

MOTHER INDIA

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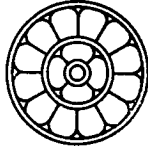
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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Vol. XX

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail!"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Somebody asked me, -

In the work of Transformation,
who is the slowest to do his part,
man or God?"

I replied, -

man finds that God is too slow
to answer his prayers.

God finds that man is too slow
to receive His influence.

But for the Truth-Consciousness
all is going on as it ought to go.



A MESSAGE OF THE MOTHER

Be quiet and offer yourself calmly and confidently.

All that happens is always the effect of the Supreme's Will.

Human action can be the occasion but never the cause.

3-8-1968

OVERMIND AND SUPERMIND

THREE LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND A TALK BY THE MOTHER

Q. In the Arya there is no mention of the Overmind. You have mentioned the Supramental or Divine Reason in the gradation of the Supermind, but from its description it is quite different from the Overmind. Why was the Overmind not mentioned and clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the Arya?

THE distinction has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind feels itself living in a surprising revelation of Divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind—for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.

20.II.1933

SRI AUROBINDO

2

THE Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call overmind and the other the true supermind or Divine Gnosis. That is the reason why they got confused about Maya (overmind-Force or Vidya-Avidya), and took it for the supreme creative power. In so stopping short at what was still a half-light they lost the secret of transformation—even though the Vaishnava and Tantra yogas groped to find it again and were sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the Gnosis, with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no farther, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into some immovable and inactive silence of the Supreme.

April 16, 1931

SRI AUROBINDO

ALL truths below the Supramental (even that of the highest spiritual on the mental plane, which is the highest that has yet manifested) are either partial or relative or otherwise deficient and unable to transform the earthly life; they can at most modify and influence it. The Supermind is the vast Truth-consciousness of which the ancient seers spoke; there have been glimpses of it till now, sometimes an indirect influence or pressure, but it has not been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there. To so bring it down is the aim of our Yoga.

But it is better not to enter into sterile intellectual discussion. The intellectual mind cannot even realise what the supermind is; what use, then, can there be in allowing it to discuss what it does not know? It is not by reasoning but by constant experience, growth of consciousness and widening into the Light that one can reach those higher levels of consciousness above the intellect from which one can begin to look up to the Divine Gnosis. These levels are not yet the Supermind, but they can receive something of its knowledge.

The Vedic Rishis never attained to the Supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. They tried to rise individually to the Supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness. Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the Supermind) and yet retain an earthly body. It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada. Our Yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the Supermind. Only when that can be brought down is a divine transformation possible in the earth-consciousness.

May 4, 1930

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI Aurobindo's work is a unique earth-transformation.

Above the mind there are several levels of conscious being, among which the really divine world is what Sri Aurobindo has called the Supermind, the world of the Truth. But in between is what he has distinguished as the Overmind, the world of the cosmic Gods. Now it is this Overmind that has up to the present governed our world: it is the highest that man has been able to attain in illumined consciousness. It has been taken for the Supreme Divine and all those who have reached it have never for a moment doubted that they have touched the true Spirit. For, its splendours are so great to the ordinary human consciousness that it is absolutely dazzled into believing that here at last is the crowning reality. And yet the fact is that the Overmind is far below the true Divine. It is not the authentic home of the Truth. It is only the

domain of the *formateurs*, all those creative powers and deities to whom men have bowed down since the beginning of history. And the reason why the true Divine has not manifested and transformed the earth-nature is precisely that the Overmind has been mistaken for the Supermind. The cosmic Gods do not wholly live in the Truth-consciousness: they are only in touch with it and represent, each of them, an aspect of its glories.

No doubt, the Supermind has also acted in the history of the world but always through the Overmind. It is the direct descent of the Supramental Consciousness and Power that alone can utterly re-create life in terms of the Spirit. For, in the Overmind there is already the play of possibilities, which marks the beginning of this lower triple world of Mind, Life and Matter in which we have our existence. And whenever there is this play and not the spontaneous and infallible working of the innate Truth of the Spirit, there is the seed of distortion and ignorance. Not that the Overmind is a field of ignorance; but it is the border-line between the Higher and the Lower; for the play of possibilities, of separate even if not yet divided choice, is likely to lead to deviation from the Truth of things.

The Overmind, therefore, does not and cannot possess the power to transform humanity into divine nature. For that, the Supramental is the sole effective agent. And what exactly differentiates our Yoga from attempts in the past to spiritualise life is that we know that the splendours of the Overmind are not the highest reality but only an intermediate step between the mind and the true Divine.

1931

THE MOTHER

SUPERMIND AND SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTH

A SNATCH FROM A CONVERSATION WITH SRI AUROBINDO

FEBRUARY 4, 1943

"Do I understand that the conquest of the Asuric forces will usher in the Supramental Descent?"

"Not in itself," he said with a far-away look, "but it will create conditions for the Descent to become a possibility."

There was something in his tone and look which stirred a chord deep down in me. I hesitated for a little and then hazarded the question, just to have the answer from his lips, was it? I do not know. All I know is that something irresistible impelled me to it.

"Is your real work this invocation of the Supramental?"

"Yes," he replied, very simply. "I have come for that."

And I was laughing with him, arguing with him, examining his point of view... because he had given me the right by calling me "a friend and a son", in his infinite compassion! The remorse of Arjuna in the Gita recurred to me, inevitably:

Oft I addressed thee as a human mate
And laughed with thee—failing to apprehend
Thine infinite greatness, sharing with thee my seat
Or couch—by right of love for thee as a friend:
For all such errors of irreverence
Thy forgiveness I implore in penitence.

(Dilip Kumar Roy's Among the Great, p. 359)

THE MOTHER'S CONTACT

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

It is only if one can feel the inward touch of the Mother without the necessity of the physical contact that the true value of the latter can be really active. Otherwise there is a danger of its becoming like a mere artificial stimulant or a pulling of vital force from her for one's own benefit. (2.3.1937)

It is a question of aspiration and right attitude—of putting away self and outward things, of desiring only the soul's opening, the inner touch, the working of the Mother's consciousness and force and will within oneself—or else it comes by faith, love and self-giving—or it comes by quietude of mind and the power to go within. (3.2.1937)

If they are so dependent on the physical touch that they cannot feel anything when it is not there, this means that they have not used it at all for developing that inner connection; if they had, the inner connection after so many years would already be there. The inner connection can only be developed by an inner concentration and aspiration, not by a mere outward pranam every day. What most people do is simply to pull vital force from the Mother and live on it—but that is not the object of the Pranam. (4.3.1937)

You have to develop the inner intuitive response first—*i.e.*, to think and perceive less with the mind and more with the inner consciousness. Most people do everything with the mind and how can the mind know? The mind depends on the senses for its knowledge. (10.7.1937)

THE PURUSHA AND THE PRAKRITI

Self: In the silent state, who is it that guards our being and witnesses it?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Self or Purusha is the witness. (23.1.1934)

Self: Yesterday evening, there was a vital disturbance. I know quite well of its irrational character and yet cannot get out of it. This is my normal defect and weakness. But this time somehow I tried to persevere in coming out of the disturbance. After some time, my consciousness entered a state where it could not only detach itself from the vital and its revolt but force it to throw away its selfish and unsatisfied feelings by the Mother's Force which was there. During that time I felt as if I were neither mind, vital nor physical, but something else.

What was that experience?

SRI AUROBINDO: What experience? The separation from mind, physical and vital? That is the separate Purusha consciousness. The Purusha separated from the instruments can control them—when there is an identification, he cannot. (25.4.1934)

Everything is more powerful than the Purusha when one follows the Prakriti—the Purusha then is merely passive. (11.5.1934)

Self: Now I attempt to save myself from the identification with mind, vital and physical—specially when some outward movement tries to influence me. How does the inner Purusha deal with these instruments?

SRI AUROBINDO: It observes their movements and gives or withdraws its consent according to their nature. Or else it quiets them all down so as to receive only from above. (27.4.1934)

Self: While concentrating, aspiring and receiving, should the Purusha identify itself with the Adhar and do these things?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Purusha does not identify with the adhar—it observes it. If the Purusha identifies with Prakriti, then it loses its separate consciousness in Prakriti. (28.4.1934)

Self: During the work the mind was thinking quietly. As I did not like that kind of mental action during the work I tried to silence it with will and force. It was effective to some extent.

In the evening, however, the physical mind was very active. The concentration and receptivity could not be maintained as usual. What was there that made it difficult for the Purusha to bring back the right condition?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Purusha is one thing and the ordinary mental will and force are another. The latter may be unsuccessful in their action. When you are in the Purusha consciousness, that itself implies a state of concentration and receptivity. (28.4.1934)

Self: When the Mother grants us certain things and the Purusha receives them separating itself from the Adhar, how would the latter participate in the reception?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Adhar will receive them better than if the Purusha is involved and mixed up with the lower Prakriti. (30.4.1934)

Self: When a wrong movement is to be rejected the Purusha finds it hard to separate itself from the Prakriti. Why so?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not yet sufficiently detached and separate. (30.4.1934)

Self: When the Purusha is separated from the Prakriti, is it the Purusha itself that aspires and receives in us?

SRI AUROBINDO: The Purusha by its will is the cause of the aspiration and reception. (10.5.1934)

Self: Is the Purusha and the psychic being considered as one and the same?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have already said they are different. (10.5.1934)

The psychic realisation and the Purusha-Prakriti realisation are two quite-different things. (15.5.1934)

Self: My friend P says, "In the beginning when the Purusha separates itself from the Prakriti, it entirely withdraws itself, throwing away the lower nature and cutting all relation with it." Well?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no question of throwing away the lower nature, but of observing it, knowing it, mastering and transforming it. (15.5.1934)

Self: If my friend is right, will the Purusha not care when the mind, vital or body does something which is not one with the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: The business of the Purusha is to be the observer and knower, the giver or withdrawer of the assent, the master (Ishwar) of the Prakriti. Why should it give assent to a movement that is not one with the Divine? (15.5.1934)

Self: It seems some parts of my nature do not obey the Purusha. What to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: Go on quietly insisting till the Prakriti does obey. (15.5.1934)

Self: At present how far is my Purusha in direct touch with the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: At present it is the Purusha in the mind that you feel—when

you become aware of the Purusha on the spiritual plane then there is more chance of its getting into direct touch with the Divine. (15.5.1934)

Self: P believes that the Purusha can remain withdrawn and allow the lower nature (the Prakriti) to satisfy its desires. For he is not bothered whether the nature is satisfied or not so long as he is not identified with her.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the old Vedantic idea—to be free and detached within and leave the Prakriti to itself. When you die, the Purusha will go to glory and the Prakriti drop off—perhaps into Hell. This theory is a source of any amount of self-deception and wilful self-indulgence. (15.5.1934)

Self: During the period of the physical purification, cannot the mind and vital follow their movement of sadhana, without rest or delay on the way, if the Purusha is realised in them?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you can keep detachment and the realisation of the Purusha at all times. (28.5.1934)

Self: The Purusha consciousness is becoming separate from the Prakriti. If she does not obey the Purusha, has he not to become severe and harsh to her?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. The Purusha always remains calm and always goes on putting its will till it succeeds. (5.6.1934)

Self: Even when the Purusha does not lose his separateness and wants the Prakriti to be calm, she does not care to listen to him at all.

SRI AUROBINDO: As you have indulged the Prakriti for the last ten thousand lives or so, it has been accustomed to impose its own way on the Purusha. To be separate is only the first step. Also I fancy the Purusha in you is still very mental in its will. (3.7.1934)

Self: You said, "The Purusha in you is still very mental in its will." What then should be the right position of the Purusha?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a position, it is a manner of action. The Purusha's action is more effective when it is spiritual. But that comes afterwards. (4.7.1934)

Self: My inner part feels sad sometimes seeing the ordinary mind busy with its mechanical rounds and disturbing the tranquillity—at the same time the Purusha is only detached and observing but not reacting.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the nature of the Purusha to observe only at first—it comes forward first as the Witness (9.7.1934)

Self: Before the consciousness is surcharged with the active self, is it not possible to set right or give a proper value to actions? I mean: can they not proceed from the true consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is the witness element in the consciousness that can distinguish—otherwise it is only possible if the psychic becomes active. (17.10.1934)

It is the will of the Purusha that ought to meet action—will is a silent force put upon the thing to be changed. (22.10.1934)

It is only by developing the habit of will or command in the Purusha consciousness that that can be done. Left to himself the Purusha is either inactive in Prakriti, controlled by her or separate and a witness. (10.12.1934)

from NAGIN DOSHI

(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. Manlal, Dr. Becharlal, 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.)

