

MOTHER INDIA

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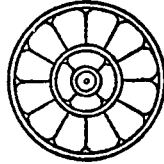
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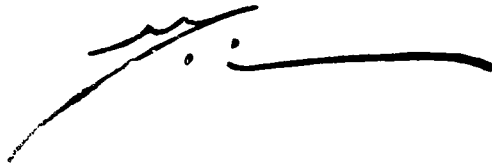


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XX

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTH

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER

TILL the birth of Sri Aurobindo, religions and spiritualities were always centred on past figures, and they were showing as "the goal" the negation of life upon earth. So, you had a choice between two alternatives : either

— a life *in* this world with its round of petty pleasures and pains, joys and sufferings, threatened by hell if you were not behaving properly, or

— an escape *into* another world, heaven or paradise...

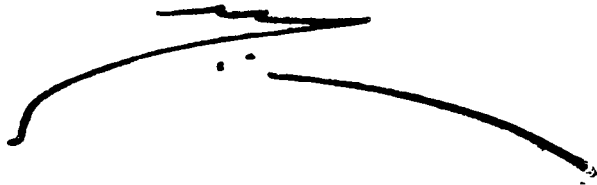
Between these two there is nothing much to choose.

Sri Aurobindo has told us that this was a fundamental mistake which accounts for the weakness and degradation of India. It was sufficient to sap all energy out of the country.

True, India is the only place in the world which is still aware that something else than matter exists. The other countries have quite forgotten it : Europe, America and elsewhere.... That is why she still has a message to preserve and deliver to the world. But at present she is splashing and floundering in the muddle.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that the truth does not lie in running away from earthly life but in remaining *in* it, to *transform it, divinise it* so that the Divine can manifest **HERE, in this PHYSICAL WORLD.**

31.3.1967



APROPOS OF THE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE OF 1967

AN ANSWER BY THE MOTHER

Q: What is the meaning of "abyss" in your New Year's Message or, put another way, what should a sadhak fear?

RIGHT now there is a great tension. They have all taken positions as if to start war. It is the blind passion that men put into their international relations.

At the base of all there is fear, general distrust, and what they believe to be their "interests" (money, business)—a combination of these three things. When these three lowest passions of humanity are brought into play, that is what I call "the abyss".

When someone has decided to consecrate his life to the seeking for the Divine, if he is sincere, that is to say, if the resolution is sincere and carried out sincerely, there is absolutely nothing to fear, because all that happens or will happen to him will lead him by the shortest way to this realisation.

—That is the response of the Grace. People believe that the Grace means making everything smooth for all your life. It is not true.

The Grace works for the realisation of your aspiration and everything is arranged to gain the most prompt, the quickest realisation—so there is nothing to fear.

Fear comes with insincerity. If you want a comfortable life, agreeable circumstances, etc., you are putting conditions and restrictions, and then you can fear.

But it has no business in the sadhana !

26.5.1967

THE ROAD TO AUROVILLE

At last a place where one will be able to think of the future only.
(Enfin un endroit où l'on pourra ne penser qu'à l'avenir.)

January 1967

The Mother

*
**

Auroville is going well and becomes more and more real, but its realisation does not advance in the habitual manner, and it is more visible for the interior consciousness than for the exterior vision.

(Auroville va bien et devient de plus en plus réelle; mais sa réalisation n'avance pas de la manière humaine habituelle, et elle est plus visible pour la conscience intérieure que pour la vision extérieure.)

January 1966

The Mother

*
**

Humanity is not the last rung of terrestrial creation. Evolution continues and man will be surpassed. It is for each one to know whether he wants to participate in the advent of this new species.

For those who are satisfied with the world as it is, Auroville has evidently no reason for existence.

(L'humanité n'est pas le dernier échelon de la création terrestre. L'évolution continue et l'homme sera surpassé. A chacun de savoir s'il veut participer à l'avènement de cette espèce nouvelle.

Pour ceux qui sont satisfaits du monde tel qu'il est Auroville n'a évidemment pas de raison d'être.)

August 1966

The Mother

*
**

The Most Useful Work to be Done :

Collectively to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God.¹

1912

The Mother

*
**

Once, however, the connection (between the Supermind and the material being) is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation,

beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world.²

1930-31

The Mother

*
**

The First Condition for living in Auroville :

To be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and the will to collaborate towards the material realisation of that unity.

19-6-1967

The Mother

*
**

Auroville is the shelter built for all those who want to hasten towards a future of knowledge, peace, and unity.

(Message to be carved in block letters on a stone which is to be placed in or by the side of a pond with red lotuses.)

16-3-1967

The Mother

*
**

An evolution of the instruments of the spirit in a medium of Matter is the whole fundamental significance of the values of the earth-existence. . .³

Sri Aurobindo

...But since the Divinity is involved here and is emerging, it is inevitable that all his powers or degrees of power should emerge one after the other till the whole glory is embodied and visible.⁴

Sri Aurobindo

...The indwelling deity who presides over the destiny of the race has raised in man's mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order, and substitute for it conditions of the world's life which will in the end have a reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being. This would for the first time turn into an assured fact the ideal of human unity which, cherished by a few, seemed for so long a noble chimera; then might be created a firm ground of peace and harmony and even a free room for the realisation of the highest human dreams, for the perfectibility of the race, a perfect society, a higher upward evolution of the human soul and human nature. It is for the men of our day and, at the most, of tomorrow to give the answer.⁵

Sri Aurobindo

¹ *The Mother's Conversations*, 1-2.

² *Words of the Mother*, III, Series

³ & ⁴ *The Hour of God*.

⁵ *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Postscript Chapter.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

A POSSIBILITY in the soul or in the inner being generally remains always a possibility—at the worst, its fulfilment can be postponed, but even that only if the possessor of the possibility gives up or breaks away from the true spiritual path without probability of early return—because he is in chase of the magnified and distorted shadow of his own ego or for some other distortion of the nature produced by a wrong egoistic misuse of the Yoga. A mere appearance of inability or obstruction of progress in the outer being, a covering of the inner by the outer, even if it lasts for years, has no probative value, because that happens to a great number, perhaps to the majority of aspirants to Yoga. The reason is that they take somehow the way of raising up all the difficulties in their nature almost at the beginning and tunnelling through the mass instead of the alternative way of going ahead, slowly or swiftly, and trusting to time, Yoga and the Divine to clear out of them in the proper season what has to be eliminated. It is not of their own deliberate choice that they do it, something in their nature drives them. There are many here who have had or still have the long covering of the inner by the outer or separation of the inner from the outer consciousness. You yourself took that way in spite of our exhortations to you advising you to take the sunlit road and you have not yet got out of the habit. But that does not mean that you won't get out of the tunnel and when you do you will find your inner being waiting for you on the other side—in the sun and not in the shadow. I don't think I am more patient than a Guru ought to be. Anyone who is a Guru at all ought to be patient, first because he knows the difficulty of human nature and, secondly, because he knows how the Yoga force works, in so many contrary ways, open or subterranean, slow or swift, volcanic or coralline,—passing even from one to the other—and he does not use the surface reason but the eye of inner knowledge and Yogic experience.

14.11.1934

EXPERIENCES IN THE SUBTLE PHYSICAL AND THE GROSS PHYSICAL

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q : When H wrote in his poem that he felt peace in his body, some people commented that it was impossible to experience peace or anything spiritual in the body itself at such an early stage of the sadhana. According to them, a strong peace descending into the inner or subtle physical gives only an illusion of reaching the outer gross physical. What is the truth of the matter ?

SRI AUROBINDO : All experiences that penetrate the centres are recorded in the body and seem to be the body's experiences, but one has to distinguish between the reflection of the experiences there and the experiences that belong to the physical body consciousness itself. It is a matter of consciousness and pure discernment. There is no absolute law about the time.

13-6-1936

Q : If one felt a fountain of Force rushing into the body, could it still be a mere reflection of the inner being's experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It can be a rushing of Force into the subtle body which the physical records and feels the effect. When Force descends into the head it means that it has come down into the mind, when it is felt in the heart it means it has entered into the emotional vital, when it is in the Muladhara and below it means it is acting on the physical consciousness. The centres are all in the subtle body although there are corresponding parts in the gross physical.

16-6-1936

Q : I understand from your answers that all experiences felt in the external physical are reflections from the subtle physical. How much progress is needed to bring experiences directly into the outer body ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I spoke only of the fact that what one feels recorded in the physical body may be actually taking place only in the subtle body. Whether in a particular case it is that or a direct experience in the physical body also, is a matter to be seen in each case. One must distinguish for oneself what it is.

16-6-1936

Q : Well, if you leave to each individual to judge I would say this: the static Peace and the Force are sometimes felt in the outer body directly, and not merely as reflections. Now it is for you to correct me.

SRI AUROBINDO : Have you a clear feeling of the subtle body as separate from the outer body, or of the mental and vital and subtle physical sheaths which compose the subtle body ? If not how can you say what is of the subtle body and which is of the physical ?

18-6-1936

Q : The influence and action of the Mother's Force are felt as so tangible in the physical...

SRI AUROBINDO : Any reflection or outflowing from the subtle body into the physical would also be felt as tangible. 18-6-1936

Q : For instance, when the Force is in the outer physical it is sometimes felt as a great mountain entering my external body.

SRI AUROBINDO : But the same thing would be felt if it was acting massively in the subtle body. 18-6-1936

Q : Kindly excuse me, I still fail to understand. When the Force descends into my body I experience the same power, swiftness and palpability as of a waterfall entering me. Could such concrete sensations be a mere record from the subtle body ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why "mere" record ? If you think the experiences in the subtle body are feeble vague things, you are mistaken—they can be quite as intense, swift, palpable, massive as those of the body. 18-6-1936

Q : How to distinguish an inner physical occurrence from an outer physical one ?

SRI AUROBINDO : You cannot distinguish except either by intuition or by experience and established direct knowledge of the different sheaths. 18-6-1936

Q : Sometimes I feel the Force acting in the nerves, and also the nerves passing through different states of consciousness. Are there really nerves in the subtle body ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, there are nerves in the subtle body. 19-6-1936

Q : Is the whole of the inner being made up of sheaths only ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes—Sheaths is simply a term for bodies, because each is superimposed on the other and acts as a covering and can be cast off. Thus the physical body itself is called the food sheath and its throwing off is what is called death. 19-6-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

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. Mamulal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

FEBRUARY 24, 1940 (contd.)

EVENING

B : Is remaining in the Mother's consciousness the same as Japa, repetition of the sacred name ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you mean ?

B : Are we not in the same state ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No Japa is a means to the other, just like constant remembrance . both lead to the Mother's consciousness.

B : Aren't Japa and remembrance the same thing ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Remembrance is by the mind, while Japa is by speech, the use of a name or something equivalent to it.

M : Which is better, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Both can be effective.

M : But which is better ? Doesn't Japa sometimes tend to be mechanical ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the person.

At this point the Mother came and the talk stopped. During the sponging, M wanted B to resume the talk.

M : B wants to ask you something more. His questions were not answered.

SRI AUROBINDO : They were.

M : But not completely.

SRI AUROBINDO : What was incomplete ? If you want to ask anything more, ask.

M : Japa and remembrance seem to me to be the same, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : How can they be the same ? As I said, you do Japa of a name or some mantra without any mental element in it, while you remember something by your mind.

M : But when I do Japa in my heart, I remember the name of Miraravinda, Miraravinda.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is a name ! That is a name !

M : How can one remember without a name, then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ? I can remember you though I may be confused about your name and call you Murtal instead of Manilal. (*Laughter*)

N (*to M*) : When you go away we shall still remember you.

M : That will be in connection with my name.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? It will be your rupa and swarupa (*Laughter*). Remembrance is dwelling on the idea of God or, if you like, his image.

M : Japa tends to be mechanical, Sir; one does Japa but at the same time thinks of his household matters, as when one says, "Cow is getting loose."

SRI AUROBINDO : But sometimes Japa also may go on, cow also may be there, but the mind gets loose. (*Laughter*)

M : Which is better, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That depends on the person and the way he does it.

M : There is Manilal and there is Becherlal, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ask Becherlal. Which do you find better ?

B : Remaining in the Mother's consciousness—that is, feeling the Mother's presence and influence, feeling her action in oneself.

SRI AUROBINDO : That, of course.

M : What is meant by the Mother's consciousness ?

SRI AUROBINDO : As he said, feeling the presence and the influence.

M : Remembrance is also getting the presence—they are the same.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ? When you are not here, we remember you; when you are here, we don't need to do so, for we have your presence.

S : That means you haven't got the true consciousness, you have still to go by the mind. (*Laughter*)

M (*after some time*) : People who worship images—do they get their Ishta (chosen deity) ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on their faith. There are plenty of instances where people have got what they wanted by worshipping images. Images are only forms.

P : At the age of 10, during my sacred thread ceremony at the Ambaji temple in Gujarat, I used to see a lot of visions, various lights, many forms of the Mother. I thought that everybody was seeing these things. I had faith, of course.

SRI AUROBINDO : There must have been a living Presence in that temple.

S : Yes, Sir. Plenty of people have seen visions there, and people go there with a living faith.

N (*to P*) : How do you know they were the Mother's forms ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, that is easy.

P : Those who don't see visions hear sounds.

N (*to M*) : Which did you get ?

M : Neither.

N : I would have been in the same boat. We seem to be alike. We must have had some relation in a previous life.

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose that is why both of you have come as doctors in this life !

M : But I was not a doctor at the time I went to that temple.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ah, but the doctor must have been latent in you.

M : B also is a doctor.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is less of a doctor.

P : He is more of a devotee.

N : I am less of a doctor too.

S : You ! You are both a doctor and a devotee (*To Sri Aurobindo*) Today, when he was thinking whether to put the sling or not, I told him, "Go to the next room and meditate."

SRI AUROBINDO : Meditate ? For what ?

N : To get the decision by intuition.

SRI AUROBINDO : Indecision ? (*Laughter*)

M : What case ?

S : Ansuya's. N says he no longer needs to meditate for it. The decision is automatic now. (*Laughter*)

N : Talking of visions : Sisir Mitra told me that Nandalal had a vision of Vishnu in an image. He was going somewhere and on the way he saw an image of Vishnu in a temple. It was nothing beautiful but he kept on gazing and gazing at it till suddenly he saw Vishnu come out from the image and enter into him. When his pupil came to call him he replied in a sort of trance, "Do you know who I am ?" Again, once taking his bath, he saw that it was somebody else who was doing it, not he. Two or three recent paintings he has done just like a passive instrument. He was much amazed.

