

MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY 1968

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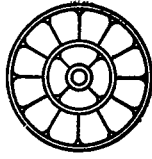
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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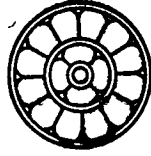
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THE MOTHER'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

1.1.68

Remain young,
never stop striving towards
perfection

1.1.68

Reste jeune,
ne cesse pas de tendre
vers la perfection.

STARTING THE NEW YEAR

A LETTER BY THE MOTHER

Avec cette nouvelle année qui commence pour toi, il faut commencer une nouvelle vie, dans une résolution renouvelée de chasser de ta conscience et de ton action tout ce qui déforme, amoindrit, obscurcit et finalement enraye ton progrès et détériore ta santé.

Dans ton effort de croissance intérieure et de purification, tu peux être sûre d'être soutenue et aidée par ma force et mes bénédictions.

27-1-1963

WITH this new year that starts for you, you should start a new life, in a renewed resolution to drive away from your consciousness all that deforms, diminishes, obscures and finally stops your progress and impairs your health.

In your effort for inner growth and purification, you can be sure of being sustained and helped by my force and my blessings.

27-1-1963

TWO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

...But neither feeling nor logic can stand against usage. A language is like an absolute queen; you have to obey her laws, reasonable or unreasonable, and not only her laws, but her caprices—so long as they last—unless you are one of her acknowledged favourites and then you can make hay of her laws and (sometimes) defy even her caprices provided you are quite sure of the favour. In this case, Tagore perhaps feels the absoluteness of some usage with regard to these particular words ? But one can always break through law and usage and even pass over the judgment of an “arbiter of elegances”—at one’s own risk.

26-1-1932

Q. I do not know how to express the joy I felt reading your new poems... Have you yourself invented the metre of “Trance” or is it adopted from some former poet ?

A. No. I am not aware that anyone has used this metre before. It came to me just as I finished the “Bird of Fire” and I put it down.

23-10-1933

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

FEBRUARY 28, 1940

N : Dutt says that your second visit to him was at his own place at Thana.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's right.

N : There were two Maharattas present. One was Kaka Patil.

SRI AUROBINDO : I seem to remember a name like that.

N : Dutt says you had a long argument with them and him about the Bhavani Mandir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Argument with them and him ? I was never in the habit of arguing. I am here given a character I never had.

N : Though the scheme of the Mandir was given up, Barin and Upen were going ahead in Maniktala training boys in Yoga. Dutt said, "They were first-rate boys, especially Profulla Chakravarty and Profulla Chaki." He added, "The yogic force made them remarkable." It seems Barin in particular was giving them spiritual training.

SRI AUROBINDO : It was Lele who gave them the initiation into Yoga. Barin called down Lele from Bombay for that purpose.

N : Lele, we learn, after seeing Chaki, was much impressed and picked him out from the group. He is said to have remarked that such fine boys were wasted in the revolutionary movement.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is it asserted that Lele knew about the movement ? He knew nothing at all except at the end and then he said to Barin, "You have all along deceived me. I thought you wanted to practise Yoga and for that reason you called me. Now give it up, give it up. Otherwise you will fall into a ditch."

N : Dutt quotes Lele as saying, "These boys are being wasted." So Lele perhaps knew ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If he had known he would immediately have left them. He believed that they were practising Yoga. If he had known more, Naren Goswami, the informer, would have brought it into his evidence. The only thing that came out

about Lele was the phrase, "Rub me with ghee", written by himself on a piece of paper, as a sort of service to him. (*Laughter*)

N : We are also told that Chaki and the other boys were known to you.

SRI AUROBINDO : I had nothing to do with them. It was all Barin's work. I never knew who these boys were and never saw them. Only once Barin brought a troop to my house, but they were all waiting below. It is true that Barin used to consult me or Mullick for any advice needed. But the whole movement was in his hands. I had no time for it. I was more busy with the Congress politics and *Bandemataram*. My part has been most undramatic in it. If I had been the head, I would have been more cautious.

N : Barin has written that you were the leader and brain of the movement.

SRI AUROBINDO : My connection with the movement began before I joined open politics. The Japanese Okakura started the revolutionary movement at Calcutta, but there was always a quarrel going on among the members. When I went to Calcutta I came in contact with the party. They had no organisation at all. Their main programme was to beat up some magistrates, and the quarrels were going on. So I organised them and reconciled their differences and went back to Baroda. Again the quarrels broke out : again I came and settled them. The whole thing went then into Barin's hands. Violence was only a subordinate element in the original scheme. It could have been important when the armed revolution—for which we wanted to prepare the whole country—would have come. And I was too busy with the open political movement to prepare the country in that way. The terrorist movement was to get the young men ready to have some sort of military training, to kill and be killed. Otherwise it was never my idea that by throwing a few bombs we could overthrow the British Government. And that probably was the reason of the split in the party. P. Mitter was for the original scheme while Barin was for this terrorism. I was never in direct contact with the movement nor with the young men and didn't know them. Only in jail I came into touch with them, especially Nolini, Bejoy and some others. When I was out of jail Jatin Banerji and others again approached me and I reorganised the party.

N : Chaki seems to have shot himself.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it was in the Kingsford case, along with Khudiram.

N : About Profulla Chakravarti, Dutt said that he died in Deoghar among the hills where Barin and his company had gone to experiment with a bomb-explosion. It appears the bomb exploded in mid-air instead of on the ground and a splinter struck Chakravarti on the head and he died.

SRI AUROBINDO : I see. I didn't know that.

N : After the accident, Barin is said to have come to Calcutta for advice. Something had to be done : else the body would be found out and identified.

SRI AUROBINDO : Good Lord ! Does it mean that Barin left the body over there and came to Calcutta for consultation? Barin might have been rash but he was never so foolish... Yes, he was rather reckless. For example, on the eve of the search of

my house by the police he brought two bombs there. I told him, "Take them away. Don't you know that the house is going to be searched ? And remove everything from Maniktala." He took away the bombs but didn't do anything at Maniktala.

S : He has written in his book about it. When he was just removing things the police came. He seemed to be a man on whom responsibility was sitting very lightly.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then he knew that the police were watching him and yet didn't care about it at all?

N : Dutt suggests that the mistakes and accidents happened because you were passing through some new phase of sadhana. On account of it you could not be sufficiently vigilant. Sisir Mitra and Nolini can't believe this because they think that you couldn't have been so careless with such a heavy responsibility on you.

SRI AUROBINDO : As I have said, I had nothing to do directly with the movement. If I had, I would have certainly been more careful.

N : I asked Dutt whether the spiritual force he talked of as having been among the boys had been imparted by you.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, I didn't impart it. I didn't give any force. There was at that time a break in my sadhana because the pressure of work was too much. The sadhana was renewed after my contact with Lele. The boys were revolutionaries from the beginning : it was their own force that moved them.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

AUROVILLE—THE CITY OF NEW LIFE

A TALK DELIVERED ON ALL-INDIA RADIO, PONDICHERRY,
ON NOVEMBER 11, 1967

THE main aim of Sri Aurobindo Society which has sponsored the project of Auroville is to work for "the advent of a progressive universal harmony". Auroville is being established to give a concrete shape to this ideal. Introducing the project, The Mother, President of the Society, declared :

"Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

"The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity."

It proposes to realise this unity in diversity and not in uniformity. It will bring together those who believe in a progressive universal harmony and want to work for it. In fact "the first condition for living in Auroville is to be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and the will to collaborate in the material realisation of that unity". Named after Sri Aurobindo, Auroville literally means the "City of Dawn".

Provision is made for 50,000 residents in the main town, 20,000 in the model villages in its green belt, and 30,000 in its subsidiary projects like World Trade Centre, etc.

The site selected covers areas both in Pondicherry and in Madras States, and provides a beautiful panoramic view with the sea on the east and a number of lakes on the west and north, with the centre of the town on a high level land.

Architects and engineers from different countries have volunteered their services free. M. Roger Anger of France is the Chief Architect.

The town is divided into four Zones :—Residential, Cultural, International and Industrial. Nothing necessary for life is forgotten.

The activities in the project cover a very wide range :—industrial, agricultural, educational, artistic and others. Each nation will participate in the projects in which it specialises. Each resident will be free to choose the work for which he has special aptitude, and will be given the necessary training for it.

The work in Auroville will not be a field which one is compelled to accept for earning one's livelihood but a joyful means whereby to express oneself while doing at the same time service to the whole group.

There will be no unemployment and no beggars. The township will provide for both the field of work and the basic needs of all. Rules will be as few as are unavoidable. Guiding principles will help each person to develop self-discipline in freedom. Auroville will also participate in the design of integrated living programme of UNESCO. There will be an integrated effort and a practical research towards creating conditions, where each individual can occupy the place for which he is best suited, develop himself to his highest possibilities, inner and outer, and give his maximum to mankind.

Permanent cultural pavilions for each country and also for each state of India

are an important feature of Auroville activities.

To give an example, the Japanese pavilion will have a Japanese garden, houses built in the Japanese style, a lake, a boat pier, a meditation house, rooms for the Tea ceremony, guest rooms, library, museum and an exhibition hall for Japanese handicrafts, works of art, etc. One will experience in this pavilion the aesthetic sense and culture of Japan in a living manner. Thus each country and each state of India will plan its own pavilion.

Auroville will also have an International University, perhaps the first in the world, established specifically for world unity. In fact the whole of Auroville will be a living University.

An institute of integrated health sciences with a clinic will be another feature of Auroville. It will synthesise allopathic, ayurvedic, yunani, homeopathic, biochemic, naturopathic and other health knowledge in the light of actual experience and add new dimensions to human research. The patient will obviously receive the best care and treatment possible.

A sea-side resort and the entire life and programme of Auroville will make it a great Tourist attraction and a training ground for cultural Tourism.

Regular conferences, seminars on different aspects of world welfare, youth camps and other similar activities will bring together those interested in a collective effort towards a new and better life.

A physical education department covering all games and sports, model agricultural villages revolutionising agricultural life by synthesising aptitudes of workers, suitability of land and technical assistance, for a better life and optimum production, a handloom village for the handloom weavers in the area, a model fishermen's village, a film studio with an artists' colony, a World Trade and Information centre, industries, all with a changed outlook and consciousness, are some of the other highlights of the project which will help to usher in a new era in every aspect of life.

Here is the dream city of which you and I have dreamt as little children and hoped that someone someday will fulfil it.

And now it is on the way to fulfilment—the city of happiness, harmony and progress with no politics, no economic exploitation, no rich or poor, no employer or employee, but all sons of God.

On 28th February 1968, will be held the ceremony for laying the foundation stone of this unique town. On this occasion, people will come from all over the world, bringing love in their hearts and the soil of their country in their hands for placing it in the lotus of mosaic specially made for the purpose, as symbolic of their co-operation in this project which has been unanimously accepted by the General Assembly of UNESCO.

Auroville invites all those who are dreaming of a better humanity and a better world to participate in this saga of world progress.

NAVAJATA
General Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Society

SISTER NIVEDITA

A READER'S QUERY AND THE EDITOR'S REPLY

ON the subject of Nirodbaran's article "Sister Nivedita as a Disciple" in the *Mother India* of October 1967 several letters were received. All were highly appreciative, but one of them, after calling the article "indeed perceptive and illuminating," raised a query under two heads :

"(1) I am unable to reconcile myself to Sri Aurobindo's observations :¹

Sister Nivedita was a westerner 'to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook' and although she 'had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of the life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-oriental to the end.'

The echo is heard in your article (p. 508) : '...Despite a lot of change in her, one must say that in the background of her nature there was some remnant of innate sanskaras.'

Will you kindly throw more light ?

(2) On page 506 Sister Nivedita is quoted as saying :

'Sri Ramakrishna by making over to his disciple his power in this way retained his life for only a year and a half.'

The quotation, even if accurate, is not in consonance with facts. The transmission of the power by Sri Ramakrishna to Swami Vivekananda appears to have taken place three or four days before Sri Ramakrishna's Mahasamadhi.²

V. S. GANATRA

70, Gareebdas Street, Vadgadi, Bombay 3"

Reader Ganatra is quite correct on the second point. Nirodbaran says that what he wrote was just a mistake due to a piece of wrong information he had received from a book.

On the second point we should like to formulate a reply along one line of thought out of several possible.

We must understand properly Sri Aurobindo's position here. According to him, it is not necessary for a European or American to have what is popularly called a Hindu temperament or a Hindu outlook in order to do Yoga successfully. He gives the example of Sister Nivedita (as well as Sister Christine), who had "spiritual realisa-

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, 1953, p. 317.

² (a) *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashram, 8th impression, 1964, p. 504.

(b) *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, 7th impression, 1965, pp. 147-8.

tion on the lines of Vedanta". He was personally acquainted with both, and going by his contact with them he uses the words which our reader cites about Nivedita's having been a Westerner to the core and having possessed a non-oriental nature to the end. Again, when mentioning the power of intense sympathetic penetration that was hers, he refers to her as "an Irish woman."

Now, on the basis of this power which brought about a deep understanding and assiduous practice of Indian life and thought on Nivedita's part, we must not conclude that she was psychologically Indian, any more than we should arrive at such a conclusion on the strength of her Vedantic spiritual realisation. Apropos of that realisation, Sri Aurobindo points out, "it is not the Hindu outlook or the Western that fundamentally matters in yoga, but the psychic turn and the spiritual urge, and these are the same everywhere." And, apropos of the power, we must keep in mind Sri Aurobindo's attribution of it to Nivedita's Irish (or Celtic) psychology. Most probably our reader has felt like objecting, because he has overlooked Sri Aurobindo's explanatory reference.

