Aurobindo's call urged me to run to him." Is there any truth in this dream, Mother ?")

Mère : "Ce rêve est sûrement vrai parce que Jotindra est allé tout droit rejoindre Sri Aurobindo."

(Mother : "This dream is certainly true because Jotindra has gone straight on to rejoin Sri Aurobindo.")

Q : "Est-ce qu'une âme qui est consciente de Toi prend sa nouvelle naissance immédiatement après son départ ? Ou faut-il qu'elle attende longtemps ?"

(Q : "Does the soul which is conscious of you take its new birth immediately after its departure ? Or is it obliged to wait for a long time ?")

Mère : "Chaque être psychique pleinement conscient et développé est libre de choisir quelle sera sa prochaine existence et quand cette existence prendra place."

(Mother : "Each psychic being fully conscious and developed is free to choose what will be its next existence and when this existence will take place.")

Q : "Est-ce que cette âme vient dans l'Ashram après sa naissance pour accomplir Ta mission Divine ?"

(Q : "Does the soul after its birth return to the Ashram to accomplish Your Divine Mission ?")

Mère : "C'est généralement son choix quand elle se réincarne de suite."

(Mother : "Generally this is its choice when it reincarnates next.")

Q : "Est-ce que cette âme est capable de choisir sa naissance et de jouir du bonheur de la vie de l'Ashram ?"

(Q : "Is the soul capable of choosing its birth and enjoying the happiness of the life of the Ashram ?")

Mère : "Si elle est pleinement développé, elle en est capable."

(Mother : "If fully developed, it is capable of it.")

Q : "Quelle est la relation entre la lumière supramentale et la lumière solaire ?"

(Q : "What is the relation between the supramental light and the solar light ?")

Mère : "La lumière solaire est le symbol de la lumière supramentale."

(Mother : "The solar light is the symbol of the supramental light.")

Bread-making needed constant attention. In between if he could snatch even two minutes Jotindranath would utilise it in writing out a line or two from the Mother's or Master's works.

On being asked why he wrote instead of reading them he would say in reply : "Writing things enters into the being while off goes from the mind what is read."

Jotindranath used to say that due to work one can never get tired. If one works out of joy it would not make one tired.

This cannot be said of vital joy :

"Vital joy, though it is a very helpful thing for the ordinary human life, is something excited, eager, mobile, without a settled basis—that is why it soon gets tired and cannot continue. Vital joy has to be replaced by a quiet settled psychic gladness with

the mind and vital very clear and very peaceful. When one works on this basis, then everything becomes glad and easy, in touch with the Mother's force and fatigue or depression do not come."¹

Jotindranath always cared for work first, all else afterwards. According to Sri Aurobindo, when there is a readiness to subject everything to the divine yoke, it means the necessary stage has been reached for conversion. When the time was approaching fast for harvesting what was sown in his life he had to leave the earthly scene.

For him work was worship. In the opinion of one of his co-workers his whole life was worship.

He reared and cherished a great longing in his heart that he might be able to serve the Mother till his last breath. And this was granted to him.

Instances can be cited of how Yoga cannot be cut off by death.

X was suffering for a pretty long time. One day a feeling arose in him. "What is the use of keeping the body which can give no service to the Mother?" From his death-bed he sent a letter to the Mother.

On receiving the Mother's reply his son gave it to him to read and went out to do something. While reading he passed away with the Mother's letter laid upon his breast and with his hands upon it.

When his son approached the Mother she said, "He had been waiting for the letter. He wants to come back to the Ashram in his next life. Does your sister love him?"

"How can I say, Mother?"

"The normal way is that the soul comes as a son of the daughter. However, I shall see to it."

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *On Yoga*, II, Tome One, p. 659.

THE CULTURE OF THE TAMILS

(We have pleasure in publishing in two instalments an article from the pen of Sri S. Maharajan, the Chief Justice of Pondicherry or, to take the French formula still current, *Chef du Service Judiciaire*. Sri Maharajan is that rare phenomenon, a mind versed not only in law but also in literature, for he is an accomplished writer of essays and a Shakespeare-scholar whose translations of some of the greatest Shakespearean tragedies into Tamil have won much praise. He has published a collection of essays in Tamil, *Olichelvam*. He is the Convener of the Tamil Advisory Board of the *Bharatiya Jnan Pith*. Recently he attended an International conference—Seminar of Tamil Studies at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he read a paper on translating Shakespeare into Tamil. At the moment he is engaged on an English book commissioned by the *Sahitya Akademi* on the epic poet of Tamil Nad, *Kamban*. The article we are publishing is a lively yet substantial study in brief of the Tamil cultural spirit down the ages.)

I

IN Mamallapuram, near Madras, stands a rock-hill, carved, in the 7th century A.D., into more than a hundred pieces of sculpture, which have been described by H. Zimmer¹ as the “grandest expression of plastic Indian art, one of the largest, most beautiful and most dramatically striking masterpieces of all times.” Another Frenchman, Leopold Bazou, who was inspired by this description, went to Mamallapuram to study the sculpture and was struck with the powerful master-mind that had conceived the whole scene. He declared, “Art has reached here its full mastery,” but he was astonished that the artist had nowhere signed his name to authenticate his work. Bazou exclaimed, “Names have never meant much in South India....Self-depreciation, tempered with a deep sense of humour, has ever been a virtue of the Tamils.”² Evidently, what he meant by self-depreciation was a sense of humility, deprecatory of the ego. In fact, one would very much like to know the names of the master-sculptors of Mamallapuram, of the great architects of the temples of Tanjore, Madurai, Srirangam and Chidambaram, of the illustrious authors of Tamil classics like *Tholkappium* and *Muttollayiram* but all of them preferred the self-denying joy of anonymity to the vulgar glare of publicity. It may be that humility, as Hazlitt says, is the worst of virtues, but it does connote a maturity born of an ancient culture, which, according to Archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler, is over six thousand years old.

In times of decadence and political subjection, the humility of the Tamilian has occasionally degenerated into an inferiority complex, which, in its turn, has given rise (by way of compensatory process) to moods of vulgar and empty boastfulness.

¹ H. Zimmer, *Mythes et symboles dans la civilisation de l'Inde*, Paris 1951

² Leopold Bazou, *A Sculptor's Paradise in South India*.

But, during periods of prosperity, the Tamilian has shown unmistakable evidence of dignified humility born of strength and broad understanding.

It is not without significance that the cult of non-violence should have captured the imagination of the Tamils. Gandhiji records the fact that it was a Tamil woman, in an advanced stage of expectancy, who offered herself first as a volunteer in the Satyagraha movement which he started in South Africa. This recent incident seems to illustrate a dominant note in Tamil culture, for, as long ago as the 1st century A.D., *Tirukkural* had emphasized the need for non-violence in thought, speech and action; the theme of the 33rd chapter of the *Kural* is, "The highest virtue is non-killing; for killing brings in its train every other vice."

Not that the Tamilian has succeeded in renouncing acts of violence. In fact, in the history of the Tamils, there has been frequent internecine warfare among the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. But what is remarkable is that more than once the fratricidal wars were stopped in response to the appeal of a wise poet who would appear on the battlefield and preach to the rival armies the virtues of Peace. In a communal riot, which took place at Tuticorin in 1953, the rioters marched into the colony of a particular community and indulged in loot and acts of vandalism. As one of the rioters invaded a house and raised his bill-hook to cut off the head of a sleeping baby, his fellow-rioters threatened the miscreant with dire consequences if he dare touch the child. Thus they saved the child from slaughter. A strong ethical sense and a responsiveness to finer sensibilities would appear implanted in the consciousness of the Tamils.

Another trait of the Tamilian is his tolerance and cosmopolitan outlook. His refreshing lack of jingoism is evidently due to the intimate international contacts he has had from the earliest times. R. B. Dixon, the celebrated archaeologist and historian, asserts that the Tamils had extensive trade with Malaya, North Borneo and Northern Philippines even in the 1st millennium B.C. and that trade led to colonisation and conquest of those countries by the Tamils. According to Paul Filliot, there is evidence in Chinese literature of diplomatic relations between South Indian coasts and the Chinese empire as early as the 2nd Century B.C. A Chinese writer, Pau Kou, who lived at the end of the 1st century, mentions the fact that in the time of the Hun Emperor, the Chola king sent embassies to China (*Vide*: K. M. Panikkar, *India and China*, pages 17 and 19). Strabo, a Greek, who wrote his *Geography* in the 1st Century A.D., makes mention of the embassy sent by the Pandyan king to Emperor Augustus on the occasion of the latter's accession to the throne. Pliny, who wrote his *Natural History* in 77 A.D., gives an account of a voyage to India and says that passengers preferred to embark at Barake in the Pandyan country rather than at Muziris, which was infested with pirates. Warmington speaks of the ships that sailed from the West with gold, wine and goblets and returned home laden with rice, peacock, pepper, silk, cotton, ivory and pearls from Tamil Nad. In fact, the Tamil word for rice, *Arisi*, became *oryza* in Greek and the Tamil word for peacock, *Thogamayil*, became *toga* in Rome. The Greeks and Romans had trading stations in the

Tamil kingdoms and many of them were employed by the Tamil kings as body-guards or palace-guards. It is not therefore surprising that the Tamils, who had contacts with different nations and races, were singularly free from insularity and a *Sangham* poet of the pre-Christian era proclaimed, with incredible catholicity, "Every country is my native land and everyone my kinsman."