SRI AUROBINDO : That happens to artists and poets.

N : But he never had this experience before.

S : These are recent experiences ?

N : Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is he in the habit of meditation ?

N : I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO : If he is, then these experiences may come now and then. There is something there in the consciousness which has been prepared by meditation and one gets these visions and experiences as a result. Otherwise it must have been a natural opening.

N : He had a two-hours' talk with Sisir and was so much moved by Sisir's account of the Ashram that he embraced him.

SRI AUROBINDO : Did Sisir meet him after going from here ?

N : Yes.

A CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN YOGA

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

A NUMBER of pointed queries face us : “How is your Ashram different from the large number of Ashrams that abound in India today ? How can you call this Ashram a Centre for Research in Yoga ? What are the proofs that such a Research is being carried on here, and where are the records containing the conclusions ?”

Let me state at the outset that we do not claim any superiority for our Ashram over others. All that we say is that our aim is different from theirs, our ideal is different and our way to realise it is something distinct from the traditional methods of Yoga. Usually the goal of Yoga as practised in India is liberation from the limitations of Nature, from Ignorance, and release either into a state of utter Peace or positive Bliss. The achievement is individual and whatever consequences ensue for the society are incidental. The collectivity does not, as a rule, enter into the scheme of Yogic endeavour. One may indeed exert oneself for the total welfare, *lokasamgraha*, or put out one’s energies to help suffering humanity in the way of the Buddha; but that is secondary. The main preoccupation is personal salvation. The place where one retires to work it out is a retreat from the world and its activity. The world is left to itself while the individual salvages his soul by a progressive isolation of his being from the rest.

The aim of this Yoga and the Ashram where it is being practised in an organised manner is double : first, individual development, liberation, perfection, and then participation in the world for its elevation and change of character by the force of one’s own achievement. The two are not steps that are taken one after the other, but lines of progression that proceed in parallel. Inner development is closely related to outer expression. Thus this Yoga has two aspects : inner and outer, and both develop simultaneously. Spiritual gains made in the inner domains of the being are canalised into purposeful activity for affirmation of the inner status in the outer conditions of the world. We believe in life, in the possibility of the eventual perfection of the material world, not merely in the perfection of the soul freed from the trammels of the body. The key to that change lies within ourselves. To find it there and turn it in the lock that keeps the world-nature shut in a cosmic Ignorance is our aim. Each sadhaka exerts himself in this direction, for the reclamation of his part of the material world to the Light and Power of the Divine that are realised in his soul-state. We have not devoted our whole life to our personal liberation, *mukti*, but have dedicated ourselves to the Ideal of manifesting the Divine in this world of Matter. To serve the Divine, to express the Divine, to embody the Divine in order to rebuild the world in the image of the Divine is our living Ideal.

In this teaching, Matter, the physical realm, is not rejected either as an inferior order of reality or as a temporary formation of Maya to be put behind. It is treated as a projection of the Divine, as real as the Divine. The spiritual and the material are

two poises, statuses, of the same Reality. To bring out this inherent relation in overt operation by infusing the active consciousness of the Divine Spirit into this triple world of Matter, Life and Mind is our object. All spiritual effort in the Ashram is directed towards realising the higher and still higher statuses of consciousness in oneself and turning their flowings outward into life : all material effort is to make this complex of body-life-mind more conscious, more pure and more ready to receive this higher charge and illumination. No part of life is left outside our purview : all is equally sacred awaiting its hour of fulfilment in the divine manifestation. Every section of life is epitomised in the Ashram for this purpose. In fact, no distinction is made between life-activity and sadhana. The whole of life, during all the hours, is to be lived as a continuous sadhana for self-upliftment, self-enlargement, and self-dedication. Visitors are often surprised that we do not have separate timings set apart for *satsang*, holy communion, common prayers, etc. The explanation is very simple : our endeavour is to be constantly in a state of communion with the Divine inwardly : meditation and prayer are there fixed in attitude and inner poise, so that all life becomes a sadhana, all moments movements of prayer and aspiration.

I have been in touch with many centres of Yoga in our country and have had some knowledge of their aim and activities. At the best, they are working for the Godward growth of man away from life, but if there are any that have this double purpose of the perfection of man and perfection of the world, I would be too happy to know. To participate in activities of life by economic necessity or on the generous impulses of humanism is one thing : to take on the problem of the world at its crux in order to resolve it both at the individual and the collective levels by spiritual means is quite another.

Regarding the second question, I would put it this way. Research means the discovery of new processes, new truths or principles hitherto not patent, and their bearings on our existence. In the context of Yoga, research would mean the opening up of new realms of consciousness, new areas of Knowledge, and the means to establish them in the human range. And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pioneers of this Yoga, have been doing. Day after day, for nearly seven decades, they have been engaged in mapping out the subtler domains of this Creation, effecting fresh openings for the efflorescence of the human consciousness and its faculties, drawing into the universe truths and powers of higher orders of existence and establishing them in this triple world. Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*, particularly the pregnant section on the Yoga of Self-Perfection, is a standing testimony to the new Knowledge gathered in this field, and the processes tried out and made available to man for a total perfection. In fact, no book on Yoga or spiritual Philosophy contains such a vast store of Knowledge of Principles and Formulations of Soul and Nature in the Cosmos. Similarly, the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* are a remarkable transcript of the experiences and realisations registered in Her being in the course of Her work of linking together the highest and the lowest terms of this manifest Creation. The Talks given by Her to the disciples, young and old, contain spiritual and occult

wisdom unparalleled in the whole extent of spiritual literature for its sheer amplitude and the facility with which profound truths are delivered in a form which even a child can grasp.

At the moment, the Mother is preoccupied with the Organisation of the New Consciousness-Force, the Dynamis of Knowledge-Will, the Supramental Shakti that has been brought down on earth by the concentrated tapasya of Herself and Sri Aurobindo. She is ceaselessly engaged in extending its roots, furthering its blossoming in the earth-consciousness. She has exposed Her own physical body representing the Earth-principle in evolution to the workings of this transforming Force. Her latest writings in the *Bulletin*—the main organ of the Ashram—contain meticulously faithful and detailed notes of Her experiences in the course of this unprecedented labour. She examines the reactions of the very cells in Her body to the influx of the Supramental Power and describes the manner in which the fusion is steadily taking place. Here is a graphic record of the transition that is going on from humanity to super-humanity.

Naturally, the aim of Her endeavour being what it is, She needs a collective base to support Her work. If it had been a question of Her personal supramentalisation or transformation, She could very well have done it in a hermitage in a forest. But Her spiritual conquests are meant for mankind, they are to be established as the property of the whole of humanity. For this purpose a representative collection of humanity at all stages of development, in all its variations of types, has been organised around Her in the form of this Ashram. Each spiritual advance that is made in this Central Consciousness housed in Her body is automatically radiated and reached to those around. She is trying to establish and affirm these developing states of being and consciousness in those who are equipped or are equipping themselves for this call. In this sense, each member of the Ashram, each inmate, participates in the task, contributes his mite and shares in the general advance at some level of his being or other. Thus the process is one of extending Her own realisations to as many as possible so that things may get founded in the general consciousness and become available there to be drawn upon by anyone who seeks for them. The Ashram is a nursery of the new race to come.

Knowingly or unknowingly, all those who live in this Yogic *muhu* absorb the vibrations of the Truth-Consciousness and those of us who are conscious know very well to what extent our own movements of mind, heart and even the body are undergoing perceptible change. A great reservoir of spiritual power, light, consciousness is daily and hourly being built up for the benefit of the world. The fact that the work is done in silence, without fanfare or publicity, does not make it any the less effective. Even agnostics cannot help being struck by the solemnity, peace and quickened pace of life and the pervading joy in the Ashram atmosphere.

If this is not research in Yoga *par excellence*, I would like to know what else is.

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the July issue)

This is how
all sincere aspirations
are fulfilled
With blessings

1-9-63

6

Bombay
1-2-1954

O my dear Mother !

I asked You, "Why do You not call me to stay near You ? Mother, won't You please liberate me from this ordinary world soon ? Save me !"

You replied, "You are mistaken, my child. If the game of the world is soon over, then there is no charm in life. So first of all remain in the ordinary world and finish the game. Victory or defeat—leave that to me.

“Child ! you will know more and see more in the ordinary world than here. One must live the complete Life so that there may be felt no lack and no craving afterwards.

“The ordinary world will itself free you from its own clutches. You are mine and you will be mine. I have saved you from troubles and I will always save you. With faith in me as your star sail the ship of your life.”

I was astonished but I understood, I obeyed and in the end my soul bowed down at Your feet, O Mother....

7

Bombay
1-2-1954

O Eternal Mother,

One day I wept bitterly before You. I wanted Perfect Love. You understood.

You took form and lifted me up with Your hands. You sat on a beautiful swing. I was lying in Your lap.

You started singing a divine melody. You made the stars dance, You put the whole infinite universe into a trance. I felt that what I experienced on that day was something rare even for great Yogis.

I did not know what happened afterwards. Along with the divine melody I merged into a divine atmosphere.

I was not aware that I lay in the lap of the Supreme Mother and Her hand was caressing my head...

8

Bombay
14-2-1954

My dearest Mother,

My life is full of blots and stains. I am wondering how to remove them. I have not found the eraser yet. The pages of my life which is full of errors are fluttering in the wind. Must not I understand ? What am I to do ?

Why, O why are those errors increasing in my life instead of diminishing ?

I have taken refuge in You, I have accepted You in my life. Now be the eraser and efface every stain of my life.

O Mother, You know full well that the years of life are decreasing instead of increasing.

In my life, right from the very beginning till the end, these words will remain :

Mother, You have given me this precious human life, You have put energy and power in it. You gave me everything but I could not make the most use of them. I feel that I have failed to make my life worthy yet.

(To be continued)

HUTA

WHAT SRI AUROBINDO STANDS FOR

(Summary of a Talk given at the Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore,
on February 5, 1967)

It is always a pleasure and a privilege of no mean order to have to speak or write about Sri Aurobindo. To throw into bold relief, however, what he essentially stood for and even stands for to-day, yesterday and forever, is no less of the nature of an ordeal or a trial of strength not unlike what Arjuna experienced while grappling with the mystery that was Kirata, the mountaineer. But what with the encouragement imparted by the precedent of Arjuna, and what with the Grace abounding of the Master-Mountaineer, I hope "to deliver the goods" and come out of the ordeal unscathed !

Happily Sri Aurobindo is known by now to most of us in one way or another. To the intelligentsia and the elite, he is a giant intellectual, a wizard in the world of thought, handling any problem of metaphysics or dialectics with masterful ease and penetrative insight; to the more enlightened and initiated, he is a brilliant exponent of Indian Culture and Vedic Wisdom, a seer-poet right in the line of our ancient rishis; to the unsophisticated masses, he is just a name to conjure with, a legend or a cult, at the most a Mahayogin with rare charms and powers to speak about with bated breath; to the aspirant Ashramites at Pondicherry, he is all this and much more : he is their Friend, Philosopher and Guide, their one master whose yoke they find easy and whose burden light indeed :

Master of all who work and rule and know,
Servant of Love !

Now when one person—a single entity—is so many diverse things to diverse persons—and persons hailing from all strata of society and all quarters of the globe, it is time we should pause and ponder over the whole phenomenon afresh with all the resources of our heart-*cum*-head, by an all out-effort of our own consciousness, in a spirit of earnest enquiry and dedicated approach. It is no use swinging from one extreme to the other, as the ordinary puerile human mind is prone to do, of either labelling it as the "Great Enigma" or else explaining it away by a ready-made formula as of the "Avatar" ! The supreme Origin of things, for that matter, is something of a Great Enigma in itself; and the One Reality of the universe manifests itself through several grades in a variety of worlds : *Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti* ("The knowers give various names to one and the same Reality"). No wonder, therefore, that one whose sole preoccupation in life was to come to grips with that Reality should partake a little of its nature of marvel and mystery, and repeat its performance of

responding to varied natures and needs by varying routes and approaches !

The mighty Himalayas are there, a standing invitation and challenge to human aspiration and endeavour and no amount of figurative epithets (even like Kalidasa's well-meant "measuring rod of the Earth"), nor any pile of photo-albums relaying snapshots of their several viewpoints can ever give us an adequate idea of their greatness and grandeur; it is only by taking the pilgrim's staff in our hands and scaling even a few thousand feet thereof *on foot* that we can have some distant idea of their might and magnificence. Even then it will be only the middling heights that will suffer themselves to be probed and sounded by "the foiled searchings of mortality": the highest peaks will probably remain cloud-lost, "self-rapt in solitude" !

Not only that; it is the very nature of genius to apprehend and reveal Truth in newer and newer modes of its manifestation : *Prajñā navaṅāvōṅ meṣaśālinī pratibhā matā* : and we must have something of a genius for apprehending Truth ourselves before we can hope to follow the scintillations of the multi-faceted Genius in whose dazzling Presence we find ourselves to be in the act of cognising or recognising the embodiment of Truth. Even if we cannot stand the full blaze or gaze of Truth, we can yet very modestly and honestly follow the track of one ray in this palpable world of ours—and back. A close study of the main events in the life-story of any individual as such sheds illumination on several laws governing the growth of the individual "psyche"; what to speak, then, if we could only read between the lines, in the case of one whose Psyche was already ripe to fullness and burst all bounds of chrysalis-action in crisis after crisis to emerge at last—Truth-winged and Truth-embodiment—a full-fledged and full-orbed genius in every sense of the word !

Let us try to rehearse rapidly on the screen of our minds a running documentary-cum-commentary on the several phases of the growth of Sri Aurobindo's genius. At every stage or stadium of his life, we find cross-currents and under-currents preparing him for the next; in every act of his spiritual odyssey we find seeds scattered and sown for flowering out in the next. We see young "Auro" leaving the benign shade and shelter of his mother and his much-loved motherland at the tender age of seven or so, to imbibe an alien culture amidst alien surroundings—shall we say, like Kacha of our Puranas ? For, like Kacha, did he not master the lore within record time with laurels—only to find himself at the cross-roads, addressing like him some Devayani of his imagination at the age of eighteen ?—

Love, a moment drop thy hands :
Night within my soul expands. .