Further, if we say that the intense sympathy by which Nivedita penetrated into the Eastern mind and the oriental ways of living must indicate an Indian nature, we should be driven to the opposite position face to face with so many things we observe in Vivekananda, her own Guru. He brought a mind coloured by Western education—he tussled doubtfully with Sri Ramakrishna for years—he had a dynamic assertive personality—he incessantly preached action and service and amelioration of life-conditions—he formed intimate connections with the Western world—he even asked the youth of India to eat meat and play football rather than run after traditional religious practices. Should we declare on account of all these Western characteristics and movements that he was non-Hindu in his outlook and possessed a non-oriental nature? Certainly not. And then how would the characteristics we may label as Eastern and oriental in Nivedita entitle us to controvert Sri Aurobindo's pronouncement?

Actually, Vivekananda and Nivedita are in general the obverse and reverse of the same type of phenomenon: the temperament and nature being of one kind (Indian in the former case, Irish-European in the latter), the acquired outlook and life-attitude being of another (Western in the former, oriental in the latter case).

When we see this significant balance between master and disciple, and when we remember that Sri Aurobindo not only had an extraordinary faculty of insight but also knew Nivedita pretty closely, need we dispute from the fact of her successful "Indianisation" the truth of his reading?

K. D. SETHNA

THE BEATLES

A READER'S COMMENT AND THE EDITOR'S ANSWER

I

Ashdon Hall, Saffron Walden, Essex, November 28th 1967

My dear Friend,

I always enjoy *Mother India*, which you so kindly send me. But I was taken aback and saddened by the article "Beatniks" in the September issue, which has just reached me. It is not easy to look with charity upon some of the youthful manifestations of the present and in this I have every sympathy for the complaints of the author. But misinformed generalisations cannot help the young to solve their problems.

To say that "the Beatles are a typical symptom of the disease that is infecting the youth of today" is surely most unfair. The Beatles are four extremely hardworking young men, gifted and original musicians who have produced some music which will find its place in our folk tradition. Personally I find a great many of their songs delightful. They have given pleasure to millions and in many ways remained unspoilt despite vast wealth and adulation and the fatuous behaviour of their fans. One is extremely interested in Indian music and has studied the Sitar. They admit their "break-through" came through drugs. We can be shocked if we like, or we can say with the old hymn "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." Their 'conversion' was naturally attended by uproars of publicity and a barrage of radio and television limelight. They behaved (I thought) with dignity and simplicity. Asked on television if they would be prepared to give up their wealth for what their Guru offered them, they said without hesitation "Yes." A silly and irrelevant question, but how many millionaires, twice the age of these children, who have the world at least financially at their feet, would have had the courage to answer it so unequivocally? Their pronouncement against the taking of drugs has probably had a more positive effect on their generation than any other measure.

The Beatles' teacher is Maharishi Mahesh, a member of the Shankaracharya. He did not animadvert against the West from his Himalayan retreat but came here "bearing precious gifts from afar" like the Wise Men. Hundreds of people have found peace and new understanding through him. Those Aurobindians who have met him admire and respect him. Truly this little man has done a great work. The Beatles will soon be with him for two months at Rishikesh, for an intensive course in meditation.

We in the West have lost God. The young are trying desperately to find Him again. Instead of criticising their (often gay and original) clothes, their often bad manners and morals, perhaps we could remember them—and the Beatles—when

we meditate, so that they can share the Grace we all need ? We may yet find that the publicans and beatniks have entered the Life Divine before us.

MORWENNA DONNELLY

2

23 Rue Suffren, Pondicherry—1, 15.12.1967

My dear Miss Donnelly,

I was glad to hear from you. It's been years since we last corresponded. I may grant that the sentences on the Beatles in the article miss doing them personal justice and can be considered over-generalised. But the author is really concerned with the Beatniks and still more with that recent phenomenon, the Hippies, some of whom broke on Pondicherry a little while back and by their behaviour gave the occasion for the article and its attitude. This behaviour cannot be regarded as accidental or irrelevant: it has an organic relation to some active part of the modern youth orientation and, though to some extent this orientation is towards a certain side of the religious Orient, it often misses a good deal of the essential spirit of the *ex Oriente lux*.¹ The Beatles, however, do not fall within the category of what is broadly regrettable here.

As to music like theirs, I have observed that as a rule Westerners who have taken to the spiritual life in India find it superficially sensational, whereas Easterners themselves manage to get a sort of soul-kick out of it and touch some genuine ecstasy in the vitalistic abandon of sound surging, as it were, from the solar plexus. I suppose the Dionysian element in art in the West has almost always been non-mystical and Westerners turned mystics cannot easily discern the upward cry of the blind depths when, no matter how faintly, it mingles its soul-stuff with "the barbaric yap". The East has known an authentic spirituality of the Bacchant type, along, of course, with quite a lot of sheer uncontrolled vitalism—and it is therefore able to leap in response to whatever outbreak of transmogrified Tantra and Vaishnavism meets it from the colourful clamour of the Beatles' quaintly exhilarated quest for they-know-not-what.

I am not acquainted with Maharshi Mahesh's personality or teaching. But I am prepared to believe that he has brought peace and new understanding to people. The only thing rather putting me off him is his alleged claim that "transcendental meditation" is a very easy process and can be learnt in a short time. This sort of "instant Yoga" smacks of popularisation and suggests that the levels of consciousness plumbed cannot be very deep. I am afraid people in the West are very easily impressed and satisfied. But how can I bring myself to think that a person like you who has known something of the Aurobindonian "ocean depths and breadths of the Infinite" could praise him unless at least some of the gifts he bore came really in hands as of

Light from the East.

the Magi? So I may accept on the whole the terms in which you characterise him and his work. That is to say, the touch must be there of the Spirit that makes all things new—even though for me personally this newness may be insufficient because it is still of the old kind and does not answer the basic all-round evolutionary need which *The Life Divine* lays bare and whose fulfilment by an Integral Yoga it outlines.

Your closing remarks on the young of today strike sympathetic chords in me in the sense that I can see a glimmer of the life of the lilies of the field through all their irresponsibilities and even their aberrances. But I feel also a great pity. So much gaiety and originality and sincerity goes waste because the attempt to find the lost God of the West is made on a level where the chances of going quite astray or of being caught in a false light are immense. The young of today at their best are a bravely drifting multitude trying to catch at the ultimate Mystery through its figurations in a world of wandering mist. Now and then they happen to look beyond that world as the Beatles have done and the mist-images give way to some approach to the Real. But the Beatles do not seem to be quite typical of modern youth: there is more solidity and stability in them. You have described them not only as “gifted and original musicians” but also as “four extremely hardworking young men”. And the true spiritual life calls for extreme hard work, even if the soul of music in one may turn one’s life a realisation of the old Latin motto: *Labor ipse voluptas*.¹

K. D. SETHNA

¹ Labour itself is pleasure.

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1967)

*This is how
all sincere aspirations
are fulfilled
With blessings*

1-9-63

18

Miwani (Africa), 16-4-1954

O Divinities of the world, O Powers !

Why do You not cast a glance towards me ? What is my fault ? I have always been weak in health. Gradually all my energies are vanishing. Why do the vitality and light of my consciousness diminish bit by bit ? Do make me understand ! Otherwise how shall I receive the Love and the Light of my Divine Mother ? Where is the answer ?

O Mother Divine, nobody is giving any answer. Mother ! now answer me Yourself ! Where are You ? Look ! in this skeleton of a body there will remain only one cry, "Mother, my dearest Mother!" Even though my eyes may have wept themselves dry of tears, I shall still stare and stare in search of You. Let everything of me go away; but my love for You will yet remain immortal ! No matter how weak I may be, yet lying in one corner I shall repeat, "Mother, Mother." If even that strength leaves me, every cell of my body shall still quiver and a voice come forth : "My Mother, my Guru!" Will You not then take pity on me ?

"Child, your trembling, your love and the throbbing of your heart—all these I can see and hear. You are Mine ! Always my Strength will be with you. How could I leave you ? Invisibly I am ever with you. One day I shall reveal Myself to you. I shall embrace you and all your difficulties and confusions will come to an end. You shall be one with Me. Do not lose hope !"

19

Miwani (Africa), 26-4-1954

O Guru, O Mother, O brilliant divine Light !

Now I know a little bit by Your Grace, but how am I to express it ?

Is there any end to this cycle of the world ? World, body, mind, life—to understand all these and to get out of them is terribly difficult ! So, Mother, what if I offer everything to You and You alone be the Master of my whole being?

Calm all my agitations and shape me into stillness. Make me worthy to receive Your perfect Love, Truth and Light. With the dazzling and powerful rays of Your Light, burn up all my impure thoughts, actions and the hostile forces that are harassing me constantly. Then wrap in a wonderful moon-cool atmosphere my soul and my whole being. This is my only prayer to You.

I know nothing else, O Mother ! Wherever You lead, whatever You say, whatever inspiration You give—only these shall make up my life. You alone will show me the way. O Mother, I do not want anything except You.

Whatever I am, I am Yours.

"Child, when the hour is ripe, all shall come."

20

Miwani (Africa), 26-4-1954

O Divine Mother !

When I was meditating on You, I felt that I came to You. You called me with Love. What did You say to me ?

"Dear child, within a few days you will gain new inspiration—something wonder-

ful. Keep it treasured in your heart.”

What did I reply ? “O Mother, protect me. My whole life is in Your mighty hands. So it is You who have to worry, why should I ?” You smiled sweetly and understood. You talked with me a great deal and gave me Your blessings.

I was still engrossed in You. But then the meditation ceased.

Dear Mother, never leave me even for a moment. I am Yours; You are mine...

(To be continued)

HUTA

TO EVERY CHILD OF THE NEW DAWN

(With apologies to Amal Kiran, for projecting at large his letter to a particular child on its first birthday in the Mother India of December 5, 1967)

WHILE on our life the world's grim shadow presses,
 And the limbs bear the pallid cast of thought—
 A sunshine crest of gay thrills carves thy lot,
 O tiny lump of smiling thoughtlessnesses !

Surround thyself with the elfin throng of flowers,
 Flowers that are little smiles of paradise—
 Let thy heart's flutter forge supernal ties
 With hue and perfume through enraptured hours.

Then turn thy bloom-trance into a listening shell
 And immortal strains will pour from viewless strings—
 Melodious throb of dream-translucent wings
 Shall tune thy pulse and tingle tissue and cell.

A flute, a flower, a golden temple be
 For the earthward pressing blue divinity.

NARESH

AN UNSCHEDULED DARSHAN OF THE MOTHER

THIS was the third year in succession that the Mother had acceded to the request of Miners from Central India for Darshan. They wrote first in October 1965 that some 600 of them were coming South on tour and wanted to take a special detour to Pondicherry in order to have the Mother's Darshan. And though the Mother gives public Darshan only on certain fixed dates of the year, She graciously consented to receive them at Darshan on their day. This was repeated the next year. This time too the Darshan was fixed for the 24th of December. There was some difficulty in train arrangements and they prayed for postponement to the 29th; to this also the Mother agreed.

And all waited for 5 p.m. of the 29th. Imagine our surprise when on the morning of the 28th the gates of the Ashram were flooded by the miner friends in groups after groups. Was there a mistake, somewhere, I asked myself and wanted to check up the papers. But in the meanwhile the head of the party met us and explained how they had been hustled into these changes of programme by the railway and other official authorities. The local station staff would not allow their train to stay longer and hence, she said, they had to go back with a heavy heart. However, their aspiration worked, the railway authorities agreed to let the train stay till evening and the Mother was approached at about 3 p.m. on their behalf. The Mother instantly agreed to give Darshan at 5 p.m. and the word was passed.

What happened thereafter can be best described by a friend of mine who had arrived just a couple of hours before from Madras.

"It was 3.30 and I was proceeding to your place from Golconde. As I was coming I saw people rushing, coming and moving—men and women, young and old. Each one stopped to tell me that Mother was giving Darshan at five today. I was thrilled and stood glued to the spot. Suddenly I became aware of a great atmosphere around. There was *there* a massive surge of joy, of aspiration. I could not walk. Waves of Delight were rising one after another and blocking the way. I had to literally push myself further and was enveloped by these waves. I have known something of Peace, known Power, but this was the first time I experienced this concrete Delight. I then walked on the streets around the Ashram Building and found that the whole place was surcharged with the rising Spirit. There was more than delight in it; there was *Gratitude*."

Yes, gratitude of the Earth to the Divine for Her Grace. For when the Mother comes to give Darshan it is not to keep an appointment for putting in an appearance at the balcony. She gathers—or lets gather—in Herself a whole world of Consciousness, Light and Power of the Supreme and comes to pour it on Earth for its transformation. She greets the Earth in the person of the humanity present for the occasion and reaches Her Grace to each one there to enable him to realise his highest

aspiration at that moment.

It was glorious. As the hour approached, all stood still. And when She appeared in Her emerald glory, all forgot themselves :

A wonderful face looked out with deathless eyes...
 A power leaned down, a happiness found its home.
 Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss.

(*Savitri*)

M. P. PANDIT

THE QUIET ONE

Quiet at eve, quiet at dawn,
 Quiet at noon, quiet at night,
 And fleet like a dappled fawn,
 She comes to my heart aright.

Quiet and shy are her ways;
 Her gifts and graces are legion;
 With peace and joy she fills my days
 And then vanishes like a pigeon.

Quiet she comes, quiet she goes,
 My heart is her thoroughfare :
 The morning sun her mystery knows
 And her rapture the dewdrops share.

In the evening star her vision is,
 In the rainbow her footprints fair :
 Red roses mirror her lambent kiss,
 And white lilies after her stare.

Quiet she comes, quiet she goes,
 Scattering boons with regal hands :
 My silent heart her bounty knows,
 And her myriad visage understands.

KAMALAKANTO

COSMIC YOGA*

All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony.

Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Chap. 1.