The rudimentary principles of Science were not unknown to the Tamils. Many of them dabbled in alchemy and some of the *Siddhas* (Mystics) professed to have discovered the three salts (*Muppu*) with the aid of which they claimed to have converted copper into gold. Compounds of iron, copper, mercury and arsenic were prepared in their crude laboratories. According to certain historians, the Tamils were the earliest users of iron implements in India. The *Siddha* system of medicine, the secrets of which were jealously and selfishly guarded by the physicians, was in vogue. That arsenic could cure eosinophilia was known to the *Siddhas* and it is well-known that Allopathy recently borrowed this concept from *Siddha* medicine and has been effectively eradicating a disease which did not respond to any drug known to it. There is a legend that Bhojar, a Tamil mystic and physician of renown, went to Germany and propagated there the knowledge of the *Siddha* system of medicine. *Kapilar Ahaval* shows that the Tamils practised principles of eugenics from the earliest times. Marco Polo, who was born in Venice and who visited the eastern coast of Tamil Nad on his voyage back from China to Venice in the last quarter of the 13th century, refers to the skill of the Tamilians in building vessels and boats of different sizes and in the art of diving for oysters at the bottom of the sea. He adds, "The natives make use of a kind of bedstead or cot of very light cane-work, so ingeniously contrived that when they lie on them and are inclined to sleep, they can draw the curtains about them by pulling a string. This they do in order to keep out tarantulas, which bite severely, as well as to prevent their being annoyed by flies and other small insects, while, at the same time, the air, so necessary for reducing this excessive heat, is not kept out."

It is in engineering that the Tamils reached a high degree of perfection. The network of canals through which the Tamil country was irrigated by gravitational flow has been characterised by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as evidence of their ancient and glorious civilization. The Chola king, Rajarajan (985 A.D. to 1016 A.D.) built the historic Grand Anicut—a long irrigation dam which stopped and stored the Cauvery waters for irrigation during the dry months of the year. The skill of his engineers and the labour of millions of workmen combined to raise this dam of unhewn stone, 1080 feet long and 60 feet broad, below the island of Srirangam. The same king constructed the temple of Bruhadeswara at Tanjore and dedicated it to Siva. The *gopuram* (tower) of this temple is 216 feet high and is topped by a block of granite $25\frac{1}{2}$ feet square and 80 tons in weight. This stone was hauled four miles over an inclined plane and put on top of the tower. The temple carries sculptures depicting the different poses and *bhavas* of *Bharathanatyam*. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes this temple as the "greatest temple in India", and the Tamil-

speaking people as "perhaps the greatest temple-builders in the world." The icon of Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram symbolises the dynamics of the cosmic dance and has been described by competent foreign critics as the culmination of Tamilian art.

According to Marco Polo, "In this country, there are many experts in the science of physiognomy, which teaches the understanding of the nature and quality of men and whether they tend to good or evil. These qualities are immediately detected on looking at a man or woman."

Some gallant attempts were made by the Tamils to correlate the moods of Man with those of Nature. The division of human life into *aham* and *puram* (subjective and objective or introvert and extrovert) is an instance in point. Furthermore, they divided land into five categories (*tinai*), namely, hills and hilly area, woods and wooded country, fertile plains, sea-board and desert. An elaborate grammar was evolved nearly two thousand years ago, defining the customs and manners of those inhabiting the five different areas, the moods of Nature in each area and the suitability of each area as background for different aspects of the human drama, such as love-making, wedding, pangs of separation, re-union, etc. The seasons of the year and the different hours of the day were also correlated to human moods and the interplay between the two was extensively studied. Though these classifications revealed a penetrating study of man and nature, the inability of the later *Sangham* poets and dramatists to free themselves from the conventional framework of *aham*, *puram* and *tinai* served to stifle their creativity.

Though the Tamils were a practical, realistic and reason-loving people, their thinkers held up before themselves almost impossible ideals of chastity, bravery and ethical perfection. They believed that by chastity a woman could command the Elements, bring down rain or burn a city to ashes. One of the tests of chastity of a woman was that no man, however lustful, could cast covetous eyes upon her and, if he did, her chastity was not above board. Although such severe standards were imposed upon women, it does not appear that men were subjected to the same rigour. Perhaps, it was thought that from the social point of view, woman's chastity was more important than man's. Even during the *Sangham* period, the institution of prostitution appears to have been well established and many of the tiffs between married couples were due to the machinations of the harlots. Harlots were taken so much for granted that grammarians laid down rules delineating the behaviour-patterns of the three characters in the eternal triangle. It may however be observed that harlots were assigned a very low and contemptible status in society.

Life in Tamil Nad was characterised by utter simplicity. The basic dress of the Tamilian consisted of two or three pieces of unsewn cotton cloth, one being used as a loin cloth and the other as a covering for the body. A turban on the head and gold-embroidered silk as covering for the body were used for ceremonial occasions. *Kuppayam* (long-sleeved shirt or coat) appears to have been worn by the soldiers whose weapons of war were shields and swords. Woman's dress was a little more elaborate; a long saree and a blouse draped her body gracefully. The women

used to wear the saree in such a way that though it brought out the curves of the body it did no violence to their modesty. The simplicity of the Tamilians' dress and their semi-nakedness have very often led the foreigner into misjudging their culture. Marco Polo says in his *Travels*, "The natives of this part of the country always go naked except that they cover their private parts with a piece of cloth. The king wears no more cloth than the rest except that he has a piece of richer cloth and is distinguished by various kinds of ornaments, such as a collar set with jewels, sapphires, emeralds and rubies of immense value. He also wears, suspended from the neck and reaching to the breast, a fine silken string containing 104 large handsome pearls and rubies." It is possible that the description given by Marco Polo is of the fishermen of the east coast and their chief. However, the semi-nakedness of the Tamilians did not blind Marco Polo to the greatness of their culture, for he calls the Coromandel or eastern coast of India "the noblest and richest country in the world."

Tamils had a great love of flowers. The *atti* flower was the emblem of the Cholas, the palmyra flower of the Cheras, and the margosa flower of the Pandyas. Women used to adorn their hair with flowers, whereas men used to wear garlands of flowers around their neck. Their intimacy with flowers was so great that they developed an elaborate flower symbolism. The *vengai* flower connoted love. Jilted lovers used to wear *erukkalai*, the most trivial of flowers, and thereby evoke the pity of their beloved. The Tamils conceived Siva as having a *konrai* flower tucked up in his head, *konrai* itself symbolising the stars of the Milky Way while the Milky Way, in its turn, symbolised the Infinite.

In his Presidential Address delivered at the All India Oriental Conference, Ahmedabad, in October 1953, Dr. S.K. Chatterjee said, "The flower ritual of the Tamilians evolved on different lines from the fire ritual of the Aryans." He quotes Mark Collins in support of his thesis, that the word "Puja" of Sanskrit is derived from the Tamil "Pu" meaning flower and the Tamil "Cey" meaning "to do". According to him, the Tamils invoked the divine spirit in an image, a pot, a pebble or a tree, poured water over it and offered it flowers and fruits and incense and music and dance, treating the divine spirit as an honoured guest like a king on a visit to a subject of his. It is the thesis of Dr. Chatterjee that in the ritual of the *Homa* the worshipper is not keenly conscious of any force pervading the universe, but only used the fire as a messenger to the Gods of wind, sun, thunder, rain, etc. He further points out that in the flower ritual of the Tamilians there was no place for animal sacrifice, but that such sacrifice was part of the fire ritual. The synthesis of the two rituals took place probably after the 2nd Century A.D.

Apart from flowers, the Tamils loved outdoor sports such as cock-fights, ram-fights, and bull-fights. Open-air dances by nautch-girls (*Paadimi*) were arranged by kings. The dancers used to interpret, through emotional expression and rhythmic movements of the limbs, the songs sung by minstrels called *Paanars*.

Bharatha, in his prologue to the *Natya-Sastra*, makes the modest statement

that he is unequal to the task of codifying the art of dancing which was in vogue in Tamil Nad for hundreds of years before him. Bala Saraswathi, the greatest living exponent of the art of *Bharathanatyam*, recently gave a performance in the Ted Shawn theatre in Massachusetts. An American reviewer noted that "it was Hindu dance in its purest form, and she radiated a contagious spirit of calmness." "The most articulate fore-finger in the world of dance (employing two thousand years of gestural dance development) is the dancer's special approach to the art, an approach not based on physical virtuosity, but rather, upon nuances, shading, subtleties." This was the appreciation of another American art critic.

Music also flourished in the Tamil country from ancient times. The wide variety of *ragas* and musical instruments known to the Tamilians has been graphically described in the *Silappathikaram* of the 2nd Century A.D. Music was employed also as a background to manual labour. Tamilian folk-lore is replete with the songs of the ploughman, the boatman, the hunter, the warrior and the hewer.