And when he indeed took a plunge into the veritable Dark, by his radical decision not to appear at the horse-riding test of his I.C.S., do we not sense shadows of oncoming events, the bold intrepidity and courage of initiative of a born Revolutionary, as also the would-be Rajayogin's self-assertion and freewill to harness first the horse-power of his own proper vital ? And when we see him accepting the offer of the late Sayaji Rao

to take him up as his personal secretary, did he not evince the wisdom of practical common sense like young Augustus, bidding his time to collaborate with an Aurelius in consolidating the premier state of the times ? And when, even during his busy years of rich garnering and golden harvests, he found time to render Kalidasa's romantic play into *The Hero and the Nymph*, and follow it up with an original version, *Urvashi*, of the same theme and *Baji Prabhou* into the bargain, do we not find him acting up to the dual role—so dear to his heart—of both the Poet and his Patron-Hero ?

And when, from the zenith of his academic career, he flung himself headlong into the vortex of national resurgence—with his plans of “Bhawani Mandir” and cult of “Bande Mataram”—do we not see him playing the role of Prometheus or Perseus, both so near to his heart ? And when, even behind the façade of his live-wire activities, he could manage to carry on his experiments with the occult and seek initiation into Yoga, can we not say that he was working out the Law of Polarities and Spiritual Paradoxes ? For, when we see him inviting his newly-wed to bear him comradeship in the New Venture to which he found himself equally wedded, are we not sharply reminded of Bhavabhuti's lines apropos that beau-ideal of the ethically Perfect Man, Sri Ramachandra ?—

Who can fathom the minds of the Great—
Harder than adamant, yet softer than flowers ?

Surely, the “Lotus-and-Dagger” society was not founded in vain—with prognostications of the Heart-Lotus and the adamantine Will-Dagger !

And when he returned in 1910 to Pondicherry at the behest of Lord Narayana, who had vouchsafed to him Darshana behind the prison-bars of Alipore, do we not sense the categorical act of surrender to the Charioteer of the Path, that other Perfect Man, Lord Purushottama, so that the joint Tapasya of both Nara and Narayana might bring down the plenitudes of Truth into this dolorous Earth of ours ? And when that Dawn of Ahana at last dawned in 1914 and he was requested to lay down the Blueprint of his New Vision and his New World-Order, do we not see him in the monthly *Arya* acting up to the composite role of Vyasa and Ganesha—stenoing out serial after serial of the Neo-Mahabharata for about six years on end ? And when in 1926 he laid down the cornerstone of his New Heaven on Earth and gave us even a New Gayatri, can we not spot out in him Vishwamitra of yore—as indeed a Neo-Vashishta of his age failed not to spot out and even extend his compliments ? And when, for 20 years or more, we see him later on attending to the multifarious queries and posers of his circle of the elect, and yet moving about like his Aswapathy in inner realms of the spirit “splendid and lonely as the sun”—can we not see in him “Yogeshwara Krishna” and “Yogishwara Shiva” both rolled into one ? And when in 1950 he consummated the Last Great Act of draining off the “Halahala” that his own Mahakala action had precipitated out of the cosmic ferment—well, what shall we say ? Let us rather stop—lest our heads reel and fall off—with just an offering of our humble salutations to that

Grand Embodiment of the Grand Creative Sun of Truth :

*Twamādidēvaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ
Twamasya viśwasya param nidhānam.
Namo namaste'stu sahasrakṛtvāḥ
Punaśca bhūyo'pi namo namaste.¹*

THE MOTHER

A GLORIOUS face of wondrous calm delight,
In beauty absolute, of love divine,
Has dawned upon this earth for Truth's new line
To lift her up from jaws of Death and Night.

The gods know not Thy love's intensity
That dares to plunge itself in Matter's knot
To wipe away the inconscient's primal blot
And found here supernature's eternity.

With silent prayer all Nature bows to Thee;
It is Thy part and Thou the mystic whole;
Beyond creation's range Thou dwell'st, All-Soul !
In Sun-worlds of splendour Thou playest openly.

Reveal Thy Form of light and truth and bliss,
Seize Thy adorer's heart with infinity's kiss.

3-6-67

PRITHWI SINGH NAHAR

¹ Thou art the ancient Soul and the first and original Godhead and the supreme resting-place of this All.

Salutation to Thee a thousand times, over and again salutation.

LIFE IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

(Continued from the July issue)

ART AND YOGA

Always she drives the souls to new attempt...
That a diviner Force might enter life.¹

INSTANCES of the Mother's "drive" to young souls and their wonderful efflorescence are too numerous for the space here. We shall mention only four. This will further demonstrate to what extent life in the Ashram is varied, and what is being done for an all-round development of the youngsters.

For R, music is a means of self-dedication. The Mother encouraged him, listening to his music once a fortnight. Sri Aurobindo once remarked that R would have been a great musician but he did not apply himself to it.² He has poured out his feelings in numerous poems. He has a whole file of poems corrected by Sri Aurobindo. He has been working on a poem, *Lotus Flame*, of 25000 lines.

He was the first boy to be allowed to enter the life of the Ashram. When his father prayed permission for him, then only nine-years old, Sri Aurobindo wrote to the effect that they (he and the Mother) did not admit children, but R could come; they would see what could be done. His first visit to the Ashram was in 1929, but at that time he was not allowed into the Ashram premises.

He would remain sitting by the window with hungry eyes fastened on the road along which the Mother would have a drive. She ordered a small chair and a table to be prepared for him. He was allowed to stay in 1930. His student life began with Nolini's help.

Although his natural tendency is towards literature, it is the artistic side of life that gives him the real joy. "Art for me is Yoga," says he.

If the Mother finds an opening in one, say, to music or painting, She gives him all encouragement to develop that particular faculty fully. Who knew that P, a product of our Centre of Education, would go to Sorbonne for higher studies in French Literature and Phonetics with a French Government scholarship, have an audience with the Pope (February 8, 1967) and his own composition of music accepted in a French University Orchestra ?

When the Cardinal introduced P as an Indian, the Pope told him of his deep love for the Indian people. At the end he added, "You are a poet. Poets are so

¹ *Savitri*, pp 403,416

² *Mother India*, Jnly 1966.

different. The Lord is always with poets.”

At the age of ten when P came to the Ashram his very sight evoked the Mother's compassion, for fate had denied him the use of his legs. He could not walk a step without crutches. She told the Director of Physical Education, Pranab, “P's vital is full of energy but how will he be able to utilize it? If he can develop love of learning and artistic capacity it will be well.” He is now on the way to fulfilment of the Mother's wish.

Nirod writes, “Sri Aurobindo said, in the Ashram atmosphere a creative force was in action that could serve anyone's aspiration to be a poet or an artist.”¹ The exhibition of H's paintings, opened on 10-2-1967, is an illustration of this statement. Could it be imagined that she would blossom into a symbolic painter and develop 460 pictures largely from the pencil sketches of the Mother and depict the whole of *Savitri*? Each picture, with its corresponding verse quoted below, made it so impressive that it inspired meditation.

There is a perfection of their own in these pictures which owed little to outside help. Those who are gifted with an inner eye can see in them “some of the realities which are still invisible to the physical eyes”, as the Mother puts it.

So far four volumes have been published. In the preface to the fourth volume the Mother writes :

“Concentrate silently your vision behind the apparent form of the picture and you will reach the meaning.”

The passages of *Savitri* portrayed are being rendered into orchestral music by S. The Mother has given to H a new eye to visualise *Savitri*. Has S also been given an inner ear? He seems to be rising from peak to peak in his creative activities.

Before he came here he loved music but could hardly dream he would be able to compose anything worth the name.

His own words speak for him :

“Some twenty years ago I heard for the first time the Mother improvising on her organ. In the beginning the music sounded strange to me. It was neither Indian nor Western or shall I say that it sounded like both ?

“The theme She was playing came very near to what we know as ‘Bhairon’, the whole closely knit musical structure expanding melodiously. Then suddenly it started : notes came surging up in battalions, piled one on top of another, deep, insistent, coming as if from a long way down and welling up inevitably : the magnificent body of sound formed and gathered volume till it burst into an illumination that made the music an experience.

“Thus She revealed to me the secret of a magic world of music where harmonies meet and blend to make melodies richer, wider, profounder and infinitely more powerful . I have tried to take my music from Her.

“My music is my labour and my aspiration for the Divine and what I try to con-

1 Mother India, February 1967

vey through it are the voices of my inner experience.

“My grateful thoughts are with Her, who has been my Guide, Guru, Mentor and Mother. One day it was Her Light that sparked my heart, it is Her Light that has sustained its glow, it is Her Light that seeks to express itself through my music. If this music brings some comfort, some delight or some message to someone, I have achieved that for which She has placed Her trust in me.

“The source of my music is the Mother, its expression or form is the Mother’s but in substance it reveals my own experience. For these I am immensely grateful to Her.”

Music is not S’s only love. He is a mathematician of a high order. B, who recently had his first class first in B.Sc. (Hons.) from St. Andrew’s University of Scotland, is all praise for him. He says it is S who has made him.

S had discerned B’s brilliance in his early infancy. There is something amusing in their first contact. S had been to see one of the performances by our schoolchildren. By his side he found B with his father. Someone cracked a joke with the boy, “You too would be a chemist like your father ?”

“Why not ?”

“Good ! Hope you will invent some pill, one of which will be enough to make the stomach full !”

“Oh ! that I can do even now. Only it will be as big as a ball,” came his smart answer.

B says he came here when he was four. Sri Aurobindo once sent him a copy of his *Brain of India*. He could not make out why he had sent him that book.

“He will understand later on,” came the Master’s reply. He joined the Ashram when he was six in 1946. At the age of 23 he went abroad for higher studies and a second time for his Ph.D.

Regarding S he has said, “I have not met such a teacher even in England. Whatever subject he taught went home to the student.”

On the other hand, S said about himself that he was a hard task-master. But the good that his strict and exacting method did to his students was gratefully appreciated afterwards when they grew up. An example of mutual love and collaboration between teacher and taught !

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

AN AUROBINDONIAN AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY, ENGLAND

(At our request Dr. Arindam Basu of Durham University has recounted the antecedents and the sequel of his appointment at that English institution, as well as the duties and pleasures of his office. The story of his various experiences as an ambassador of Indian Culture and particularly of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy makes most interesting reading and gives one an insight into the intellectual forces at work abroad towards a spiritual vision of life.)

It was in August 1952 when I was lecturing at Varanasi Hindu University, that I got a letter from Professor T. W. Thacker, Director of the School of Oriental Studies, University of Durham, England, informing me of the founding of a Lectureship in Indian Philosophy and Religion at the School and inviting me to take up the post. Dr. H. N. Spalding, a keen student of Comparative Religion, had endowed the post for five years and Durham University decided to call it Spalding Lecturer in Indian Philosophy and Religion. The invitation was a complete surprise to me as I did not even know that such a post had been created. Even if I had known, I would not have applied as I had no particular desire to go abroad.

I wrote to my father, Sri S. K. Basu,¹ and to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President of India, and asked for their advice. Both of them urged me to accept the post. My father, however, asked me to find out the conditions of service and also my duties. I wrote to Professor Thacker, provisionally accepting the appointment and thanking him for the honour, but also told him that I must know in detail what exactly I would be required to do, so that I could examine the pros and cons and consider my qualifications for the post. In reply I got a most informative letter and the Contract of Appointment from him and also a very nice letter from Sir J. F. Duff who was then the Warden of the Durham Colleges. I was due to join the post in October, 1952 but for some domestic reason I had to postpone my departure for England to the middle of December and took up the appointment on January 1, 1953.

Meanwhile, I went to Calcutta to see my father and tell him personally about the developments and make arrangements for the journey to England. My wife and two children were to accompany me. Dr. Radhakrishnan, who had been my professor at Calcutta and also Vice-Chancellor of Hindu University when I had started teaching there in 1944, happened to be in Calcutta then. I went to see him. He surprised me by saying that Sir James had written to him about the post and asked him to suggest the names of two persons as possible incumbents. "I am glad that they have chosen

¹ He was the Mayor of Calcutta at one time, a Minister in pre-partition Bengal, and a member of Parliament till recently.

you," he added. When I asked him why he had not told me about it, he said, "Well, they might not have chosen you." Naturally, I was very much touched by the confidence placed in me by such an eminent philosopher who had been a Professor at Oxford University and had wide experience of lecturing all over the world. This is the background of my appointment at Durham University.

Professor Thacker had already written to me that I would be required to teach primarily Hinduism and Buddhism and to guide research at post-graduate level. When I enquired about the library of books on Indian subjects, he said there was none but that the university was awaiting the arrival of the Lecturer and hoped he would organise it. So, making a list of books, ordering as many as possible, and buying them were also part of my initial task. I am glad to say that the University of Calcutta, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Mahabodhi Society gave me many books to take with me as a token of good will to the School of Oriental Studies at Durham. People responsible for making these gifts were the late Sri Shyamaprasad Mookerjee, the well-known political leader, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ramaprasad Mookerjee and the late Professor Shishir Kumar Maitra, F. R. S., Sri K. D. Poddar, now reborn as Navajata, also kindly made a present of a few books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on behalf of Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Bombay. I still remember with gratitude their interest in the initiation of Indian Studies at Durham.

We left Bombay by boat on the 17th of December, 1952, and were due to arrive at Tilbury on the 31st. This was the first time I was going out of India unless Pakistan be counted as a foreign country which I suppose now it must—I had served in the Indian High Commission in East Pakistan for about a year and a half. We arrived in London on the 1st of January, 1953, stayed there overnight and proceeded to Durham the next day.

Dr. M. F. L. Macadam, Reader in Egyptology, and Dr. F. Rahman, the then Lecturer in Persian, came to receive us at Durham and took us to the hotel where the University authorities had arranged accommodation for us for three days. Everything was new and yet nothing seemed strange. My two colleagues and all the people we met were kind and considerate and there was no difficulty in settling down in the new surroundings in a very short time. On the morning of the 3rd January, the first thing we saw through the windows of our rooms was a heavy snowfall. As much of Durham as we could see was white. The hotel where we were staying was perched on the banks of the river Wear, which was like a sheet of white paper, and under the shadow of the great Durham Cathedral. It was a beautiful sight and in a strange way peaceful.

The University was closed for Christmas, but I went to the School and started working on the catalogue of books right away. I also got familiar with the working of the School and began drafting a syllabus of studies. It was first suggested by my colleagues that Indian Philosophy and Religion should be one of four alternative papers that students could offer, as part of their syllabus for the General B.A. Degree. I thought this might be a little too specialised for British students. I therefore decided

that instead of a full curriculum on Indian Philosophy and Religion, it would be much better to draft a course on "Civilization of India".