...The analytical age is coming to its close. It fulfilled its purpose. But now something else is needed. The age of synthesis is about to begin. And how could it begin if no high centre of perspective were provided for all the parts to fall in harmony ?

Salvador de Madariaga, in a message of tribute to Sri Aurobindo, April, 1951.

Yuj which means "to unite" is the root from which the word *yoga* is derived. It is the Sanskrit collateral of the Greek *zugon* and the Latin *jugum*. The primary meaning of the word *yoga* is union of the individual *ātman*, spirit, with the Supreme *ātman*, the Divine or the Absolute. The mode of such union is described variously in the spiritual philosophies of India in accordance with their respective metaphysical backgrounds and ideas. It should be mentioned that in Hindu thought the Atman is uncreated, eternal, distinct from the body, vital energies, mind, intellect and the separative ego-sense due to which the Atman identifies itself falsely with the non-Atman, that is body, etc. This false identification is the cause of bondage from which release is sought. To know and experience the Atman is release. Self-knowledge is in some systems just the intuition and experience of the individual Atman; in others, which believe in God, it is the knowledge and experience that the Atman, though uncreated, is dependent on Him and exists for His pleasure and involves the relationship of love, devotion, submission and servitude to the Lord; or in one system it means the complete identity between the individual Atman and the Absolute because for it there is, metaphysically speaking, no distinction between them. The Upanishads, the more philosophical portions of the Vedas, the basic Scriptures of Hinduism, present a harmony of the different views very briefly mentioned above. There is in these records of spiritual experiences, intuitions and their resultant philosophies a most comprehensive idea of the nature of the ultimate Reality. Brahman the Absolute is ineffable, transcendent, beyond speech and mind, featureless, unmanifest, unmoved and unmover, even beyond description as being. Yet it is the same Reality which is also self-manifest, self-reflective, dynamic, becomes features and qualities with which it is

* This essay is based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), especially his books *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, originally published between the years 1914-1920, later revised and enlarged, and now published both by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India, and by Sri Aurobindo Library, Inc., New York. References are to the American edition of these books.

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endowed, universal and individual Spirit, the manifestor out of his own being of the world of which it is the Ruler and Ordainer. Brahman is the Ishwara, the Lord of All, and the Atman, the inmost reality of everything. To know and experience Brahman in either of these aspects is liberation. To realise it in more than one way is a further enrichment of the spiritual realisation.

The direct intuition and experience of Brahman in some aspects, whether as the individual, cosmic or the transcendent Spirit beyond all manifestation or in a harmonious way reconciling all these aspects, requires a training of man's ordinary consciousness because it is normally ignorant of the true Reality and mistakes its appearance in the multiplicity of things as the Essence. Yoga, apart from union, also means the physical, vital and mental disciplines which lead to the direct knowledge and realisation of Brahman in whatever aspect it may be. Yoga implies the control of the instinctive urges, the desires of the vital nature which is the instrument of grasping, possessing and enjoying things and for desire for objects of this world and ephemeral values, purification of the mind and heart by eliminating all unspiritual tendencies, and concentration on the spiritual goal.

There are various types of yoga and, depending on the temperament, aptitude, capacity and the chosen goal, the seeker chooses one of these disciplines. Yoga is both science and art. As science it is the knowledge of the inner being and nature of man and as art it is the application of that knowledge to the discovery of the eternal Reality in man or nature or both or beyond them. Yoga has the same relationship to the forces of man's nature as the specialised sciences have with the forces of external Nature. Like the sciences the yogas are also open to experimentation and verification. It is true of course that because the yogas deal with subjective forces, they require certain disciplines other than the merely intellectual. These involve moral control of the seeker's impulses and desires which make his intelligence disturbed and thus prevent it from being calm, collected and receptive of the reflection of the Light of the Spirit on it. Modern psychology has rediscovered an ancient yogic truth that our intelligence is full of preconceived ideas, prejudices, desires, and impressions of all kinds of previous experiences and all these things accumulated in our intelligence stand in the way of discovery of objective truth. An unregulated life affects the intelligence unfavourably and that is why moral life should precede yoga and spiritual life. And moral life in this context does not mean external conduct only but inner purification of the seeds of thinking, feeling and willing because of which the intelligence is drawn outward to unspiritual objects and the satisfaction of the desire for evanescent values.

The urge of the individual to know his spiritual being and achieve union with God is as old as the emergence of his consciousness. This has given rise to various philosophies, religions and mystic ways which though different in many respects have striking agreements in fundamentals. But is it possible significantly to speak of a cosmic yoga ? Can Nature be thought of as having an aspiration for perfection or a seeking to discover its spiritual Essence ? Indeed, has Nature a spiritual being or aspect ? We normally use the term "Nature" as the collective name of

certain physical, vital and mental phenomena and forces which we conceive to be behind those facts and events. The natural sciences study particular kinds and aspects of those phenomena and forces. They do not, understandably, discover anything in them that might be called spiritual or conscious. For Science deals with the measurable, the quantitative and the observable. And Consciousness is in its very nature not observable. Its action and result can be objectively observed and studied and manipulated but it is not in its essence subject to scrutiny simply because it is the Ground of all objectivity. We cannot here within the space at our disposal work out the logical need for accepting a spiritual principle as the fundamental Reality. We will say that Existence is the basic logical category of philosophic thinking and that Consciousness is the undeniable, even indubitable, fact of experience. Consciousness must be, indeed most certainly IS. Thus Consciousness and Existence are identical. And this Existence-Consciousness is the fundamental Reality. This is symbolically called Akasha or Ether in the Upanishads. The Taittiriya Upanishad, II, says, "For who would live or breathe if there were not this delight of existence as the ether in which we dwell?" (Sri Aurobindo's translation). It is Ananda, or Bliss. Since Reality is without a second, it is sovereign, free, unshakable peace. There can be no suffering or absence of delight in it; the Absolute must be exceeding Bliss.

How can the transcendent and impersonal Brahman manifest the world out of his being? For to do so Brahman must have the will to manifest and also the knowledge of the manifestation and its process. Brahman must be a Person. A Person is a being conscious of itself. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 1.4.3, says, "Being one and alone he did not enjoy the bliss of union, so no person enjoys the bliss of union when he is alone. He wished for a second; he attained the condition of a man and a woman in close embrace. He divided his own self and became pati (husband) and patni (wife)."

Since Brahman is the only Reality, how and whence can there be a second? The Upanishad says that he divided his own self and became two. This is the biune aspect of Brahman. To the question how Brahman can be self-divided, the answer must be that there is in it the inherent capacity, the essential power, of self-reflection, that Consciousness is the Light that can turn upon itself. This is the dynamism of Brahman, the original movement of Consciousness towards itself, the self-looking of God in a mirror which is also himself. Brahman is the object of himself as the subject. The self-consciousness of God implies the sense in him of the universal Self, the cosmic "I". And it is in this aspect that the Divine is the inmost reality of everything. The universe is an emanation of the Divine, a Becoming of Being. Consciousness, of which the Sanskrit is *cit* (chit), is a power not only of perception but also of action. "Chit is a power not only of knowledge but of expressive will, not only of receptive vision but of formative representation. The two indeed are one power. For Chit is an action of Being, not of Void. What it sees that becomes. It sees itself beyond Space and Time; that becomes in the conditions of Space and Time" (Isha Upanishad, by Sri

Aurobindo, 1951, p. 38). The Taittiriya Upanishad, II.6, says, "The Spirit desired of old, 'I would be manifold for the birth of the peoples.' Therefore he concentrated all himself in thought, and the force of his brooding. He created all this universe, yea, all whatever exists. He entered into that he had created."

Consciousness as such is not Knowledge or Will. For there is yet no world even potentially for God to know. The desire of the Spirit to be manifold implies the foreknowledge of the world of multiplicity to be manifested. Here Consciousness becomes the Idea, the creative vision of the process and order of self-manifestation. And since Consciousness is Power, the Idea is effective Force, the Knowledge is one with Will. This Knowledge-Will is the seed of creation. This is called in the Vedas *ṛta-cit* (rita-chit), the dynamic Truth-Consciousness, and *vijñāna* in the Upanishads. It means "The Divine's own knowledge of himself and his own native power of acting" and the integral and intimate gnosis of the process and law of creation. It is this Knowledge-Will which truly is Nature. We now see that Nature is really spiritual and the movement of God.

The creation is in one sense an unfolding, in another a self-concealing of God. The essential spiritual being and nature of God is progressively hidden in and through different levels of God's self-manifestation as the world. This is called the descent or involution of Spirit. The Self's Knowledge-Will is the substance and force in everything though hidden and limited. The Aitareya Aranyaka, II.3.1, an ancient Vedic text, says that the Self is the same Reality in all under limitations; it is sheer existence in stocks and stones, existence and vital sap in plants and trees, being, vitality and instinctive intelligence in animals and in man, and all this and self-conscious intelligence too in him which enables him to ask about his nature and destiny and know them. We find here a hierarchical arrangement of the different levels of the Self's manifestation in the world. From sheer lifeless existence to self-conscious intelligence is the gradation of the Self's gradual expression on the earth. There is Spirit involved in Matter. This really means that Matter is not entirely lifeless nor mindless though life and mind are not manifest in it. There is also ascent of Consciousness in and out of Matter, there is evolution of what is involved in it. In man this process of evolution has formed itself as living and thinking Matter. He is the mental being who is the leader of life and body, says the Mundaka Upanishad, II.2.7.

It is not unreasonable to say that there is in Nature an aspiration to manifest in the world hidden qualities of the Spirit. Evolution can only mean the progressive unfolding of what is already contained in the lowest formation of the Spirit, a bringing out of the secret perfection waiting to be unveiled. Thus the cosmos is engaged in a vast yoga. It is unconsciously, subconsciously and consciously in travail of ever higher emergents of God here in Matter and in the material world.

With the appearance of man in the world evolution has become conscious. Man can and does seek to find the Ground of his own being, to know the true self in him and in the world and to live in and from that experience. This is pursuit of perfection (though of a limited kind from our point of view). The fact that evolution is now con-

scious does not however mean that it is a spontaneous and smooth process. Nature is still red in tooth and claw and there is more stress and struggle in evolution than easy, harmonious progress. The reason for this is that the process of descent of God involves a plunge into Ignorance and ultimately into unconsciousness. The emergence of the multiplicity of the spiritual souls and of the world is, as we have seen above, the result of delimitation of the Self. When the cosmic Atman manifests itself as many spirits forming centres of its self-knowledge, self-enjoyment and points of its involution, the individual atmans have the freedom to forget their unitary Ground of being and to concentrate on their own lines of development and descent into the world. This means exclusive concentration on their own respective lines of evolution, rather involution, separate from the lines of descent of the other spiritual souls who are in reality their own Self in the spiritual world. This exclusion develops into Ignorance. The world as we know it is the product of cosmic Ignorance. And though Ignorance is secretly and in essence hidden knowledge and has in it developing knowledge, as long as the divine Knowledge-Will is not manifested as the overt leader of evolution, there is bound to be strife and clash in its process. For these things are the results of Ignorance.

Nature has two aspects, the higher and the lower. In its higher aspect Nature is full of Knowledge and self-effective Will, in the lower aspect it is incomplete perception and limited power. But the secret Knowledge-Will is what is evolving through the laborious and slow self-manifestation of the Spirit in the world. In man it has already become partly conscious, partly because man being an evolute from Matter and Life carries in him the limitations of those formations of Spirit from which he has emerged. Mind is not the creator of the world but a secondary power of the Knowledge-Will in the order of descent, and only an instrument of seeking Knowledge and Will and not in possession of them in the order of ascent of Consciousness. Mind cannot be the term of evolution. And if Nature is in travail of secret perfection, there must follow the evolution of something which is more overtly spiritual than Mind. Only that which brought the world into being can be the goal of its evolution. The dormant Spirit in mind, life and matter must emerge and manifest itself in them. This will be possible when these become transformed and achieve their perfection in the spiritual sense of the term. The Knowledge-Will of God of which mind, life and matter are lower formulations can alone effect this transformation.

Man is the medium of this transformation. The individual is the pivot of evolution. It is in and through him that the ascent of Consciousness takes place. To the extent that he turns to the Light, to that extent Darkness vanishes. It is not the multitude which can effect evolution of any kind. It is always the hero of vision and effective power who leads and whom the multitude follows. To grow in perfection is to be progressively more free. This is why the freedom of the individual is essential. Regimentation, external control and smothering of the free development of the individual is an affront to the evolving Spirit in the world. "Man needs freedom of thought and life and action in order that he may grow," says Sri Aurobindo, "other-

wise he will remain fixed where he was, a stunted and static being. As he develops in individual reason and will, he needs and society must give him room for an increasing play of individual freedom and variation at least so far as that does not develop itself to the avoidable harm of others and of society as a whole. ... Man the mental being, disallowed the use—except in a narrow fixed groove—of his mind and mental will, will stop short in his growth and be even as the animal and as the insect a stationary species.”¹

The individual was justified in his claim to know the truth for himself and by his own enquiry and to live his life in the light of that knowledge. This ushered in the Age of Reason and the democratic epoch in world history. Science became the standard of knowledge and anything beyond the scope of Reason was rejected. Religion and religious ethics were regarded as unnecessary and the right of the individual to determine truth of existence and of life was pronounced paramount.