MARCH 9, 1940

S: Do ascent and descent of consciousness take place only through the head?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they can take place through the lower centres also.

S: N had the idea that they happen only through the head. I was thinking of Sahana's experience of ascent and descent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Did she have that experience?

N: The one we told you about.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh that? Her usual ascent-descent?

N: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is different. That is common among most people who have an opening. That is the ascent and descent of one's own consciousness, while the one I am speaking of is of the whole being going up to the Divine Consciousness and coming down with it.

N: Distinction still not very clear.

SRI AUROBINDO: In the usual experience, it is one's habitual consciousness that rises: it may be any part of the being, the mental, vital or physical goes up to the higher planes above the mind and stays there for a time, some organisation takes place and then the consciousness comes down with some result. In the ascent and descent about which I have written in *The Life Divine*, the whole being, you may call it the Self, goes up, say, to the Overmind, settles there and meets the Divine and then the descent of the Divine takes place. Obviously this is more difficult.

S: Is descent easier than ascent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: I thought it was through the head alone that both happen.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is usually through the mind, when the mental consciousness goes up, but it can happen otherwise also, the vital or physical consciousness directly going up without passing through the mental.

N: Sahana's experience of ascent and her feeling of nothingness and then her return with the sense of a flame in the heart—is it an experience of an ascent through the heart?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't remember well. In her case it won't be mind. But all the same it is a major ascent into the spiritual consciousness.

S: I had also the experience of ascent through the Muladhar chakra before doing any Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the physical consciousness ascending.

N: It would be nice to have this experience of ascent and descent.

SRI AUROBINDO: Remove that “cornice”!

P: One Pradhan, an M.L.C. of Bombay, has written a letter asking for darshan and wanting to meet you. He says he had the privilege of translating your speech at the Surat Congress and you may know him.

SRI AUROBINDO: How can I know him? Anyone could stand up and translate my speech. You can tell him that I give only silent darshan three times a year. It won't be true to say that I don't talk with my disciples. (*Laughter*)

EVENING

S: If the Supermind is involved in matter, why should the divine intervention and descent be necessary? It can evolve by itself.

SRI AUROBINDO: There was intervention in the evolution of the mind too and so will there be for the Supermind. The forces of the Inconscience are too strong. That is why the intervention is needed. Otherwise in the ordinary course of evolution it would take a very long time. The forces of the Inconscience are there to prevent any premature evolution and they exert a strong downward pull. There is also an upward pull. Mind and Supermind are involved in matter just as they are in the Superconscience. It is by waking up their corresponding forces from below by the upward pull and the corresponding forces mounting up and meeting those from above that the evolution can be complete.

P: Is spiritual experience possible without the awakening of the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean by the awakening? The psychic may be simply awake or it may take command of the being. But spiritual experience is not possible without the psychic awakening—occult experience can occur without it.

N: Then, when the experiences stop, it means that the psychic has gone to sleep.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be the overactivity of the other parts that stops them.

N: In our own case I don't see any overactivity because of which they could have stopped.

SRI AUROBINDO: In your case it may be underactivity. (*Laughter*) But you had the experience of the “cornice”!

N: Is there some decision by the Higher Force to stop experiences in this or that fellow because they may be bad for him? (*Laughter*)

P: He thinks his experiences have been intentionally stopped.

N: But can't it be true that when work goes on in some plane, for example, the subconscious, experiences may get suspended?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. Not only the subconscious but also the physical. It all depends on how far one has gone.

MARCH 10, 1940

P: A Kashmiri Brahmachari has come for darshan. He was lying near the gate at night. He seems to have done Raja Yoga and got some experiences.

S: He seems to be a fine personality.

N: Person or personality?

S: Personality—the physical ...

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh the physical?

S: I was more concerned about his belongings. Somebody might take them away while he was sleeping outside the gate.

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean some of our innocent servants who don't know what they are doing? (*Laughter*)

P: He says he has lost peace and has come in search of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: For peace he can go to Raman Maharshi. When people come for peace I always ask them to go to him.

N: Why? Can't they get peace here?

S: They may even lose whatever peace they may have!

SRI AUROBINDO: They may get disturbed by the complex working here.

S: Here peace is not the main object. In the Mother's *Conversations*, the first thing she says is: "What do you want Yoga for? For Peace? It is not enough." At the Maharshi's place it is different. People do get peace there because it is almost the main thing.

C: Really one can't get peace here if one wants it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the person. Europeans who come here get peace, they say. It is because they come with an agitated mind, I suppose.

DR. RAO. I am so glad, Sir, to see you sitting and writing. In August you will be able to give us blessings.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am giving them even now.

S: He is speaking of all the people, as in the past.

C: There is no more chance for that.

S: Why? Why do you close the door like that? (*Sri Aurobindo smiled.*)

C: How can it be possible with so many people? Even without an accident the blessings would have been stopped some day. The accident served as an excuse.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean I broke my leg to stop the blessings? (*Laughter*)

C: No, no, I don't mean that.

N: It's like Dr. B's remark. He said that he had been aspiring and aspiring to hear you, to talk with you, and now with your accident he has been lucky.

SRI AUROBINDO: Dr. M also wanted to hear my voice.

S: I too and all people wanted that. We all hope some day you will come out; everybody will hear you talk and see you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Supermind—that has to come first.

N: But who knows—after Supermind comes you may busy yourself with something else.

S: The Mother also is gradually withdrawing. There is practically no physical contact.

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at N*): Wasn't it D who said that after the withdrawal of the contact he was progressing more?

N: Progressing? He seems to have said that the physical contact is not the main thing. At first he was very upset; then got accustomed perhaps.

S: One gradually gets accustomed to anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Like getting accustomed to black-outs? (*Laughter*)

P: In black-outs it is the blind men that are the most useful. Being accustomed to darkness they know all the ways and so they can lead the others.

SRI AUROBINDO: So it is a case of the blind leading not the blind but the seeing!

C: I know a blind sadhu who could recognise by sound whether it was a one-anna piece or a two-anna one.

S: He acquired a money-sense.

SRI AUROBINDO: Was it the only sense he was aware of?

C: By footsteps he could know persons.

SRI AUROBINDO: Footsteps, of course. Everybody has his own peculiar way of walking.

S: There is a talk of the darshan taking place in April now. People are asking us about it. If we say, "We don't know," they get angry and retort, "Oh, you are having darshan every day and so you don't care." (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know myself. Maybe. (*P was signing from behind to N that there would be the darshan*).

S: P knows.

SRI AUROBINDO: He does?

P: There is a chance. The Mother perhaps doesn't want to say anything because many people may ask for permission.

S: If the sadhakas know, it's sure to leak out.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Spreading news has become a Yogic siddhi. (*Laughter*) Even before anything is decided, it leaks out!

N: We tell friends and say, "Don't tell it to anybody else." The friend repeats the same to his friend and everybody keeps his secret except to one friend.

SRI AUROBINDO: So it becomes a universal secret.

EVENING

P: The *Hindu* has published a review by Varadachari of *The Life Divine*. Have you seen it? He seems to have reviewed it well.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I was afraid they might send the book to X. Varadachari couldn't have said more within the space given him.

B: Wouldn't X's review have been favourable?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. He is orthodox and not open to new ideas.

N: Anilbaran writes that K has sent you a request through Suren Ghose to save him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Save him? What is the matter?

N: He means spiritually. Kazi Nuzrul has also approached with the same request.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): When K was here he stayed a long time. He used to say, "The movement won't grow, won't grow." (*Laughter*)

N: It seems his movement is still not growing.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has asked for permission to stay here. But the Mother hasn't approved.

P: The Mother has given permission.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh?

P: For darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, he wanted to be a disciple. During the mysterious stone-throwing without any apparent physical agency he was here. He was very afraid and said that Barin and Upen didn't understand the seriousness of the matter.

P: I remember his joke about Tamil servants. He didn't know Tamil. A servant said, "*Terima?*"¹ He replied, "What *terima?* I am *tera baba.*"² (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: He is a very humorous fellow.

N: Is he Bengali?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, his people have been settled in Bengal for a long time, like Motilal Roy's.

P: Prithwisingh and some others are also practically Bengali.

N: But they don't follow Bengali customs. They speak Hindi in their homes.

P: That is not Hindi, I can tell you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then neither Hindi nor Bengali. One of their ladies wrote a letter to the Mother. It was a queer affair. People become Bengalis very easily. The Maharattas whom I knew were practically Bengalis—except for their stubbornness.

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P after some talk on political subjects*): Gandhi has declared that he is not going to be hustled into a struggle. The country is not yet ready. Some paper has remarked that if Gandhi won't launch the struggle before the country is ready according to his demands, then the country will never be ready. There is some truth in that.

P: Yes, it is very difficult.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not very difficult—as good as impossible.

NIRODBARAN

¹ In Tamil, "Do you know?" but, in Hindi, "Your mother?"

² In Hindi, "Your father."

శ్రీ ఆరవంకాడు.

కాంచి ధన్యుడై నైతి సకాధ జలధి,
 నైతి ధన్యుడై జూచి యుగంత గగన;
 మహాకా! యుగవంద నీదుపా దారవింద
 యుగశ్రీవక్త్రించి పరమ ధన్యుడనైతి!

అంది యుతిధివి నేలపై నవతరాంచి
 గాడు వే జ్యోతి బింబము విడిచి నీవు,
 తమము నీడైన యానెల తుయ్యెడండ
 వెలుగు పురము తోడ (బ్రాహ్మణతము) నయి!

వ్యాధయమా! యేమి నీచ నర్థింతు విచ్చి
 యురిది యుతిధికి? నేమి జ్యోతిరువు పలుకు
 లోకసన నీవు పలుకంగ నేరు తొప్ప
 రుష్య! యే భంకరముంది గానంబునెతు ?

ప్రతితి మోసము నీతి, నిష్పంద కాంతి
 వ్యతమైత లోకన జ్యోతి సాహిత్యము నుచ,
 దూపు నైకొన్న యా జ్యోతిమోల నిబప
 నదియె యును రూపమైకట్టి యుర్వణంబు!

SRI AUROBINDO

BLESSED indeed am I having seen the fathomless ocean,
Blessed having beheld the infinite sky,
Wonderfully blessed to have sat
At the lotuses of Your feet, O Aurobindo!

A marvellous guest are You descended on our clay,
Leaving behind some radiant orb to flood
With torrents of light the bosom of Mother Earth
That is engulfed in gloom.

What song will my heart offer to this rare guest?
What words of salutation will my tongue learn to utter?
In what rhythms will my voice start chanting?

May my adoring silence be the song,
Rippleless peace the metre,
and inner light the revealing word!

Before this Effulgence that has taken form,
These alone are the most worthy offering.

VELURI CHANDRASEKHARAM

(Translated by V. Chidanandam from the Telugu)

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the July issue)

This is how
all sincere aspirations
are fulfilled
With blessings

1-9-63

46

Miwani (Africa), 5-9-1954

Dear Mother,

I felt as if I would dance wonderfully before You...

Dance! By the movements of my limbs and by Your Grace and Help, I would crush all desires, transient sentiments, ego and all lower elements and, as if through my sweat, wash out all the impurities of my whole being.

Finally I would look towards You with humble eyes and draw Your divine Light into every pore and cell of me and then offer at Your Feet my bright golden being and, what is even more precious, my heart's purest love.

I will look forward to that blessed moment.