The course was designed as an introduction to the Civilization and Culture of India and was a brief survey of India's Religion, Language, Literature, Science and the Arts. A brief survey of Indian History was also included in the course as providing a necessary introduction to it. My colleagues approved of this idea and liked the syllabus that I drew up. The proposed curriculum was accepted by the necessary academic and administrative bodies of the university and from October 1953, Civilization of India became part of the B.A. General Degree Course of the University of Durham. Indian Philosophy and Religion constituted the main part of the syllabus. But there were no students willing to offer the subject as part of their examination course. They somehow thought that it would not be of any use to them later in their career. Still, there were three students who asked me whether I would lecture to them on India though they made it clear that they were not offering the subject. I agreed because it was a good beginning. I had two Ph. D. students from October 1953. One was from Bihar, a lecturer in Philosophy, and the other was from Kannada. Unfortunately, the second post-graduate student did not finish his research but the other got his degree in due course. He is Dr. S. S. Sharma, Head of the Department of Philosophy of Bihar University.

Almost as soon as I arrived, I was invited by various cultural and religious organisations to lecture on Hinduism, Buddhism and various other subjects connected with Indian culture. I must have given several hundred lectures during my fifteen years' stay abroad. After a few months, Departments of Theology or Religious Studies or Extramural Studies of various universities began to invite me to give lectures and courses on Hinduism and Buddhism. It was at the end of five years' rather solid work that students started coming to me to study the Civilization of India as part of their chosen syllabus for the Degree of B.A. For the last few years I have been having about half a dozen students every year. Considering that the subject is almost totally unfamiliar to the British, this number is really good. All these years I have also had post-graduate students working under me for the Degree of either Ph.D. or M.Litt. which is a research degree in British universities. Two of them wrote theses on Sri Aurobindo successfully.

At the end of 1954, I was appointed a Member for the Committee of Experts on Translation of Representative Works, which was set up by the International Council for Philosophic and Humanistic Studies, Paris. The Council is really an agency of the UNESCO. The Committee comprised fourteen members drawn from all over the world which was divided into four areas for its own chosen purpose—India and the Far East, the Middle East, Europe and South America. I was one of the three experts on matters relating to India, the other two being Professor Helmuth Von Glasenapp, the famous German Indologist, and Professor J. Filliozat, who has now connections with Pondicherry.

The suggestion that Sri Aurobindo's books should be included in the list of

works likely to be translated was made to the Committee but was not accepted because all his major works were written in English and because translations of some of them into French were already available. The Committee felt that the question might be taken up again. We decided then that some works of Tagore and other Indian writers, both classical and modern, should be translated into English and French. The other members representing the other cultural areas of the world had their suggestions, some of which were accepted and others rejected. My work for this Committee gave me the opportunity of coming in contact with some great scholars and brought me invitations to lecture in different countries.

An interesting experience was the International Philosophical Congress held in August, 1953, in Brussels. I had decided to attend the Congress at the last moment and could not present a paper but when I arrived in Brussels I found my name put down in the printed programme as President of the Section of Ethics and Social Philosophy. There was one paper on the "Philosophical Basis of World Unity" or a similar title and I am glad to say that as President of the section I could present Sri Aurobindo's point of view on this great problem and need of our age. The audience appreciated Sri Aurobindo's emphasis on the psychological and spiritual requirements of world unity.

I had the opportunity of attending International Congresses of Orientalists and Historians of Religion in Germany, Italy, England and Japan. At the Munich session of the Congress of Orientalists, I gave a paper on Sri Aurobindo and Prabhu Jagadbandhu as representing the view of a further spiritual realisation and manifestation in the world. In 1958, I went to South East Asia and the Far East to do some research on the position of Hinduism and the influence of Indian culture in Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan. I lectured in all these countries except Burma and gave a paper on "The Mysticism of Sri Aurobindo" at the session of the International Congress for the History of Religions in Tokyo. This paper caused a learned discussion and the inevitable question of Nietzsche's Superman came up. I think I was successful in clearing up the difference between Sri Aurobindo's gnostic Superman and the German prophet's titanic Superman.

(To be continued)

ARINDAM BASU

NEW CONCEPTS AND OLD WORDS

DICK Hawk, a recent American member of the Ashram, has written a thought-provoking little letter :

“The problem of language, or ‘saying’ how things are, when new discoveries put an end to old concepts, becomes quite difficult.

“Take sunrise and sunset. This is not a fact, but how to say it in the light of the new concept ?

“Today in meditation it crossed my mind and an answer came.

“At every moment some part of the earth is turning into the sun and at the same moment another part is coming out of the sun.

“So we can say that we ‘sun in’ at 5.30 a.m. in place of sunrise and we ‘sun out’ at 6.45 p.m. in place of sunset. To me this clarifies very simply the new concept.

“Since this came to me without thinking, can it be called knowledge or did it come from mind ?”

Dick Hawk’s new expressions strike me as felicitous : they have an inspiration behind them. In that sense I should call them “knowledge” as distinguished from a mere thinking out of things. But this kind of “knowledge”, I may add, is not bound to scientific truth, according to which—as Dick puts it—sunrise and sunset are not facts. Inspired knowledge is much wider and provides no ground to rule out the words which Dick would like to cancel. Just because “sun-in” and “sun-out” are expressions worth adopting, “sunrise” and “sunset” do not become undeserving of a place. For, there are various dimensions of knowledge and, in answer to them, language grows many-layered. Further, language answers to the various needs of life. Apart from scientific needs, life has emotional, imaginative or poetic needs, it has also philosophical and spiritual needs—and even purely practical needs.

Here is a phrase from an Aurobindonian poet, which draws upon a scientifically untrue concept but which is true both spiritually and poetically :

O mystic sun, arise upon our thought
And with thy gold omnipotence make each face
The centre of some blue infinitude.

Or take the following lines attempting to utter paradoxically the intense inner shaking-up and waking-up which the self-sacrificial passing away of Sri Aurobindo created in some undecided souls who had not quite realised the value of his presence :

Till the fall of your body, void was my day :
You sank like a sun and made me your west—

O Deathless who died, since in no other way
 Could you be buried for ever in my breast !

The image of sunset is a vivid part of the truth here, just as the image of sunrise was in the first quotation.

A long time ago, reading the first Canto of *Savitri* I availed myself of the great freedom Sri Aurobindo generously gave me to make critical comments and one of my queries ran : "Is it advisable to bring in the earth wheeling through space ? Your picture is of a dark immensity all round the spinning earth—but there is never such a phenomenon in Nature, for the earth is dark only on one side while the other side is full of light, it being day there and the sun being quite visible. Is not the natural reality strained too much to agree with the symbolic vision ? Would it not be enough to picture the earth as lying abandoned, beneath or under 'the vain enormous trance of space', without suggesting its travelling through all-enveloping global gloom?" (22.2.1946)

Sri Aurobindo wrote back : "Do you seriously want me to give an accurate scientific description of the earth half in darkness and half in light so as to spoil my impressionistic symbol or else to revert to the conception of earth as a flat and immobile surface ? I am not writing a scientific treatise, I am selecting certain ideas and impressions to form a symbol of a partial and temporary darkness of the soul and Nature which seems to a temporary feeling of that which is caught in the Night as if it were universal and eternal. One who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light; to him all is Night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness. If I sacrifice this impressionism and abandon the image of the earth wheeling through dark space I might as well abandon the symbol altogether, for this is a necessary part of it. As a matter of fact in the passage itself earth in its wheeling does come into the dawn and pass from darkness into the light. You must take the idea as a whole and in all its transitions and not press one detail with too literal an insistence. In this poem I present constantly one partial view of life or another temporarily as if it were the whole in order to give full value to the experience of those who are bound by that view, as, for instance, the materialist conception and experience of life, but if anyone charges me with philosophical inconsistency, then it only means he does not understand the technique of the Overmind interpretation of life."

We may sum up : "Words and phrases with non-scientific connotation—that is to say, expressive of physically untrue concepts—have a legitimate play in a spiritual 'impressionism' aiming at a deeper presentation of truth."

At the other extreme to spiritual needs are what I have termed practical needs. Apropos of them I may quote from a passage of Sri Aurobindo's in *The Life Divine* (American Edition, p. 423). In a discussion of "What is Reality ?", Sri Aurobindo says : "It is necessary to distinguish between the essential Reality, the phenomenal reality depending upon it and arising out of it, and the restricted and often misleading experience or notion of either that is created by our sense-experience and our

reason. To our sense the earth is flat and, for most immediate practical purposes, within a limit, we have to follow the sense reality and deal with the flatness as if it were a fact ; but in true phenomenal reality the flatness of the earth is unreal, and Science seeking for the truth of the phenomenal reality in things has to treat it as approximately round. In a host of details Science contradicts the evidence of the senses as to the real truth of phenomena ; but, still, we have to accept the cadre provided by our senses because the practical relations with things which they impose on us have validity as an effect of reality and cannot be disregarded.”

Sri Aurobindo goes on to state : “Our reason, relying on the senses and exceeding them, constructs its own canons or notions of the real and unreal, but these canons vary according to the standpoint taken by the reasoning observer.” Then Sri Aurobindo says that, to the view of the physical scientist (who, we may remark, takes the earth as “sun-in”-ing and “sun-out”-ing), “mind may appear as a subjective result of Matter and self and spirit as unreal”. If we stop with his discoveries, we shall miss the realities open to “the psychologist probing independently into mind consciousness and mind character”. This psychologist, by his reasoning, may conclude that Matter is just a construction of mind. But even he may miss “a farther probing which brings up the truth of self and spirit and establishes a greater order of the real in which there is a reversal of our view of the subjective mind realities and objective physical realities...”

Thus the question “What is Reality ?” has to be seen in all its manifold implications and each implication has to be given its due. Language must reflect and echo the complexity, move at several levels, serve different ends at different times. Let us by all means have new expressive formations. Every writer, genuinely creative, introduces either new words or new verbal modes to embody the originality of his sight and insight. But the old formulas have still their own life and also their own relevance to inner and outer occasions.

If we attend to ultimate “facts”, not only sunrise and sunset but also sun-in and sun-out are non-factual. For, both involve the presence of darkness, which has no standing in a vision such as finds voice in these sentences from “The Web of Yoga” (*The Hour of God*, p. 26) :

“Our sense by its incapacity has invented darkness. In truth there is nothing but Light, only it is a power of light either above or below our poor human vision’s limited range.

“For do not imagine that light is created by the Suns. The Suns are only physical concentrations of Light, but the splendour they concentrate for us is self-born and everywhere.

“God is everywhere and wherever God is, there is Light. *Jñānam chaitanyam jyotir Brahma.*”

Perhaps one cannot do better than conclude this little discourse by quoting some other bits from Sri Aurobindo in the aphoristic vein. They have almost a direct pertinence to the subject which set off Dick Hawk on the discovery of his two fine

neologisms. In *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (pp. 16-17) we read :

“To the senses it is always true that the sun moves round the earth ; this is false to the reason. To the reason it is always true that the earth moves round the sun ; this is false to the supreme vision. Neither earth moves nor sun ; there is only a change in the relation of sun-consciousness and earth-consciousness.”¹

11-7-1967

K. D. SETHNA

¹ I was glad to receive from Dick Hawk a generous note after he had read my reply in typescript .
“The whole thing was very surprising. I did not expect such comments. It was very interesting and enlightening. I appreciate your sending it to me.”

EPIPHANY

ALL was gold, a solid gold of God-surprise
In the rapture-fields of the shining herds.
Their eyes lit by the anthem of the stars
Played the music of a marvellous paradise,

The children of the deathless Rose of dawn.
The murky cloud-sheets of the night were torn.
The dismal earth's inconscient base
Shuddered with the bliss of a fire-face.

The uncoiled hood of a diamond gleam
Holds in trance-grip the wheels of Time.
A volcano of God's unexpected ecstasies
Smites Life's valleys to gold eternities.

VENKATARANGA

THREE SONNETS

ON LOSING CONNATURALITY

The heart's own sanctuary is unprofaned.
Step in and all the raging storms are stilled ;
As water off the lotus leaf is spilled,
The shadows pass, the Radiance is unstained.

Thy wise and prudent schemes thou mayst forego,
In thee no trace of ancient evil lingers—
Pluck not the ego out with bleeding fingers
Or stun the mind to silence with a blow.

Betwixt the two Unknowns our lives are cast,
Dim arcs of meaning flicker in our moods :
Above, the Ineffable's Light in Darkness broods,
Below, Its Shadows impenetrably massed.

Put out the light, our mortal eyes are blind—
Put out the light the Effulgent Truth to find !

*
**

JOY AND SERENITY

(THE CELESTIAL VISITORS)

Vaulting down the stairways of the skies
Two flaming angels swooped into my brain.
“Welcome, Bright Ones,” I said, “to this terrain
But why these shadows in your lambent eyes ?”

Joy said, “I met a man, his head was bowed ;
Grim-visaged, fiercely plucking at his breast
He ran in circles in a frantic quest,
His torn and bleeding ego wept aloud.”

“I saw a Yogi seated on a hull;
 His mind was in a whirl,” Serenity said,
 “With heavy blows belabouring his head
 And crying the while, ‘Be still, my mind, be still!’”

The Celestials sighed with pity at man’s ways
 And swiftly flew back to their sunlit days.

*
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THE GOLDEN DOOR

OUR lives keep pace with Time’s relentless tread.
 Into our Nows the Past precipitates,
 And these but gateways to our future states—
 We do not live, we are unborn or dead.

Yet in each moment of the scurrying pace
 Of Time there lies concealed a golden door
 Through which the soul may pass beyond and soar
 To gaze with rapture on the Eternal’s Face.

Regret and Hope guard jealously the key.
 These I disarmed. Time’s wanton movement stopped :
 Like withered leaves the Past and Future dropped,
 The Present lived on in its own eternity—

I heard the centuries crashing at my feet,
 I found myself immutable, vast, complete.

JEHANGIR N. CHUBB

THE FIRST CANTO OF SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*¹

I

THE first Canto of *Savitri* was published as a fascicule in 1946 on the 15th of August, when Sri Aurobindo was seventy-four. The poem carried the sub-title, 'A Legend and a Symbol'. Subsequently the whole poem of nearly 24,000 lines was published in two Parts in 1950 and 1951 respectively, and again in 1954 in a single-volume definitive edition, but now without the sub-title. Probably it was not thought necessary to indicate, even on the title-page, that behind the 'legend' of *Savitri* there was a 'symbol' as well; the intelligent reader would anyhow be able to see the 'symbol' behind the 'legend'. Besides, the opening Canto is boldly entitled, 'The Symbol Dawn', and once started on the symbolism of the poem the reader is unlikely to lose sight of the filiations between the 'legend' and the 'symbol'.