But Reason by itself cannot know the ultimate Truth of existence and life. And Science reduces the individual into a mere example of a universal Law and as such the individual begins to lose value in a scientific age. The transfer of the pure scientific attitude to the field of social life has now made the individual a member of a pack, a hive, a mass. “...for collectivism pretends to regulate life not only in its few fundamental principles and its main lines, as every organised society must tend to do, but in its details, it aims at a thorough-going scientific regulation, and an agreement of the free reasoned will of millions in all the lines and most of the details is a contradiction in terms.... And there would be something infinitely worse, for a thorough-going scientific regulation of life can only be brought about by a thorough-going mechanisation of life. This tendency to mechanisation is the inherent defect of the State idea and its practice.... It is indeed the inherent defect of reason when it turns to govern life and labours by quelling its natural tendencies to put it into some kind of rational order.”²

There is no doubt that the ordinary individual is not only not spiritually awake but is quite unaware of spiritual values and life. Even as a mental being he is not very well developed. Barbarism and civilisation are inextricably mixed up. Even those who have the benefit of education are more interested in the satisfaction of physical urges and vital appetites and do not care for the things of the mind for their own sake. And it is true to say that even more developed individuals may well be intelligent but crude in their taste or honest and good but fools or keen intellectually and aesthetically but moral wrecks. We live in an age of economic barbarism. “Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim,” says Sri Aurobindo. “His ideal man is not the cultured

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 237.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, pp. 237-238.

or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment of life made a business, this is commercialism. To the natural unredeemed economic man, beauty is a thing otiose, or a nuisance, art and poetry a frivolity or an ostentation and a means of advertisement. His idea of civilisation is comfort, his idea of morals social responsibility, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialised industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power of organisation, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and the organiser of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society...¹ And yet the health and well-being of the body, the satisfaction of legitimate vital urges, wealth, comfort, all this has a place in life. It is a question of balance and proportion. Mental man should make the things of the mind his main preoccupation without suppressing or depriving his vital and physical needs. But if he is to evolve beyond the mind and manifest in him a higher level of consciousness as his normal and natural faculty of knowledge, action and feeling, he must not only liberate himself from the hold of the economic barbarism of to-day, but must also have freedom to pursue an integral and harmonious spiritual life. To deny him this freedom will be to block the way of his evolution, indeed it will open the door to his degeneration as a cultured being.

There is of course always the danger that an individual of exceptional force of character, strong will, great gifts of leadership and capacity for organisation but without the right perception of human values and cultural ideals may impose his crude ideas and unregenerate will on a society or nation. History records the misdeeds of many despots and dictators and we have seen in our own time the titanic and demoniac superman shake the world and try to block the way to human progress. There are still many economic and political systems to-day which deify the State and minimise the individual, and crush him under the machine of overall control of his thought, action and indeed his whole life. But even in those countries where there are still Communist, Fascist or neo-Nazi regimes the voice of freedom refuses to be entirely stifled and progressive individuals are bound to break the bonds of regimentation.

As far as spiritual evolution is concerned, it can happen only in and through a

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, pp. 86-87.

group of individuals who have already realised the Divine in all the ways in which the knowledge of God has been vouchsafed to man but who are not content with that high yet limited realisation and seek to widen, deepen and heighten it, aspire to make it more integral and also release the Knowledge, Will and Love in their whole being and nature. They want to transform their human nature and put on divine nature. Till now spiritual transformation has meant only a change of the inmost parts of man's consciousness, of those parts where he is spiritual but not that of those aspects of his being and nature which are unspiritual in their formation and function, namely, the mental, vital and physical. The spiritual Supermind, the divine Knowledge-Will alone can effect this transformation because that is what is secretly lodged in matter, life and mind as the as-yet unmanifest motive power of their evolution to their intended perfection—perfection not just within their present possibilities but far beyond, bringing openly into organised nature a freedom which is associated with the Spirit alone. To divinise Matter and make the body an earthly robe of God is to transform Nature.

Is this not a fancy, an idealised dream, mere moonshine? Do we not see all over the world not only no sign of progress but a degradation of even what man has achieved as a refined mental being? Indeed we can lament with Wordsworth:

But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there has past away a glory from the earth...

The infra-rational in man is being given unrestricted expression in art and literature; decorum, decency, honour and dignity are no longer values considered worthwhile, idealism and heroic qualities are things which man does not seem capable of appreciating any more. There seems to be a widespread influence of a titanic power over the consciousness of man. Can we in this jungle of gathering darkness see any light, or are we doomed to condemn ourselves to a disintegration of civilisation and culture? Far from a new spiritual evolution, there seems to be a determined effort by humanity to lower itself to the level of the animal from which it emerged.

There are two things to be noticed in this connection. Evolution is the bringing out of that which is involved. It does not mean that the new emergent is bound to manifest itself throughout Nature nor that what has already evolved is as a whole the medium of the evolution. When man evolved out of the higher animals all apes did not become mentalised and thus human beings. But that did not mean that there was no evolution of mind from instinctive intelligence and living matter. Similarly the manifestation of the divine Supermind will not mean that all men will be supramentalised. But that is not to say that evolution has stopped with the emergence of mental intelligence. And if in the meantime there is a degradation of civilisation and culture as we have had these till recently, that is not in itself an argument against the emergence of a level of Consciousness beyond the mind. Secondly, it

is well known that when a spiritual seeker begins to practise yoga, there is always at the beginning an exacerbation of the unspiritual tendencies in him. No spiritual realisation is possible if the nature of the seeker is not purified of its dross. To suppress them, even to ignore them is not at all the way. In fact it is a denial of yoga. If there is a cosmic yoga, if universal Nature is engaged in a concentration of its powers to bring out a new, perfect emergent from its depth, then it is to be expected that the impurities in its midst would be thrown out first. Regrettable though the contemporary preoccupation with the demoniac and the titanic is, from a larger point of view it is the result of the process of purification of cosmic Nature. This is not to say that we should complacently accept the upsurge of the infra-rational in man. On the contrary, the soldier of the evolving Divine must with all his power fight not only the manifestations of unspirituality but even the denial of refined mentality in our age. He must not only raise his voice against the debasing of all decent values but also himself reject all that is undivine and not properly human. But he must do so not sentimentally or out of panic but with calm discrimination and quiet courage refusing to be browbeaten by the undivine forces. It is possible to withdraw from the adventure of Consciousness in Time and the world and seek with Plotinus after "a flight of the alone to the Alone." But this will be to refuse to play the role God has assigned to spiritual man which is to accept the challenge of founding the Life Divine on the earth. It will be to reject the Grace of the Divine which, as the Supermind, is descending into the world in order to release the supermind involved in Matter.

A word of warning must be given here. The superman of our conception is not the Nietzschean titan or the Hitlerite demon. The latter is a concentration of powers openly anti-Divine and tramples underfoot all that is opposed to the sheer accumulation and exercise of such power for self-aggrandisement. He is an inflated ego standing against God and defying His Will and purpose in the world. Love has no place in his scheme of things and everything is grist to his egoistic mill. The Aurobindonian superman is a child of the Divine and lives for God in himself, his fellows and in Nature. His whole life is dedicated to making God's Will manifest in the world and he has no personal axe to grind. Nietzsche's superman, as Sri Aurobindo has said, is a titan who rises angry to the struggle of life. The Aurobindonian superman is a god who descends happy and joyful to the play of life. He leads by love and not by domination ; he is not a seeker of power for himself but a channel of the Divine Force. He is a deputy of God on the earth.

The evolution of the new principle of supermind cannot really remain confined to an individual or even to a handful of individuals. Even if all apes did not or have not become humanised, the number of human beings in the world is hundreds of millions even though they may not all be on the same level of mental development. The evolution of the divine supermind will also gradually take place in many individuals and it is meaningful to speak of a race of supermen. There will be a community of gods on earth. They will be the natural leaders of evolution

helping humanity onwards in its collective life and individual men to a fresh and integral experience of God. For apart from the community of supermen in whom the new evolution will be fully realised, the manifestation of the supermind will radically change the life of humanity on social, national and international scales. There is in the collectivity an inward turn to the subjective aspect of itself. Just as there is a collective ego in society and the nation, because of which communities and nations try to dominate other societies and nations, so also there is a social and a national soul or at least there are collective souls in the process of formation. The next phase of social evolution will be that in which the soul of the community will come to the front and guide its affairs. The same will be true of the nation. Not that all communities and nations will evolve their respective souls at the same time. But a few nations have tried to follow the intuitions of their collective souls in art, education, politics, and other spheres. Revolutionary Ireland and Bengal in the first years of this century are examples of the awakening of the soul of a nation. Others like Germany also tried to live by their subjective being but, unfortunately both for themselves and the world, mistook the unregenerate vital, the instrument of domination, as the true soul. The clash of interests between the individuals of a society and between them on the one hand and the society as a whole on the other will no longer be a source of strife because the evolved soul of the community will through spiritually awakened individuals guide the affairs of the commune with the full knowledge of those interests, and also of the respective roles of its members. Unity will be the basis of life and variety a play of harmony.

There is a genuine desire for international unity among people to-day. Many methods are being tried out. Economic co-operation, concerted political and even military action to prevent aggression, etc. and cultural and educational exchange are some of the means which are being employed. But it is also being increasingly recognised that the really effective cement of unity must be psychological. There must be a growing feeling of unity to the extent that nations must accept unity as a vital need without which they cannot exist. This feeling cannot be a superficial sentiment but should be a profound and powerful need in the life and mind of humanity. If men and nations can feel the growing Soul of humanity then it will be easier for them to achieve unity. As long as nations live in their respective egos, they are bound to prefer disunity, for the ego divides but the soul unites. What is needed is a spiritual religion of humanity in which, on the international level, the Soul of humanity will emerge as the worshipped Deity. The collective Soul of humanity in formation is really the Divine as the Spirit of mankind, just as the Atman is the Divine in the individual and the social and national souls are also God on the communal and national levels.

The result of the cosmic yoga in the individual is a complete divinisation of his whole being and nature. "To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight and obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss

where there is only a stress of transitory satisfaction besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.”¹

And in collective life “there will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into large and purer horizons ; the earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.”²

ARABINDA BASU

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 4.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, pp. 299-300.

VIGNETTES IN VINGT-ET-UNS

I

“The Kingdom is of the Child.”—Heraclitus.

A tangled thing of knots and nodes am I :
I know not if e'er a straight and simple yarn
Be sifted off it, to be re-woven back
Into a delicate piece of art superb,
With texture fine and intricate design !
I know not that; but a thing or two I know :
My child of ten, who loves to crack hard nuts,—
Nuts with a pith albeit—brings me at times
Some knotty problems—nuts for my drier wits—
And, duly rendering slate-pen into my hands,
Stands by my side, sedate, and wistfully counts
The first grey streaks on one endearing head :
But ere it can size up the manifold mystery
Of the 'old computer' working strange, swift, sure,
A sharp rap-tap of pen pulls it sudden-back
From the world of phantasy to the world of facts—
Even so if I could only lay the 'thing'
Trustfully down before Two Lotus-Eyes
And invoke the action of Two Laser-Beams,
A Grand Patriarchal Smile would brace me up
For playing 'Square-Circle' Game with the naivete-zest of a Child !

II

“Matter its mystery hides from its own eyes.”—Sri Aurobindo.

This is but a Stick : yard-length of enduring wood,
 Born of those Heights I seek to sue and win :
 A trifle mere that serves me a hundred ways,
 —Balancing and propping, sounding and pointing out,—
 To which I owe apologies profuse,
 For calling it so and gross-using it at times,
 In driving home ‘argumentum ad baculum’ !
 Nay, more; I feel deep-grateful to it in sooth :
 For, how could a crippled ground-wed man like me
 E’er dare to draw inch-near unto his Goal,
 Were it not for that small thing he bears in hand ?
 As long as it’s there, there’s Hope and Life and Cheer :
 The moment it drops, he drops down deep in the abyss !...
 But the mystery’s deeper : why should mountains wild
 Teem ever with forests of such enduring wood ?
 Are they so wild as *we* deem them to be,
 And so self-sufficient as they seem to be ?
 Do not their spires urge on aspiring men,
 Reaching out millions of extended hands ?...
 So, when I reach the Peaks and lay down Stick,
 Who’ll say—Who wins the Trick ? The inspiring Peaks or I ?...

CHIMANBHAI

PRANAM, A RISING IN LOVE

BIRDS are twittering in my core
And coo-coos are cooing in the calmness column
And music boxes tinkle gently in my tubes
Waiting in the soft light
For Champaklal to lead us up the golden ladder
To the feet of the Fount

And on the white roof beating with sun
My surface eyes are surging
And my nerves are tightening in a tryst, now
Trying for quietness

And in the Room
Gentleness
Driving dreams
Into a vacuum-valiance !

And in the dark of cavernous being
Vibrating echo beyond sound steals my heart
In the echoing bosom of the Red Rose

And we are torn towards the nexus, between
A lying forever in the basked balm
And the false fingers of a false Time

And
One
Two
Three
(Babyfingers clutching in the fulness of grey beard)
On bended knee

And we are out again in the brightness, Sunday
Watching the long low line of white wave
Rippling slowly off the blue sea.

5 November, 1967

RICIARD BODNER

A CHRISTMAS TALE

THERE once stood a great gaunt house, surrounded by a large park. It was really a very fine building, massive and imposing, and yet somehow slightly hostile in its splendour. But everybody just accepted it as it was, for it had been there ever since they had been born, and gave the impression that it would remain there for ever. It could not be said that anybody greatly admired the establishment, but still most people regarded it with a certain reverential awe, as if it were a symbol of permanence in the world of time.

And then one wintry day, shortly before Christmas, when it had been snowing off and on since early morning, a small trim figure was seen walking briskly but gracefully up the drive that led to the great house. She mounted the steps, and removing her small delicate hand from her muff, she rapped on the great oak door. After a short pause she heard the drawing of bolts and detaching of chains, and slowly the big door creaked open, revealing a sour-looking butler. She quickly explained that she was the new housemaid, and so with a grunt of consent the old man opened the door, just wide enough to let her pass through, and quickly locked it again. He then beckoned to her with a movement of his shaggy head to follow him.