The people living in the river-valleys in Tamil Nad revelled in public baths in the rivers. Marco Polo says, "Both men and women wash their entire bodies in water both morning and evening. Until this ablution has taken place, they neither eat nor drink; anyone who neglected this observance would be regarded as a heretic; it ought to be noticed that in eating they make use of the right hand only and never touch their food with the left, reserving the latter for cleansing the private parts of the body. They drink out of a particular vessel, and each individual from his own, never making use of the drinking vessel of another person. When they drink they do not put their lips to their vessel, but hold it above the head and pour the liquid into the mouth, not allowing the vessel to touch the lips. In giving drink to a stranger, they do not hand their vessel to him, but pour the wine or other liquid into his hands from which he drinks as from a cup."

One of the customs of the Tamils which bespeak their living contact with Nature is that they generally eat food not from plates but from plaintain leaves. Their love of trees was so great that they started worshipping them. In fact, in the Sanctum Sanctorum of most of the famous temples in Tamil Nad, there is a holy tree which is offered worship. The *vanni* tree, the bamboo tree, the jack fruit tree, the tamarind tree and the *tulasi* plant and even the *aruham-pul* (a kind of grass) are worshipped as symbols of the Cosmic Spirit. The miracle of the seed sprouting into stem, leaf, flower and fruit was a profound reminder to them of the miracle of creation, sustenance and destruction.

The average Tamilians lived in mud houses with thatched roofs. The floors would be swept every day and smeared with cowdung which is known to be a better disinfectant than phenyl or dettol. The humblest of the people would beautify the floor of the house and the courtyard by drawing a variety of designs (mostly floral) with white silicon power; the art of *kolam* is an indispensable part of a housewife's equipment.

The eating habits of the Tamils are equally simple. Though the majority of

the Tamils are non-vegetarians, the maximum number of vegetarians in India are to be found in Tamil Nad. There are thousands upon thousands of Tamils who have been practising abstinence from meat, fish and even eggs for several centuries. *Idli* is a peculiarly Tamil delicacy which has recently become popular in the rest of India. Finely ground pastes of rice and blackgram are mixed in a particular proportion and allowed to ferment for about twelve hours and then boiled in steam. The *idli* so prepared is soft and fragile and readily melts in the mouth. As the late Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudalar used to say, there are two thousand years of tradition behind the *idli* which no non-Tamil has so far succeeded in producing.

Reverence for life, in whatever form, appeared conspicuous among the Tamils, at any rate, during the *Sangham* period. Paari, the renowned patron of Tamil letters, found a jasmine creeper lying across his path and refused to ride his chariot over it. The story is that he abandoned his chariot and allowed the plant to creep on it for support. There is also the legend of Pehen, another chieftain who, finding a peacock shivering with cold, covered it with his own silk mantle. As P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar says in his *History of the Tamils*, "This same love of Nature was the cause why they beautified their tools, their house, their furniture and their vessels with carvings imitative of creepers, leaves, flowers and animals."

By the first century A.D., as the Romans were codifying their laws, we find Thiruvalluvar codifying ethics in Tamil Nad. Although it is wrong to contend that the great ideals of perfection which the *Kural* preached were being practised by the contemporary Tamils, it must be admitted that a society which gave birth to the *Kural* in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. must have had something in common between it and the illustrious author of the *Kural*. As Albert Schweitzer has said in his book, *Indian Thought*, "With sure strokes the *Kural* draws the ideal of simple ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world, its utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom." According to Schweitzer, in a country which believed in world-and-life-negation, the lonely voice of Valluvar affirmed life and the world, at the same time assimilating all the valuable ethical results of the thought of world-negation. It is the assertion of Schweitzer that this voice of Thiruvalluvar gradually penetrated into Hindu thought through the great religious teachers who had sprung from the lower castes and lived among and felt with the people.¹

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

¹ While agreeing that negation of world and life assumed a large shape in the later and recent ages of Indian history, we may rightly express a negation of Schweitzer's own thesis. What he considers an original and persisting characteristic of Indian spirituality was only one strain of a many-sided movement and this movement as a whole was essentially world-affirming and life-affirming. It regarded the universe as a real and progressive manifestation of the Divine. And the most fruitful tendencies today are a return, under modern conditions, to the old spiritual all-roundedness, combining the Here with the Beyond. (Editor)

THE MAKING OF POETRY

LETTER TO SRI AUROBINDO

X BRINGS without doubt a very poetic substance and some wonderfully striking imaginative phrases, but, if I may judge from the two poems I have corrected, what he seems to lack is a precision of idea and language which would elicit a rich meaning from his richness of imagery. As regards metre and metrical rhythm, he is of course rather amorphous, though he is not quite without a sense of them as you will see from some lines which are quite correct in the original forms I am giving below of the two poems together with my versions in italics.

By the way, I should like to know—not, of course, with any intention to damp X's ardour—if in your opinion what I have done could be described as 'a few corrections'. And up to what point of correction by another man do one's poems remain one's own ?

I

Dream-depths of the ocean bright blue !
Dream-depths of ocean—bright and boundless blue !

Would I in mystic joy and love plunge there
Let me in mystic joy and love plunge there

To sip that nectar hidden in deep hood
To sip the nectar hidden in thy hood,

Of star-coiled serpent whose spelled mood
O star-coiled serpent of infimtude,

Trance-crowned with a gold moon's glare,
Trance-crownèd with a gold moon's magic glare,

Shining and rich in God's strength ever new.
Shining and rich in God's strength ever new.

O depths yet unseen by a human eye !
O depths yet unseen by the human eye !

Receive my soul and hold me in your palm;
Receive my soul and hold me in your palm;

My deeper soul is the world's delightful calm
Make me a measureless immortal calm

And heal my anguish of an agelong cry.
And heal my anguish of an agelong cry.

Deep as your bosom and blue yet high—
Deep as your bosom and as blue yet high,

In all creative lights my soul will shine
A pure creative light, my soul will shine

On the golden hood deep in your hush supine :
One with your golden hood : O hush divine

O the spirit's ecstatic depth, you draw me nigh !
Of everlasting rapture, draw me nigh !

2

Trance-held in the Supreme's love-embrace,
Trance-held in the Supreme's giant embrace,

In the depths of this night your heart unstirred
Across our human night your heart unstirred

Shines like a sky, O heaven's immaculate grace,
Shine like a sky, O heaven's immaculate grace,

And your eyes fixed on the earth's past, unblurred
And your eyes fixed on the earth's past, unblurred,

Sees steadily, this moment, the ecstatic flight
See steadily, this hour, the rapturous flight

Of the future's forms, soul-birds crossing fast
Of future forms—soul-pinions crossing fast

Over the shining blue of the immortal light.
The shining blue of the immortal light.

And, crimson, your feet press sweetly the grey cast
Your crimson feet press warmly the grey cast

Of this hard earth to open unto the future's morn.
Of rigid earth, opening a deathless morn.

O Love ! this inward moment, my spirit's eye,—I see
O Love ! this inward moment, my dark eye

Merging into the yonder moon, a golden horn,
Merging with yonder moon's uplifted horn

Becoming the blazing form of the gold infinity,—
Becomes a force of gold infinity,

That bursts bright in the vistas of a vision rare...
To pierce the vistas of a vision rare...

And my fingers like burning and aspiring rays
And now my fingers like aspiring rays

Here offer to your rich and fulfilling care,
Offer unto your rich fulfilling care

All of a tender soul, though moulded in mortal ways.
All of a tender soul moulded in mortal ways.

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENT TO AMAL

“Certainly ‘a few corrections’ is absurdly inadequate. X has a real poetic faculty, but without mastery of metrical form and perfection of language the poetic faculty cannot tell. Your changes make all the difference between a promising failure and a brilliant success. Even a few changes can often make that difference, but these are more than a few.”

(7-12-1935)

A VISIT TO THE DELHI BRANCH OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

AFTER arriving from Agra at Old Delhi railway station we drove from the old city through New Delhi with its beautiful park-like residential area, past Parliament Row out along Jan Path till we came to the road which leads to the historic Qutab Minar and soon arrived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, opposite the Indian Institute of Technology.

The Ashram, a complex of buildings, is situated on a pleasant site well outside the din and rush of the city with plenty of land around it for further expansion as the need arises. There is also a spacious Meditation Hall in the Main Ashram Building.

The Shrine containing the relics of Sri Aurobindo has been reverently housed in a small temple-like structure of bluish white marble set on green lawns, bordered by flowers. We were struck by the peaceful atmosphere amidst the 'building boom' going on at the Ashram and the Mother's School.

We had no idea what a bustling bee-hive of spiritually inspired activity under the able leadership of Shri Surendranath Jauhar the Delhi Branch had turned out to be, and so were delightfully surprised by all that is taking place there and especially the activity of the Mother's School. A brief history of the School should illustrate the point.

Since its inception on 23.4.56 (numerologists take note) the school has grown from three students and one teacher till there are now about 800 students and 39 teachers plus an administrative staff headed by Shri Lal Singh Bhagowalia who is Principal.