When you say, for example, *Lead me from darkness to light!*, the meaning is obvious enough. Darkness no doubt means physical darkness, but it could also signify mental darkness or ignorance; and light means physical light as well as the light of the mind or knowledge. The prayer, *Lead me from darkness to light!*, is thus logically the second prayer, *Lead me from ignorance to knowledge!* Think a little further again, and darkness can mean death also. As darkness envelops visible earth and night advances, there is a general cessation of activity, people retire, and the waking consciousness gives place to sleep. Darkness and night are also associated with evil of one or another kind, and sleep is addressed by Shakespeare in *Cymbeline*: "thou ape of death." Since, then, darkness means the defeat of consciousness and the reign of evil, since darkness is almost synonymous with death, the third prayer is, *Lead me from death to immortality!* That is, from death to immortality through knowledge, through light—knowledge that is true knowledge, or spiritual light. It is such knowledge—spiritual light—that enables the soul in anguish and perplexity to pass beyond the ignorance that is death and reach the light of knowledge that is immortality.

Much in the same way we are expected, when we read the opening Canto of *Savitri* and indeed the whole poem, to follow the legendary story and also hear its symbolic undertones. The story, derived from the familiar *Mahabharata* episode, is simplicity itself but simplicity doubled with sublimity. A young man, Satyavan by name, dies a year after his marriage, and his wife, *Savitri*, armed by the power of her love, struggles with Death, and secures her husband's release from mortality and return to the earth. The death of Satyavan also means the defeat of Truth, the eclipse

¹ Transcript of a Talk in Arts College, Waltair, on 2nd March 1967, originally contributed to the *Armando Menezes Commemoration Volume*

of light through the invasion of darkness; and Savitri's is the light of love that defeats the darkness and achieves the recovery of Truth. Nay, more; Savitri not only accomplishes the recovery of Satyavan from 'death', she also encompasses the recovery of the soul and Nature from the partial and temporary darkness that has overtaken them. And the opening Canto of the poem is verily "a key beginning and announcement".

Read as a legend, the poem tells the story of a wife who rescued her husband from the jaws of death, but when you read it as a symbol, you find yourselves involved in a whole spiral of meaning. It is not the fate of young Satyavan alone that is at stake, it is the human condition itself; not Satyavan alone, but thousands and millions of people have died or—are dying. Thus the theme is not merely Satyavan's death, rather is it the evil of death itself—evil and suffering and misery and death. Savitri too is more than the loving and sorrowing wife that fights for her husband's life and beats back death; she is also a saviour spirit, a pathfinder, a redeemer. Siddhartha and Jesus were such saviours too, and Jesus died on the Cross for love of humanity, and Siddhartha turned away from personal happiness because he found the general human predicament riddled with old age, sickness and death, and not until Enlightenment came to him after the defeat of Mara and his myrmidons would he return to the world to spread his message among men. Such a vanquisher of evil, such a bringer of light and love is Savitri. She is no sentimental wife or the heroine of cheap romance, but a power of love and light, an engineer of a new heaven and a new earth.

2

The opening Canto describes the immemorial physical dawn or the splendid moment of passage from night to day .

It was the hour before the Gods awake...
This was the day when Satyavan must die.

It is the passage from night to day,—the day that is to witness the death of Satyavan, which is another night; and the passage from this night of ignorance and death to the eternal day of knowledge and immortality is the larger theme of the poem; and when Savitri and Satyavan retire again, having already ushered in a new heaven and a new earth,

Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign.
She brooded through her stillness on a thought
Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn.

The Dawn motif thus returns upon itself as it were, and from one imminent dawn to another, and a greater dawn, the poem completes a full circle.

First, then, the physical dawn. If you are an early riser, if you can get up when it is still dark, if you can walk to the beach and gaze at the east—maybe for half an hour or more—till the moment of sunrise, the moment when the Sun rises suddenly as if from the Bay of Bengal, if you can involve yourselves in this daily marvel, you will then be able to participate somewhat in the drama of dawn described in the opening lines of the poem. As you go on observing the east, first everything is dark, then you see streaks of light breaking the dark monotony, and slowly a reddening glow suffuses the east and you almost know where exactly the Sun will presently rise,—and soon the Sun rises indeed. It is a matter of a few seconds, and the marvel is enacted before you, but in another ten or fifteen minutes the Sun has risen higher still and higher, the Sun is blindingly bright, and you can look at the Sun no more. The dawn, and the sunrise, are over. The world is bathed in light, and a new day has begun its journey and struggle.

Like the physical dawn, the passage from Night to Day, there is also the symbolic dawn, the passage from inertness and inconscience that are characteristic of night and sleep to consciousness and wakeful activity that are the prerogative of day. Like the miracle of the physical dawn, there is also witnessed simultaneously the daily miracle of the passage of the earth and its denizens from seeming inconscience to the play of full consciousness in the broad light of day : in short, an *ascent* from inconscience to earth-consciousness. An hour before the physical dawn, men, animals, birds, all earth seem to be in the drowse of sleep or inconscience. The normal condition of sleep is one of total absence of consciousness, a condition almost of inconscience. The body is inert, the intellect is asleep, the emotions and passions are asleep (except when they leap to extravagant life in dreams), and perhaps the soul itself is asleep or withdrawn. Night and darkness thus bring us to a condition of the sleep of the body, the sleep of the emotions, the sleep of the mind, and the sleep of the soul. One is so inert and unconscious in a condition of deep sleep that one hardly notices even the coming of a thief, hardly hears the chime of the clock, hardly feels the attentions of the bug or the mosquito. Yet in the course of less than an hour all is changed. Like the stages in the coming of the physical dawn, there are also the stages in the return of human consciousness at break of day. One passes for a while through the twilight no-man's land between sleeping and waking, one opens and rubs one's eyes, one wakes up, and presently one is up and doing with all one's faculties alive and alert. You and I and all others, fathers and mothers and children and grandchildren, tens of thousands in village and town and city, all of us rise even as the Sun rises—more or less at the same time—and our faculties wake up from their night's drowse or trance of inconscience, and like the Sun we too begin our day's routine, a routine which is a journey and a struggle at once. Every night is a death, and every dawn is the moment of rebirth. Passing from darkness to light, we also pass from death to life. Does it cease to be a miracle because it

happens every day ?

During the long hours of the night, all earth as good as surrendered its right to live. Even trees and plants—and not merely birds, animals and men—went into a kind of drowse; only evil slimy creatures and noxious insects were apparently active ! There is no compulsion that the Sun should rise today. Suppose the Sun went on ‘strike’—suppose the Sun took ill—suppose the Sun’s path was barred by another power ! Likewise there is no absolute certainty that the man who went to sleep last night should wake up today; people are, after all, known to have died in their sleep. The physical dawn and the return of human consciousness and earth-consciousness as part of the drama of the physical dawn together make the daily miracle of darkness being followed by light, and death by rebirth. But this drama implies also an effort, a struggle, and a victory. At one moment you are sleeping like a top, wholly inert. The next moment there is an obscure stirring within the inner countries of the mind. Some outer noise telegraphs its intimations to your deep unconscious sleeping self. Half-consciously you hug your pillow, or draw the blanket over your head. You hear vague noises, but still refuse to be hustled out of your sleep. Even the alarm clock is powerless to rouse you from your slumber. Perhaps your room-mate has got up already; perhaps the door opens and shuts; perhaps you hear the milkman at the gate. Between sleeping and waking, between night and day, you hover uncertainly for a while—then, suddenly, having thrown aside the blanket, having cast aside the chains of sleep, you get up resolutely—a man born anew and gloriously alive.

The evocation of the physical dawn and of the ‘symbol dawn’ of the earth-consciousness is itself achieved only through a fusion of image and symbol, through a series of intimations and illuminations. Night, immobile, silent, dense, infinite, blind, is stretched across “the divine Event” of Dawn. It is as though a Zero is filling the universe. In the deep unconscious levels, there are nightmarish reviews of the endless cycles of birth and death, and the whole sad story of our earthly travail. Any movements during this cosmic drowse are instinctive and automatic, like somnambulistic actions. The whole earth whirls, as if abandoned, in the soulless void. The “impassive skies” are “empty, neutral, still”.

As yet still aimless, there is a vaguely half-conscious stirring in the darkness; the mind hovers between desert nightmare and the first intimations of conscious life. There is an obscure straining towards change, an infant longing. As if in response to this longing, there is the first streak of consciousness, the “hesitating hue” in the eastern sky. This streak is like “an eye of deity” piercing through the deeps of night—it is like a scout of reconnaissance from the Sun. There is now a more distinct call to the adventure of consciousness and life. Thought and memory play a kind of hide and seek, sleep and night and inconstancy still resist resolute change.

But nothing can delay the “divine Event”, and *all can be done if the God-touch is there*. A hope steals in, and in response to an orphaned world’s longing, there is a slow miraculous gesture from Above. From the earlier “inert black quietude” there is a softening because of “the persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch” on the orphaned

child. "One lucent corner" opens, and presently—like a falling cloak from the body of a god—the darkness suddenly fails, and dawn appears. It is the burst of the Revelation and the Flame, yet it is only a brief reign for us—although Dawn itself is a perpetual phenomenon, for somewhere or other it is Dawn, and hers is a continuing marvel and ministry. But even during the brief reign of Dawn, a seed of grandeur is implanted in the earth, the Epiphany is disclosed, a meeting of Heaven and Earth has taken place, and all is enacted as a consecration and a rite appropriate to a marriage, followed by a priestly hymn and a prayer from the earth :

Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven;
The wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind
Arose and failed upon the altar hills;
The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky.

As soon as prostrate earth has received the awakening ray, Dawn the "divine afflatus" withdraws—spent, unwanted, "fading from the mortal's range" :

A sacred yearning lingered in its trace,
The worship of a Presence and a Power
Too perfect to be held by earth-bound hearts,
The prescience of a marvellous birth to come.
Only a little the God-light can stay...

Presently, men, beasts, birds, all visible earth begin a new day's life. The glory of the Dawn gives place to the common light of earthly day. Leader of earth's evolving destiny, man with his uncertain mind lifts up the burden of his fate.

3

If the physical dawn implies also the *ascent* from inconscience to earth-consciousness in the full light of day, in the situation visualised by the poem the dawn signifies no less Savitri's *descent* from superconscience or divine consciousness to normal earth or human consciousness. You remember Wordsworth's lines in the *Immortality* ode :

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

But Heaven recedes from the growing boy, and at last “the man perceives it die away, and fade into the light of common day”. For average humanity, then, consciousness is but a function of the “light of common day”, and sleep involves a temporary forgetting of even this imperfect earth-consciousness. But for some people, sleep could be a kind of *tapas*, it might mean *samādhi*—a condition of oneness with God. In everyday life we come across, say, a mathematician so much engrossed in his problem that he is totally impervious to his surroundings—he may seem to gaze at his wife yet see her not. It is an effort for him to descend from this level of apprehension and meet men and affairs in the light of common day. Likewise, for a *mahātmā*, a Great Soul, sleep really is *samādhi*, a condition of self-absorption and serenity and stillness, a trance of union with God. When Ramakrishna Paramahansa was in one of his trances, his body was inert while his soul withdrew into the *ānanda* or bliss of God-realisation. For a Ramakrishna, therefore, the return from the trance of sleep to the waking consciousness could only have meant a descent from the bliss of Brahman to the confrontation of earth-life and the acceptance of human responsibilities. For Savitri, too, the dawn means a descent from her divine consciousness to the level of human consciousness, and also the necessity to confront time and fate.

Along with the rest, Savitri also awakes on this fateful day. While they are engaged in their apparent ways and ephemeral joys, her own true self stands aloof. She is a mighty stranger among them, and she is unaware of the illusion of desire. Hers is verily a vaster Nature’s joy, the calm delight of the gods. Deep in her self she recapitulates how the earth has been unequal to such prodigal love as has been hers, and how the earth will not give up its limitations and change quickly or finally. On the other hand, the earth has only visited with martyrdom its many would-be saviours :

Mortality bears ill the eternal’s touch...
It sullies with its mire heaven’s messengers :
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of Grace;
It meets the sons of God with death and pain.

Elsewhere, in *A God’s Labour* (first published in April 1946), Sri Aurobindo has presented the avatar’s predicament :

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way...

I have laboured and suffered in Matter’s night
To bring the fire to man;

But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

Savitri knows therefore that she can look for no terrestrial support in her work. In the strength of her solitariness alone "she must foresee and dread and dare". Driven by her aim to rid the world of its burden of pain, she has had to exile herself from her native Felicity and to "wrestle with error and fate" and trample a road "through mire and waste for the nameless Immaculate" :

Apart, living within, all lives she bore;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world :
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might;
The universal Mother's love was hers.

Since she carries in herself the ache of a world-wide heart, she will now turn her private threatened calamity into a mystic poignant sword and cut with it the Gordian knot of the world's woe. Awakening to the urgency of the hour, she rises to the "lone Immortal's unshared work". Like the several stages of the coming of the physical dawn, like the corresponding stages of the awakening of earth-consciousness from the inconstance of night and sleep, there are also the divers stages in the coming of the dawn of earth-consciousness in Savitri from her night's repose in her native divine consciousness. From the vast silence on mind's verge, there is first "a slow faint remembrance" as she lays her hand on her bosom and recognises the human ache ; then her mind travels back to the regions of memory, and lights a pathway through symbol dreams ; and, then, of a sudden, "memory's casements" open wide on the hours, and all come back to her—earth and love and doom. The godheads from the dim Inconscient awake to the struggle. Grief and Pain dominate the scene, and earth's daily sacrifice and desire and tears are expressed through the "ignorant cry of living things" :

Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene,
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.
Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
This was the day when Satyavan must die.

The full significance of the dawn of Savitri to the "wakeful" state from her normal condition of "inborn felicity" in sleep is explained in the second canto, 'The Issue'. Fully awake, Savitri's witness spirit stands for a while withdrawn yet, reviewing the circumstances of her childhood, girlhood, wifeness :

As in a many-hued flaming inner dawn,
Her life's broad highways and its sweet bypaths

Lay mapped to her sun-clear recording view,
 From the bright country of her childhood's days
 And the blue mountains of her soaring youth
 And the paradise groves and peacock wings of Love
 To joy clutched under the silent shadow of doom...
 Twelve passionate months led in a day of fate.

Savitri is at the cross-roads now, she will have to confront the hour of struggle with Nature's Law. She will have to fight alone, but it will not be for herself alone. She has grown *within*, in the background of the eternal and unique. And the radiant prologue to the present drama has been the coming of love and marriage. But her love too has been no ordinary limiting love. It has really brought heaven and earth, or love and truth, together. Love has been for her a wide self-giving, a deep of compassion. And Satyavan himself is "the great unsatisfied godhead" who has found in her his own infinity.