If one could describe the house as looking sombre from the outside, then inside it looked distinctly grim. The great entrance hall was large and dark, and as far as Light could see, for that was the name of the new maid, there seemed to be doors, and staircases, and corridors, leading off in every direction. The whole establishment had a distinctly depressive air, even for a cold winter's day.

Light was led through into a large kitchen, where she was confronted with the other members of the household. These were all too busy pursuing their various tasks, to notice her at first, and even when they did so, they just nodded their heads in acknowledgement, though deep down inside each one something responded. They did not like to show nor mention it to one another, but every one of them felt as if a breath of fresh air had at last entered the house.

Light quickly changed into her housemaid's uniform, and picking up her brush and duster, set to work at once, polishing, cleaning, and dusting, with such efficiency and rapidity, that soon one and all had the impression that a whirlwind had been loosened.

Within the first week she had completely cleaned up the ground floor to such an extent that it was hardly recognisable. This gloomy establishment actually began to sparkle and shine, and though not much more illumination came in through the windows, the whole place looked decidedly brighter.

In fact whatever Light touched became brighter, for she seemed to have the power to make things absorb and reflect her own radiance and good humour. Even the most austere bust of some deceased old villain looked more kindly when she had

finished dusting it.

The butler went about mumbling and muttering to himself, at all this unexpected spate of activity, yet even he could not help feeling a certain approval of what was happening around him.

It was not until Light had reached the first floor that a great problem confronted her. Nearly all the doors were locked and no one knew where the keys were nor could they even remember ever having seen inside the rooms. After contemplating for a few minutes, with folded arms, Light put on her warm cape, and went out into the garden. There she made a model of the key out of snow, and bringing some water from the house, she poured it over her key, which soon froze. She repeated this until an ice key of the required size had been formed, and then picking it up, she returned to the house. She went upstairs and was just about to place it in the lock, when it slipped from her hands and fell to the ground. But instead of breaking into fragments, the thin outer coating of ice fell away revealing a small golden key. With delight she took it up, and trying it in the lock, found that it opened the door with ease.

But woe, what a shock greeted her eyes. The room was dark and dank, with cobwebs reaching from ceiling to floor. In the centre stood a large green baize table, around which were several deeply upholstered black leather arm chairs. On the table were piles of legal documents covered with important-looking seals and stamps. One or two forbidding treasury boxes stood among the documents.

Light frowned with disgust, and rolling up her sleeves, set to the heavy task before her. First she dusted and cleaned the whole room from top to bottom, and though it looked ten times brighter than before, she was far from satisfied. The documents consisted of deeds and bonds, agreements and disagreements, whose mere existence caused anxiety and misery to hundreds of people, for each one meant some form of bondage for someone. These documents she decided were the cause of the musty smell that still pervaded the whole room, and so gathering them all up, she placed them in the grate and made a large bonfire. As the flames leaped up into the chimney, she thought she heard a great sigh of relief, or maybe it was just the roar of the flames.

Next she turned her attention to the outsized treasury boxes, that were too heavy for her to move. Unlocking them with her newly made key, Light discovered one to contain countless pieces of silver and the other of gold. All the wealth of the world that had been collected up, by means foul or fair, and hidden away for no beneficial purpose whatsoever. So opening the big bay window, she threw the contents of the boxes out into the snow-covered garden.

Now at last the room became a more pleasant and friendly place to stay in. It seemed as if a certain murky haze, that had been in the air, had lifted and vanished. Just as Light was preparing to leave, satisfied at last with her day's work, she happened to glance out of the window, and to her surprise and joy, she saw that yellow, blue and white crocuses had pushed their way through the snow where the gold and silver

pieces had fallen.

Thus Light continued working right up to Christmas eve, cleaning out one locked room after another, until she had brought new life into every nook and cranny of the house.

On Christmas day, a large and luxurious carriage drove up to the mansion, and out stepped the master of the house. The butler, who opened the door, bowed low. But no sooner had the master crossed the threshold than he stopped, and gazed around in bewilderment. He could hardly recognise his own establishment, it was so bright and gay. He even had to shield his eyes until he got used to the new radiance. Slowly he moved from one room to another, too dumbfounded to speak. One part of him was filled with an inexpressible joy, while another part was shocked and horrified. Then suddenly he caught sight of the main stairway, and a terrible anxiety seized him. Tearing off his hat and coat, he rushed up the stairs, and tried the handle of the first door he came to. It was no longer locked, and the change that greeted his eyes nearly overwhelmed him. All his power, his wealth, had vanished, and in their place stood a simple glass vase displaying a white rose. In a panic he rushed from room to room, but alas too late, for all had changed.

Furious, he stormed into the main banqueting hall, and summoned one member of his household after another, and although they appeared reverently before him, they no longer trembled at his glance, but stood quietly regarding him with pitying eyes.

At last the youngest and newest member of the household was called, and when Light entered, instead of screaming and shouting at her as he had at the others, his mouth fell open and he collapsed back in his chair, unable to utter a sound, for her radiance was such that his foul temper nearly choked him. And as she smiled at him, he suddenly felt himself overcome with an unfathomable feeling of relief as if a great weight had been lifted from his heart. Slowly rising, he led his whole household into the reception room, where a magnificently decorated Christmas tree was standing. Here the master of the house, with trembling hands, lit one candle after another, until the whole room was aglow with tiny flickering lights. With his eyes cast down in humility, he now began to distribute all the many presents he had meant to keep for himself, to the various members of his staff, and such a force of peace descended into the atmosphere that Light knew that a new era had begun for mankind.

MICHAEL NEVILLE

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1967)

CHAPTER III

SURVIVAL BEYOND THE TOMB

Nachiketas says : "This doubt there is about a man who has passed : some say, 'He is' ; some others, 'He is no more.'"

Katha Upanishad. I, I. 20

Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?... If a man die, shall he live again ?

The Book of Job, 14. 10, 14.

I shall live even when I am dead, just as the solar God Re-lives for ever.

Egyptian Book of the Dead, ed. Naville, ch. 38.

SUCH then is the ineluctability of death, and thus is fixed in the calendar of time the dark date of its visit of dissolution.

But man, the rebel child of Nature, has refused to accept the finality of this fact ; a son of Death, he has aspired to become the child of Immortality. Thus, in all ages and climes, he has believed with all the ardour of his heart that even if his body's death can bring an end to his physical terrestrial life, it can by no means make an end of his *existence* altogether. He denies any truth to the dogmatic assertion that his is merely an ephemeral spark of consciousness bubbling for a while in the eternal ocean of death and non-existence. Did not Victor Hugo represent the undying hope of humanity when he declared at the close of his life :

"I feel immortality in myself. I am rising, I know, towards the sky. The earth gives me its generous sap, but heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of bodily powers. Why, then, is my consciousness more luminous as the bodily powers begin to fail ? Winter is on my head, but the eternal spring is in my heart. *There* I breathe at this hour, as I did at the age of twenty, the fragrance of lilacs and violets and roses. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds to come. It is marvellous, yet simple. It is fairy tale, yet a fact. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse; history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song—I have tried all. But I feel I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I shall have ended my day's work. But another day will begin next morning. Life closes in the twilight ; it opens with the dawn."¹

¹ Quoted on p. 26 of *Immortality* by A. W. Momerie.

This insistent refusal of man to accept the definitive validity of the sombre fact, the fact of his body's death, that cannot in any case be denied as a practical fact,—this age-long aspiration of the race for personal immortality—an aspiration that sprang up in the earliest obscure beginnings of man and has haunted him to this day—indicates indeed a subconscious awareness of *something really pertaining to truth*, something of the nature of a prophetic indication of the future destiny of evolving man. For, as we shall presently see in the course of our study, death and dissolution do not necessarily inhere in living matter as such, nor are they at all a universal phenomenon in the realm of the living. We may remember in this connection the metaphysical argument advanced by a character in a play of Addison in validation of the instinctive desire on the part of man for physical immortality :

“Plato, thou reason'st well,
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality ?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into nought ? Why shrinks the soul
Back on herself, and startles at destruction ?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us ;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.”¹

However, as a stark and practical fact of existence, the bodily death has been till this date the ineluctable destiny of all men. Hence its awful and invisible presence has always tended to haunt and overshadow man's thought and life and action. He has variously sought to mitigate the pangs of his body's death, by considering it not as the end of the whole of his existence but rather as a new Birth, a sleep or a transition. After all, has he not witnessed with eager gaze a snake gliding forth young and new after it has cast its slough, or a beetle breaking away from its filthy sepulchre and entering on a new career, or a silkworm coming out, a winged moth, clad in the colours of the rainbow, from its cocoon wherein it lay as in a grave to all appearances dead ? Has he not heard of the phoenix, the fabulous bird, that in old age surrounds itself with spices and sets light to them, soaring aloft, rejuvenescent from the aromatic fire ? Straightway, man's love for the indefinite continuity of personal existence and his protest against the prospect of disappearing into nothingness, or sliding into the abyss of unconscious matter, takes the phoenix to be the symbol of his soul that too shall surely spring forth immortal from the remains of his corpse.²

But metaphorical or analogical arguments cannot have much evidential value

¹ *Cato*.

² *Vide* : A. W. Momerie, *Immortality*, p. 18; Alger, *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, pp. 38-30.

in support of the doctrine of persistence of one's 'spiritual existence' even beyond the grave. Hence man has sought to adduce some additional arguments to establish the fact that the physical death does not denote the total annulment of all conscious being. Leaving aside the elaboration of the intricate maze of reasoning adopted by philosophers and logicians, we may content ourselves with the bare statement, in the words of Professor Hammond, of the five traditional arguments that have been commonly used in favour of the doctrine of personal survival after the body's death and dissolution :

“(1) The *ontological argument*, which bases immortality on the immateriality, simplicity, and irreducibility of the soul-substance ;

(2) The *teleological argument*, which employs the concept of man's destiny and function, his disposition to free himself more and more from the conditions of time and space, and to develop completely his intellectual and moral potentialities, which development is impossible under the conditions of earthly life;

(3) The *theological argument* : the wisdom and justice of God guarantee the self-realisation of personal beings whom He has created;

(4) The *moral argument*, *i.e.*, the moral demand for the ultimate equivalence of personal deserts and rewards, which equivalence is not found in life;

(5) The *historical argument* : the fact that the belief is widespread and ancient, showing it to be deep-seated in human nature.”¹

Whatever may be the logical validity of these arguments, the fact remains that man has variously viewed the phenomenon of physical death as a portal to a future and greater discarnate life, or as a temporary sleep and slumber from which he will rise into eternal wakefulness in some supraterrrestrial world of bliss. He has even hoped for a resurrected body or put his trust, as in the Pauline theology, in the development of a spiritual and 'pneumatic' body in his existence beyond death.

But all these views as well as other allied ones accept physical death as a settled fact of life, and look forward only beyond the grave for any possible glory of the Spirit balking the material body's death and disintegration.

On the other hand, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo seeks to realize for man a radical victory over *physical death* itself, achieved *here* in the conditions of the earth. So we must now consider the attitude of the sadhaks practising the Integral Yoga of transformation *vis-à-vis* the problem of Death and Immortality.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ Quoted on p. 276 of *Death : its Causes and Phenomena* by H. Carrington and J. R. Meader.

THE IMPACT OF GREEK TRAGEDIES

I

THE little I have travelled in the gold realms of Greek tragedies gives me the impression that if the earth is not crammed with heaven it is at least full of God-fear.

...Lift thou not up thy spear
Against a God, but hold thy peace, and fear
His wrath !¹...

...Grant that this God be naught,
Yet let that Naught be Somewhat in thy mouth;
Lie boldly, and say He Is !²...

...Oh, whoso walketh not in dread
Of Gods, let him but look on this man dead !³

Also it is, too, full of God-defiance. Prometheus, unyielding to the last, defies the herald of the gods who bids him submit to the commands of Zeus.

Prometheus

There is no torture and no cunning trick,
There is no force, which can compel my speech,
Until Zeus wills to loose these deadly bonds.
So let him hurl his blazing thunderbolt,
And with the white wings of the snow,
With lightning and with earthquake,
Confound the reeling world.
None of all this will bend my will.

Herald

Submit, you fool. Submit. In agony learn wisdom.

Prometheus

Seek to persuade the sea-wave not to break.
You will persuade me no more easily.⁴

^{1,2,3} Euripides : *The Bacchae*, pp. 44, 21, 75 (Trans. Gilbert Murray), Pub.: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1904).

⁴ Edith Hamilton : *The Greek Way to Western Civilization*, p. 136. Pub. : (Mentor Book Ed.) The New American Library (1930).

And Hecuba, a fiery soul, high and strong even though fallen to the lowest plight, having looked to the Gods for help and strength, finds that she has to look for them elsewhere—perhaps in the abyss of her own hidden self. Therefore she says :

Ye Gods...Alas ! Why call on things so weak
For aid ?¹...

Yet if every burning bush is not afire with God, it is God-conscious and, as it were, sensitive to evil-doing; every common sight, if it is not apparelled in celestial light, is hallowed by sacredness and religiosity.

Even so the air is often murky and full of fatal and prophetic imaginings. Thus Cassandra, 'whose white/Soul laughed amid the laughter of God's light', cries out as she stands on the threshold of the Royal Palace of victorious Greece :

Oh, oh ! Agony, agony !
Again the awful pains of prophecy
Are on me, maddening as they fall...
Ye see them there...beating against the wall ?
So young...like shapes that gather in a dream...
Slain by a hand they loved. Children they seem,
Murdered...
From these, I warn ye, vengeance broodeth still.²

The brain 'Reels at these visions, beyond guesswork true'. And the senses shudder when curses not loud but deep are released into the turbid air by helpless souls at their wits' end. Thus Andromache pours out her wrath on Helen, who destroyed Troy and her dear husband and son.