From a few rooms in the main Ashram, the school has spread out, and in fact is still building over a large area with even a greater acceleration in the near future already in the planning stage. (Plans are now afoot for a College to be built and are awaiting the Mother's Sanction. Actually the whole school is going to be completely rebuilt, in the not too distant future ! At present there are 50 class rooms housed in seven blocks of buildings and ten more acres have recently been acquired for an entirely new building programme to house this ever-growing school.

Among some of the developments of note are laboratories set up with the guidance of educators working under the auspices of UNESCO and The National Council of Educational Research & Training. Teams of Russian and American Advisers have been collaborating with Indian and School authorities to make these among the finest in the country. The laboratories are equipped with science equipment which has come from Russia. Also another valuable gift was received from the Yugoslav Ambassador H.E. Radivoj Uvalic on a recent visit to the school—a 16 mm-Cinema projector, an invaluable aid to audio-visual education.

In fact, the Mother's School is highly regarded by educators. It has been approved and recognised as a residential school for the placement of Merit Scholars by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and from January 1967 has been admitting the winners of the Government of India Merit Scholarships—which also means that Ashram children will not have to go to some other school if they should win an award, as has happened in the past. A number of boys have won scholarships to the National Defence Academy and are now serving as Officers in the defence of the country. The more one sees the more impressed one becomes.

It is a co-educational English-medium school from Nursery ages 3-5, Primary 5-9, Middle 9-13, Higher Secondary 13-16—Arts and Sciences, recognized by the Delhi Directorate of Education and the Central Board of Secondary Education. It has a hostel for both girls and boys within the Ashram—and, most amazing to me, these children seem actually to enjoy school and take a real interest in it ! Yet the boys will still be boys and the Principal had to admonish some of them at Assembly this morning for climbing up on the roofs of buildings and for making mischief (I see this makes me a tattle-tale !). On the other hand when I went in to Shri Bhagowalia in his office he was writing to the Mother for blessings for fourteen of the children who had won fifteen prizes in a regional Art competition. I was very fortunate in making good friends with many of the children in my short stay.

Shri Lal Chand the art teacher has had remarkable success with his art class and some of the pictures I saw really showed young artistic souls expressing, beautifully.

There is a rapidly growing library of over 6000 volumes—Recreational and Sports activities supervised by a Physical Instructor—which is still developing.

Among other things of note the Mother's School has been selected as a Model Demonstration school by the National Council of Educational Research & Training for the development of Science and Mathematics.

The basic idea of the project is to raise the standard of science education, physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics, by teaching these subjects from the Sixth class and enabling the children to get used to handling the concepts and the equipments used in these sciences from an early age.

We enjoyed very much attending the Morning Assembly where the whole school sits in meditation—listening to devotional songs and to the recitations by the youngsters and the reading of excerpts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

To see them rise above their shyness and timidity, once they got started and were safely carried by the thoughts uttered, through the ordeal of speaking before such a large group, was most interesting. And the wisdom contained in those little ones—they seemed to know by identity just what they were saying—was really quite amazing, I must say. It is a unique experience which must be seen to be appreciated. And they compare favourably with the Ashram children I met at Pondicherry. The Mother's Grace is certainly a travelling thing, I thought to myself.

It will be a wonderful day when more schools like these shall spring up throughout the country—and let us hope around the world—in the not too distant future, schools which exist with such aims as those Ashram schools of Pondicherry and Delhi, where the child is to be regarded as a soul with a body, life-energy and mind to be harmoniously developed. “Education to be complete,” says the Mother, “must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual.” An attempt is being made to provide conditions conducive to the development of these faculties of the child.

Ten years is a short time in the life of educational institutions and their development. I think it can be safely said that this School will surpass its own expectations in another 10 years, and the future, let us hope, will see others developing after its model.

I know I will personally be watching its development with the utmost interest.

April 3, 1967

JOHN KELLY

2nd WORLD CONFERENCE OF *WORLD UNION*

THE 2nd World Conference of World Union will commence at 9.00 a.m. on 12 August 1967 at the Ashram Theatre. Its final session will be held at 4.00 p.m. on 16 August. The highlight of the conference will be the seminar for three days on "Education for One World" with four subheads : (a) Education for the whole man; (b) A philosophy of education for one world; (c) The integration of science and the humanities; (d) The role of parents and teachers in education. The conference will be inaugurated by Dr. C. D. Deshmukh and the seminar will be presided over by him.

The Executive Committee of World Union felt that it is advisable to issue a basic statement of the subject of the seminar to serve as a guide to those who may prepare papers to be read at the seminar and also to the participants in the seminar. The following statement has been issued :

Basic Statement

That alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member.

— SRI AUROBINDO

The ideal of humanity, one world, world union, has already taken root in the human consciousness. Men and countries accept the need of the United Nations organisation and its growth into a better instrument to serve mankind adequately, to create a reliable international order and to maintain peace. Men and nations who have expressed opposition to the present U.N. have nevertheless wanted to start another international organisation which, in their opinion, would serve the interests of mankind.

The same urge for unity which joined warring tribes and regional groups into the large aggregates of great nations is moving now to join the nations of the earth into a world union. The same process and factors which worked to bring the ideal of the nations to the forefront of human consciousness will bring forward the ideal of world union.

The Mother, President of World Union, has stated :

The world is a unity—it has always been and it is always so—it is not that it has not got the unity and the unity has to be brought in from outside and imposed upon it. Only the world is not conscious of its unity. It has to be made conscious.

The real need is to make humanity conscious that the world is one and to live

up to that oneness. This endeavour should become one of the aims of education. It is futile to expect the realisation of world unity by external means. World unity is an internal psychological ideal, and can therefore best be realised by inner and psychological means. It is these methods particularly that should be studied while education for one world is being planned.

If we want to have an internationally-oriented education for our children now, we have to prepare a truly planetary education for the future. Our future teachers will need to be conscious that mankind is on a spaceship, as it were, a planet, and is one with the whole planetary life. Becoming conscious that we are responsible for all this life, and for each animal species in whatever country it may be, will be the foundation of that education.

In this spaceship everything is common, from the atmosphere we breathe to the food and water which we have to apportion to every living being. We must be conscious also that any drop of poison—vital or mental as well as physical—will poison not only our enemy on this journey, but our beloved and the children of our children.

There must be a complete reversal of the notion that we, a superior race or a people with a divine mission, have to fight against the whole world to defend something distinctive. It is only a dynamic feeling of oneness, an awareness of physical, vital and mental identity with everything that breathes, that will be strong enough to overcome the natural animal aggressiveness which is a part of our inheritance. In this context there is urgent need for consideration of the following aspects:

1. The psychology of culture.
2. The underlying psychological causes of the rise and fall of civilisations.
3. An estimate of the ancient systems of knowledge.
4. Is a reconciliation possible between them and modern knowledge that could lead to its enlargement and illumination ?
5. New horizons of knowledge and their relevance to a consciousness of one world.
6. On what principles can there be a stable, progressive world reconstruction ?
7. Modern subjectivism and its possible utility for world integration.
8. What are the causes of the present unrest and rebellion among young people, and how can our education system deal with them ?
9. Internationalism as an ideal of education.
10. An international atmosphere as a powerful means of education for one world, and the problems in creating it in our schools.
11. Is it possible to develop an international attitude among students ? At what age should the attempt begin, and what methods should be used to that end ?
12. International institutions, and their relevance to education.
13. The importance of the study of world history.
14. Does world history need to be rewritten ?
15. World history and national history; world history *vs.* national history. How would a global history differ from a collection of national histories ?

16. Is there a unity of knowledge around which the study of the humanities, science, technology and the fine arts can be reconciled ? If so, how to correlate each subject of study with it ?

17. Exhibitions on themes of world unity.

18. Programmed books on world unity.

19. Creative and synthetic mind as an indispensable condition for world unity; the problem of synthetic mental education.

20. What is synthetic or integral personality, and how can it be developed through education ?

21. Education for one world, and the requisite preparation of teachers through experience and evolution.

22. How can the present systems of education be changed so that the child's sense of oneness may be guarded and developed ?

23. It has been said that our children can expect their world to change completely at least twice during their lifetime. In what respects ? How can we help them to be ready to meet these changes ?

24. What are the limitations of our present systems of education from the point of view of an ideal preparation for one world ? How can these limitations be overcome ?

25. In what areas of education do the parents and the school pull the child in opposite directions ? How can this be avoided ?

26. Yoga and world unity.

27. Integral yoga, integral education and the ideal education for one world.

These subjects are in fact a somewhat detailed breakdown of the four main subdivisions of the seminar subject :

a. Education for the whole man.

b. A philosophy of education for one world.

c. The integration of science and the humanities.

d. The role of parents and teachers in education.

The list, however, is only suggestive. It is hoped that the participants in the seminar will give serious and creative thought to these and allied subjects, and contribute papers which will not only stimulate new thinking on education for one world, but will also prepare a way for practical programmes in this kind of education which can be suggested to our educators for concrete implementation.