47

Miwani (Africa), 6-9-1954

Dear Mother,

Last night I groped and groped for a glimpse of You. Still in the gentle wafts of the breeze I felt Your Presence.

Mother, today I have felt that death is indeed a terrible thing. We never know how and when it comes.

Worldly love is painful and transient. I feel that one must not keep a lasting attachment to any worldly object, because at the end it is always painful.

Truly speaking, in this world nothing belongs to anybody.

Mother, looking at the miseries of the earth I feel deeply grieved, but slowly my mind gets stronger.

I am Yours and shall always remain Yours. Shape me as You wish.

48

Miwani (Africa), 12-9-1954

Beloved Mother,

Yesterday, what did I say to You when my soul was in such agony?

These were my prayers:

“You know my life; all that I need, You know very well. Make me Your true child. Graciously grant me the Divine Life which I yearn to live.”

I sat quiet for some time... Your Voice came from within me:

“My dear child, it will be so.”

And a great joy and peace came over me.

May Your Will be done for my soul. Victory to You!

49

Miwani (Africa), 12-9-1954

My dear Mother,

Now I am counting the moments for my eyes to have the all-fulfilling fortune of seeing You. When will the intense hunger of my heart be quenched? When shall I dedicate the flowers of my love to Your Feet? When shall I be able to make You hear the throbbing of my heart?

O Mother, I wonder when I shall embrace You with all my love, and the burning eagerness of my body and soul find rest. When shall I catch the flowing nectar from Your divine Eyes and fill with it every atom of my being? Delay no longer. Call me to You soon. Be gracious, O Mother. Your child is pining for You. Teach me utterly the lesson of Salvation of this life. At last merge Your child in Your Divinity. I am Yours and You are mine.

Dear Mother,

What You have told me has come true. Now I am on the verge of coming to You. Now I am most impatient to meet You, because You alone are my support and refuge. You are all in all; I have the trust and the faith that now You will never desert me.

These days the thirst for Your *Darshan* is so intense that I can hardly describe it.

I was absorbed in reading Your books and Sri Aurobindo's. I do not know when exactly I fell asleep. On awaking I had the experience of completely forgetting myself; some wonderful peace spread over me and everything became void...

Soon after that, there was a kind of alarm in my heart. The mind grew restless. The reason was the fear lest the Divine Life I wanted to live should fail to be realised. What if I could not live it? Suppose my relatives, my own people, came in the way! O Mother, there is none to whom I can explain my life's aim and I am deeply distressed. Only You and I know.

To forget my restlessness of mind and my anguish of heart, I went out into the open air...

And...walking about I reached the house of a friend. She is a Christian. I got some inspiration and relief from her talk. She told me, "There is an Englishwoman who, in spite of being married, leads a spiritual life with her husband."

My friend talked to me many things about dedication to the Divine and to the spiritual life.

I confided in her some of my wishes. She predicted that I would surely get at the end of the year all that I wanted. On hearing this, I at once felt within me that during this very time I might hope to meet You. My friend knew nothing at all, yet she made the prediction. And then I felt certain that my great fortune would stand before me in a very short time. I was very happy and my faith in You increased. Now will anything happen except what You have wished? You know. Now it is Your concern.

My dearest Mother, none, no earthly power can prevent me from embracing my blessed fortune.

I am waiting for that happy moment.

A million salutations to You and sweet remembrances of ages...

Victory to the Truth!

(To be continued)

THE MOTHER OF INFINITY

INFINITY! infinite are Thy ways
 To raise us up to luminous heights divine
 In evolution's supramental line
Beyond the twin-eyed Maya's magic plays.

Eternity! eternally Thou unfoldest
 Thy worlds of greater life and light and bliss;
 Impressing on all Thy high Divinity's kiss
A sun-lit path for man's ascent Thou holdest.

O Timelessness! Thou playest veiled in Time
 With numberless planes and beings of various hues;
 Thou art in all, they are Thy different views,
Yet dwellest Thou beyond creation's rhyme.

None knows Thyself, but by identity,
We too can be Thy vast infinity.

PRITHWI SINGH NAHAR

THE MOTHER'S IDENTIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

THE Mother has spoken of the identification of consciousness with the Supreme and also of the other identification of consciousness, that with the earth, with the world outside, with things and beings. On May 11, 1913, she records in the *Prayers and Meditations* :

“To be constantly and integrally at one with Thee is to have the assurance that we shall overcome every obstacle and triumph over all difficulties, both within and without.

“O Lord, Lord, a boundless joy fills my heart, songs of gladness surge through my head in marvellous waves, and in the full confidence of Thy certain triumph I find a sovereign Peace and an invincible Power. Thou fillest my being, Thou animatest it, Thou settest in motion its hidden springs, Thou illumineest its understanding, Thou intensifiest its life, Thou increasest tenfold its love, and I no longer know whether the universe is I or I the universe, whether Thou art in me or I in Thee, Thou alone art and all is Thou; and the streams of Thy Infinite Grace fill and overflow the world.

“Sing O lands, sing O peoples, sing O men.

“The Divine Harmony is there.”

Later, in a talk on the subject of the identification of consciousness she says:

“In reality, however, there is only one consciousness; it is everywhere, in all objects, in the universe and beyond. When a limit is put around it somewhere, a frame is erected, then it becomes or appears to become an individual consciousness. It is man's ego, a spot or point cutting and shutting itself off from the global consciousness, that has thus separated from the Divine; it is that ego, that separative consciousness which is asked to break the limits and regain its natural unity with the one consciousness. And when it can do so it is said to have made the identification with the Supreme. Apart from this, however, when the consciousness has separated and individualised itself in different centres, even then it exists and acts in hiding in all the multiple varieties of forms, from the tiniest to the biggest. The same consciousness is alive in the atom, the stone, the plant, the animal, in the earth and the sun and the stars, in the universe as a whole. Each object big or small, living or non-living, conscious or unconscious, contains that consciousness at its centre and embodies or expresses it in various ways.”

The earth, the sun, the universe, the different countries each and all have a consciousness:

“When you say ‘India’, what do you mean to convey? Is it the geographical boundary that goes by the name or the expanse of soil contained within that boundary or its hills and rivers, forests and fields or the beasts that range in it or its human inhabitants or all of these together? No, it is something else; it is a centre of consciousness which has as its bodily frame the particular geographical boundary; it is that which dwells in its mountains and meadows, vibrates in its vegetation, lives and moves in its animal kingdom; and it is that which is behind the mind and aspiration of its people, animating its culture and civilisation and moving it towards higher and higher illuminations and achievements. It is not India alone, but every country upon earth has its consciousness, which is the central core of its life and culture. Not only so, even the earth itself, the earth as a whole, has a consciousness at its centre and is the embodiment of that consciousness; and earth’s evolution means the growth and expression of that consciousness. Likewise the sun too has a solar consciousness, a solar being presiding over its destiny. Further, the universe too has a cosmic consciousness, one and indivisible, moving and guiding it. And still beyond there lies the transcendental consciousness, outside creation and manifestation.”

There is a consciousness in the vegetation-world with which one can identify:

“Consciousness being one and the same everywhere fundamentally, through your own consciousness you can identify with the consciousness that inhabits any other particular formation, any object or being or world. You can, for example, identify your consciousness with that of a tree. Stroll out one evening, find a quiet place in the countryside; choose a big tree—a mango tree, for instance—and go and take your seat at its root, with your back resting or leaning against the trunk. Still yourself, be quiet and wait, see or feel what happens in you. You will feel as if something is rising up within you, from below upward, coursing like a fluid, something that makes you feel at once happy and contented and strong. It is the sap mounting in the tree with which you have come in contact, the vital force, the secret consciousness in the tree that is comforting, restful and health-giving. Well, tired travellers sit under a banyan tree, birds rest upon its spreading branches, other animals—and even beings too (you must have heard of ghosts haunting a tree)—take shelter there. It is not merely for the cool or cosy shade, not merely for the physical convenience it gives, but the vital refuge or protection that it extends. Trees are so living, so sentient that they can be almost as friendly as an animal or even a human being. One feels at home, soothed, protected, strengthened under their overspreading foliage.

“I will give you one instance. There was an old mango tree in one of our gardens—very old, leafless and dried up, decrepit and apparently dying. Everybody was for cutting it down and making the place clean and clear for flowers or vegetables. I looked at the tree. Suddenly I saw within the dry bark, at the core, a column of thin and dim light, a light greenish in colour, mounting up, something very living, I was one with the consciousness of the tree and it told me that I should not allow it to be cut down. The tree is still living and in a fairly good health. As a young girl barely in my teens I used to go into the woods not far from Paris (Bois de Fontainebleu):

there were huge oak trees, centuries old perhaps. And although I knew nothing of meditation then, I used to sit quietly by myself and feel the life around, the living presence of something in each tree that brought to me invariably the sense of health and happiness.”

And the identification can also be with the earth :

“Another instance will show another kind of identification. It is an experience to which I have often referred. I was seated, drawn in and meditating. I felt that my physical body was dissolving or changing: it was becoming wider and wider, losing its human characters and taking gradually the shape of a globe. Arms, legs, head were no longer there; it became spherical, having exactly the form of the earth. I felt I had become the earth: I was the earth in form and substance and all terrestrial objects were in me, animals and people, living and moving in me, trees and plants and even inanimate objects as part of myself, limbs of my body: I was the earth-consciousness incarnate.”

The Mother’s recording of 24th May 1914 is very interesting. Outer things, material things have no interest, no savour for the Mother; yet she has written:

“If I am busy with them, it is because it seems to me that such is Thy will. . .

“O my sweet Master, I aspire to Thee, to the knowledge of what Thou art, to identification with Thee. I ask for a love increasing, growing ever purer, ever vaster, ever more intense, and I find myself as if submerged in Matter; is this Thy reply?

“As Thou hast Thyself chosen to be submerged in Matter so as to awaken it little by little to consciousness, is this the result of a more perfect identification with Thee? Is this not Thy answer to me: ‘If Thou wouldst learn how to love truly, it is in this way that Thou must love... in the darkness and the inconscience.’”

This experience the Mother records on 26.11.1915:

“The entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity.

“Then was the physical body seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made little by little, even in the most material sensation, all personal limits fall away. The being progressively, methodically, grew in greatness, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity. It was, as it were, a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving in the arms of the universal Personality, and gave itself, it abandoned itself to Her in an ecstasy of peaceful Bliss. Then it felt that its body was

absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, its totality immobile, in its internal complexity moving infinitely. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being standing on a many-headed serpent whose body coiled infinitely around the universe. The Being in an eternal gesture of triumph mastered and created at one and the same time the serpent and the universe that issued from it; erect on the serpent, he dominated it with all his victorious might, and the same gesture that crushed the hydra, enveloping the universe, gave it eternal birth. Then the consciousness became this Being, and perceived that its form was changing once more; it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms, something which, immutable, sees,—the Eye, the Witness. And what It sees, is. Then this last vestige of form disappeared and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

“The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration, by successive gradations, but directly, without passing again through the universal consciousness and terrestrial forms. And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture, without any intermediary, of the supreme and eternal Witness.”

Sri Aurobindo wrote about the above passage to the Mother on 31.12.1915 :

“The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense, though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves Vedic. It is the union of the ‘Earth’ of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which the world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.”

The point, it may be said, is : “to be this individual consciousness anywhere or everywhere and still to maintain the higher, the universal and transcendent, the supreme consciousness, to be simultaneously conscious in both the modes to the utmost degree.”

SHYAM SUNDAR

THE IDEAL OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE THOUGHT OF C. H. DOUGLAS

AN APPRECIATION AND A COMPARATIVE STUDY FROM ENGLAND

(On the 31st of last May we received from England evidence of a very genuine response to the work of Sri Aurobindo by an Englishman, Mr. T. N. Morris, M.A. (Cantab) and formerly a Principal Scientific Officer under the Food Investigation Board of The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research at the Low Temperature Research Station, Cambridge. It was an article of some length, introduced by a fairly long explanatory letter. As both the documents are of considerable interest and value and as in addition they bring before us the ideas of a practical Scottish thinker of notable originality, C. H. Douglas, of whom very little is known, we are publishing them in full, even though we may not see eye to eye with the author where some shades of opinion are concerned.)