...O Helen, Helen, thou ill tree
That Tyndareus planted, who shall deem of thee
As child of Zeus ? O, thou hast drawn thy breath
From many fathers, Madness, Hate, red Death,
And every rotting poison of the sky !
Zeus knows thee not, thou vampire, draining dry
Greece and the world ! God hate thee and destroy,
That with those beautiful eyes hast blasted Troy,
And made the far-famed plains a waste withal.³

¹ Euripides : *The Trojan Women*, p. 35 (Trans. Gilbert Murray), Pub. : George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1905).

² Aeschylus : *The Agamemnon*, p. 54 (Trans. G.M.), Pub. : George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1920)

³ Euripides : *The Trojan Women*, p. 49.

The fair seems to be foul, and the foul fair. 'For the pure and true / Are forced to evil, against their own heart's vow, / And love it !'¹

For Good comes in Evil's traces,
And the Evil the Good replaces;
And Life, 'mid the changing faces,
Wandereth weak and blind.²

Besides, 'There is anger in God's pity',³ and as it were unwillingness in His sanction and insecurity in His protection. Orestes, having slain his mother, finds no relief from the hellfires of his Conscience that have made of him 'a mass of broken nerves', in spite of the fact that he was commanded to kill her by the Sun-God Apollo himself.

...till to Phoebus' house once more
I crept, and cast me starving on the floor
Facing the Holy Place, and made my cry :
"Lord Phoebus, here I am come, and here will die,
Unless thou save me, as thou hast betrayed."⁴

II

All here is action. And every doer feels the effects of his act.

Surely while God ensueth
His laws, while Time doth run
'Tis written : On him that doeth
It shall be done.⁵

Or again :

You cannot alter this. The gods themselves
Cannot undo it. It follows of necessity
From what you have done.⁶...

Since to err is human, and the Gods cannot forgive it so easily, much of Greek life like Russian is guilt-conscious. It is, therefore, constantly trying to shake off this *blanche agonie*⁷, often *par l'espace influgé à l'oiseau qui la me*⁸; and from every heart a

¹ Euripides : *Hippolytus*, p. 31 (Trans. G.M.), Pub. : George Allen & Unwin Ltd. (1902).

² Euripides : *Hippolytus*, p. 66.

³ Aeschylus : *The Suppliants*, p. 56.

⁴ Euripides : *Iphigema in Tauris*, p. 55 (Trans. G.M.), Pub. : George Allen & Unwin Ltd., (1910).

⁵ Aeschylus : *The Agamemnon*, p. 71.

⁶ *The Theban Plays*, p. 155 (Trans. E.F. Watling), Penguin Ed. (1947).

⁷ white agony. ⁸ space-flung to the bird that denies it.

resplendent ennui takes flight. Thus Creon's regret :

The sin, the sin of the erring soul
Drives hard unto death.¹

And Phaedra's deep sigh :

Ah, could but I stand guiltless in his eyes !²

Retrospective and repentant Iphigenia shudders at the thought of her past doings—a savage duty even though assigned to her by the goddess Artemis herself.

Blood my hand had been,
My heart heavy with sin.³

Yet all is bloody where I dwell, Ah me !⁴

Even Clytemnestra, blood-smearred, having killed her husband, yes, even she implores, as she awakens from the trance of her death-frenzy :

Let us not stain ourselves with blood.⁵

III

Though weak, the flesh is solid enough not to melt away so easily, and all the doers of action are bound in their shell of sin and virtue, foul and fair, evil and good. But most often the flesh does not pay heed to the deeper intentions of the spirit. Its nether cravings pull the human soul downwards, bloodwards. Its senses are 'wooded with human blood'. Hence the innumerable crimes and sinnings; as Cassandra, the poor victim of foresight, about to enter the house of Agamemnon, foresees the many deaths to come, including her own :

....This is the house that God hateth.

There be many things that know its secret; sore
And evil things; murders and strangling death.

'Tis here they slaughter men...A splashing floor.

¹ *The Theban Plays*, p. 160.

² *Hippolytus*, p. 28.

^{3,4} *Iphigenia in Tauris*, p. 50, p. 65.
The Agamemnon, p. 76, pp. 48-50.

Ah, ah ! What would they ? A new dreadful thing.
 A great great sin plots in the house this day;
 Too strong for the faithful, beyond medicining...
 And help stands far away.

Ah, ah ! What is it ? There; it is coming clear.
 A net...some net of Hell.
 Ah, look ! Look ! Keep his mate from the Wild Bull !
 A tangle of raiment, see;

Poor woman ! Poor dead woman ! ...Yea, it is I,
 Poured out like water among them. Weep for me...
 Ah ! What is this place ? Why must I come with thee...
 To die, only to die ?¹

O God, O God. What would they bring to pass ?
 Is there a woe that his house knows not ?
 Oh, dark deed, beyond cure, beyond hope.
 —And help stands far away.²

There is no respite. This way lies madness and bad dreams and dire suffering. After having killed his mother Clytemnestra, this is the state of Orestes' being :

Orestes : ...My thoughts are out of bounds. Fear at my heart is leaping up. Before my reason goes—oh, you my friends, I say I killed my mother—yet not without reason—she was vile and she killed my father and God hated her Look—Look—Women—there—there—Black—all black, and long hair twisting like snakes. Oh, let me go.

Chorus : What fancies trouble you, O son, faithful to your father ? Do not fear.

Orestes : No fancies. My mother has sent them. They throng upon me and from their eyes blood drips, blood of hate. You see them not ? I—I see them. They drive me. I cannot stay.³

There is no respite. Even the golden fires fretting the firmament pursue the guilty like the inscrutable Big Brother of the Iron Curtain.

But dark fear now
 Shows me dim
 Dreadful forms

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76, pp. 48-9-50.

^{2,3} Edith Hamilton : *The Greek Way to Western Civilization*, pp. 138, 141, 138.

Hid in night.
Men who shed the blood of men,
Their ways are not unseen of God.¹

Besides, these 'men, who shed the blood of men', their own blood-drenched actions reveal to them how vile and rank they are within. For

O'er all this earth
To every false man that hour comes apace
When Time holds up a mirror to his face,
And marvelling, girl-like, there he stares to see
How foul his heart.²

And when 'that hour comes' the natural tendency of man, then, is to run away—fly, alone, far away from the madding crowd and hide himself from the sunlight so pure it hurts the guilt-stricken conscience. Hence Oedipus' ardent and delirious wish :

Alas ! All out ! all known, no more concealment !
O Light ! May I never look on you again,
Revealed as I am, sinful in my begetting,
Sinful in marriage, sinful in shedding of blood !³

Hence too the inmost desire of sin-sore Phaedra to hide herself from the lawful world of light and laughter—a strong desire which she does not express but which the Chorus anticipates and expresses for her most poignantly and beautifully:

Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod;
Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding,
As a bird among the bird-droves of God !

Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
In God's quiet garden by the sea,
And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
Joy among the meadows, like a tree.⁴

But how to flee ? How escape the dread of things after so many bad darings ? For

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 141, 138.

² Gilbert Murray : *Euripides and His Age*, p 214, Pub. . Williams & Norgate (Home University Library).

³ *The Theban Plays*, p. 58.

⁴ Euripides : *Hippolytus*, p. 48.

the 'avenging rod', the 'all-piercing thought of Zeus', the hellfires and the 'hurt' are within us. And wherever we go or may wish to go, we carry them with us.

I know not how I should be changed, nor where
Escape the all-piercing thought of Zeus the Wise.¹

Sad, sad and evil-starred
Is Women's state.
What shelter now is left or guard?
What spell to loose the iron knot of fate?

And this thing, O my God,
O thou sweet Sunlight, is but my desert!
I cannot fly before the avenging rod
Falls, cannot hide my hurt.²

However much the flesh may drive men to hellward—to the unrestrained chaotic impulses—the Spirit is ever there to remind it of its true business. Though ineffective and faint, its harrowing voice is always audible amidst the loudest whirlwinds of foul desires. Thus the native hue of passion is sicklied over with the pale cast of the Soul.

...'Tis honour, honour, we must save.³

Ah God, how sweet is virtue, and how wise,
And honour its due meed in all men's eyes!⁴

Heart that throbs,
Breast that swells,
Tides of pain that shake the spirit,
Are you but fools?
Nay, you presage what shall be.⁵...

Weak as he is, the troubling Voice of Conscience shall not leave any man in peace, till he becomes strong and pure of heart; till the soul cleanses the foul bosom of its sinful stuff and the written troubles of the brain are razed out by its fire. Hence it is only too meet that the guilty

...would not rest
Till I had prisoned up this body of shame

¹ Aeschylus : *Prometheus Bound*, p. 63 (Trans. G.M.), Pub. : George Allen & Unwin Ltd, (1931).

² Euripides : *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

^{3,4} Euripides : *Hippolytus*. pp. 36, 34.

⁵ Edith Hamilton : *The Greek Way to Western Civilization*, p. 138.

In total blankness. For the mind to dwell
Beyond the reach of pain, were peace indeed.¹

At times, however, one feels that one could obtain a quick release from this life teeming with sickness, pestilence and the smell of red hot blood, by shuffling off this mortal coil. For isn't 'Swift death...bliss to men in misery'²? Besides,

Who knoweth if the thing that we call death
Be Life, and our Life dying—who knoweth?
Save only that all we beneath the sun
Are sick, and suffering, and those foregone
Not sick, nor touched with evil any more.³

But Andromache speaks with a surer accent :

.....To die is only not to be;
And better to be dead than grievously
Living. They have no pain, they ponder not
Their own wrong. But the living that is brought
From joy to heaviness, his soul doth roam,
As in a desert, lost, from its old home.⁴

Indeed, if it were so, many an accursed and suffering soul would have obtained a quick exit from this harsh and painful life through self-slaughter by the mere thrust of a bare bodkin. What stops it from doing so? It is the dread of something after death. For 'there be many shapes of mystery' in the dark unfathomed world of the Dead.

But if any far-off state there be,
Dearer than life to mortality;
The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,
And mist is under and mist is above.
And so we are sick for life, and cling
On earth to this nameless and shining thing.⁵

Besides, is not the canon of the Everlasting fixed against self-slaughter?
Nay, not even sweet and easeful Death comes to heal the ills our mind is heir to.

¹ *The Theban Plays*, p. 64.

² Euripides : *Hippolytus*, p. 63.

³ Gilbert Murray : *Euripides and His Age*, p. 192.

⁴ Euripides : *The Trojan Women*, p. 43.

⁵ Euripides : *Hippolytus*, p. 21.

No escape, no peace anywhere. Even after life's fitful fever, there's no sleeping well. Neither is it safe to be that which we destroy, for we dwell by destruction in scorching frenzy. In fact, very often the Dead rise up more potent than the living, possessing and commanding rightful slaughter for their unquenched vengeance and apparent injustice undeservedly suffered. Hence both the worlds suffer. For the blow here is not the be-all and end-all of things.

Even though the victors wend their way securely home,
what those dead suffered yet may work them ill—
that pain which never sleeps.¹

For fierce are the smittings back of blood once shed
Where Love hath been : God's wrath upon them that kill,
And an anguished Earth, and the wonder of the dead
Haunting as music still²...

Indeed no wrong goes unpunished. Yet—very strange—every punishment becomes a fresh wrong and seeks for a fresh vengeance. 'The ancient blinded vengeance and the wrong that amendeth wrong'. So strong is the desire of vengeance, 'It plotteth, it haunteth the house, yea, it never forgetteth'³, 'till another Shedding of Blood be wrought'⁴ 'And a stab for a stab returneth'. So that one slaughter starts another. All as it were a vicious circle. Says Creon :

Behold the slayer, the slain,
The father, the son.⁵

Driven mad by the chain of slaughter he further continues :

Insatiable Death, wilt thou destroy me yet ?
.....
I am already dead,
And is there more ?
Blood upon blood ?
More death ?...⁶

Poor foolish things that live a day, Eternal Retribution crushing them on her way.

¹ Edith Hamilton : *The Greek Way to Western Civilization*, p. 171.

² Gilbert Murray : *Euripides and His Age*, p. 241.

^{3,4} Aeschylus : *The Agamemnon*, p. 7

^{5,6} *The Theban plays*, pp. 10, 160.

IV

Everything is grim in mortality. Life is a serious business. A *faux-pas* in matters governed by the laws that sustain the universe and society may be lethal, fatal. For a mighty power overrules our destiny. And that power is Fate. Says Cassandra :

The thing which must be shall be.¹

Or as the Chorus in *Antigone* declares :

Ask nothing.
What is to be, no mortal can escape.²

And the Chorus in *Alcestis* :

Reflection has taught me that there is nothing mightier than Destiny...
Zeus bows to her power. She surpasses iron in hardness.³

So stern is Fate that, it seems, even the slightest movement of man does not go unnoticed by her. And once he acts against the laws of things, he is caught up in the tempest of purgation made wild by God's wrath within us. Hence at every step of life swiftly comes the warning :

Woe to him who fears not fate !⁴

Grim though she is, yet all can be done if Fate but smiles. As Pylades says :

How oft, how oft the darkest hour of ill
Breaks brightest into dawn, if Fate but will !⁵

However, at rare moments one feels Chance too has her hand in shaping man's life.

Chance raises a man to the heights, chance casts him down,
And none can foretell what will be from what is.⁶

^{1, 2} *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 161.

³ Adapted from Euripides' *Alcestis*, pp. 54-5 (Trans. G. Murray), Pub. : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., (1915).

⁴ Aeschylus : *The Agamemnon*, p. 43.

⁵ Euripides : *Iphigenia in Tauris*, p. 30.

⁶ *The Theban Plays*, p. 157.

Men are helpless. They are but toys. And as flies are to wanton boys, so are we to the gods.