The following message, which the Mother gave to the Education Commission of the Government of India in 1965, has an important bearing on the seminar's study :

India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.

TO MY GURUBHAIS IN INDIA'S CAPITAL

WE all aspire to be faithful to the Mother and the Master and their Integral Way, the Life Divine. That is the precious common bond between us. But how to be loyal to them and their Way, in this India crisis within the world crisis, must be our vigilant and deep concern.

We can easily play the fool if we allow ourselves to be so immersed in our usual everyday affairs, so much in the ordinary rut, even in work which we are offering to the Divine, that we do what two-thirds of all the civilisations thus far in human history have done—meet the challenge of a major crisis with “too little, too late” and are therefore destroyed. Let us come alive to the challenge of this tremendous Hour !

How can we now be faithful to the Master and the Mother and their Way ? There are two major aspects of their Way, two great areas of their Truth with which they are concerned and to which we must be alive at a time like this :

(1) The Yoga, the sadhana, the *inner* evolution of ourselves as *individuals*.
(2) The *collective* order, India and the world, the *outer* evolution towards a Life Divine on earth. The evidences of this second concern of the Master and the Mother are writ large in the two booklets, *Messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, also in *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, the chapters on Indian Polity in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *Evening Talks*, etc. These are massive, unmistakable evidences of the Master and the Mother's concern with the *collective* order, our co-responsibility as citizens of India and the world.

The super-crisis of our time clearly relates to this second phase of the Master-Mother Way. When the Mother published Her 'New Year Message' for this fateful year 1967 it obviously was in that realm :

Men, countries, continents !

The choice is imperative :

Truth or the abyss.

The Truth to which She refers is clearly the truth with which the Master dealt *with all emphasis* in that very special Postscript Chapter (of 17 pages) to *The Ideal of Human Unity*, written a few months before His passing in 1950. It is also the Truth with which the Mother dealt when She said (according to the Bombay Annual, published in the Ashram) some three years ago, concerning Her statement of September 1945 (just after Hiroshima !) that She could not assure us that it is the Divine's will to preserve the present human civilisation, “It will be settled in 1967. Do not change my words; it will be settled in 1967.”

If now, as She says, “*The choice is imperative*,” have we made our choice— or have we put it off, passed it by, busied ourselves with our usual affairs and avoided the choice that our Divine Mother says is *imperative* ? Four months, a third of this fateful year has gone by. Is it not time that we take ourselves in hand and

together make our choice ? I say "together" because it is obviously not a merely *individual* matter. It requires the *united* action of not only gurubhais but also our fellow-citizens of India and the world. The Mother's challenging warning is a most widely *collective* one, and so is the Master's.

How do I dare to remind us of our collective responsibility ? Not only because, *when all is at stake* it is the responsibility of *anyone* who becomes aware of the impending danger to sound the alarm, but also for a very special reason. That is, because it has somehow fallen to me to prepare, ever since Hiroshima, 22 years ago, for this awakening work. I shall not detail all of this, but only go back a little over two years.

I was then resuming the teaching of a post-graduate course in International Relations, "Contemporary India and the World in the Light of Sri Aurobindo," in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry. I soon became arrested by the Postscript Chapter of the Master's *The Ideal of Human Unity* and was wonder-struck that I had not awakened much earlier to the stern challenge of this very special writing of the divine seer, amazed also that apparently none of us had awakened to it. It was very special because it was the only such postscript to any of His many works, and was written in the very year of His passing. He evidently saw that it was imperative (just as the Mother says "imperative") that He warn us all, because over and over He emphasises in that lengthy chapter that a vast disaster will befall mankind unless, in time, we strengthen the United Nations by removing, agreeably, its weaknesses (still present), or bring about the creation of its successor.

The penalty for our failing to do this Sri Aurobindo sums up when He says, "It is for the men of our days, *and at the most of tomorrow*, to give the answer, For too long a postponement or too continued a failure *will* open the way to a series of increasing catastrophes which might create a too prolonged and disastrous confusion and chaos and render a solution too difficult or impossible; it might even end in something like an irremediable crash not only of the present world civilisation but of all civilisation." (My emphasis.)

Unconsciously perhaps, disciples tend to *religionise* away the challenge, the coresponsibility for this crucial phase of the Mother-Master's Work in the world. Many years ago, as a Christian missionary, I awoke to the fact that a similar kind of substitute for the Truth, the living Way, which Christ had incarnated, had soon captured and corrupted the Early Church. Of course other religions also represent largely degenerate religious substitutes for their actually following their so-called "founder", often a spiritual and moral giant who had, in most cases, no notion of founding a religion. For Truth's sake, and Theirs, let us spare the Master and the Mother any such unfaithfulness, such superficial betrayal, by our vigilant and steadfast refusal to substitute religion for *obedience*, not only in the matter of self-disciplining sadhana but also *collectively in relation to the national and world crisis*.

We have rather gloried in the prophetic insight of our Master in his writing, in May 1950, that the Korean War was the prelude to the effort of the Communist forces to take over South-east Asia (Viet Nam !) and finally "passing Tibet as a gate

into India.” He also writes in greater detail in the Postscript Chapter about the rising tide of that menace, saying, “In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples of this part of the world in the emergence of a communist China.”

The Master also envisages in the same connection the possibility of what has happened lately in the Soviet Union and in Western Communism, barring tiny Albania, the evolution of that wing of Communism, to an extent, in a moderating, liberalising direction.

Shall we now take the Master’s warning vision as seriously as He gave it to us, answering the divine challenge with a faithful, daring and joyous response ?

Coming to feel this truth deeply two years ago, I began to concentrate on the quest for the Master-Mother’s inner Light concerning what is to be done. Day after day for many months, rising in the wee hours for this purpose, I found the flow of truth gradually shaping itself clearly into the vision of the birth of a movement of positive forces, or co-operative truth-forces, in India and the world, for adequate action, in time, to save civilisation.

At last I wrote the Mother fully about it, outlining the elements of the Awakening and Mobilisation of those positive truth-forces as the vision had come to me, strongly requesting Her corrective Guidance. I added, “We see all this development, not in terms of politics but rather, through the eyes of the Master, in terms of *spiritual statesmanship*. Does the Spiritual Age not call for spiritual statesmanship ?” I wrote further in that letter to the Mother, “For months I have felt a strong, steady urge to *make Delhi my base* for an indefinite time to come, simply because it seems to me that the work can be done better from there. In particular, it seems that the Delhi Branch would be a happy location, and Jauhar and Parasher had always said they felt that I belong there. *Do You* feel like appointing me to work there ?” I added, “But again, all depends on *how You see it*, and always, wherever, whatever, *on Your Grace*.”

In a supplementary note, while awaiting the Mother’s reply, I wrote, “Can You not canalise Your Force sufficiently into me in Delhi to compensate for my not being here ? Or do You see that I am ill-equipped and must remain here longer, despite the urgency of the world situation ? I am eager for Your corrective Light at every point. All in Your dear Hands, Your growing child.”

To all this the Mother Divine graciously replied, “It is true that this is part—and a very important part—of the work of tomorrow. It will have to be done, but the world is far from being ready. And to do this work now may mean the martyrdom of the misunderstood. Are you ready for that ? Love and blessings.”

To this I replied after seeking further Light overnight :
“Gracious Mother,

Your reply, with its somewhat startling question, has had a hallowing effect. Since I have been *made* ready for the mobilisation itself, the only question that gives me any pause is : *Is the time ripe for me to begin it ?* The question as to whether I am ready for possible martyrdom because of being ‘misunderstood’ is to me a

reminder not to assume that 'success', and even popularity, will soon follow the Call to Mobilisation. For this caution I am grateful to You, Mother. I have no dread of the tough going, the martyrdom that You see as possible.

"As to whether the time is ripe, You once told us that 'the world must be *made* conscious,' and that 'now is the time most propitious for the endeavour' because of 'the New Consciousness, Light, Force', yet I fully realise that in another sense 'the world is far from being ready.' But is that not part of the game, the battle, the Mobilisation? And everything has been telling me that it is already very late, that Sri Aurobindo's strong warnings, both as to 'catastrophe unless' and the time factor, have gone apparently unheeded, incredible as it now seems. And what You, Mother, and others have said about 1967 adds to the lateness of this 'stupendous endeavour' to save civilisation. So does my reading of the world situation, with particular reference to the Viet Nam escalation towards major war, and other elements.

"And yet if You see my proposal as premature, unwise, or untimely for me, *please do tell me so*. I am concerned only for my readiness to be Your *effective* instrument, by Your great Grace, and that means constantly more intensive sadhana; also I must ready myself in other practical ways for the launching of the Mobilisation. These items include finishing my thesis revision, completing my Hindi requirement for citizenship, and preparation for the shift to Delhi, if You approve. For these elements of my readiness I may require a few weeks after my return from Bombay and Surat.

"Now, if You see it as timely for those who are ready and will offer themselves, whatever the cost, may we have, for this all-out endeavour, the boon, the undergirding, of Your Commission, Your sustaining Grace, Your constant support?"

"Ever in Your dear Hands, Your aspiring child."