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

300 High Street, Cottenham,
Cambs, England. 26-5-1968

Dear Members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram,

I have enclosed a copy of an article which I wrote a few weeks ago and hoped to have published in *The Social Creditor*, a journal to which I have contributed articles and reviews from time to time. The Editor was not able to find space for it at present, but in view of the unrest which exists nearly all over the world—a sign no doubt that we are on the threshold of a new era of one sort or another—I hope that it, together with this letter, will receive your earnest consideration.

You will see that I have only recently come across the work of Sri Aurobindo, although I have for many years been interested in Hindu philosophy and religion. His integral philosophy strikes me as something which the world needs and I am sure that the world does not want an artificial and unreal 'unity' thrust upon it by force and fraud. It wants a genuine unity through understanding, sympathy and mutual respect—a growing together, not a forcing together—and we are in great and immediate danger of the latter.

For more than 40 years I have been a student of the work of C.H. Douglas, the Scottish engineer who, as far back as 1918, discovered faults and flaws in our present financial and accounting systems and policies which, as he showed, have involved the nations of the world in irredeemable debts, promoted bitter competition and strife instead of mutual helpfulness and frustrated the best efforts towards economic and social development and improvement.

More important still, Douglas went much further than a mere analysis of the situation. He also showed how these faults could be corrected without anarchy and chaos by what amounted to paying to each individual member of the population his or her share of the wages of the machines. The justification for this lies in the fact that scientific and engineering discoveries are to a very great extent a common heritage. In his view every real improvement in agricultural and industrial processes, which reduces the time and human effort required to carry them out, ought to be made to pay a dividend to the community either in the form of reduced prices or directly as national dividends or by both methods combined. The national dividends could increasingly supersede and replace the wage and salary system so that every individual would become a shareholder in the business of the community and a participator, as of right in the national production and prosperity.

In his books *Economic Democracy*, *Credit Power and Democracy*, *The Monopoly of Credit* (which contains Douglas's evidence given before the Macmillan Committee on Finance and Industry) and *Social Credit* Douglas indicated the adjustments in financial accounting and in the position and function of banking which are required to make finance reflect economic facts and potentialities in accordance with the interests and wishes of consumers. Like Sri Aurobindo, Douglas was an integrator: he insisted that accounting must be 'integral'. It must integrate production with consumption; real production, of course, includes additions and improvements to plant (appreciation) and consumption includes depreciation and obsolescence. The cost of production (in terms of real goods and services) is consumption over the same period.

By an overwhelming vote a Social Credit legislature was elected in Alberta, Canada, during the terrible agricultural and industrial depression of the 1930's and C.H. Douglas was asked to apply his remedies to that province. His efforts were frustrated, however, partly by the inexperience of members of the legislature and, more particularly, by the powerful interests who have been the chief beneficiaries of the present financial system and who, through their influence on the presentation of news, have been able to make it appear that Social Credit has been tried and has failed. It has of course never been tried and Legislatures of Alberta and also of British Columbia are Social Credit in name only. They have never implemented Social Credit policy and when I was in Vancouver a few years ago I failed to find any of Douglas's books in one of their largest public libraries.

I cannot help feeling that, if Sri Aurobindo had followed the history of this struggle and had read the works of Douglas, he would have been in full sympathy with him. It also appears to me that the philosophies and policies of the two men were the same. Neither Sri Aurobindo nor Douglas inculcated abnegation and scarcity; the former desired a "simply rich and beautiful life for all" and the same is implied in many of Douglas's utterances.

In an address on Social Credit Principles Douglas said: "The end of man, while unknown, is something towards which most rapid progress is made by the free expansion of individuality and therefore economic organisation is most efficient when it

most easily and rapidly supplies economic wants without encroaching on other functional activities." Again, in *Economic Democracy* he wrote: "It is suggested that the primary requisite is to obtain in the readjustment of the economic and political structure such control of initiative that by its exercise every individual can avail himself of the benefits of science and mechanism; that by their aid he is placed in such a position of advantage that *in common with his fellows* he can choose with increasing freedom and complete independence whether he will or will not assist in any project which may be placed before him .. The basis of independence of this character is most definitely economic." He concluded the chapter, in which these words appeared, as follows: "Systems were made for men, not men for systems and the interest of man *which is self-development* is above all systems whether theological, political or economic."

Please forgive this rather lengthy statement, but I felt that something a little more explanatory than the enclosed article might be necessary because the subject of Social Credit has been effectively kept out of the news and away from public discussion since the 1920's and the Universities have failed to give it serious and proper attention. For the most part they have merely dismissed it as an economic heresy—a 'funny-money system.'

In the Cambridge University Library, for instance, most of the works of Douglas (like most of those of Sri Aurobindo) are consigned to shelves not accessible to members of the university who wish to browse: they can only be seen or borrowed by request.

It is my earnest hope therefore that, if Douglas's work is practically unknown in India, I may kindle a flame which will spread through that country and from thence throughout the world.

I am encouraged in this hope by the belief that philosophy and the ancient wisdom still have great power in India and also by the testimony of V.P. Varma who, in his book on *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, wrote on p. 384: "There is however in the writings of Sri Aurobindo supreme emphasis only on moral and spiritual freedom. But it is unfair not to lay the same emphasis on social and economic freedom. It is true that Aurobindo has referred to economic justice but he has not laid the necessary emphasis on it."

Believe me to be

Yours most sincerely,

T.N. MORRIS

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SRI AUROBINDO

1

I first saw Sri Aurobindo's name in *Gandhi's Emissary* by Sudhir Ghosh (Cresset Press, London, 1967) a book which fully warrants the author's statement in the Introduction: "if I do not write this account of what happened in those amazing years (the years immediately preceding and following independence) a legitimate part of the recent history of India will be lost."

Sudhir graduated at Cambridge University in the mid-1930's, an experience which enabled him to understand and appreciate both East and West. He made some notable contacts there and this, coupled with his evident intelligence and integrity and his gift for making friends, explains why, although he was never an acolyte, Gandhi chose him as his young emissary in his negotiations with the British Labour Government during the transfer of power in 1945-1947. He was thus "at the centre of discussions and negotiations that ultimately led to the division of India into two separate sovereign states with disastrous consequences ..not for mere decades but, perhaps, for centuries to come." Immediately after independence he did valuable work in rehabilitating refugees and as a liaison between the Indian Government and the British, Russian and American engineers and officials who were engaged in installing new steel plants in different parts of India.

It is in the Introduction to his book that Sudhir first mentions Sri Aurobindo. He tells us there: "I have moved in these years from Gandhiji to Sri Aurobindo. These years have stretched my faith as well as my experience. They have led me gradually and inevitably from the inspiration of Gandhi, perhaps the greatest spiritual genius of India since the Buddha, to Sri Aurobindo, the logical conclusion of India's long struggle to express her inner riches in outer life."

We do not see Aurobindo's name again, however, until the last chapter in which Sudhir describes how, in 1963, he again became an emissary. This time he was sent by Nehru to try to get a joint guarantee from Russia and America for any peaceful settlement that might be arrived at between India and China after China's invasion of Assam from the north.

In Moscow he gathered that it was doubtful whether Krushchev could influence the Chinese even if he wished to do so. Some communist leaders tried to make light of the invasion, even suggesting that it was intended more than anything else to test the sincerity of Nehru's proclaimed policy of non-alignment. In America Sudhir met senators, congressmen, members of the administration and, finally, had an interview with President Kennedy himself.

He told the President that he had found that leading politicians in America were now generally opposed to helping India to raise her military strength enough to enable her to offer effective resistance to communist China whereas, formerly, President Eisenhower had, on his own initiative, offered to give India three weapons for every one given to Pakistan, an offer which Nehru rejected because he thought it would

be incompatible with his policy of non-alignment. Kennedy told Sudhir that the trouble now was Kashmir and Krishna Menon—the two K's. It was well known that Menon regarded Pakistan as Enemy No. 1 and, although he was no longer in office, he might be recalled, in which case there was no guarantee as to how the weapons would be used. Kennedy said that he had already offered mediation on Kashmir and was willing to do so again. He also promised to consider the suggestion of a joint American-Russian declaration regarding China. He spoke indignantly and sarcastically about Nehru's non-alignment policy: when India was in danger of being overwhelmed by China, Nehru had made a "desperate appeal" to him for air-protection to which he, Kennedy, had immediately responded. (He alerted the Mediterranean forces and despatched an aircraft carrier towards Indian waters). A few days later, however, after the Chinese had withdrawn, Nehru swung back to his original non-alignment position.

It thus appears that Nehru and Menon between them had queered the pitch. In fact Sudhir also discovered, while he was in America, that Nehru had upset Kennedy badly when he visited the White House in 1961 by his failure to "open out" and respond to sincere and friendly hospitality and overtures. Also, when questioned by American reporters at Cairo on his way home as to how he got on with their new President he had replied in an off-hand manner: "I can get along with anybody in this world." Naturally this was broadcast all over America.

It was at this interview with President Kennedy that we hear again of Aurobindo. Sudhir tells us that he showed the President Sri Aurobindo's last testament, written on November 11th, 1950, which ran as follows:

"The basic significance of Mao's Tibetan adventure is to advance China's frontiers right down to India and stand poised there to strike at the right moment and with the right strategy unless India precipitately declares herself on the side of the Communist bloc. But to go over to Mao and Stalin in order to avert their wrath is not in any sense a saving gesture. It is a gesture spelling the utmost ruin to all our ideals and aspirations. The gesture that can save us is to take a firm line with China, denounce openly her nefarious intentions, stand without reservation by the U.S.A. and make every possible arrangement, consonant with our self-respect, to facilitate American intervention in our favour and, what is of still greater moment, an American prevention of Mao's evil designs on India. Militarily China is almost ten times as strong as we are, but India as the spearhead of an American defence of democracy can easily halt China's mechanised millions. And the hour is upon us of constituting ourselves such a spearhead and saving not only our own dear country but also South-East Asia whose bulwark we are. We must burn it into our minds that the primary motive of Mao's attack on Tibet is to threaten India as soon as possible."*

* EDITOR'S NOTE. This "last testament" does not come directly from Sri Aurobindo's pen. It is part of an article written by the Editor of *Mother India*, then a fortnightly from Bombay, in consonance with Sri Aurobindo's views, particularly those openly expressed in his message on the hostilities in Korea. All editorial utterances in *Mother India* scrupulously echoed Sri Aurobindo's opinions:

Since the President had never heard of Aurobindo, Sudhir gave him an outline of his life substantially the same as that given below (see Part 2). He tells us that the President read the testament over several times and then said: "Surely there is a typing mistake here. The date must have been 1960, not 1950. You mean to say that a man sitting in a corner of India said that about the intentions of Communist China as early as 1950." Sudhir assured him that Aurobindo died in December 1950 and Kennedy then said: "One great Indian (Nehru) showed you the path of non-alignment between China and America and another great Indian showed you another way of survival. The choice is up to the people of India."