We are slaves of gods, whatever gods may be.¹

From the high towers of hope on which they stand
He Zeus casts men down; they perish utterly.²

Therefore Orestes, empty of hope and reverence, frustrated, finding no support on which to lean, nothing to cling to, nay, not even the Gods, pulls them down to a lower station.

Aye; the gods too, whom mortals deem so wise,
Are nothing clearer than some wingèd dream;
And all their ways, like man's ways, but a stream
Of turmoil.³

Hence upon this bank and shoal of time, men sit and hear each other groan—here where to live is to be under the constant mysterious arbitration of the gods, and by and by the poor heart learns to forbear all, though drawing still its breath in pain. Having become almost shock-proof, Iphigenia asserts :

For hard things borne from birth
Make iron of man's heart, and hurt the less.⁴

And as time and age advance, wisdom and the better understanding of things dawn upon men. There is then no reason to fret about the weight of all this unintelligible world. As Cassandra realises :

Why should I grieve ?...
I who have seen the City of Ilion
Pass as she passed; and they who cast her down
Have thus their end, as God gives judgment sure...
I go to drink my cup. I will endure
To die.⁵...

And as the grand old former King of Thebes Cadmus puts it :

¹ Gilbert Murray : *Euripides and His Age*, p. 191.

² Aeschylus : *The Suppliant Women*, p. 37, (Trans. G.M.), George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

³ Euripides: *Iphigenia in Tauris*, p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵ Aeschylus: *The Agamemnon*, p. 57.

Shall things of dust the God's dark ways despise ?¹

Indeed, shall mortal man be more just than God ?...

(To be continued)

BIBHAS JYOTI MUTSUDDI

¹ Euripides: *The Bacchae*, p. 16.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Path to Perfection. Compiled from the Writings of the Mother by Keshavmurti. Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Rs. 12.

CLOSE on the heels of M. Pandit's compilation, *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*, comes this ordered ensemble from another disciple, aiming to do for the Mother's writings what the former book did for the Master's. The work has been admirably done, spreading out in a super-rainbow spectrum of multiple tones the white light of the Mother's truth-consciousness.

The word "tones" is apt, for here we get not only the diverse shades of a spiritual being's vision-moulded thought but also the varied modulations of a living voice—the soft or strong, intimate or commanding, piercing or wide-vibrationed utterance of one who stands amongst us with a face and form at once human and divine. As we read the extracts we see her and hear her, we feel permeated with her personal aroma, as it were, and the alphabetical arrangement of the extracts renders this presence accessible at a moment's notice for a word of wisdom, as warm as it is luminous, on any problem of spiritual knowledge or practice.

Yes, a light, to make us both know and do, comes to us in these pages. The Mother, no doubt, does not philosophise in any intellectual fashion, but she often transmits in a systematised intellect-stirring shape the discoveries she has made in the realms of psychology, occultism, the universal consciousness, the transcendental being. To every subject discussed she brings a quickening insight. Sometimes the insight is simultaneously profound and piquant. Thus we read under *Meditation and Progress* : "The number of hours spent in meditation is no proof of spiritual progress. It is a proof of your progress when you no longer have to make an effort to meditate. Then you have rather to make an effort to stop meditating...." Equally felicitous and striking, with a flash of originality that goes to the heart of the theme, is the opening passage on *Old Age* : "Old age does not come with a great number of years, but with the incapacity or refusal to continue to grow and to progress. As soon as one wishes to settle down in life and to rest on the benefits of past efforts, as soon as one has done what one had to do, and accomplished what one had to accomplish, in short, as soon as one ceases to progress, to advance along the road to perfection, one is sure to fall back—to grow old." This is another way of putting the gist of the Mother's Message of the New Year.

"Progress" and "Perfection" : here are the two guiding concepts, the two key-mantras. But what is the Perfection towards which we must progress ? The Mother's answer is clear: "Perfection is not a maximum or an extreme. It is an equilibrium and a harmonisation.... Perfection is not a static state, it is a poise and a dynamic poise. The human being cannot attain perfection unless he comes out of himself. He must

pass into a higher species or must give up this species to create another."

To evolve from the human into the divine : that must be the story of our progress. And here we may give a few glimpses of the Mother as the pragmatic Guru. "Nobody can say, 'there is no hope for me,' because the Divine Grace is there."—"The ego thinks of what it wants and has not. That is its constant preoccupation. The soul is aware of what it is receiving and lives in endless Gratitude."—"There is no better way to show one's gratefulness to the Divine than to be quietly happy."—"If you remember what you have given to the Divine, He will have no need of remembering it Himself ; and if you were to mention the gift or speak of it to anybody, it is not to the Divine that you have made the offering but to the demon of your vanity."—"To give to the Divine what one has in excess is not an offering. One should give at least something out of what one needs."

On every page we strike upon living truths. Indeed, it seems as though with one single book in our hands we could hold the shining secret of fulfilling our lives. If any hands are still vacant of these 195 pages in their finely bound form, with a snow-white jacket bearing in gold letters a title that alliterates Time's movement with Eternity's plenitude, there is poverty indeed !

K. D. SETHNA

A Song for Sunday and Other Stories by *Manoj Das*, pp 103. Price Rs: 2.50. Publishers Higginbothams (Private) Ltd, Mount Road, Madras 2.

TODAY we are swamped in a flood of shapeless mediocrity and the novelist is no longer admired "for the skill with which he ordered the indiscriminate clutter of natural circumstances so as to produce a poetic sensation of destiny". The reason given is : "Our knowledge of reality is so uncertain—so the theory goes—we have such difficulty in distinguishing between direct perception of the eternal world and subjective imaginings, we are so unsure both of our own identities and of the coherence of other people, whom we are finally resigned to considering as only an intermittent series of appearances, that the avant-garde novelist cannot bring himself to be any more confident about the patterns of life than the average reader is." (*The Times Literary Supplement*. Dec. 16, 1965).

At this point of the novel's history it is most gratifying to go through the delectable volume comprising sixteen short stories by Manoj Das who, though yet in his early thirties, has already won distinction in his mother-tongue Oriya and is a familiar name to the readers of the *Hindu*, *Mother India*, the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Shanker's Weekly* and the *Caravan*—all journals of wide popularity and high literary and cultural standard. It may also be mentioned that the first half decade of his creative career had distinguished him as a progressive poet (covered by Bharatiya Sahitya Akademi for their anthology of representative Indian poetry: 1956-57).

He won the Orissa Sahitya Akademi award 1965 for his short stories and has written about twenty books in his mother-tongue—short stories, poems, travelogue—running into editions.

These stories reflect three phases in the author's inner development and awakening to greater and greater depths of the human psyche and thus re-interpreting the tangled web of circumstances which engulf the individual. In the first phase, as the author remarks in his introductory note, he was moved by the spectacle of stark helplessness of the individual caught in the chains of fate whether forged by his own temperament and disposition or by the external vicissitudes of life. In the second phase he became aware of an inner reality in man which, over and above sustaining him, could enable him to evolve despite his circumstances. In the third phase he came to believe "that the inner reality could be traced not only within man's individual being, but also in his circumstances".

These are big strides in a spiritual exploration almost made with seven-league boots and with each his writing gains an extra dimension in profundity of outlook and now that, as the blurb says, he has joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a most dynamic centre of creative spirituality in all human fields, we look forward to a further deepening of his inview and outview and to a heightening of consciousness to planes of greater and greater Light.

One is struck in these stories by the author's deep and sympathetic imagination. Not only is he quick to respond to the tragic and comic aspects of human life—the pathos of a young girl waiting day after day wistfully for a letter from her mother who after a short stay in a sanatorium has departed from earth, the affection of a circus monkey which ferrets out its trainer who has been fired by the proprietor, the struggle of the artist to bring forth the moon as it appears transformed in his imaginative vision, the perils of the short-lived and treacherous blaze of public popularity, the embarrassments to which the old generation in India has been subjected as a result of the radical changes that have swept off the traditional structure of our society in the post-independence era, embarrassments far exceeding those of a Rip Van Winkle. The author is vividly alive to the subtle charm that nature weaves round this drama, thus revealing with unerring artistry and sureness of touch the soul of beauty hidden in her tints and shades. Everywhere one meets images clothed in a soft radiance of words like : "sparkling rays which while fading away had steeped the hour in a velvety glow—" a balm of thin cloud over the full moon had charged the night with a thrill, which, as the train gathered speed, reigned supreme in the calm solitude of my coupé"—"the double-storeyed dwelling, that stood at the quietmost end of the colony, looked like a tranquil nest amid a small dense orchard and creepers of affluent growth."

These stories also reveal Das's technical mastery of the story-teller's art in bringing most adroitly all the threads together so that the plots are carried forward with speed, suspense and vividness along with the imaginative probing into the human soul.

Another feature that makes this collection remarkable is their complete freedom from the sensual theme which is the bane of all modern fiction.

Four of the stories, "A Letter of the Last Spring", "The Intimate Demon", "Lure of a Remote Melody" and "Sita's Marriage" are unique contributions to child psychology, a subject of the deepest concern in our day, and we can see how an imaginative insight is far more fruitful in this field than the analytical approach of the scientist. "Sita's Marriage" appeared in the *Mother India* with these illuminating comments of the editor K. D. Sethna: "We find the story a piece of great beauty, at once delicate and deep in its probe into a child's mind. But the child concerned is an unusual one—and, dealing with her, the author brings a background touch of insight into a certain aspect of Indian mysticism—the perception that souls too developed for ordinary surroundings find often an unexpected short-cut out of the disharmony between their inner *dharma* and the outer life whether of common misery or of conventional happiness."

All through these stories the autumnal note is more prominent which makes them very gripping and captivating, but we also hope that the spiritual turn in his art will bring other notes as well which can unseal the hidden strengths of the soul rising triumphant over the ordeals of life. J. B. Priestley's words on this subject have a prophetic ring: "No matter how piercing and appalling his insights, the desolations creeping over his outer world, the lurid lights and shadows of his inner world, the writer must live with hope, work in faith. What literature, which is still concerned with Man himself, with persons and not with statistical units, must deny, if necessary against all evidence and reason, is the ultimate despair, the central place of darkness from which the last gleams of nobility and wisdom have gone."

R. N. KHANNA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TWELFTH SEMINAR

13TH AUGUST 1967

THE Twelfth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 13th August 1967 from 8.30 to 10.00 a.m. in the New Hall of the Centre of Education. The subject chosen by the Mother for this Seminar was :

Sri Aurobindo and The New Age

Three members of the Association—Oscar, Romen and Srijit—participated as speakers.

The Seminar began with listening in silence to a short piece of the Mother's recorded music. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman, made the following introductory speech.

Friends,

Since the creation of the New Age, the Age of the Supramental Truth, was the central mission of Sri Aurobindo's life and since the advent of that Age is now imminent, the subject chosen by the Mother for this Seminar is of paramount importance at the present moment. It is especially so because Sri Aurobindo's birthday, the 15th August, is very close. We shall, therefore, in this Seminar, try to present in a few speeches some salient ideas on the subject with the hope that they will prove helpful to you to have a clear understanding of some important issues related to it.

Before calling the other speakers to deliver their speeches, I shall make a few observations as an introduction to the subject. I propose, however, to speak more about Sri Aurobindo himself as the creator of the New Age than about the New Age itself.

(1)

Evolution is a cyclic movement progressing by a succession of stages or epochs. In this succession certain stages are marked by such great and radical changes that they can be spoken of as new ages in comparison to the preceding ones that recede in the past. There have been a number of such new ages in the past. At the present

moment, we are witnessing the birth of one more new age which, because of its unique significance for the human race, is new in a very special sense.

The cyclic movement of evolution is normally worked out by universal Nature secretly moved by God from behind the veil of the apparent process. But during the periods of radical transitions, when a new age has to be brought to birth, this secret veiled action of God is not sufficient. His direct unveiled intervention in Nature's working is needed. God himself has to incarnate upon earth in a human body to prepare, manifest and establish each new age in evolution. Nature by herself cannot do this by her normal working.

It is for this reason that God manifests as an Avatar in a human body upon earth age after age—*sambhavāmi yuge yuge*, as Krishna says in the Gita. The purpose and function of the Avatar is to lead the evolution to a higher stage, to create a new age in terrestrial history. As Sri Aurobindo observes: "Avatarhood would have little meaning if it were not connected with the evolution."¹

A special incarnation of the supreme Divine therefore presides over the advent of each new age in earthly evolution. The forms of the successive incarnations vary according to the conditions and the needs of the new age that is to be created, but they are all forms of the same supreme Divine, the Lord, in increasing degrees of His manifesting power.

(2)

The New Age whose birth we are now witnessing is the Age of the Supramental Truth. To prepare and establish it here upon earth the Lord came incarnated as Sri Aurobindo. But He is the same Supreme Lord who had also repeatedly incarnated before in one form or another to prepare and establish all the new ages in the past evolutionary history of the earth. It is for this reason that the Mother says :

"Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another."²

And the same will be true of all the future new ages that will come after the Supramental Age, for surely it is not the end of the Lord's manifestation upon earth.³ Again as the Mother says :

"The Lord is Eternal and Infinite. Even when the supramental will be fully realised upon earth the Lord will infinitely exceed this realisation which will be followed by other manifestations of the Lord *ad infinitum*."⁴

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 405.

² ³ *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo*.

⁴ *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Twenty-First November, 1965.

We may therefore say that though it is the same Lord who repeatedly incarnates upon earth to create successive new ages, yet each time He reveals a greater glory of His Power than before. Because of this we can say that each new Avatar in the evolutionary progression is greater than and superior to the other Avatars preceding him. Thus if we take the ten Avatars of the Hindu tradition, each new Avatar in this succession should be considered to be superior to those who preceded him because he manifested a plane of consciousness higher than the planes manifested by them. Buddha and Krishna, for example, should be considered greater Avatars than Vamana and Parashurama.