On this fateful day when a Shadow is to cross Satyavan's life, Savitri is *both* a human being bearing a load of anxiety and experiencing the striving human heart's aches *and* an armed Immortal, ready to give battle to the Shadow and vanquish it utterly :

Although she leaned to bear the human load,
 Her walk kept still the measure of the gods...

To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
 And must confront the riddle of man's birth
 And life's brief struggle in dumb Matter's night.
 Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death
 Or hew the ways of Immortality,
 To win or lose the godlike game for man,
 Was her soul's issue thrown with Destiny's dice.

The 'issue' is not alone Satyavan's life, but also, and more fundamentally, the human right to immortality. Man is limited by Nature, although he has a limitless soul. Savitri must needs join issue to assert the claims of the soul, so that the determinism of Nature climaxing in death may be exceeded at last. In Savitri the Divine has lit the limitless Flame, and it is her role today to match her will against the iron law and stay the adamant wheels of Doom. Nature's massed machinery is to be surpassed by her will and idea and action :

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
 Can link man's strength to a transcendent force.

Savitri's is the universal Mother's love, and now the great World-Mother dawns in her to stop "the mute march of Necessity". The physical dawn provides the

theatre, the time and the occasion. When he is awakened himself, the human dawn exposes man to the assault of the Shadow. And when Savitri too wakes "among these tribes", this immaculate dawn of the World-Mother ensures that the Shadow shall be worsted :

A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.

4

As we see enacted the drama of the 'Symbol Dawn', we mark three simultaneous movements converging towards a point of time when time and mortality are to be transcended. The movement from darkness to light ; the movement from the cosmic drowse of inconscience to the first stirrings of consciousness and then onto the full awakening of consciousness ; and the movement of Savitri from her super-conscious divine calm and felicity towards earth-consciousness in response to the stir of human life and human need and her resolute awakening to meet the human need and earth's challenge ;—these three movements coalesce in 'The Symbol Dawn' to set the stage and start the action of the poem. It is, however, necessary to remember that the 'action' of the poem is not, properly speaking, any physical action—although physical images and constructions are often used. It is essentially a spiritual action, and by its very nature it must defy physical formulation or intellectual comprehension. The physical dawn itself is not presented in purely scientific terms, but rather impressionistically, making the physical dawn a kind of link between the two symbolistic dawns. "I am not writing," Sri Aurobindo protests, "a scientific treatise"; on the contrary, he adds,

"I am selecting certain ideas and impressions to form a symbol of a partial and temporary darkness of the soul and Nature which seems to a temporary feeling of that which is caught in the Night as if it were universal and eternal. One who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light , to him all is Night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness."

When presently Sri Aurobindo writes of the Inconscient and the Ignorance, again he is describing things that to him are realities—not verbal pyrotechnics. In a final defence of his impressionistic and symbolistic technique, Sri Aurobindo writes:

"To me...consciousness is the very stuff of existence and I can feel it everywhere enveloping and penetrating the stone as much as man or the animal.

A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to me an image but a fact.... The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer."

But certainly the poet expects from the reader a concentrated attention and a complete alertness, for "how without it can he grasp the subtleties of a mystical and symbolic poem" ? Reading 'The Symbol Dawn', it is advisable at first to linger on some of the life-lines :

It was the hour before the Gods awake...
 A fathomless zero occupied the world...
 Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred...
 And a blank prescience yearned towards distant change...
 An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast...
 All can be done if the God-touch is there...
 A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal...
 A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge...
 Outpoured the revelation and the flame...
 A form from far beatitudes seemed to near...
 All grew a consecration and a rite...
 Our prostrate soil bore the awakening ray...
 Only a little the God-light can stay...
 Man lifted up the burden of his fate...

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes...
 Akin to the eternity whence she came...
 Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch...
 The mortal's lot became the immortal's share...
 Even her humanity was half divine...
 Aloof, she carried in herself the world...
 She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care...
 Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved...

But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load...
 And memory's casements opened on the hours...
 All came back to her : Earth and Love and Doom...
 Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.

It is also instructive to note the balanced system of contrasting images that holds together the two parts of the opening Canto :

the hour before the Gods awake	And Savitri too awoke
lay stretched	hastened
unlit	brilliant
Silence' marge	mind's verge
unbodied Infinite	embodied Guest
fathomless zero	the daughter of infinity
a blank prescience yearned towards	Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant
distant change	breast
the heedless Mother of the universe...	The universal Mother's love was hers
an infant longing	
a long lone line of hesitating hue	a solitary mind, a world-wide heart
amid the Night's forlorn indifference	against the evil at life's afflicted roots
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal	Then a slow faint remembrance
	shadowlike moved
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge	through strange symbol dreams across
	the ebbing of the seas of sleep...
	And memory's casements opened
	on the hours
Outpoured the revelation and the flame	All came back to her
Man lifted up the burden of his fate	Her soul arose confronting Time and
	Fate

These are by no means exhaustive, and it is not to be presumed either that the parallels or contrasts have been deliberately contrived or 'planted' by the poet. The main and subsidiary symbolisms have naturally grown out of the central inspiration, which is also the reason why most of the images strike us at one and the same time as idea and symbol. First Night is presented as a dark woman—

Across the path of the divine Event
 The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
 In her unlit temple of eternity,
 Lay stretched immobile .

Then Dawn appears as a woman too :

 ...a Face of rapturous calm
 Parted the eternal lids that open heaven;
 A form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
 Ambassadors twixt eternity and change,
 The omniscient goddess leaned...

And Savitri of course is the incarnation of the Divine Mother, "the godhead greater by a human fate". While Dawn is the bringer of light, Savitri is even more—she is the vanquisher and transformer of darkness into light. And the imagery is apt every time.

Again, the ascent from inconscience to the waking state, and Savitri's descent from divine consciousness to the awareness of the normal human predicament—these two symbol dawns are dramatised through images that vividly project the two contrary movements. Thus of Night's movement towards Day :

The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
 Persuaded the inert black quietude
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God...
 One lucent corner windowing hidden things
 Forced the world's blind immensity to sight.
 The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
 From the reclining body of a god.

The four images are (1) *the inert black quietude*, which is disturbed by (2) *the persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch*; presently (3) *one lucent corner* opens to let in a stream of light; and soon afterwards (4) *the darkness slips like a falling cloak from the reclining body of a god*. There is a like movement of Savitri making the descent from super-conscious felicity to meet the demands of terrestrial life :

In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms
 She lay remote from grief...
 Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,
 And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
 And recognised the close and lingering ache...
 Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams ..
 Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,
 Illumined swiftly were life's darkened rooms,
 And memory's casements opened...

The cardinal images here are (1) *a deep cleft of silence*, then (2) *her hand upon her bosom* recognising the close and lingering ache, then (3) *her house of Nature* being *illuminated* swiftly within, and finally (4) *memory's casements* opening on the hours, and all coming back to her.

Sri Aurobindo once remarked that "*Savitri* is an experiment in mystic poetry, spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure". It is vision, experience and realisation in terms of poetry, and only a seer who had achieved a purposive involvement in the totality of experience and comprehended the structure of the Cosmos could have ventured to reconstitute the realm of ends and means in the way Sri Aurobindo

has done in this poem. The day's travail and struggle and victory concluded, there is room only for

An ecstasy and a laughter and a cry.
A power leaned down, a happiness found its home.
Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

Such is the promise held out by the embodied vision and experience of *Savitri*, and the promise is already implicit in the opening Canto, 'The Symbol Dawn'.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

(Continued from the January issue)

THE first problem that we face in religion is that of dogmatism and the difference that it creates between one religion and other religions, and even between one sect and another sect within the same body of religion. This has given rise to storms of theories and counter-theories, and animosity has manifested itself in the religious wars, the holy fights, the crusades. The whole of mediaeval Europe is replete with sub-human atrocities committed in the name of the Pope, in the name of guarding the integrity of one cherished faith. Milton does not pause to think of the cause of this sanguine phenomenon. There are passages in *Paradise Lost* to show that he supported the holy wars and hated all Catholic 'black, white or brown' friars. He does not pause to consider that a religion that could generate strife must be in itself wrong in some way, specially a religion that professed the cult of love and sacrifice. So we come to the conclusion that something is fundamentally at fault in the religion that grew out of the personality of Christ. It was perhaps a later growth, for Christ did not form this religion any more than Buddha created Buddhism prior to Christ. Religions grew up according to the moral and social needs, rather than from the living flame of the divine emanation, a Christ or a Buddha. Thus, the heralds of the Christian faith wove an aura of awe and fear around God's personality, making Him fierce, exacting, full of wrath and without compassion. Milton imbibed this deformation.

Thus when one made such a man-made religion his base, as Milton did, then, as a sure consequence, falsifications of ideas, concepts and *a priori* notions would be inevitable. And there would not linger the smallest residue of spiritual verity with which the religion had originally started its journey. So we can infer that, had Milton not made religion his base for the epic, all the problems and difficulties that we find in it would have been absent. But Milton wanted truth. He wanted his epic to be veridical. When experience is lacking, we have to make up by faith in scripture. But, rational as he was, was this faith in such a self-contradictory body justified? To judge religion he had neither the capacity nor the opportunity.

Religion can begin with a spiritual experience, and to be lasting it must be led by people with spiritual experience. But there are some religions which start with ethics alone as their starting-point. Confucianism, Islam and Judaism belong to this category. Christianity did have an authentic spiritual background, but this got suppressed owing to the ethical pressure and the lack of force of the spiritual following. Ethics became the highest code in conduct and faith; it took over the role of the spiritual guide. Its strong and well demarcated character, its biased opinions of good and

evil, its character of rude and exacting taskmaster made it assume the dominant position in man's life. Milton was drawn chiefly to this aspect in religion. But did it answer all his questions ? Did it satisfy all his wants ?

For example, ethics put forth : 'Thou shalt not kill.' But religion murdered people in great numbers in the name of God. How did ethics view this unethical view of religion ? Another adage is : 'Love your neighbours.' But religion generated hate, and harnessed it to create further division among men. Did Milton see the obvious bankruptcy of the ideal and its practice ? How could he condone such a blatant outraging of principles not only in religion but in his own life as well ? All this proves that both Ethics and Religion are not sufficient to solve the problems of life. They cannot touch the inner core of human existence.

Morality sees man as a rational entity and seeks to force on him its ideas of good and evil. But man's life-elements revolt against such impositions. Religion too has its measure of coercion which too fails in its purpose. Man revolts against these time-serving laws and the result is the creating of newer religions, newer ethics and fresher ways of life which also in their turn get outmoded and cast aside in the march of man's progress. Hence both these principles are not fixed and eternal ; the statutes and canons are transitory and serve a moment's use.

This means that the Christian faith, that was created for a specific human and local need in the past, no longer served the requirement of a growing and vitalistic mass of humanity. There were religious upheavals. One such Milton saw almost in his life-time. The message of love and compassion was lost to men who were adventurous and no longer a tribal, nomadic, vicious and quarrelsome body of men. And the old codes were re-affirmed, only to be rejected. The priests and the church were no longer necessary to approach God; Christ was already a dim and distant figure. Milton came to re-establish Christ's position and to point out the misdeeds of man as an ethical and rational being. Although he became popular and created a great literature in the process, his message failed to go home and the problem of religion and ethics remained as ever a large question-mark in the thought of men. For, he failed to see the real aspect of religion and ethics. He had not the inner vision and capacity to draw away from the current of human opinion, he lacked the moral fibre that constituted the fabric of religion. He made rationality the supreme godhead. His faith did not save him. His revolt did not make him free and, like Satan, he bore the load of his sin of rationality. Ethics and religion as objects of disinterested studies are an interesting pastime. But to get involved in their bitter dissensions is indeed unfortunate. These were necessary for a evolving humanity. But when conflict on conflict poured in, and controversies became the breeding-ground of hate, we could be sure that religion had spent itself in its utility to man and that ethics itself could not be the supreme law-giver in man's affairs. But there is attachment to the past form and this bars man's progress. Then there is ignorance and the dogmatic clinging to the ritual of ideas, the rites of worship of reason as the deity. Religion as the supreme god and ethics as its minister fail in their office. Here not the divine presence but an ideative

image is worshipped : here not truth but Ignorance is enthroned as the lasting daemon. Thus all the problems we face are problems of half truths, of man's limitations. And, unless we overpassed these, we could never solve our problems and any wistfulness for the ideal past or a condemnation of man's disobedient nature would not in any way further our aims.

Milton portrays man's early history but he does not illumine us about the failure, for Christ the only hope of Christianity, the true apex of ethics and religion, is also now a legend. Mankind is no better for his advent or his sacrifice. We have, asserts Christianity, one single birth, hence all our hopes and despairs rest on the final Judgment Day, which seems to become further and further away as decades, centuries and ages pass. Religion in Europe has done nothing to give us any hope, or any prospect, of a happy future. This is the reason science has uprooted religion and kept it for mere decorum on Sundays, an impotent ornament that serves no useful purpose in the long run. The Church is a body made for the elected few who choose to evade the harsh and swift human existence for a life of contemplation, prayer and service. But the Church too is a centre of dispute, of wrangling; it had its armies in the past and sought to appoint kings. Thus religion in all its spheres of activity has not been able to confer on man, specially the European, any boon of peace.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

THE INDIAN TRADITION

AN APERÇU

WHEN the American author writes about the American tradition, he is very clear in his mind as to what he is going to write about. Democracy and freedom and the constant urge to adventure and change, and the desire for peaceful coexistence : these have animated the American scene throughout history.

To us in India, to speak of the Indian tradition raises difficulties. First, because we are a very old people, our history began when Egypt and China were young and Greece and Rome were not yet born, and the course of centuries has left on our soil the varied deposits of the past. Secondly, because the life and thought of such a vast concourse of peoples as India have been so full of diverse elements that to discern a single tradition running through this heterogeneous mass seems next to impossible.

Yet a few guiding lines can be seen, and it might be worthwhile trying to trace them in outline. This is a task particularly necessary at the present moment, when India seems determined to carve out her future in keeping with her ancient traditions, and the eyes of the world will be kept turned on her to see how far she succeeds and which way she goes.