Before he left America Sudhir gave the President three of Aurobindo's books: *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, and *War and Self-Determination*. When he returned to India Nehru sent for him and asked for a full report. Sudhir took the opportunity of reminding him of the President's immediate response to the request for air protection. He also told Nehru that he had heard from one of the President's closest friends that the President had "two secret sorrows", viz., that he had failed miserably to make contact with two great men, Nehru and de Gaulle. Sudhir says that he pleaded with Nehru: "You are so charming to so many people. Why couldn't you show some kindness and warmth to this man? He is young enough to be your son." Nehru did not flare up and deny that he had requested air protection, as he would have done if it had not been true, and, as regards his cold behaviour to Kennedy, he merely said: "Surely you didn't expect me to embrace him, did you? There is no misunderstanding between him and me so far as I know." That, says Sudhir, was a typical Nehru reaction. He replied: "No, Sir, I did not expect you to embrace him. But the absence of misunderstanding is not the same as understanding. He (Kennedy) was so eager to come to an understanding as between two human beings. I think that he believed that if Jawaharlal Nehru and John Kennedy really got together they could, between the two of them, change the world." He also reminded Nehru of his off-hand reply to the American reporters and contrasted it with what he had said on leaving Moscow airport, viz., that he was leaving behind in Russia a part of his own heart. Nehru replied "rather glumly": "I said that in China too and now see what has happened." Sudhir then suggested that Nehru regarded the Americans as "barbarians in the Greek sense" and tells us that "this went home" and may have resulted in the next American mission to India receiving a warm welcome. Nehru reacted favourably to their proposal to mediate between India and Pakistan but later relented and withdrew unilaterally all that he had ever offered. Thus he ruined any chance of further Nehru-Kennedy cooperation and of preventing the war with Pakistan which broke out in 1965.

in fact they were first submitted to him for confirmation. They sought to guide national and international politics from a point of vision far above it and above all "isms" of the mere mind unconnected or ill-connected or half-connected with the higher spiritual Light that Sri Aurobindo represented. Sri Aurobindo called *Mother India* in its editorial capacity: "My paper."

Sudhir's assessments of some of the prominent statesmen with whom he had dealings are interesting. For instance, of Gandhi he says: "I loved Gandhi but I was not an acolyte. To sentimentalise over Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence is not my purpose, nor to refute it. I knew him as a very human man who was quite capable of committing human blunders in negotiations." Sudhir admired most of all Gandhi's courage: "On a point which was his self-law (swadharma) he was unshakable. The way he left the politics of Indian independence in October 1946 and went down to the interior villages of Eastern Bengal to be in the midst of frightened men and women who, as a result of communal violence, had lost all sense of security, showed the world the real Gandhi—driven inevitably to loneliness, walking barefoot from village to village at the age of 77, singing Tagore's song of poignant isolation: 'If they answer not thy call then walk alone; if they do not hold up their lamps when the night is troubled with raging storm...ignite thine own heart and let it burn alone.' When we celebrated Indian independence on August 15th 1947 Gandhi said it was for him a day of mourning."

With Nehru, Sudhir says that he had a kind of "love-hate relationship." Nehru was one of those who did not altogether approve of Gandhi's choice of an emissary. "He was a man of violent personal likes and dislikes. It was my misfortune," says Sudhir, "that he had developed during the negotiations with the Cabinet mission at New Delhi a personal dislike of me." However, Nehru did make use of Sudhir on several occasions, after Gandhi's death, in addition to that mentioned above.

2

The fact that a man of Sudhir Ghosh's calibre could say that he had moved in his outlook from Gandhi to Sri Aurobindo, whom he describes as a saint and a seer, prompted me to investigate further—and, incidentally, to discover my profound ignorance of the personalities who figured in Indian politics, particularly during the early years of the present century.

I obtained copies of two¹ of the books which Sudhir had presented to President Kennedy and also found that Aurobindo and his work had been the subject of a commemorative symposium² held in San Francisco in 1957 to which thirty distinguished scholars, chiefly Indian and American, had contributed. This contains an account of Aurobindo's life and a complete list of his books published in English.

Aurobindo Ghosh was born of cultured parents in Western Bengal in 1872. His father, a medical doctor trained in Scotland, had found life in middleclass Britain so much to his liking that he sent his son at the age of seven to be educated in England and brought up as an Englishman.

After a period of private tuition as a member of the household of a congregational minister in Manchester, Aurobindo was sent in 1884 to St. Paul's School in London. From there he won an open scholarship in Classics—an unusual subject for an Indian—to King's College, Cambridge, in 1890 and, in 1892, he took a First Class in the

Classical Tripos, Part I, and won prizes in Greek and Latin poetry. He was selected for the Indian Civil Service but, by this time, he had become unsettled by events in India and did not stay to take his degree. He also avoided the Civil Service and, returning to India in 1893, he entered the service of the Gaekwar of Baroda. In addition to acting as a kind of private secretary to the Gaekwar he taught English and French in Baroda State College and later became vice-principal. In 1905 he went as principal to a new national college in Calcutta where he became very active politically, being associated with Tilak and others in opposing the partition of Bengal. He also became an ardent Nationalist and edited the daily and weekly journal *Bande Mataram* from 1906 to 1908 and, soon afterwards, started *The Karmayogin*. Although never a pacifist in the Gandhian sense he realised the hopelessness of trying to free India by force and so became the first to advocate and organise passive resistance along with Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal. In 1908 he was charged with sedition but was acquitted. A little later he was detained in custody on suspicion of being connected with a bomb outrage at Alipore but was again acquitted after a long-drawn-out trial of about a year. While in prison, Aurobindo had profound and illuminating religious experiences which not only changed his whole life but also gave him assurance that India would become independent in due course without violence. He therefore turned away from political activity and retired in 1910 first to Chandernagore and then to Pondicherry in French India where he established an Ashram and founded an International University.

In 1940 Aurobindo publicly declared himself on the side of the Allies and in 1942 he urged Gandhi and Nehru to accept the offer made by Sir Stafford Cripps on behalf of the Churchill government that India should be given independence soon after the war in return for present cooperation. This advice, if taken, would have given time for proper preparation for the change-over and it is possible that in a calmer atmosphere the division of India into two sovereign states might have been avoided; unfortunately it was rejected. Also, as we have already seen, in his last testament, Aurobindo advised that India should align herself with America in order to discourage Chinese or communist-backed invasion not only of India herself but of all South-East Asia.

As a young man, Aurobindo had been much influenced by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. His philosophic message, based on the teaching of these two sages and on his studies of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures, particularly the Bhagavad Gita, was that the Ultimate Reality from which creation flows is not a void or zero or a contentless, remote Absolute or an anthropomorphic god unconnected with the Cosmos: it is the omnipresent reality immanent in the Cosmos, a dynamic divine reality—father and mother in one—apprehended or glimpsed by a direct knowledge or intuition, transcending “the tardy (and, one might add, mechanical) processes of ratiocinative thought.”³ Indeed, according to Aurobindo, it is in the increasing development of this superior consciousness that hope for the future of the human race can be said to lie.

When he returned to India in 1893 Aurobindo knew English, French, and some German and Italian but did not know his native language. However, he quickly learnt several Indian languages, including ancient Sanscrit. His literary work covers an amazingly wide range: commentaries on and translations of the ancient scriptures; philosophy; yoga; nationalism; world affairs; letters, and many poems and plays including an epic, *Savitri*, all in English.

Much of this material appeared in his journal, *Arya*, from 1914 to 1920 before being published in book form and it is perhaps remarkable that, at about the same time as C. H. Douglas was writing his important early books, *Economic Democracy* and the rest and stating the principles of Social Credit, Aurobindo was writing in the *Arya* passages like those quoted below and chosen almost at random either from *The Ideal of Human Unity* or from *The Human Cycle*:

“The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self development.”

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“When the State attempts to take up the control of the co-operative action of the community it condemns itself to create a monstrous machinery which will end by crushing out the freedom, initiative and serious growth of the human being... The State is bound to act crudely and in the mass; it is incapable of that free, harmonious and intelligently or instinctively varied action which is proper to organic growth. For the State is not an organism; it is a machinery and it works like a machine, without tact, taste, delicacy or intuition. It tries to manufacture, but what humanity is here to do is to grow and create. We see this flaw in State-governed education. It is right and proper that education should be provided for all and in providing for it the State is eminently useful; but when it controls the education it turns it into a routine, a mechanical system in which individual initiative, individual growth and true development, as opposed to routine instruction, become impossible. The State tends always to uniformity, because uniformity is easy to it and natural variation is impossible to its essentially mechanical nature; but uniformity is death not life... A State education, a State religion, a State culture are unnatural violences. And the same holds good in different ways and to a different extent in other directions of our communal life and its activities... It is therefore quite improbable that *in the present conditions of the race*, a healthy unity of mankind can be brought about by *State machinery*, whether it be a grouping of powerful and organised states enjoying carefully regulated and legalised relations with each other or by the substitution of a single World State, a single empire like the Roman or a federated unity. Such an external or administrative unity... cannot be really healthy, durable or beneficial over all the true line of human destiny unless something be developed, more profound, internal and real. Otherwise...the experiment will break down and give place to a new reconstructive age of confusion and anarchy. Perhaps this experience is also necessary for man-

kind; yet it *ought to be possible to avoid it by subordinating* mechanical means to our true development through a moralised or even a spiritualised humanity *united in its inner soul* and not only in its outward life and body.”*

“In social aggregates there are always two types. One is state supremacy over the individual, the other yields as much as possible to the freedom, dignity and successful manhood of the individual. The former would lead to a dominant world state, the world union.† Under one or other of these two types of global government the human race is fated to live as it draws closer together and becomes constantly more economically interdependent.”

“It may be that the unitarian [world state] idea may forcefully prevail and turn the existing nations into mere geographical provinces of a single well-mechanized state. But in that case the outraged need of life will have its revenge, either by a stagnation, a collapse and a detrition, fruitful of new separations, or by some principle of revolt from within. The question is whether there is not somewhere a principle of unity in diversity.”

There is no doubt that C.H. Douglas supplied the answer to the last question. I have quoted enough of Aurobindo to indicate to anyone who is acquainted with the writings of Douglas that it would be easy to make a long list of parallel utterances from the two writers over a wide range. Both men were integrators, both stressed the supreme importance of the self-development of the individual in freedom, and both had apprehended or, as Douglas put it, ‘glimped’ reality. Comparisons are perhaps odious but there is no doubt that, through his different training and experience, Douglas had the more intimate contact with the actual workings of the economic system. For this reason he was able to identify the present faulty non-self-liquidating and non-integral financial accounting system as the instrument which has placed human society increasingly at the mercy of unscrupulous men actuated by the will-to-power (an exaggerated form of egotism). If this system is allowed to operate long enough it will inevitably force upon the world the type of “unitarianism” which Aurobindo so strongly condemned. In addition to making his correct diagnosis Douglas indicated how the system which is at present poisoning all human and national relations could be adjusted so as to make a real and genuine unity in diversity possible.

Aurobindo favoured what is called in India ‘karmayoga’ which, in simple terms, appears to mean that he sought self-development through right action carried out in the right spirit. In his essay, *The Realistic Position of the Church of England*, Douglas says that “the object of Christ” is to “permit the emergence of self-governing, self-conscious individuals, exercising free will and choosing good, because it is good,” which seems to amount to much the same things. This, of course, involves the ability

* The italics are mine (T. N. M.)

† Sri Aurobindo says elsewhere that the latter need not have a formal structure. — Author.

to recognise what is right—or, as Douglas put it, to recognise and adhere to ‘the Canon.’

If these few remarks should come to the notice of any disciples of Aurobindo, who must still be numerous in India and perhaps elsewhere, and if they should induce them to examine the works of C. H. Douglas in order to discover to what extent they complete the works of their own ‘guru’, I shall not have written in vain—provided, of course, that they take appropriate action.

T. N. MORRIS

NOTES

¹ *The Ideal of Human Unity and The Human Cycle.*

² *The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.* General Editors. H. Chaudhuri, Professor of Asian Studies, San Francisco, and F. Spiegelberg, Professor of Asiatic and Slavic Studies, Stanford University. (Allen and Unwin)

³ H. P. Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, p 31 (footnote), 1911 reprint.

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(We are starting this series from the pen of Sri S. Maharajan, the Chief Justice of Pondicherry, with full confidence that justice at last will be done to a poet who, according to Sri Aurobindo, "succeeded in producing a supreme masterpiece" and "makes of his subject a great and original epic". The author is well-known for his Tamil translations of some of Shakespeare's finest tragedies and now he has attempted to create a living English sense of the premier poet of old South India. These "causeries", as he has modestly named his work, were originally sparked off by a call from the Sahitya Akademi for a popular monograph which would yet embody literary taste and judgment.)