So also if we admit that the supramental consciousness which Sri Aurobindo incarnated, and to manifest which he came upon earth, is greater than the spiritual consciousness which Buddha or Krishna or any other Avatar manifested in the past, then surely we must accept Sri Aurobindo as the greatest of all Avatars in earth's history.

This point needs to be specially stressed because, even though it is obvious, some people find it extremely hard to accept it. Even those, who believe that Sri Aurobindo realised the divine consciousness, often consider him to be only a great yogi but not an Avatar. And even some of those who accept him as an Avatar find it difficult to accept his superiority to some other Avatar of the past whom they worship as their God. But if it is admitted that the Supreme Lord does not reveal His full glory in His one incarnation, but progressively in a series of His incarnations, then what objection can there be to accepting that each new incarnation manifests a greater degree of His glory and therefore is superior to the other incarnations that preceded him ? If Rama and Krishna are accepted as greater Avatars than Vamana and Parashuram, why should Sri Aurobindo not be accepted as a greater Avatar than Rama and Krishna or Buddha and Christ ?

Let me quote the Mother's words in this context :

"In the eternity of becoming each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect future realisation.

"And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

"Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow ; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

"But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done."¹

¹ *The Mother on Sri Aurobindo.*

(3)

To those who feel shocked at the idea that Sri Aurobindo incarnated in himself and revealed to the world a Truth greater than that revealed by any of the Avatars, one can only point out the following somewhat piquant remarks made by Sri Aurobindo himself on this issue :

“As for the past seers, they don’t trouble me. If going beyond the experience of past seers and sages is so shocking, each new seer or sage in turn has done that shocking thing—Buddha, Shankara, Chaitanya, etc. all did that wicked act. If not, what was the necessity of their starting new philosophies, religions, schools of yoga ? If they were merely verifying and meekly repeating the lives and experiences of past seers and sages without bringing the world some new thing, why all that stir and pother? Of course, you may say, they were simply explaining the old truth but in the right way—but this would mean that nobody had explained or understood it rightly before...Or you may say that all the new sages... e.g., Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva were each merely repeating the same blessed thing as all the past seers and sages had repeated with an unwearied monotony before them. Well, well, but why repeat it in such a way that each ‘gives the lie’ to the others ? Truly, this shocked reverence for the past is a wonderful and fearful thing ! After all, the Divine is infinite and the unrolling of the Truth may be an infinite process or at least, if not quite so much, yet with some room for new discovery and new statement, even perhaps new achievement, not a thing in a nutshell cracked and its contents exhausted once for all by the first seer or sage, while the others must religiously crack the same nutshell all over again, each tremblingly fearful not to give the lie to the ‘past’ seers and sages.”¹

This same point is made by Sri Aurobindo in another passage :

“The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.”²

(4)

It needs however to be said that though Sri Aurobindo was fully aware that the supramental consciousness which he incarnated was the greatest spiritual consciousness ever manifested in earth’s history, he himself never cared to proclaim or argue about his own greatness in comparison with the past Avatars. To a person who had

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome One, pp. 98-99.

² *On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 94.

a dispute on this point with another person, he simply said :

“You can’t expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna’s... X thinks I am superior in greatness, you think there can be nothing greater than Krishna : each is entitled to have his own view or feeling, whether it is itself right or not. It can be left there...”¹

Supremely great though he was, his utter indifference to any question of personal greatness is obvious also from his following remarks :

“It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness ; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.”²

(5)

The New Age thus is a creation of Sri Aurobindo in a specially personal sense because without his personal intervention as its Avatar and his life-long preoccupation with preparing and manifesting it upon earth it could not have been created at all. It is he who conceived it, fostered it, laboured for it against tremendous odds and stupendous difficulties and sacrificed everything, including even his body, for its successful advent.

If it is asked why he, being the Avatar of the omnipotent supramental Power, had to labour and struggle and suffer and sacrifice to manifest it upon earth, the answer can best be given in his own words :

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, pp. 208-9.

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, pp. 214-15.

“For the leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled, hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the path.”¹

In spite of these extreme difficulties, Sri Aurobindo never shrank from the herculean labour required for bringing down the supramental Truth upon earth. His love for humanity was so fathomless and vast that he considered no price that may have to be paid for its sake as too great. Not only did he devote his whole life single-pointedly to this work of central importance for earth and humanity, but finally in an act of supreme sacrifice he gave away even his own body. But the giving up of his body did not mean the giving up of his work ; it only meant its continuation from a different plane, but with greater urgency and intensity.

As a fruition of this unrelenting labour, the Supermind manifested in the subtle layers of the earth in February 1956 and from there it has been incessantly working to manifest in the external physical life of the world. The time has now come when this manifestation is imminent.

(6)

At this very moment when the advent of the supramental Truth is imminent, we are confronted with a world-situation which seems to us most paradoxical and perplexing because it is quite the contrary of our normal expectations. We expect that the advent of the supramental Truth should bring into the world a great outburst of Light, Joy, Peace, Harmony and Love. But instead of that what we actually find happening now is a tremendous upsurge of dark and violent forces of falsehood and evil. The world-conditions at the present moment are increasingly becoming so chaotic and blindly destructive that they have created a widespread feeling of acute anxiety and distress. Some great catastrophe, which may engulf the whole world, seems not a far too distant prospect to most people. Faced with such a formidable and overwhelming situation, they find it extremely hard to believe that the birth of a new age of some great Light and Truth is imminent.

But if we have a true understanding of the working of the world-forces, which always precede the birth of a new age in evolution, we shall not only not feel bewildered and perplexed in face of the present adverse conditions but would rather see in them a clear sign of the very near approach of the new age upon earth. This phenomenon of the uprush of extreme darkness just before the advent of a new Light is a thing well-known since ancient times to the mystics who have an inner perception of the operation of the occult world-forces attending upon the birth of a new age in earth evolution. Sri Aurobindo has spoken about it a number of times. I

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 370.

quote here a passage from *The Human Cycle* which is very significant in the present context :

“God works all his miracles by an evolution of secret possibilities which have been long prepared, at least in their elements, and in the end by a rapid bringing of all to a head, a throwing together of the elements so that in their fusion they produce a new form and name of things and reveal a new spirit. Often the decisive turn is preceded by an apparent emphasising and raising to their extreme of things which seem the very denial, the most uncompromising opposite of the new principle and the new creation. Such an evolution of the elements of a spiritualised society is that which a subjective age makes at least possible, and if at the same time it raises to the last height of active power things which seem the very denial of such a potentiality, that need be no index of a practical impossibility of the new birth, but on the contrary may be the sign of its approach or at the lowest a strong attempt at achievement.”¹

The same point is made by Sri Aurobindo in a letter written to a sadhak:

“The extreme acuteness of your difficulties is due to the Yoga having come down against the bed-rock of Inconscience which is the fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work that is leading toward that victory. The difficulties themselves are general in the Ashram as well as in the outside world....All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn ; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come.”²

7

Remembering this assurance of Sri Aurobindo, we must refuse to be dismayed or perplexed by the chaotic conditions of the world at the present moment. Even if they become still worse, as they may,—for the shadow of the third world war is still looming over our head,—even if sheer darkness may seem to engulf the world, we must remain firm in our faith in Sri Aurobindo’s assurance that it is only a passing shadow which will soon disappear and the bright sun of Truth will emerge victoriously from behind it. If the darkness seems to become too overwhelming,

¹ *The Human Cycle*, pp. 227-28.

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 243

we must remember that it is so because the Light that is emerging is also unique and unparalleled in the world's history. According to the Indian tradition, in each evolutionary cycle, the Satya Yuga or the Age of Truth is preceded and prepared by the Kali Yuga or the Age of Chaos and Destruction. We may say that since the Light which the new Satya Yuga will manifest is the greatest ever manifested on earth, the darkness of the Kali Yuga through which we are now passing is also the worst in its blackness ever experienced by humanity. But, however black it may be, it is only a passing cloud. Inevitably it must recede and give place to the splendour of Truth which is pressing from behind to emerge.

There is thus no reason to entertain a pessimistic attitude towards the near advent of the New Age, however distressing the world-conditions may temporarily become.

(8)

In the final count our faith in the advent of the New Age must rest upon our faith in Sri Aurobindo himself. I have said before that the creation of the New Age in earth's evolution is a work for which Sri Aurobindo himself is personally responsible. Our faith in the successful issue of his work must therefore ultimately rest upon our conception of and faith in Sri Aurobindo himself. If we believe that he was not merely a great personality or a great yogi; if we believe that he was the Supreme Lord incarnated in a human body with the single mission of establishing the supramental Truth upon earth to create a New Age in human evolution, if we further believe that the Will of the Supreme Lord that Sri Aurobindo wielded can *never* be defeated or frustrated by any power of darkness or falsehood however formidable it may be, then we must remain absolutely firm in our faith in the victory of His Will and unperturbed even if the world-conditions which are now extremely bad may become still worse.

And still if any shadow of doubt or diffidence may sometimes try to cloud our faith, we must expel it immediately, remembering these words of the Mother :

“...the mighty work of Change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact; there is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand. It is no mere experiment but an inevitable manifestation of the Supramental.... The transformation is going to be : nothing will ever stop it, nothing will frustrate the decree of the Omnipotent. Cast away, therefore, all diffidence and weakness, and resolve to endure bravely awhile before the great day arrives when the long battle turns into an everlasting victory.”¹

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Friends, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, what I have said refers more to Sri Aurobindo himself as the creator of the New Age than to the New Age

itself. The three other speakers who will follow me will explain to you some of the issues concerning the New Age.

Our first speaker is Oscar. He will try to explain the Mother's views on the ideal and the organisation of AUROVILLE which is intended to be a concrete embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the New Age or the New World. AUROVILLE will be in fact the whole New World in a miniature and I am sure what he has to say will interest you all. After him Romen and Srijit will read their papers on other aspects of the New Age.

After they have finished, I shall read out to you a few important writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bearing on the subject. Finally, Arati will read an extract from *Savitri* in which Sri Aurobindo has given us a graphic vision of the new humanity that will emerge in the New Age as an adjunct to the race of the gnostic Supermen. That will end our programme.

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After this speech the three speakers were called to deliver their speeches. Then Arati read the above-mentioned passage from *Savitri*.

These speeches, along with the extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the passage from *Savitri* will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 1

January 1968.

1. Changes for a New Year

SRI Aurobindo says man is a traditional being. This fact can very well be measured by the changes that have come about in the evolving pattern of our Centre of Education over the past twenty years. It could be said we have experienced many forms of educational experiment from such influences as Pestalozzi, Shantiniketan, Montessori, Dalton, Summerhill, and combinations and modifications of all these, plus an overall spiritual and environmental influence and guidance of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

That these changes have found their counterpoint all over the world is not surprising because change in education means a growing change in world consciousness. If there is still any doubt about this let me quote what The Mother has recently exclaimed :

“What, are you questioning what the Creator is doing !”

With all the up-to-date facilities students have at their command to look back at two thousand years of recorded change, the evolution of human consciousness is not now so incomprehensible.

Change means always the possibility of progress. The direction of progress is not always what man expects, nor does it always seem to him rational but then man, in spite of all his material and mental advance, does not yet command progress, neither has he acquired sovereignty over his growing nature in an evolving consciousness. He will become master of himself only when he turns to his Creator, surrenders to the Divine Will, co-operates with the Lord of all Nature.

The changes which The Mother has formulated for our Centre of Education this year along broad avenues of future possibility and progress are based upon those fundamentals which educationists of the highest ideals have always advocated with certain variations from Plato to Sri Aurobindo: truth is within and truth is knowledge and truth and knowledge must be allowed to grow.

The controversial issue has always been the question : grow in what soil and which environment ? Grow in a climate of organized discipline where data can be easily fed to the student, or grow in a climate of free progress where the teacher is a guide and counsellor—a climate where the teacher is as a gardener feeding the soil—the environment of learning—putting the plant in the sun—the truth of knowledge—helping it to grow according to its nature and its own capacities ?

Up to last year we had two streams of teaching/learning—the Free Progress and the Traditional Classes. This year, with The Mother’s guidance, we hope to integrate these two streams into a synthesis of greater co-operation and understanding.

2. *Thought of the Month*

Openness and, whenever needed, passivity, but to the highest consciousness, not to anything that comes.

Therefore, there must be a certain quiet vigilance even in the passivity. Otherwise there may be either wrong movements or inertia.

SRI AUROBINDO

“More Lights on Yoga” p.41

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

EYE EDUCATION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is the Mother's attitude to eye-treatment by the Bates-system?

A. The Mother wrote to the editor of *Mother India* after his visit to Dr. Agarwal's clinic: “It is a very good treatment. You can follow it with my blessings.”

Q. I am interested to join the medical course in Ophthalmic Science. Can you tell me something more about this course? And what qualification should the student possess? Will you give any diploma? What speciality will this course have?

A. A student who has passed higher secondary can apply for it. It will take four years to complete it. The following are its ten main subjects:

1. Anatomy and physiology of the eye and the body.
2. Study of Dr. Bates' discoveries for the prevention and cure of imperfect sight without glasses.
3. Use of modern diagnostic instruments and dark-room examination.
4. Physiological optics and errors of refraction and prescription of glasses.
5. Where is surgery necessary?
6. Study of secrets of Indian Medicine.
7. Study of synthetic knowledge in Ophthalmic science.
8. Eye-Education and Mental relaxation.
9. Medicines.
10. Diseases of the eye.

The main thing is to develop self-confidence and ability to work as a successful eye-specialist. If the Mother will sanction it, a diploma in Ophthalmic Science, ‘D.O.Sc.’, may be given.

Dr. R. S. AGARWAL