I

A nation's life, like that of a developed individual, is a complex of many strands, of several diverse and often disparate elements, that seek fulfilment. Any account of a nation's history and tradition must take note of all these elements and if possible discover the unity running through all this diversity. There is, first, standing behind all its other activities and guiding them as it were from behind the veil, a deep aspiration, a seeking for something which the nation considers to be the thing most worthy of attainment; this gives a nation its religions, its mysticism, its urge to spirituality. There is, next, the need to know, to satisfy the curious intellect, to find out the why and wherefore of the world and man and Nature, this finds fulfilment in its philosophy and science and social, economic, political thought. A nation, too, like the individual, has an ethical being which responds to all that is good and which strives after all that is worth achieving; and there is the side of aesthesis which delights in all that is beautiful. These find expression in its ethics, its will-to-power, its literature and art, music, dance and drama, all its manifold interest in the joy of life. And, above all, constantly clamouring for satisfaction and loud in its demands, there are the cravings of the animal in us—the desire for material comfort and well-being, the need for security and a well-ordered economic existence, the need for gregariousness and the need to adjust personal relationships in a well-ordered social and political system—which

constitute nine-tenths of the life of the average man and strike the headlines in books and periodicals. All this makes a very complex whole and no part of it can be ignored in an integral view of a nation's past.

Another factor that makes for complexity is that a nation, like the individual, has ever been on the march. It is a common fallacy to suggest that the East has been static while the West alone has been progressing. This is a generalisation based on insufficient data, a hasty judgement which takes note of recent history without studying the long past. A nation, whether of the East or West, can never stand still, any more than an individual can. It can show signs of fatigue, it may show signs of going back, it may grow old and seem to be on the point of death. But, as Sri Aurobindo has said, "the nation is immortal"—and this applies to all nations, whether of the East or the West. And India has been no exception to the rule. India has passed through her phases of childhood and youth, of maturity and full adulthood, of declining years and senile decay. Today she stands at a critical moment of her life; the choice is before her whether to cling to her past and slowly fade away or to renew her life by turning to a glorious future; for a constant renewal of the energies of life and body are the conditions for terrestrial immortality.

If we are to understand the meaning of the Indian tradition, we have to study it from the dynamic point of view. Three distinct phases can be traced in its growth. Each of these phases covers a period in time extending over a millennium and more. Each offers a clue to the complexity of our task.

During the first, formative period which gave us the Vedic hymns, the Upanishads and Brahmanas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Sutra literature in cryptic prose, the mind of India was busy formulating in clear terms its aspirations and ideals. This vast body of literature has to be studied carefully and its deeper meaning grasped if we are to know what India has stood for, not only in religion and spirituality and philosophy, but also in her attitude to life in all its multitudinous urge to fulfilment. Something of these ideals and aspirations as they appear on the surface in the Upanishads, the Brahmanas and the Sutras has received some publicity at the hands of modern scholars. Much of it remains unknown. The deep esoteric meaning of the Vedic hymns with all that they meant for the later evolution of Indian religion and spiritual practice has been wholly missed by the scholars; this has to be rectified. The Great Epics which were as if an epitome of the ancient culture have been grossly neglected by most scholars; unless they are carefully explored and the ideals of life and thought and ethics and religion they embody are given their due place, we shall know little indeed of the ancient Indian tradition.

The next great phase of our cultural growth covers the period from the Buddha to the coming of the Muslims in the thirteenth century. This was a period when the ideals and aspirations formulated in the preceding age were put to the acid tests of the analytical reason and sought to be embodied in dogma and ritual and philosophical argument, in diverse forms of art and literature, in social, economic and political institution and practice. This is the great age of intellectual discussion and argument

among the rival schools out of which the great philosophical systems took shape. The spiritual preoccupation gave rise to different systems of yoga, each with its set principles and fixed lines of practice. Religion branched off into a hundred sects each with its own ritual and dogma and manual of litany. The aesthetic motif was expressed through a variety of art forms, the joy of life was manifested in feasts and festivals and the splendid opulence of cities, literature reflected the glory of the age. Codes prescribed the social and ethical, the economic and political norms. It was an age of trade and colonisation and empire, of war and politics and diplomacy, of a deep interest in the life of the senses and sensual enjoyment as well as in the life of the recluse and ascetic. Material prosperity, the love of wealth and the worship of earthly power were as much in evidence as adoration of saints and the respect for the monastic life. This, the great classical age of Indian culture, has been the one that has not yet received the attention that it deserves.

The last phase through which the life of the Indian people has passed shows a gradual process of decline, a period during which the shortcomings of the old culture began to come more and more to the surface. This too we must study in order to know where the Indian tradition has failed and why it has failed. The account has not all been on the debit side; great things were achieved even in this era of decline. The banning of the Sanskrit tongue from the courts of kings gave a chance to the people to make their voice felt through the regional vernaculars. These tried to recapture some of the old spirit of the Epics. The spiritual endeavour continued and the religions of Bhakti opened new pathways to God. Art sought to maintain the old traditions in painting, architecture received a fresh impetus from the Muslim patrons, music developed finer shades, and manners if not morals improved among the new aristocracy. The first stirrings of nationalism too were felt. But the general impression left by this long period of foreign occupation is one of senile decadence. The old vigour of life had begun to depart. There was a constant attempt to turn one's eyes on the past, to repeat what had been already said, to carefully preserve what had been once gained. Society became static, the economic life began to show signs of weakness in its growing dependence on the State, foreign trade passed into the hands of the Arab and the European, politics offered little scope for the gifts of the Kshatriya. Education was stereotyped in its method and narrow in its outlook; it could not produce great creative thinkers nor men of high moral fervour. The result was that in its hour of need when a new nation with all the energy of its limited years thrust itself on us, there were hardly any leaders capable of offering resistance. India lost her freedom at the skirmish of Plassey; she was well on the way to lose her soul at the funeral pyre of the Rani of Jhansi.

The abortive rising of 1857 cowed the intelligentsia to an abject surrender to our fate; all that most of them could aspire to thereafter would be for ever to remain

tied to the apron strings of a step-motherly England, and copy as best they could her ways of life and thought. The turn of the century saw the beginning of a change brought about by the Swadeshi movement.

The leaders of this movement which was inspired throughout by Sri Aurobindo were men who looked towards the future, theirs was the vision of an India rendered free of all her shackles political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual that had kept her bound in the age of decline. Their method was to fight the enemy within as well as the oppressive bureaucratic rule. Their immediate aim was to bring back to India her sense of self-respect, awaken in our people a deep sense of her ancient glory, and to show the way to the goal through a planned effort and persistent sacrifice of self in the cause of the Motherland. Their work bore fruit during the decades that followed and India emerged victorious in the struggle for freedom. The other items of their programme—the recovery of the Indian spirit and its application to the problems of life and thought and action—are yet to be worked out.

Sri Aurobindo has been insisting that India's freedom was necessary not for her sake alone, it was an indispensable condition for the world's progress, perhaps even for its survival. "Mankind has long been experimenting," he says,¹ "with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape from the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, dissatisfaction from which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find one by material means must inevitably fail." The world has not given up that impossible attempt; the world's intellectuals are still hoping to "bring in the millennium by an Act of Parliament".

"Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India²... We believe that the Zeitgeist, the Time-Spirit, is at work to bring about a mighty movement of which the world at the present juncture has need, that that movement is the resurgence of Asia, and that the resurgence of India is not only a necessary part of the larger movement but its central need, that India is the keystone of the arch, the chief inheritor of the common Asiatic destiny. The Mongolian world, preserving the old strong and reposeful civilisation of early Asia, flanks her on the right and has already arisen. The Mahomedan world, preserving the aggressive and militant civilisation of Islam, flanks her on the left and in Egypt, in Arabia, in Persia, is struggling to arise. [This was written in 1907]. In India the two civilisations meet, she is the link between them and must find the note of harmony which will reconcile them and recreate a common Asiatic civilisation."³

¹ *Bandemataram*, 29. 3. 1908.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 1. 6. 1907.

Here, in these prophetic words, can be found the clue to the Indian tradition, the guiding lines of which we spoke about at the beginning. India is the mediator between the claims of the Spirit and the demands of Life and Matter and Mind ; to harmonise the needs of Unity and Freedom has been the sense of her millennial endeavour. In her best periods, she has been in search of the principle of Unity that underlies all the multitudinous Diversity of the world ; she has offered the fullest freedom to vary, to depart from the norm ; and at the same time she has been insisting on the need for a harmonious reconciliation between these two apparently contradictory claims, of Unity and Diversity, of Liberty and Law. It will be wrong to suggest that she has wholly succeeded in this difficult task. But that a serious attempt was made by her during the great periods of her history is in itself a grand achievement. It will be for the future to carry the attempt to fruition.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

A CAUSERIE ON EVENTS AND OCCASIONS

THE LURE OF THE ELIXIR

THE scientist of Azerbaijan who is currently engaged in inventing an elixir for rejuvenation, must have been led by the same inspiration which had made Shakespeare exclaim, "Age ! I do abhor thee ; Youth ! I do adore thee !"

The lure of the elixir for rejuvenation is one of those foremost pristine fascinations of men—and certainly prevailed long before the days of King Yayati. Magicians and alchemists of yore had their reassuring prescriptions though nothing seems to have arrested man's corporal plight. History however records how an ambitious monarch of China, Wu ti (2nd Century B.C.) devoted almost all his time and resources to make it possible to realise tangibly the efficacy of such an elixir. Once while riding by the countryside, the monarch saw a man with some unusual features. On being questioned the man narrated how when he was eighty-five years of age, and was on the verge of death, he came across a Taoist who passed over to him his alchemic secrets. "I practised this regimen, and lo ! my age was turned to youth ; black hair grew again on my head, new teeth filled the place of those that had gone....Your servant has now reached the age of 180" (*A Gallery of Chinese Immortals* by Lionel Giles, John Murray, London, 1948).

The eagerness for the perpetuation of youth has naturally assumed a challenging temper in our era as man knows so much about so many things today. Researches in the field by well-known scientists like C. E. Brown-Sequard, Jurgen W. Harm, Steinach and Voronoff, etc. have created sensations from time to time.

All this reminds one of a very significant story by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*. Dr. Heidegger, an old, wise scientist and philosopher whom people believed to be only a magician, once gathered a vaseful of water from the Fountain of Youth. He invited four of his old acquaintances—one retired army man, one retired business man, one retired politician, and an old lady. All the four guests were notorious in their youth in their own ways. The doctor wanted them to drink the strange water; but he too warned them that if, becoming young again, they repeated their forgotten follies, it would be too embarrassing. Rather, with the experience of a lifetime to guide them, they should become "patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age". At this, the venerable guests laughed, indicating that it was simply ridiculous to think that they would repeat their follies, "knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error".

So, they drank the water. "We are young ! We are young !" they cried with excitement, and then,

“Dance with me, Clara !’ cried Colonel Killigrew.

‘No, no, I will be her partner !’ shouted Mr. Gascoigne.

‘She promised me her hand, fifty years ago!’ exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.”

This was followed by a riotous scene during which the vase overturned, and again they became old. Dr. Heidegger observed, “Yes, friends, ye are old again, and lo ! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well, I bemoan it not; for if the fountain gushed at my door steps, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it—no, though its deliriums were for years instead of moments. Such is the lesson ye have taught me !”

Thus, Nathaniel Hawthorne anticipates what will happen with a physical rejuvenation—unaccompanied by a change in consciousness—even the semblance of prudence and restraint that age effects would disappear too and that would destroy altogether whatever harmony is there in the present order of human existence—a harmony which the best of human eyes can discern, and of which Browning sang thus :

Grow old along with me !
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made :
 Our times are in His hand,
 Who saith, “A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God : see all nor be afraid !”
(Rabbi Ben Ezra)

So, let us hope that by the time a successful formula of rejuvenation is there—all efforts at which we greet with the most sincere good-will—there will be a plasticity of consciousness to deserve it.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

—August 31, 1967 is the first centenary day of his death.

If you remember the young David Copperfield—who has lost his father and has suddenly encountered an unkind step-father and is soon thrown away from his near and dear ones—you have a picture much resembling the young Baudelaire. Of course, his mother did not die; she only moved away from him to accompany his step-father—an ambassador abroad.

Baudelaire, born on 9th April, 1821 of his father François’ second marriage (at the age of sixty) to Caroline, lost his father when six years of age and was expelled from his school in his late teens as his impact on his classmates was deemed undesirable. He had to combat his step-father’s plan to make him an administrative officer, in order to fulfil his own urge to become a poet. To help him to develop a little common sense in regard to his career, his guardians arranged for him a trip to India. He

slipped off the ship and after enjoying a stay in the bright tropical isle of Mauritius returned to Paris and resumed his reckless living.

Often resigned to melancholy and solitary confinement, Baudelaire too had strong desire for gaining social prestige. He craved for the *Legion d'Honneur*. Though he lived the most part of his life in not too bright a fashion, we find sudden outbursts of a radically different nature in him. He had, with exemplary courage, participated in saving the ship, which was carrying him to India, when it faced some danger. Later, he worked with the revolutionaries in the forties of the last century.

Baudelaire's main collection of poems, *The Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du mal*) was published in 1857. The conflict within him, between spirit and flesh, has become a phenomenon of bareness in his expressions. In his poems stark naked passion is mixed with an awe-inspiring sense of guilt. There are sweet images knit around his tender enchantress walking and sweeping the air with her ample skirt which appears to him as a "handsome ship setting out to sea with all the canvas spread", and "swinging away, keeping a gentle, languid, slow rhythm", and shocks of expression such as "a choir of worms upon a corpse", which he experiences around the same kind of object.

Baudelaire's theme, his treatment of it, and his own life intimately intertwined with them remind one of Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick*. Ahab was revengeful—and that was deadly to himself—and he was almost deliberate in his own destruction while striving to destroy the white whale. And says T. S. Eliot of Baudelaire: "He was one of those who have great strength, but strength merely to suffer. He could not escape suffering and could not transcend it, so he attracted pain to himself."

Many things troubled him, affairs in regard to his inheritance, and his love affairs too. Then there was the tumult around his *Flowers of Evil*, which "says everything, is clothed... in a sinister and cold beauty", as he wrote in a letter. He was brought to trial and was condemned for having violated the maxims of morality.

Naturally, he had said, "The poet is like the prince of the clouds who rides the tempest and scorns the archer. Exiled on the ground, amidst boos and insults, his giant's wings prevent his walking."

So, upon this earth, the existence of our poet, the prince of the clouds, had become cloudy. He had become an admirer of De Quincy, experimenting with the efficacy of opium upon himself. His exploration of evil had lured him into a dark passage leading towards self-destruction. He likened life to a hospital. "Anywhere, anywhere, as long as it be out of this world," said he. He went out of his immediate world, France, in 1864, to Belgium. He conducted an unsuccessful lecture tour, drank excessively and soon suffered from paralysis. He returned to Paris, to die there on August 31, 1867.