The same day I received from the Mother the following reply, in Her bold, clear hand, GO AHEAD. LOVE AND BLESSINGS.

I have shared freely with you, my gurubhais, this account of the infinitely precious Commission of the Mother for this work, for I want you to see that this work springs definitely from my aspiration and determination to be faithful, by Their Grace, to the Master and the Mother's vision of the present crisis and what Sri Aurobindo calls "the one thing needful". I do this in the confidence that their Shakti will move my gurubhais to faithful, co-responsible, co-operative action. Let us be their faithful instruments in helping to make our beloved Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram not only ever more responsive to the Master-Mother's Call to sadhana and devotion but also, *as befits its location in the nation's capital*, an instrument of their will and a channel of their Force for the regeneration of India and for world reconstruction, which is equally their concern, as we have seen.

What becomes of their work, their centres wherever they be, if we neglect "the one thing needful" and all is destroyed? Will the "series of increasing catastrophes" which the Master sees looming up in that case leave unscathed these centres and ourselves and our loved ones and our pursuits and possessions? The Mother said

in an interview about 1955, "If war should come, in spite of our efforts to stop it, *our spiritual work will be finished*". When I questioned Her about this She confirmed it as just what She meant because, as the Master and others had foreseen, a third World War would be unimaginably destructive and there would be no telling when the earth might recover. She added that She could not give us the consolation that Sri Krishna sought to give Arjuna at Kurukshetra, "do not shrink from the impending slaughter, for although the bodies perish the souls are indestructible", because Her Work and the Master's is not in terms of souls but of *world-saving* and transformation.

My work in India's capital continues to be *wholly* in pursuance of the objectives which the Master has emphasised as "the one thing needful" and which the Mother too has warned us is "imperative." And my co-workers thus far and I have been careful to keep free from politics, and devoted to moral and spiritual statesmanship, a clear and important distinction. Surely we, the disciples of the Master and the Mother in the nation's capital, must pray that they will make us their faithful instruments in this Hour of God. What more could we ask as the privilege of a thousand lifetimes ?

I propose that we who aspire for that faithfulness to their *collective* concern in this supreme crisis begin to meet together, not for a lot of mere talk, but for seeking their further Light on what we shall do about their warnings and our co-responsibility. I suggest that the most appropriate time and place will be (at least to begin with) at about 11.30, after the meeting on Sunday mornings which begins at 10, at the Delhi Branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on Mehrauli Road.

Kindly convey to me your reply as soon as it becomes clear to you.

Your aspiring gurubhai,
In Her Love and Service,
JAY HOLMES SMITH

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TENTH SEMINAR

19th February 1967

The tenth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 19th February 1967. The subject chosen by the Mother was :

Why is the Choice Imperative ?

The following four members participated as speakers :

Promesse, Romen, Srijit and Swadesh.

The Seminar was held in the New Hall of the Centre of Education from 8.30 to 10 a.m.

At the commencement a short piece of the Mother's recorded music was played. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman of the Seminar, made the following introductory speech :

Friends,

In Her New Year message this time, the Mother has said : "Men, countries, continents ! The choice is imperative : Truth or the abyss." This naturally raises the question : What is the choice and why is it imperative ?

In view of the momentous significance of the Mother's message, we had asked Her to give Her own answer to this question. She has given the answer and I shall first read it out to you before I say anything.

Her answer to the question : *Why is the choice imperative ?* is :

"Because we are at one of the 'hours of God' as Sri Aurobindo puts it—and the transforming evolution of the world has taken a hastened and intensified movement."

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Taking a long-range view of human evolution we may say that the choice to which the Mother refers in Her message is the choice of man's evolutionary destiny. In the terrestrial evolution man is a transitional being. He is not expected to remain

what he is but to become a new type of being by rising to a higher level of consciousness. His destiny is to become the divine superman by exceeding his present human status.

The choice of which Mother speaks is a fundamental necessity of this higher evolution of man and it is due to his special position in the evolutionary process. The appearance of man in the earthly evolution marks, as Sri Aurobindo puts it : "a crucial step, a decisive change in the course and process of evolution ; it is not merely a continuation of the old lines. Up till this advent of a developed thinking mind in Matter evolution had been effected, not by the self-aware aspiration, intention, will or seeking of the living being, but subconsciously or subliminally by the automatic operation of Nature. This was so because the evolution began from the Inconscience and the secret Consciousness had not emerged sufficiently from it to operate through the self-aware participating individual will of its living creature. But in man the necessary change has been made,—the being has become awake and aware of himself ; there has been made manifest in Mind its will to develop, to grow in knowledge, to deepen the inner and widen the outer existence, to increase the capacities of the nature. Man has seen that there can be a higher status of consciousness than his own ; the evolutionary oestrus is there in his parts of mind and life, the aspiration to exceed himself is delivered and articulate within him : he has become conscious of a soul, discovered the self and spirit. In him, then, the substitution of a conscious for a subconscious evolution has become conceivable and practicable, and it may well be concluded that the aspiration, the urge, the persistent endeavour in him is a sure sign of Nature's will for a higher way to fulfilment, the emergence of a greater status."¹

This is the fundamental reason why man's conscious choice and participation are needed for his higher evolution. It cannot occur automatically by the subconscious impulsion of Nature as in the plant and the animal. He has himself to will for this change and make an endeavour to realise it. The very fact that he is a self-conscious being in evolution makes it necessary that he should consciously choose to raise himself to a higher evolutionary status.

So we may say that though it is man's evolutionary destiny to become the divine superman, he is required to realise that destiny by his conscious choice and endeavour. Supermankind will not be granted to man as a free gift either by Nature or by God. In evolution he has been given the unique privilege of a self-conscious mind and will ; but that privilege is also a responsibility or an obligation. His self-consciousness has been given to him so that he may become aware of the higher evolutionary potentialities awaiting him and exercise his will to realise them. Then alone, and not otherwise, can he exceed his present human status and become the divine superman.

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¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition), pp. 750-51.

The necessity of this choice has always been there on man ever since he appeared on earth. But in the earlier stages of his development it was mostly latent and implicit. This was because in his earlier career on earth he had first to realise fully his mental possibilities. Though man in evolution represents the mental being, in his early stages he has only a rudimentary mind. Initially and for a very long time he lives as a barbarian engrossed in his physical-vital mind and its needs and impulses. Then gradually the higher mental faculties begin to develop in him and he becomes a man of true culture trying to live in the high mental ideals and aspirations. The long centuries of human history are a vivid record of this cultural endeavour and achievement of man.

But since man in evolution is a transitional being and is not expected to stop at being a fully developed man, since it is his inevitable destiny to exceed himself by rising beyond mind into the Spirit, a time must come in human history when the call of that destiny awakens in him and presses on him with increasing urgency. Man cannot forever remain man ; a time must come when he must take the forward step and become the superman.

It is when this time arrives in human evolution that the choice which was always necessary for man becomes urgent and insistent because it can then no longer be evaded or postponed. At this hour, which Sri Aurobindo calls the "Hour of God," the call of man's destiny demanding his choice becomes imperative. It is a crucial turning-point of supreme significance for man's evolutionary future.

According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, humanity at the present moment has arrived at such a crucial turning point in its evolution. As Sri Aurobindo says "At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny."¹ So also the Mother says : "There are, in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have been for thousands of years must give place to things that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, happens at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are precisely at such a turning of the world's history. As Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, even so, there is now a concentrated activity to bring forth in this mentality a supramental consciousness and individuality."²

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From the higher end of things we can give another reason why the choice has now become imperative. The emergence of a new principle in evolution requires simultaneously an aspiration or a call for it from below and a descent and a pressure of that principle from above. The supramental Truth which is the new principle to

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 933.

² *Bulletin of Physical Education*, November, 1953.

emerge in evolution had started descending a long time back. But so far its action was of a preparatory nature and its pressure was not overtly felt because it was secret and veiled. But since its global manifestation in February 1956 the situation has radically changed. For now the Supermind is standing close, very close, at the earth's gates and is pressing insistently to emerge openly in the external life of the world. Eleven years after its advent the moment has now come when it will no more tolerate any apathetic indifference or obstructive bad-will to stand in its way. Each man and nation have to listen to its call and choose either to accept it whole-heartedly or to take the consequences of the neglect or the misuse of the opportunity offered to them. The choice is open to all between these two alternatives and no other.