INTRODUCTION

JUDGING from the fantastic popularity that Kamban enjoys in Twentieth Century Tamil Nad, a foreigner may be tempted to guess that Kamban is a contemporary poet who has sung of the absorbing problems of to-day. Such a guess would be eleven centuries off the mark, for Kamban lived and died in the Ninth Century A.D. His great poetry keeps its hold firmly on the centuries, because he gives poetic articulation to those timeless problems, which arise at all times and the answers to which will continue to fascinate the spirit of Man till the end of Time.

THE BACK-DROP

Kamban had behind him an unbroken poetic tradition of over a thousand years. He did not have the advantage, which the Tamil poets of early Spring had: he could not, like the first-comers, take with both hands from the treasury of popular speech and forge virgin modes of effortless expression. Before his arrival, the Tamil language had been handled by scores of masters; while it was still malleable and responsive, the Sangam poets of the pre-Christian era had conferred upon the language a delicate reticence and austerity. Tiruvalluvar, of the 2nd Century A.D., had given it a lucidity, precision and terseness, which forced Dr. Grail to describe his couplets as "apples of gold in a network of silver." The Vaishnavite Saints (Alvars) and the Sairvite Saints (Nayanmars) had, between the 6th Century and the 9th, given the language an extraordinary suppleness and a warm and moving song quality. It appeared as if all the potentialities of the language had been thoroughly exploited before Kamban's arrival. But, in spite of these handicaps, Kamban's genius gave to the language fresh powers of articulation and made it serve the pure perfection of poetry.

He chose the *Ramayana*, because the simple story of Rama, unlike the *Mahabharata*, was free from the complexities which would distract the reader from the liberating influence of poetry. The Tamils had known for many centuries the broad outlines of the story and enjoyed the different situations in the story through the devotional songs of the Alwars. Kamban knew that when he retold the story, no part of the attention of the readers would be wasted in grappling with the lesser mechanics of plot and suspense or in the anticipation of the events that would follow. The advantage of such a familiar setting was that Kamban could divert the entire attention of the reader from the story and focus it upon the marvels of his own creative narrative, dramatic and lyrical genius. In fact in the prologue to his *Ramayana*, he proudly declares that he has chosen the *Ramayana* for his theme in order that the greatness and divinity of poetry may be demonstrated. This claim he makes good with astonishing success.

In fact, with the birth of *Kamba Ramayana* the whole future of Tamil poetry was altered, and this masterpiece has been exercising the most profound impact upon the poetic sensibility of the Tamils during the last eleven centuries. A long line of learned men have been thrilling the masses, from the time of Kamban down to our own, with recitations from and exposition of the *Kamba Ramayana*. Land grants have been made by the Tamil Kings for the maintenance of these rhapsodists and reciters. Stone inscriptions in the neighbouring territories of Kerala, Kannada and Andhra show that *Kamba Ramayana* was being expounded to and enjoyed even by people whose mother tongue was not Tamil. Thus Kamban became one of the most potent instruments of popular education and culture; he shaped the outlook, character and the aesthetic and religious attitudes of the people in the South; his *Ramayana* became part of the abiding national memory. He was acclaimed by all poets and scholars as KAVI CHAKRAVARTI or the Emperor of Poesy and he has passed into history as the most learned of Poets. Popular exponents of a *Kamba Ramayana* hold discourses continuously for months and it is a marvel that even to-day mammoth crowds of twenty to forty thousand men, women and children attend these discourses and listen with rapt attention and delight to the songs of Kamban. There must be something timeless about a poet who has gripped the attention of the people for over a millennium. Kamban can never become out of date, because he speaks to us and to the whole world with the Voice of To-morrow.

THE AGE OF KAMBAN

The Age of Kamban has been the subject of considerable controversy among the scholars. According to one view, which appears to be the more plausible, he lived in the 9th Century A.D. and, according to the other, he lived in the 13th Century.

But there is consensus among the scholars that Kamban was a native of Thiruvazhundur in Tanjore District, and that a landlord by name Sadayappa Vallal was his great admirer and patron and that we owe not a little to this patron for drawing the best out of Kamban.

Popular imagination has woven several legends around the name of Kamban, and these legends, which are totally valueless as historical material, indicate the attempt of the people to analyse and evaluate the genius of their greatest poet.

According to one legend, Kamban was the contemporary of Ottakootar, a minor poet in the court of a Chola King. By his mastery of prosody and of the mechanics of versification, Ottakootar exercised a tyrannical sway over the literary men of his time; he was suffered by the King even to decapitate the poetasters of the age, who, out of ignorance, committed the slightest mistakes of grammar, syntax or prosody. But, with the advent of Kamban, whose intense poetic genius broke the accepted moulds of grammar and who invented patterns of verbal harmonics which far transcended the conventional scales of Ottakootar, the latter's influence with the King began to dwindle and Kamban became the Poet Laureate in the Court of the Chola King.

One day the King requested both the bards to prepare a poetic rendering of the epic story of Rama. Ottakootar set about the task in great earnest and started producing a laborious work of third rate verse. Kamban was in no hurry to commence the work but spent his time in playful amusements. Sometime later, the King summoned both the poets and questioned them about their progress. Kamban said that he had come up to the Sixth Canto and was working upon the bridge that Rama's monkey hordes were building between India and Lanka as a preliminary to the final battle between Rama and Ravana. Ottakootar, who was listening to this yarn, knew that Kamban had not even commenced the first Canto. So he challenged Kamban to recite one song from the scene relating to the construction of the bridge. At once, Kamban, with unlaboured spontaneity, sang the original of the following song impromptu :

Kumuda, the monkey-chief,
dropped a stately hill into the rocky sea;
and the hill, with the rhythmic footwork of a dancer,
glided over the rocks and twisted and churned,
shooting forth a spray of ocean-droplets into Heaven;
and the denizens of Heaven jumped with joy,
hoping that Nectar would rise again from the sea.

Ottakootar, who was irritated by this brilliant extempore performance of Kamban, blamed him for using the word 'thumi' in the song. Kamban said it meant 'droplet'. Ottakootar objected that 'thuli' was the proper word and not 'thumi', but Kamban asserted that the word had the sanction of popular usage. Ottakootar challenged Kamban to prove the usage. At once Kamban took his rival and the King into the town. The three saw a shepherd maid churning curd in front of her house and telling the children playing around her, "Go away, you kids, lest the curd 'thumi' (droplet) should spill upon you." After making this statement, the churning woman vanished miraculously. Ottakootar realised that Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning herself, had come in the shape of the shepherd maid to justify the verbal inventions of Kamban.

Heart-broken, Ottakootar went home and started tearing to pieces the seven cantos of the *Ramayana*, which he had carefully and laboriously compiled with the aid of a thesaurus. By chance, Kamban went to his rival's house at that juncture and found that only the last canto, Uttara Kanda, remained untorn. With characteristic graciousness, he grabbed his rival by the hand, prevented him from tearing the Uttara Kanda and got his permission to include it as the final Kanda in the *Ramayana* he was yet to produce.

With the death of Kamban, even his jealous contemporaries began to assess his poetic achievements in their proper perspective. While Kamban was alive, the tillers of the soil threw aside the plough and followed the great poet in ecstatic adoration; thus Mother Earth lay forsaken. As trades people neglected the accumulation of wealth and vied with one another in enjoying the poetry of Kamban, Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, felt abandoned, whereas Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, reigned supreme. But, after the death of Kamban, the ploughmen turned to the plough and the tradesmen got busy at the counter; the Goddess of the Earth and the Goddess of Wealth were thus restored to their original glory. And what happened to the Goddess of Learning? A contemporary poet gives a poignant answer to this question in the following song he composed at the first anniversary of the death of Kamban:

Isn't this the day
 that Kamban died?—
 The day my tinsel verse began to glitter
 and catch the royal eye?
 Isn't this the day
 when the Goddess of the Earth
 and the Goddess of Wealth
 were restored to their thrones?
 Isn't this the day
 when by virtue of Kamban's death
 the Goddess of Learning herself
 was left in the lurch—dethroned and bereaved?

This is the evaluation of a contemporary poet who was struck with the tremendous influence that Kamban exerted on his contemporaries by propounding the eternal verities through the medium of poetry.

It is desirable that we review the message of Kamban for the benefit of a society which is in danger of losing the dimension of depth. To Kamban, the question of the meaning of Life is one of infinite seriousness, and in his Epic he silences the transitory concerns of life so effectively that he enables us to listen continually to the voice of the Ultimate Concern. His intuitive and powerful presentation of Truth, Beauty and Goodness gives sustenance to the springs of our own being, dissolves the rigidities

of the Ego and induces in us a new perspective of *Ananda*. The author starts this series in the hope that something of this *Ananda* may come through in his English renderings of Kamban.

THE MAIDEN BATTLE OF RAMA

We shall make a rapid survey of the maiden battle of Rama as described by Kamban. Visvamitra, the great sage, takes young Rama and Lakshmana from the custody of King Dasaratha, much against the latter's will, to a dreary desert. Kamban brings out the dreariness of the desert after taking the three characters through the luscious greenery of the forests and the cool rivers undulating down the hills, pausing awhile on plain ground and leaping down steep rocks. The alternate pauses and leaps of the rivers remind them of the rhythmic tinkle of the dancer's anklet. Now they come upon the unfriendly desert, dried, parched and moistureless. The poet, with a chuckle up his sleeve, compares the aridity of the desert with the minds of two incompatible quantities, namely, seekers after Ultimate Reality and harlots—with Reality-seekers, because in their ruthless search for the Ultimate they have gone beyond the warmth of passion and become detached; with the harlots, because they ply their passions for hire and thereby become devoid of the least vestige of passion. We note that the poet by his wit effects a skilful though startling linking of two contradictory elements.

It is in the setting of such a dreary desert that Visvamitra starts recounting to Rama the weird atrocities of Thadakai, the giantess. He says, "In her hand Thadakai holds a trident, around which snakes remain coiled. All living things she regards as her lawful prey. Ere long she will stuff them into her stomach."

As Visvamitra was giving this description, Rama raised his lovely head, which was adorned with honey-filled flowers, and asked, "The one who perpetrates such atrocities, where does she live?" Thus asked the One, who held the bow in the hand which was accustomed to hold the Conch.

Before Visvamitra could say that she resided in yonder mountain, came a huge black woman with crimson hair. She looked like a soot-black hill aflame with fire; the ends of her eyebrows trembled with anger. With pursed lips, she closed her cavernous mouth. She wore around her neck a string of elephants, the trunks of each animal pair remaining intertwined. She let out a roar, at which the Heavens, the outer space and the seven worlds trembled, at which thunder itself became hushed with fear.

"This is my impenetrable jurisdiction," she roared, "I have destroyed the wombs of things. Have you come here out of compassion to offer me your meat? Or have you come here, egged on by Fate, to your funeral end? Speak your purpose."

The Poet suggests the dynamics of the giantess in the following song:

She grabbed at the passing clouds
And, squeezing them with her hands,
She gobbled them ^up;

The huge hills she powdered
 with her kick;
 Her giant lips she bit hard
 with her giant teeth,
 Each of which looked like half a moon;
 She seized her trident
 And roared,
 "You will get this in your chest."

Visvamitra thought it was time for Rama to act, but the chivalrous Rama, out of deference to Thadakai's frail sex, refrained from putting arrows to his bow. Visvamitra plumbed all the soft thoughts of Rama, who stood idly by, even after the red-haired, white-toothed monster had threatened to kill.

"Oh bejewelled One!" implored the Rishi, "she has exhausted the entire gamut of conceivable evil. she has left us alive, because she thinks we are shrivelled-up things unworthy of being eaten. This is her only restraint. Would you look upon this monster as a woman and as a delicate damsel with her plaited hair-do dangling on her back?"

Visvamitra added, "I utter these words not in anger but out of a calm reflection upon inexorable duty. It is no part of your duty to show her pity. Kill her forthwith."