Posterity has acknowledged him as a great poet. One wonders how only a century ago it was not so simple a thing to understand that the horror of an image isolated from its setting was not sufficient to brand a poem as immoral or vulgar. Baudelaire's poems may appear tragic or even awful, but his was a sensibility far

above anything vulgar. Of him says Sri Aurobindo : “Baudelaire was never vulgar—he was too refined and perfect an artist to be that. He chose the evil of life as his frequent subject and tried to extract poetic beauty out of it, as a painter may deal with a subject that to the ordinary eye may be ugly and repellent and extract artistic beauty from it. But that is not the only stuff of his poetry.”

MANOJ DAS

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

ELEVENTH SEMINAR

30TH APRIL 1967

THE eleventh Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 30th April 1967 from 8.30 to 10 a.m. in the New Hall of the Centre of Education. The subject for the Seminar, chosen by the Mother, was :

What is the need of the hour ?

The following seven members participated as speakers :

Abhijit, Amita, Anand Reddy, Arati, Romen, Srijit and Tarun Vishnu.

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

Friends,

The subject chosen by the Mother for this Seminar, as already announced, is : *What is the need of the hour ?* At our request the Mother has also given a special message for this Seminar as an answer to this subject. I shall read it out first. Her message is :

"Do not try to deceive the Divine."

I shall now say a few words by way of an introduction.

In the progressive movement of earthly evolution there arrive certain crucial periods which are of great significance because they are the turning-points when the evolutionary movement takes a decisive forward leap. At each of these crucial periods there is a certain demand of the Time-Spirit who insists upon the fulfilment of certain conditions by the evolving beings in order to test their fitness for the higher evolutionary status. This demand of the Time-Spirit can be spoken of as "the need of the hour."

At the present moment humanity has arrived at one such crucial turning-point

which has no parallel in its past evolutionary history. Because of its supreme significance for the evolutionary destiny of man, Sri Aurobindo has called it the "Hour of God."

The subject of our Seminar, "What is the need of the hour?" can therefore be more explicitly worded as: "What is the need of the Hour of God?" In other words, what is the demand of the Time-Spirit at the present moment? What are the conditions which the Master of evolution requires us to fulfil before we can be considered fit or ready to rise to the supramental status which is the next step in earthly evolution?

The supramental evolution is a universal process affecting the whole human race. But even till this day, when the manifestation of the supramental Truth in the external life of the world is imminent, there is hardly any awareness of it in the general humanity, much less any conscious effort to be ready to receive it. But for us, who call ourselves sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, it should be different. Even though the rest of humanity is still asleep, we at least, even though a small minority, are or should be awake to the significance of the present moment and should be trying to fulfil the need of the present hour.

So instead of considering the question in its wider universal context, it would be more pertinent to consider it in its direct bearing upon us. For the very fact that we call ourselves Sri Aurobindo's disciples imposes a great responsibility upon us, for it means that we are expected to do something very special which, at this juncture of earth's history, is of the utmost importance for the destiny of the whole human race.

What then is demanded of us at this hour to make ourselves ready?

Fundamentally the demand is for each of us to make a decisive choice between two contradictory elements in our nature pulling us in opposite directions and making us lead a double life. As Sri Aurobindo has said:

"...every sadhak is faced with two elements in him, the inner being which wants the Divine and the sadhana and the outer mainly vital and physical being which does not want them but remains attached to the things of the ordinary life. The mind is sometimes led by one, sometimes by the other. One of the most important things he has to do, therefore, is to decide fundamentally the quarrel between these two parts."¹

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, being integral in its aim, insists upon a total transformation of all the parts of our nature and therefore cannot allow the persistence of these contradictory elements in us for ever. Some day or other the outer vital and physical parts which remain attached to ordinary worldly desires and interests must convert themselves and, receiving the higher Truth, allow themselves to be transformed. The higher parts in man's nature—his psychic being, his thinking mind and his higher

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 722.

vital—are relatively easy to change because they readily open to the Truth and consent to its transforming action. But the lower parts—the external vital and the physical—are most recalcitrant to admit any change. The central difficulty in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga lies in the obstruction in these lower parts.

In spite of the extreme difficulty in changing these parts, the necessity of converting and transforming them is fundamental in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga because the external personality and nature of man is almost entirely governed by them. They dominate his habitual modes of thinking, feeling and action and largely determine his character and temperament. So long as these parts do not change, all the spiritual endeavour and realisation in the inner and higher parts remain mixed, uncertain and inconclusive. There can be no definitive transformation of the whole life unless these parts consent to be changed.

It is because the obstruction in these lower external parts is so very obstinate that the Yogis of the past have declared that it is insurmountable and abandoned the effort to transform them. They remained satisfied with the inner realisation of the Spirit because they did not succeed in changing the outer personality in man. They could not join together the two ends of existence. Spirit and life were declared to be eternally incompatible and any attempt to unite them was treated as futile. Human nature was considered incorrigible and an escape into the immune and immutable Spirit was offered as the only lasting solution.

But Sri Aurobindo never accepted this defeatist solution of life's difficulties. On the contrary, He made it the central aim of His Yoga to transform this lower external nature of man at its very roots whatever be the price that may have to be paid for it. What the other Yogas have left undone is the fundamental thing to be done in His Yoga because on it depends the whole success of its aim. If the external nature of man remains unchanged, if the spiritual realisation remains confined to the inner consciousness, then it only means repeating the old failure. But Sri Aurobindo refuses to repeat it; He categorically insists that Spirit must transform life and divinise Matter.

Those who call themselves sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga are therefore required to remember that its indispensable condition is this change of the outer lower nature and the external personality. It is incumbent on all the followers of Sri Aurobindo to undertake the task of this change however difficult it may prove to be. If, however, they shrink from it because of its extreme difficulty then they are shirking the most essential part of their work. And if they shirk it, if they do not change their outer personality, how can they call themselves sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga? If they refuse to overcome the pull in their lower nature which keeps them tied to the ordinary life of worldly attachments, if they refuse to remove the contradictions which stand in the way of the aspiration in their higher parts, if they remain divided, then it means that they only profess to be sadhaks of His Yoga but refuse to practise that which is the most essential part of it.

I must point out here that what I am now saying is not my own view of the

matter. I am only repeating what Sri Aurobindo Himself has very distinctly said on this very crucial issue. Let me speak in His own words :

“It was inevitable that in the course of the sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation. My whole work depends upon this movement; it is the decisive ordeal of this yoga. For the physical consciousness and the material life cannot change if this does not change. Nothing that may have been done before, no inner illumination, experience, power of Ananda is of any eventual value, if this is not done. If the little external personality is to persist in retaining its obscure and limited, its petty and ignoble, its selfish and false and stupid human consciousness, this amounts to a flat negation of the work and the sadhana. I have no intention of giving my sanction to a new edition of the old fiasco, a partial and transient spiritual opening within with no true and radical change in the law of the external nature. If, then, any sadhak refuses in practice to admit this change or if he refuses even to admit the necessity for any change of his lower vital being and his habitual external personality, I am entitled to conclude that, whatever his professions, he has not accepted either myself or my yoga.”¹

These words of Sri Aurobindo tell us very precisely what is the need of the present hour, the Hour of God. Each one who professes to be a disciple of Sri Aurobindo must remember these words and make the crucial choice which can now no longer be postponed or evaded. If, however, any sadhak still refuses to make this choice and to carry it out sincerely in practice, if he still persists in living a double life, he is only trying “to deceive the Divine” as the Mother has said in Her message to this Seminar which I have already read out to you.

At this hour those who sincerely make the right choice will become the true children of the Mother whom She will surely lift up to the Truth. But for those who still follow the lure of the old life, what can She do ? They shall have to take the inevitable consequences of their wrong choice : “the abyss.” This is the warning that Sri Aurobindo has given to all who profess to be His disciples. Let me repeat it in His own words :

“Those who are not straightforward cannot profit by the Mother’s help, for they themselves turn it away. Unless they change, they cannot hope for the descent of the supramental Light and Truth into the lower vital and physical nature, they remain stuck in their own self-created mud and cannot progress.”²

The choice is open before each one of us either to remain stuck in this self-created

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, pp. 405-406.

² *Ibid*, p. 409

mud of the lower nature and sink into the abyss or in all sincerity to open to the Truth which the Mother has brought close to our doors and allow it to new-create us and lift us up into the New Life. The choice is imperative. The need of the hour, the Hour of God, is to make it.

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After this speech the seven speakers were called in the alphabetical order of their names to deliver their speeches.

At the end Kishor Gandhi read out a writing of Sri Aurobindo which is of unique significance as an answer to the subject of the Seminar.

These speeches and Sri Aurobindo's writing will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, THE 10TH SEPTEMBER 1967, AS FIXED BY THE MOTHER. PAPERS ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS PERTAINING TO THE NEW AGE WILL BE READ BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION AT THIS CONFERENCE.

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND.

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 8

August 1967

1. The implementation of integration of subjects

WHETHER we count the history of man long or short in terms of evolution or change of consciousness, "his earliest preoccupation", as Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*¹, "is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality."

These are basic roots that man has put down into the soil of his earthly experience and human culture and whenever there is an upsurge of renewed Energies or a descent of Light into the human consciousness we should look to these basic truths of our civilization and review them in the focus of the New Light.

We have obviously come to a point when integration of the senses has to be seriously considered as a more powerful means to perceptive knowledge. That one of the senses can deny what other senses have affirmed is an experience not to be ignored for too long a time as the student passes through the formative years of learning.

To bring more senses into play in classroom activities is the need today if the teacher is to keep pace with the growing consciousness-need of the modern student.

If any teacher is puzzled by this increasing impetus of awareness of the modern student, let him take cognisance of the scientific and technical advance in the last fifty years and measure that against the whole age of the Industrial Revolution. This advance alone represents one factor viz., the search after pure Truth in the physical world. The other factors of manifestation are also there as part of the expanding consciousness. Even though they be seen mostly in the occult they are ready to burst forth at any time into our world of life and thought.

Integrating our understanding through the senses means a higher standard of organization and discipline where the senses serve the thought-processes with pure, unmixed patterns of sense-experience recognised as necessary adjuncts to the building of strong memory impressions.

From this foundation of sense-integration, where as many of the senses as possible are employed in a given experience, we can proceed to more highly organised thoughtpatterns, and it is from here that the true demand for integration enters.

¹ P. I.

Any really good teacher has had the very satisfying experience of taking a very common subject—whether factual, abstract or symbolic—and expanding a discussion of classroom experience to include all three. For example, one may take the subject “donkey” as a *point de départ*, building up from the natural history available on the species to more specialised knowledge on the uses that donkeys have been subjected to throughout history; expanding to donkeys mentioned in literature, such as R.L.S.’s “Travels with a Donkey” and perhaps ending with G. K. Chesterton’s famous poem from which one will automatically enter into the symbolic, the religious and the spiritual implications inherent in that poem.

It will be readily seen from such an example that the possibilities of integrated subjects—in this case perhaps natural science, history, geography, evolution of the species, language, prose and poetry, religion and spiritual values—could hardly be encompassed in one period of forty-five minutes. It could easily take up the whole day and perhaps two or three different teachers.

Such an integration of subjects would certainly do away with formal teaching under the present auspices of morning and afternoon periods of one hour or less of the clock. The advantages, however, would be so obvious to both student and teacher alike that there would come about a complete reversal of teaching techniques that would harmonise with the students’ own intellectual participation in the search for Truth.

This may sound rather ambitious to the type of teacher who has long allowed himself to get entrenched in traditional methods of teaching and is content to remain a fixture in the *status quo*, but if we remember that all learning has to come out of the child, has to be in fact “educated,” brought forth, we will appreciate more and more the value of the urgent need for the integral approach to invoke what knowledge there is inherent in the growing consciousness memory of the race of beings we call man.

It seems somewhat anomalous that with all our scientific and technical advances we still fail to reach the essence of knowledge within the heart of man. Is it not because of our almost exclusive reliance on material things to the immediate detriment of any reliance on our senses, our faith, our intuition? We have come a long way from the time when the shepherd boy, alone with his sheep on the mountain side, could, through his intuition, commune with the forces of nature, and read in the stars what was going to happen.

A stronger and wider material base was no doubt necessary to the evolutionary movement of man’s consciousness, but if the foundations have their place, so does the superstructure. We should not be so enamoured of the earth and its progress that we cannot look up at the stars. This is especially important today when we see a New Race of Children straining to the call of Truth.

2 : *Parent Anxiety*

One of the greatest problems presented to progressive and forward-looking teachers is the position of today's parent in relation to the growth-experiences of the child. Quite often the parent is frankly puzzled but most often does not understand and therefore refuses to accept that the child is going through phases of growth-experience which the parent has not had. This misunderstanding, in most cases, is caused by the parents' lack of appreciation of the difference in the speed and impetus of our evolutionary consciousness in general as against the speed of evolutionary consciousness when they were themselves at school. This basic ignorance sets in motion a series of psychological neuroses which constantly feeds back to gain force and justification from the maternal and paternal protective instincts which themselves take various forms of emotional expression ranging from nagging the child at home and imposing extra work, to violent attacks on the teachers of the child.

The most powerful justification the parents have is always based on the accepted premise of their love for the child. This of course could take us into the most complicated regions of psychological discussion where we would come at last to the question "What is love?" And we would have to answer either with a positive "God is love" or a negative "Love is whatever can still be betrayed." Neither of these answers, however, could give authority to the possessive love of the parent, mainly because this sort of "love" takes no cognisance of the possibility of Nature's own protection over all growing creatures. Needless to say, a possessive love, which is not really love at all but a bargaining, can have no trust in divine protection because of the anxiety for its own brand of love to be returned or for some kind of gratitude for the expenditure.

Children have to be allowed to grow through experience and the experience can rarely be what the parents would wish. If children are fenced in by "do this", "don't do that", frustrations are born which may last a lifetime or create blocks in the mental being so as to prevent free growth, setting up inhibitions which limit the consciousness to the ordinary, the general, the inartistic, the uncreative, the low and the vulgar.

Parents must learn to put their trust in the Divine Mother, having the faith that the best will happen when they put their children into Her care.

3. *Thought of the Month*

It is not Yoga to give free play to the natural instincts and desires. Yoga demands mastery over the nature, not subjection to the nature."

Sri Aurobindo, *More Lights on Yoga*, p. 63

NORMAN C DOWSETT