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There is a still further reason why this choice has now become imperative. Along with the advent of the supramental Truth in the earth's inner atmosphere, there has also occurred a precipitation of very dark, dangerous and destructive forces of Falsehood which are vehemently trying to oppose and frustrate that advent in order to retain their age-long grip over the life of humanity. At the present moment an acute struggle is going on between the supramental Truth and these forces of Falsehood. As the Mother Herself has said, "This struggle, this conflict is becoming more and more evident, marked and visible between the constructive forces of ascending evolution, a more and more perfect and divine realisation and the forces that are becoming more and more destructive, powerfully destructive, the forces of madness that are beyond all control ; it is a kind of race as to who will arrive first at the goal. It would seem that all the adverse anti-divine forces, the forces of the vital world have descended upon earth, using it as their field of action and at the same time a spiritual force, highest and most powerful, has also descended upon earth for the first time to bring a new life there. That makes the struggle all the more acute, violent, visible, but also, it would seem, definitive and that is why one can hope to arrive at an immediate solution."¹

The issue of this struggle depends partly upon the choice that humanity will make for itself at this hour. If it places itself whole-heartedly on the side of the Truth and follows its impulses then the Truth will establish itself in human life and the world without any need of catastrophic destruction. But if, owing to the blindness and perversity of its lower nature, it sides with the forces of Falsehood, it may invite a terrible destruction upon itself, for the Power of the Supramental Truth will no more tolerate any opposition to the establishment of its reign upon earth. Each man and nation have now to make a radical choice between these two Powers which are at this moment engaged in a dire combat in the world-arena.

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¹ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, August, 1958.

These then are the reasons why the Mother says that the choice is imperative. In saying it She is not referring to any arbitrary or accidental factors but is drawing our pointed attention to the fundamental necessities of man's higher evolution. This choice that is imperatively asked for is the imminent call of the Time-Spirit who as the Master of evolution will now no longer permit any evasion, postponement or hypocritical equivocation but will insist upon a sincere, straightforward and radical decision on the part of men, countries, continents either to accept the Truth that is now imminently pressing to manifest in the world or to take the disastrous consequences of not listening to its call or misusing the opportunity. In Sri Aurobindo's own words : "Unhappy is the man or nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment ; for them is the irreparable loss or a great destruction."¹

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To make the choice to receive the supramental Truth means in effect to practise Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Integral Transformation. In a long letter which Sri Aurobindo wrote in November 1928, He has very distinctly stated what are the two alternatives between which everyone who wants to do His Yoga will have to make a crucial choice. The Mother has permitted that an extract from this letter may be read at this Seminar. Manoj will read it now.

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After this speech Manoj read out the extract on the crucial choice from Sri Aurobindo's letter. Then the four speakers were called to deliver their speeches. At the end Kishor Gandhi read out a recent writing of the Mother on the world's future.

The extract on the crucial choice is given below. The speeches and the Mother's writing will be published in the next two issues of *Mother India*.

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THE CRUCIAL CHOICE

"This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity ; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wiful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of

¹ *The Hour of God*, p. 3.

human nature. It cannot be done if you insist on identifying these lowest things of the Ignorance with the divine Truth or even the lesser truth permissible on the way. It cannot be done if you cling to your past self and its old mental, vital and physical formations and habits ; one has continually to leave behind his past selves and to see, act and live from an always higher and higher conscious level. It cannot be done if you insist on 'freedom' for your human mind and vital ego. All the parts of the human being are entitled to express and satisfy themselves in their own way at their own risk and peril, if he so chooses, as long as he leads the ordinary life. But to enter into a path of yoga whose whole object is to substitute for these human things the law and power of a greater Truth and the whole heart of whose method is surrender to the divine Shakti, and yet to go on claiming this so-called freedom, which is no more than a subjection to certain ignorant cosmic forces, is to indulge in a blind contradiction and to claim the right to lead a double life.

"Least of all can this yoga be done if those who profess to be its sadhaks continue always to make themselves centres, instruments or spokesmen of the forces of the Ignorance which oppose, deny and ridicule its very principle and object. On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards ; in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance, obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or superhuman consciousness and creation, or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine—for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible—affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which everyone will have to choose.

"For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Everyone must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower ignorance ; it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature."

November 1928

SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Yoga II*, Tome Two, pp. 410-12.)

THE DIVINE—NOT A THING TO BE TRIFLED WITH

WHEN a person first turns towards the Divine, he says, "I want the Divine and the Divine alone, and I would do nothing which would take me away from the Divine." He makes his surrender in a general way, as if once for all. But the next moment he acts in such a way as if he had no acquaintance with the Divine. His acts betray him. On the one side he professes the Divine, on the other he acts as if he had no relation with the Divine. And he does this because of his past *sanskaras* (associations) and lack of sincerity. The first thing required in Sadhana is sincerity. If sincerity is not there, nothing can be done. All say that sincerity is the first requisite, but almost all lack sincerity. Only a few chosen ones—the elect—are perfectly sincere. The discussion about sincerity leads us nowhere and it has little effect on our actions. Unless the need for sincerity goes home to the centre of our being nothing can be achieved. And the best way is to have the thing illustrated. In this connection, I am reminded of an incident in the lives of Sri Krishna and Arjuna.

We all know that the Pandavas were afflicted with many miseries. They had to pass through many difficulties and so, once being tired of everything, Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, "O Krishna, we are absolutely devoted to Thee and yet are very much afflicted with difficulties of all sorts. May I know the reason why?" With his usual enigmatic smile playing on his lips, Sri Krishna replied, "O Arjuna, a person absolutely devoted to me is never unhappy."

Sri Krishna's reply was a bolt from the blue to Arjuna. The implication was very clear, it meant that the Pandavas were not absolutely devoted to Sri Krishna. Arjuna felt wronged, but he had no go but to keep silence. Sri Krishna knew that Arjuna's ego was wounded, but it was no time for explanation and so he too kept silence.

Some days passed. It was summer-time. One day Sri Krishna asked Arjuna to accompany him on a morning walk. They went out together. Sri Krishna saw that Arjuna was wearing a pearl necklace. He said to him, "Arjuna ! you are wearing a fine necklace; will you give it to me?" On hearing this, Arjuna's face fell and he told Sri Krishna that he would rather give his head than the necklace, because he had given a promise to the person who had gifted the necklace to him that he would never part with it even though he might have to give up his life for that.

Sri Krishna said that he was not particular if it in any way distressed Arjuna. And they walked on further. Now the season being hot they began to perspire. They soon came by a lake. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "Arjuna, let us have a bath." So they both dived into the water. Arjuna was the first to come out. Arjuna saw a lion standing on the bank, ready to leap. To save himself from the lion, Arjuna took out the necklace, uttered a mantra and threw the necklace on the lion. The lion disappeared with the necklace. After that Sri Krishna came out of the water. They walked for some time and then Sri Krishna brought out the necklace from his pocket and handed it over to Arjuna. Arjuna was very much ashamed, but could not utter a word. He had offered his head to Sri Krishna instead of the necklace and he had thrown away the necklace to save his own life.

Sri Krishna and Arjuna walked for some time and Arjuna became so hungry that he requested Sri Krishna to bring some food for him from anywhere. Sri Krishna pointed out a place to Arjuna and bade him stand there without moving till his return. Sri Krishna went to fetch some food.

Some minutes passed and Arjuna saw a person going with a dish of food in his hands. Arjuna was so hungry that he ran towards the man, caught hold of him and put some food in his mouth. And then he remembered that he had broken Sri Krishna's injunction not to move from the place and moreover he had broken his own vow not to eat before Sri Krishna had eaten.

At this very moment he saw Sri Krishna coming with food in his hands. He was thoroughly ashamed and could not utter a single word. Then Sri Krishna inquired whether Arjuna would like to see a true devotee. On receiving the answer in the affirmative, they went to a nearby town, purchased the clothes of sannyasins and donned them. After donning these robes they went to a house and asked for food. Now the owner of the house had two wives. Both of them came out and requested the sannyasins to come into the house and wait till dinner was ready.

After some time the dinner was served and the women prayed to the sannyasins to take their seats. But Sri Krishna said, "Where is the owner of the house? We cannot take the dinner in his absence." The women said that the owner had taken his dinner and gone to the shop and it was not necessary for him to be present. But Sri Krishna insisted on the presence of the owner-merchant and said that they would not partake of the dinner unless he was called. So the merchant was called. He came and he prayed to the sannyasins to take their dinner. But said Sri Krishna, "We cannot take the dinner unless the host also takes dinner with us." The merchant tried in vain to persuade the sannyasins to eat, without his eating also. And thus ultimately a dish was also served for the merchant.

They were on the point of beginning the dinner when all of a sudden the merchant said, "Please wait a minute, the females have forgotten to bring one fine item; I shall bring it in no time." So saying he went upstairs. Minutes passed, then half an hour, and still he did not return. So the elder wife went upstairs to enquire what the matter was. She also did not return and so the second wife went upstairs. She also did not return and Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, "My Lord! what are these people doing? Why do they not come downstairs? What deters them from coming?" Sri Krishna said, "Let us go upstairs and see what they are doing." So Sri Krishna and Arjuna went upstairs and when they reached the upper storey Arjuna got the shock of his life.