The fire-like demon guessed what the Rishi was whispering to Rama and she flung at him her purple trident-fire along with the leaping fire of her whitish eyes.

None saw Rama
 Touching the arrow
 Or bending his lovely bow,
 But they saw
 The falling pieces of the pulverised trident,
 Which the monster had plucked from the very tree of Death
 And flung headlong.

Thereupon the woman, whose complexion was made as if out of darkness, sent with the speed of sound a rain of stones sufficient to level up the seas. With a rain of arrows the hero thwarted it. Then Rama sent out an arrow which was as sharp and hot as an unkind word and which penetrated her chest and shot past the heart like good counsel given by the virtuous to the wicked. The blood that swelled out of her holed heart spread throughout the desert. It seemed as if the rose of the evening sunset had detached itself from the sky and fallen upon the earth.

In this maiden battle of Rama, the Lord of Death, who was pining to drink the blood of the Rakshasa race, smacked his lips with a foretaste of their blood.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

A SOUTHERN AIR

THE South is the land for names
for rolling rippling frames
to hold a township firm
or an elfin empalmed suburb
bewitchingly in cups
of syllables proud and fetching,
etching the silver vowels
on clear and resonant bells
of diamond-dentals cut
to music, sapphire-sibilants
washed in tune and labial
lapis lazulis shaped
to a phrase of melody.

Give me the South for names
of places,
and I will show you round
the gorgeous comb of Coimbatore
and rustling Tinnevelly; with
charming Chingleput, petite
or queen-like Tenkasi,
we can shake hands and fly
from Tambaram to Tranquebar
nigh mystery; or coast
along plumed Ernakulam
to boast of velvet Vellore
sighing for a taciturn girl
they call Nellore; then branch off
to singing Mangalore
or little laughing Guntakal
and bright blue-eyed Pollachi;
pious Papanasam
and sweet Cape Comorin;
Japanese Shimoga, shrewd
and ripe, and innocent Salem;
languorous Madurai,
devastatingly debonair;
and many others will stir
in your heart and ear and fancy
an air of old harmony,
a phrase of melody.

B. S. MARDHEKAR

(With acknowledgments to an old number of the Illustrated Weekly of India)

A THEORY OF FREEDOM

AN ARTICLE BY SISTER NIVEDITA

NOTE BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

Once, in 1909, at the Karmayogin office, Sri Aurobindo gave me an article to read. It was "A Theory of Freedom". I read and found it very significant and powerful. I asked him whether it had been written by him. He smiled and said, 'No. It is written by Nivedita.'

THERE IS no such thing as absolute freedom for the individual except in Mukti. Yet the individual has always striven for relative freedom in all directions. By this struggle for a freedom which he can understand, he makes himself ready for the supreme effort by which he will one day gain the absolute liberty or Mukti itself. Each one of the many forms of freedom is an image or symbol of that Transcendent Freedom, and as such has the same claim upon the reverence, even of those who do not understand it, as an image of God worshipped by others has upon one who does not worship it. The man who sees freedom without striving for it is, in so far, a lost soul, for he passes by the open door of Mukti.

There are two ways in which freedom of any kind can be manifested when it is present. These are renunciation and conquest. That which we would conquer, we must first understand. We have to enter into it, to wrestle with it on given terms, to offer our very lives to it and at last to win the victory. Every success has cost at least one human sacrifice. Mastery is a kind of freedom. We cannot defeat that which has us in its power.

Neither can we renounce what we have not conquered. We cannot be independent of a thing which is admittedly stronger than we. In renunciation we attain true freedom, for in renunciation we transcend strength as well as weakness. But of these two things there can be no question that one leads downwards into deeper bondage and the other outward into free air and liberty; nor can anyone be in doubt as to which does which. Conquest is an antecedent of renunciation. True renunciation of anything is a step to Mukti.

A man struggles for freedom, which is mastery, all his life. If he does not do so, he is not a man. He may be a clod or an idiot, a drunkard or a parasite. A man struggles and struggles to be free. Some strive for freedom for themselves alone, setting up self-will or appetite in the place of God. These are the criminals, the mad men, the failures of society. We find sometimes amongst such the nature of a child. To a child there is little difference between good and evil. He will as readily pursue the sense-gratification of robbing a pantry, as that of plucking a flower or catching a butter-

fly. He throws his whole heart into the effort of the moment and is, withal, full of love and lovableness. This class of child-souls furnishes the Jagais and Madhais of the annals of religion, the criminals who became saints. The true criminal is steeped in *tamas* and egotism. He miscalls license by the name of liberty. License is not liberty for the simple reason that true liberty presupposes mastery. The profligate is the victim of his own vices. He lies helpless at their feet. He does not even enjoy his appetites. His life is spent like that of a wild animal between ungovernable desire and ungovernable fear. He who would be free must first learn to govern. One who is uncontrolled is anything but free.

The free man is that man whose will is efficient. The first enemy that the will has to encounter is ignorance, the second is unbridled impulse. That these may be overcome, we submit ourselves, while the body is yet weak, to intellectual education and are initiated, at physical maturity, into the world of the ideals of our race. Such is the provision made by humanity in order that we may live strenuously, keeping the body beneath our feet, see the ideas unclouded by our own feebleness or by any grossness, and will efficiently for the triumphant achievement of the highest that we perceive. To toil, to see, to will, and to attain, this is the four-fold debt that we incur to our forefathers by the very fact of birth. A man must arrive, strive to the utmost. And since without possible success there can be no intensity of effort he must often succeed. A man's striving must begin, moreover, as soon after the moment when visions come to him as he judges fit. There can be no ruling, no dating, no circumscribing of his effort from outside. Human beings are born, by incessant work to increase their own faculty, by ceaseless striving to add to their inheritance. They are born to disdain limitation. It is decreed in the Counsels of God that man shall be confronted by destiny only to defy and master it; that the impossible shall to him become the possible, the one inexorable law of human life is effort to the utmost.

There is such a thing as the body-politic. Even the body-politic, however, has to conform to the spiritual claim of individual man, his right, by hopeful struggle to find Mukti.

The political unit furnishes new and more complex objects of attainment to the parts of which it is made up. New rights, new tasks, new ambitions dawn upon us in relation to our political position. Again, nothing must defeat the right of the soul to the utmost of activity, the utmost of sacrifice; my right to serve, my right to suffer, my right to love, on the highest and widest area of which I am capable, must be defeated by nothing in the world save the greater power of my brother to do these things with equal and added nobility. And if I find this in him, since it is the ideal that I worship and not myself as the embodiment of that ideal, I shall place his feet upon my head and follow him. For in him I find the ideal more clearly than in myself. Nothing in the world has a right to interfere with knowledge working thus hand in hand with love. Brothers standing side by side as citizens and loyal children of a common mother must be impeded by nothing in working out their duty and offering their lives to her.

If a man directs his political activities towards the interests of himself or a section of his people against the welfare of his country as a whole, he is a traitor and the whole weight of the body-politic has a right to oppose and thwart him. But if his work for a class be dominated by the love of his country then it is harmonious with the national well-being and is service and not treachery. A nation has the right to serve its country to the utmost. A nation, moreover, has this one duty alone. In serving its land, it raises itself. It fulfils its debt to humanity and to the world. It recreates its own mother. A child has a right to spurn and defeat anything that could come between him and his mother, anything that would prevent his serving her to the farthest limit of his own capacity, anything that would make him into servant or slave in the house where he was born a son.

But we must study the position of the individual in relation to this task of the body-politic. The land must be served by the nation and by the individual as a part of the nation; not as divided from it and out of relation to it. This is the truth so clearly seen by our forefathers. This is the perception to which caste witnessess so strongly. It is true that we have forgotten the meaning of caste. We see it as the limitation or assertion of our rights instead of regarding it as the regimentation of our duties. It is always thus in an age of degradation when a people become passive and fall into static decay. We ought to be thankful for any blow that might rouse us up from so sluggish a condition. If we translate rights into duties and apply the new word as the key, many a problem will be unlocked. By our organisation into castes, we the children of India were at one time able to divide up our labours and responsibilities amongst ourselves, giving to each group the task best suited to its capacity more or less successfully but denying the right of none to his share of the household fire, to his own form of happiness and to his own mode of self-expression. Caste was also our school of self-government, and gives to this day a sense of the value to the community of our personal opinion and a measure of the decorum which is obligatory in its expression.

But all the castes put together will in this age constitute only the social expression of Hinduism, and Hinduism is no longer conterminous with the national unity. That now includes many elements once strange. Hinduism itself, moreover, as befits a progressive unit has grown incalculably in its own size and complexity. It consists of a certain common fundament of orthodoxy plus the reforming sects of the Mahomedan period plus the reforming sects of the present period. All these parts have an equal right to the name of Hindu. And similarly Hindu, Jain and Mussalman have an equal right to the name of Indian. The national unity is built on place—not on language or creed or tradition, as some would have us believe, but on home. The interest of the children is one with that of the home, therefore they cannot be divided.

It follows that the task before us is to educate ourselves in the consciousness of our own unity. We have to saturate our own subconscious mind with the thought of it. We have so to make it a part of ourselves that we react instinctively on its behalf.

Perfect harmony and mental cohesion of the body-politic is the necessary antecedent of political mastery which is another name for that relative good which we call national freedom.

There was an age when man had no family. He was incapable of the faithfulness and sustained co-operation that that institution demands. Today, we are born with the family-honour in our blood. Even the youngest child quivers under an attack on father and mother, the feeblest resents the attack of an outsider on members of the household. We are all loyal to the head of the house, all feel the delight of sacrifice for the good of the rest. Our ideals are the perfect wife, the stainless widow, the loving daughter. The mother is the central passion of her son's life. The grave tenderness of the father is the cherished memory of the endless years. In the battle of life the struggle for self is transformed into the struggle for those we love.

An age will come when men shall be as tightly knit to the thought of country; our feeling for the family is to be a gauge for our devotion to nation and motherland. By what we have already attained in the one, we can measure what we must next attain in the other. We have received promotion in the school of self-realisation. Having learnt the lesson of the family we have next to learn that of nationality. As the individual has become the instrument of the one, so he has now to become an eager tool of the other. All that force which moves in him as the vitality of egoism has to find in him a transformation-point where it is converted into force of patriotism. And that this may not constitute a mere term to the aggression of the wolf-like pack, it must be lifted and redeemed by a great and holy love. Love is the spiritual reality behind the symbolism of mother and child. Even the living human mother is only the outward and visible emblem of her own infinite love. Can we not see the still vaster love that finds expression as the Mother-land? It is said that there is no tie like that which binds together all the children of the single marriage. Are we not melted into unity, then, by the common love of the common land? As the human brain converts the physical energy of food into the spiritual energy of thought, so must each Indian man become an organ for the conversion of the individual struggle for individual efficiency and mastery. Victory will remain in the end with that combatant in whom the highest mind and character are indissolubly united with the greatest love—*yato dharmastato jayah*.

A vague emotion is not enough, however. We must serve and suffer for the objects of our love. How we serve and suffer for the family! No purpose of unity is to be trusted that has not been hammered into shape on the anvil of pain as well as joy. How are we to provide for ourselves the necessary education? A child, as we have seen, in order to be made free—to be enabled to will what he wills, freely and efficiently—is put under authority and expected to engage himself in the struggle for knowledge. How are we to recognise this process in the struggle for nationalisation? We want to have ties outside as strong as family ties. How is this to be done? We want to create that new ethics which substitutes the lines of co-operative organisation for those of unity of kindred. In what form can this be brought to the individual? In what way can he be put in direct personal contact with the lesson he is to learn? What sym-

bol can we deliberately create in order to catch for ourselves the end of the thread by which we may hope to unravel the secret?