The merchant and the two wives were there, but they were not living. All the three had committed suicide. Arjuna looked at Sri Krishna with questioning eyes as to what all this meant. Sri Krishna said, "Listen to the life story of the merchant. He was married when young. His parents then died. When he came of age, he went to his father-in-law's place to fetch his wife. He did not know what she would be like. While entering the outskirts of his father-in-law's village, he saw a woman standing at the well waiting for someone to put the pitcher of water on her head. On seeing

him the woman said 'Brother ! will you put the pitcher on my head ? 'The merchant replied in the affirmative and moved towards the well. The woman said, 'I adjure you by God not to touch me while placing the pitcher on my head, because I am a married woman.' The merchant said, 'By God, I will not touch you.' The merchant then put the pitcher on the woman's head, taking care not to touch her and then went to his father-in-law's place. Some minutes passed and the same woman entered the merchant's father-in-law's place. Oh the irony of Fate ! The woman was the wife of the merchant. The merchant took his wife to his place but as they had knowingly or unknowingly agreed in the name of God not to touch each other, they decided that they should not touch each other and to avoid any mistake they also agreed that each should cook his or her own food. Now this happened because of the vow taken at the instance of the wife, so the wife was repentant and she insisted that the merchant should marry again. The merchant refused in the beginning but yielded afterwards on condition that the wife should find out a suitable girl.

"Now the wife had a younger sister. So she went to her father's place and requested her parents to give her younger sister in marriage to the merchant. At first the parents were surprised at such a request and refused, but she insisted and at last the parents agreed. So the merchant's marriage was settled with the first wife's sister. A day was fixed for the marriage. The bridegroom's party arrived in due time and the marriage took place to the joy of all. Meantime the merchant's first wife had requested her mother not to exchange a single word with her son-in-law during the stay of the bridegroom's party at their place. The mother kept silence, but when the bridegroom's party was about to leave she could not control herself and, being anxious for her younger daughter's welfare, she exclaimed 'O jamairaj, (son-in-law), I adjure you in the name of God to treat my younger daughter, as you have treated my elder one.' Lo ! the damage was done.

"The first wife beat her brains, but the damage could not be undone. The merchant came home. He and the first wife explained the whole matter to the second wife. The second wife also agreed to the pact of not touching each other. From that day till today they have observed their pact to the letter. Today we insisted that the merchant should take dinner with us. The food was prepared by the two wives. Under no circumstances the merchant could take the food. So he preferred death rather than break his vow taken in the name of God. On seeing that the merchant had committed suicide to preserve his vow, the wives also committed suicide. They were absolutely devoted to God and gave up their lives joyously to keep their vow taken in the name of God."

When Sri Krishna finished the story of the merchant, Arjuna realised the true nature of a person absolutely devoted to God and the correctness of Sri Krishna's reply to him.

The story ends by saying that Sri Krishna brought the merchant and the wives back to life, blessed them and permitted them to lead the householder-life.

VALLABH SHETH

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 5

May 1967

1) *Yoga—Science, Future Education*

In presenting to the modern child theories and concepts on the Evolution of Life one has often to equate the mythological with the scientific. Especially is this so with the Indian student already captivated by stories from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas.

The 'modern' teacher should consider second thoughts before he dismisses these mythological stories as all fairytale with no basis of truth within them. The mere fact that they are the imaginings of the poet does not divorce them from truth undreamed of in other realms of gold. Science today no longer rests solely on empirical knowledge, nor does it consider *a priori* reasoning from cause to effect an only form of cognition.

It appears, then, that we can rely neither fully on the words of the ancients nor on the knowledge of the moderns—but such has always been the state of Truth so long as we were transitional beings evolving towards a higher state of consciousness. What is most interesting today is to grow in increasing awareness of the impetus of that heightening state of consciousness. Even physically this increase in impetus can be measured : The sailing ship took two years to circumnavigate the earth ; the steamship two months ; the aeroplane two days and the orbiting satellite just over an hour. Richard Buckminster Fuller in his "profile of the Industrial Revolution" puts A.D. 1200 as the starting-point of the revolution of industry, because he says the first known isolation of a chemical element was arsenic in 1200. At the opening of our history we begin with a list of nine elements : carbon, lead, tin, mercury, silver, copper, sulphur, gold and iron. We do not know when they were first isolated or knowingly used. By 1932 science had technically acquired 92 elements after which began the discovery of the super-atomics, the last being LAWRENCIUM 103.

We may well ask the age-old question, QUO VADIS ? —Yes, where are we going ? Does science know ? Does philosophy ? Does art ? Certainly politics doesn't ! Politics seems to be growing more and more obsolete. Art appears to be in the hands of the morons of popularity Only the scientist and the philosopher are left. The one seems today much more tolerant of the other. Perhaps because, on the frontiers that matter, science merges with philosophy and philosophy embraces science.

The only true science, after all is said and done, is the science of man and man's evolving consciousness. Yoga, in spite of much popular misinformation, is the

science of man. Yoga-science must undoubtedly be the education of the future individual and social community.

In many fields of human activity science and technology have outrun the lone individual boss or master-builder—they operated for centuries through manipulation of the visible, sensorial, physical factors influencing trade, economics and power. Control passed to their manager/lawyers, the people's politician and they are making a mess of things. It now seems obvious that an education is demanded that will create capabilities of the scientist and the and the philosopher who will think in terms of the total significance of human experience, realizing that there are planes of consciousness far greater, higher and more powerful than the mere mind of man today. This would seem to be the most important concern of any government that can actually *think* outside its petty local preoccupations.

Yoga-science, as the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, is the immediate answer to : Where are we going ? Why are we going ?

It is a long time since man first wrote over the doorway of his temple : 'Know Thyself,' yet today he needs to know himself more than ever before. There is an increasing urge for man to turn away from this life of play-acting. The integrity of man is demanding a higher order of sincerity. More and more is man asking for trust, reliability, where truth can speak to truth. We have long wasted our human heritage in the shortsighted squabbles between nation and nation. It is time now to effect The Great Change of organized ability and capability where man may encompass and enjoy both earth and heaven, the promise of which is already to be seen reflected in the eyes of our children.

2) *Teacher versus Technology*

There is some concern among those interested in future education as to whether the teacher would be replaced by the increasing use that will be made of teaching machines.

Five centuries ago, when the first book was printed with movable type, educators probably thought automation had arrived and the teacher was about to be replaced because the students no longer clustered at the feet of their master as he read to them from a precious, labouriously written manuscript. Each could have his copy of the text to study on his own. However, we know that far from being replaced, the teacher increased in importance His function changed. He ceased to be merely a reader from a book ; he now had time to counsel and expound, to interpret and explain.

Today it is time to make another change. For some time it has been recognised that the age of lecturing is passing and that teaching aids are releasing teachers, enabling them to devote more time to planning and programming classes so that students are motivated towards the more realistic needs of man's fast-evolving consciousness. These needs demand a complete reorganization of the concepts of teaching and education as a whole. The New Mathematics is one indication of

the trend towards integrating subjects into a synthesis. It is no longer tenable to break up the history of the human race into countries—not even for convenience—because the history of man is now only true in relation to his evolutionary progress over the whole earth. If we are to present to the student of today the ideal of human unity we must make an effort, first to bring about some awareness of the whole of his own being, then bring that being in relation to a totality of human experience. How much technology and how much a higher term of consciousness is to contribute to this new need for synthesis remains to be lived.

3) *Change in English Education*

A two-year study of English and European education, sponsored by the Council for Basic Education, says that change in English education is no longer comfortably evolutionary; it is now fast and fundamental, made up of major and often revolutionary reforms—the reorganization of all state secondary schools, the creation of a new system of national examinations, the raising of the school leaving age and the consequent development of entirely new curricula, the massive expansion from the central government and the advent of national planning in education. Even if one searches for the relatively changeless, for the spirit and essence of English education, one finds only that these too are changing. Much of Europe (though less rapidly) is also changing the old hierarchical patterns for more liberal and open systems in which more people will get more education and training.

4) *Thought of the Month*

In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent.

(*Words of the Mother*, p. 69.)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

SRI AUROBINDO STUDY SEMINARS, TAPOGIRI

Ramgarh (Nainital), U.P.

Summer Session

Consecrated to the contemplation of "The Supramental Truth"
June 5 to 9 (Five Days)

"By the supermind is meant the full Truth-Consciousness of the Divine Nature in which there can be no place for the principle of division and ignorance..."

"I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power..."

"The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality."

"The supramental consciousness will enter into a phase of realising power in 1967."

PROGRAMME

As usual, it will consist of a free quest regarding 'The Supramental Truth' and life generally, a few papers, some recreational programmes and a day of excursion.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Hill Station Concession Return Tickets are available from 1st April to end of October.
2. The bus for Ramgarh Talla starts from Haldwani at about 9 a.m. and from Kathgodam at 9.15 (reaching there at 12.30 noon) and one is available from Bhowali at 5.00 p.m. and Ramgarh Malla at 5.30 (reaching there at 6.30 p.m.). For Bhowali and Ramgarh Malla there are many buses during the day from Haldwani and Kathgodam. Direct buses are now running between Delhi and Nainital, Delhi and Ranikhet, Hardwar and Nainital and possibly between some other places and Nainital too. One can come by any of these and take the Ramgarh Talla bus from Haldwani or Bhowali or Ramgarh Malla according to circumstances. The Ashram is about 2 furlongs from the Ramgarh Talla bus terminus.

1. Dinesh Chandra Dwivedi,
Sadar Bazar, SHAHJAHANPUR, U.P.
2. Sarju Prasad,
Tapogiri, Ramgarh Talla (Nainital) U.P.