The first lesson we have to learn is that of implicit obedience to rightfully constituted authority. This is not the same thing as obedience to one's father. There we have the tie of love creating an impulse to self-subordination. Here the father has delegated his authority without in any way transferring the affection that belongs to him alone. We soon learn, farther, that the obedience required of us by the external authority is the same whether our heart be in it or not. Perfection of obedience can hardly be realised in the case of one whom we do not respect. But rigorous obedience to one whom we respect but do not love is a very important part of a complete training. This lesson can be learnt in many ways through our relation to our school-master, the employer, the captain of the ship, the station-master, the leader of an expedition and so on. Authority carries with it responsibility. We must learn to subordinate ourselves at a moment's notice to him of whose responsibility we avail ourselves. Authority without responsibility cannot be considered here since it is unlawfully constituted and amounts to spiritual anarchism. Lawful authority is permeated and regulated by its own responsibility: we cannot concede the one without conceding the other. And implicit obedience is the reverse of the medal, the complement of the quality, the other extreme of this pair of opposites.

He who obeys best rules best. He who rules best is most perfect in obedience. Here we come to the question of the quality of true obedience and therefore to that of the education it demands. A slave cannot obey. He only does as he is forced, a very different thing. Virtue in the slave may demand wrong-doing at the bidding of his master, a thing intolerable to the human conscience. His struggle for moral freedom may demand of him a crime. "When I was in slavery," said an American negro, "I always stole. *It was my only way of feeling free.*" True obedience is unbroken but it is free. It is not exacted by force; it is rendered whole-heartedly by those who perceive that ruled and ruler are working together for a common end, collaborating in the demonstration of a single principle which commands their mutual assent. Obedience which is not this, either in fact or in potentiality, is not worth receiving. It is a fact that no man of ungoverned impulses can successfully exercise authority. One who wishes to bear rule has first to possess himself a certain amount of self-control. True obedience is founded on respect for character. It follows from the mutualness of this object that the highest forms of rules theoretically are those in which subject and sovereign occasionally change places. From this point of view the republic is the supreme political form. There are other aspects of the question, however, which make a permanent monarchy practically desirable. England and some other western countries have compromised very ingeniously between these two institutions by the establishment of what is known as constitutional monarchy, where the actual government is in the hands of the people through their political parties and the advisory Cabinets, while the necessities of symbolism and ritual are met by the royal house in which the sovereign himself represents national stability and unity, behind the fluctuations of party.

The political system in England is only the crown of an immense life of discipline and co-ordinated co-operation. It is in thus giving them their immense capacity for democratic organisation at a moment's notice that the actual superiority of Englishmen lies and not in personal qualities. They breathe the atmosphere of this disciplined co-operation from their very cradle. They study it on the cricket field and in the football team. They are broken in to it by the fag-system. Every small boy when he arrives at school becomes the fag of a big one who acts as his protector against all others though he bullies and thrashes him and makes him fetch and carry for himself like the veriest slave, nor is there any sense of social rank in the choice of the fag and his guardian. The big boy may be the son of a tailor and his fag the son of a peer. They know no other relation during their school years than that of master and slave. Once the relationship is established, the heir to an earldom has to black the boots of the son of his father's shoemaker without demur. The very fact of sending a boy of ten or eleven away from home to live amongst boys who are not of his own kindred shows the value which the English place on the life that lies outside and beyond the family. The boy who lives at school has already begun to make his own way in the great world apart from his family. He early learns the reserve and privacy that belong to the deeper emotions. He cultivates a whole new series of relationships and practices, the courtesies and restraints as well as the daring and personal pride that are due to these. He is in fact an individual beginning to catch a glimpse of his own powers, dreaming great dreams as to his own future and gaining experience daily in the exercise of his personal freedom. The fault of the training lies undoubtedly in the brutality and unscrupulousness which it is apt to engender. It breeds men who may be left in safety with our silver, but are utterly without restraining morality about the political rights of others. A man who has been through an English boys' school is apt to think that might is right and that to what is not material and concrete the laws of morality do not apply. That these are the faults of their education the whole of the history of their country shows.

Yet strength is good and civic and national unity is good; public order based not on force or fear, but on the mutual respect and good will of ruler and ruled is also good, nay, even essential to mankind. What is known as political freedom is not perhaps the absolute goal. Yet it is a relative duty of such dignity and rank that without it men are not altogether men, just as we cannot conceive of one utterly incapable of the virtues of the family attaining to Mukti. It is through perfect manhood that we achieve that which is beyond humanity, and perfect manhood includes the citizen and the patriot. 'The weak cannot attain to *That*,' say the Upanishads.

In that community which is made one not by ties of blood and alliance but by the infinitely subtle and spiritual bond of the common love for the common home, a man must play his part. Freedom within the nation is not freedom to enter into this duty or remain outside, it is freedom to make obedience or authority our own, according to that for which we are best fitted. And freedom for a nation amongst the comity of nations is to stand unfettered in its quest for self-expression.

GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the June issue)

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

THE seed of devotion to Sri Krishna was sown in me in my infancy by my grandfather. He was a man of simple habits, filled with religious notions. My great grandfather was also of a saintly nature and was devoted to Sri Krishna.

Once in my childhood when I fell a victim to typhoid, I recall my grandfather's devotional songs which proved a healing balm and softly lulled me to sleep.

When I came to know that his end was miserable, I felt a significant shock. Since a man of his religious temperament had to die so miserably what might be in store for me? That was the first reaction in my raw brain to his death.

Life stories of devotees read by my father led me to the conviction that one can see Sri Krishna if one chooses. And the question arose in my mind again and again: when Nabhaji and others could compel Him to appear out of the image, why should it be an impossibility for me? Was this saint's life not worthy of being emulated?

Thus religious environment, chanting of devotional songs, rejoicing in ceremonial functions constituted the basic structure of my boyhood. While I was not yet ten, from time to time I repaired to the seclusion of a nearby garden and sang devotional songs, invoking Him to the best of my capacity. But often it struck me that something was lacking. The call was not so forceful as to compel His response. I tried again and yet again.

So long as I was in school I hardly found a few days at a stretch to devote all my time and energy to my heart's call. And so I looked forward to the month of December when the fear of examination would be over. But something or other often happened and the heart's aspiration never got fulfilled.

My early education began in a village primary school in which country gurus did not hesitate to spare the cane on their pupils. They used to sit on a stool, a cane in hand, and we on the floor using pieces of chalk for writing. The cane was then the means of imposing knowledge.

My schoolmates took delight in seeing the guru administering the cane on my tender body. Parents never made any protest. They took it for granted that it was necessary to make me studious and industrious.

None was to blame. The fault was mine. I was neither clever nor cunning. So I suffered and bore the pain like a dumb lamb. In such conditions began my first lesson in reading and writing.

After a time a tutor was appointed to teach me English. He was a man of violent temper. His method was to make me learn everything by heart.

It was so difficult for my stone-like dull memory to retain anything. Just one slip and a slap was there. But thanks to his beating I secured top marks not only in English but in other subjects as well and was given a double promotion.

This proved very harmful to me and left bitter memories. When I was admitted to a town school, I was loaded with so many subjects that I could not bear the burden in the weak state of health through which I was passing. I was so dull that what my cousin learnt within half an hour I took two hours to grasp and I forgot it the next day.

It was not that I preferred play to my studies or neglected them from laziness. From the time I was very young I worked hard, forced myself out of bed before dawn at 3 a.m. but nothing led me to success in studies.

I had no love for sports or games. My hours out of school were spent not in them but in studies and yet I had only a rudiment of book knowledge and a scanty education.

Perhaps it was ordained that I should remain unlettered and thus kept free from the pride of being a dignified scholar or a learned man.

When I entered the Ashram life it took me more than six years to finish reading *Conversations with the Mother*. At my request P agreed to read it for me but no sooner did he start reading than my mind became a market place and not a line could find access to my brain. Even the letters of Sri Aurobindo had no attraction for me. Such was the state of my mind when I was admitted to the school of Yoga.

P, being allotted eight hours' work a day, expressed his inability to continue the class. Then the Mother sent him word, 'Tell X he does not require intellectual labour.'

My physical mother was a living image of simplicity and of religious feelings. I came to know that when I was born she was beside herself with joy. Once a hermit had predicted that her son would be a yogi. This reminds me of a voice I heard while at Pondicherry: "You are born for this Yoga."

When this was referred to the Master, he said, "Yes."

Till I came to Pondicherry none in my family could sense that I had a leaning towards Yoga. So there was a stir in my whole community. They wondered how I who was not seen taking any part even in the National Movement could resort to Yoga. (On coming to the Ashram I developed a great love for my country.)

To escape my wife's notice I would do *japa* within the mosquito curtain and at times pretend to be ill. But it never occurred to me that I could ever do anything worth mentioning.

I was not blessed with any trait of saintly nature. Before coming in touch with the Mother, I do not recollect having had a single vision or experience although tears of devotion filled my eyes when I sang. Except for aspiration for Sri Krishna I had nothing in my possession for the great journey.

Just after my student life, one day I happened to attend the lecture of a pundit of a high order. I was so influenced by his speech that I approached him for initiation. In reply he gave me a sharp rebuke:

“You must see life first. It is a crime to desert life in this way. Many, like dry leaves, have been blown off the Path by the storm of passion. When you have learnt the lessons of life in full and the time is ripe to take a forward step things will arrange themselves by the powerful hand of Providence. So do not be rash in your decisions.” I returned home but resolved not to marry till I had earned enough to stand on my own legs.

Then there came a time when money became my God, my all. For eight years there was not even a trace of God in my life. During that period I got married.

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

THE INDIAN TRADITION

EARLY LITERARY RECORDS

INDIA has been exceptionally lucky in having preserved an almost unbroken record of her ancient tradition in the texts sacred and profane that have come down to us from the remotest antiquity. She has the Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Upanishads, the Sutras and the Great Epics, covering a period of approximately three millenniums of her early culture, which present to us a sufficiently detailed picture of her civilisation in its formative stages. None of these documents can be dated with any certainty for the scholars differ widely in their opinions on this point. But all are agreed as to the relative *order* of their composition. We shall hazard a guess about the dates based on the most reliable authorities. But the more important thing is to understand their true import in the history of our culture. Before entering into a detailed consideration of this point, it would be well to have a broad general view of these records.

First, as to the question of authorship. Indian tradition is content to ascribe them all—or practically all—to sages or Rishis who are supposed to have had access to divine sources of knowledge and inspiration and are therefore considered to be infallible. Modern research is inclined to disparage this view; indeed it is more keen to “debunk” the old authors and even to ascribe to them motives not wholly beyond reproach. Thus, the authors of the Brahmanas are sometimes charged with deliberate cheating: they wrote those sacrificial texts, it is alleged, mainly with a view to ensure for themselves a fat *dakṣiṇā*! A more reasonable view seems to be that the authors were human beings endowed with gifts that varied from person to person, that some, indeed a good many of the authors of the hymns and the Upanishads, and the original authors of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, were absolutely exceptional in calibre, and that there was a fair amount of very mediocre and even tedious work that has found a place among these ancient documents.

Next as to the question of age. Śrī Aurobindo ascribes a “remote antiquity” to the hymns of the Rigveda and we may perhaps leave it at that. The dates proposed by scholars range from 30,000 B.C. to 1200 B. C. so that there is hardly any meeting ground. Much depends on how the Mohenjodaro relics, some of which are definitely known to belong to the third millennium B. C., are found ultimately to relate to the Vedic hymns. If, as is quite possible, the hieroglyphs on the Mohenjodaro seals are found in the end to have been written in the Vedic language and are quotations from the Vedic mantras, then we shall have firmer ground to stand upon. The dates of the Brahmanas would depend largely on the dates finally given to the Hymns. For the present, we might proceed on Tilak’s hypothesis assigning them to a period between 2500 and 1500 B.C. The sutras have been in a recent authoritative study

given the dates 800-500 B.C. If this is accepted, then the original version of the Mahabharata, which is mentioned by name in one of the oldest Sutras, goes back to about 1000 B.C. The Ramayana might then be a little earlier. The rest of the Mahabharata which has been freely interpolated was probably made up during the first millennium B.C.

We know for certain that much of this ancient record was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. But when was it first put down in writing? Again, nobody knows for certain; we can only draw certain inferences. If the Mohenjodaro script was Vedic, then obviously the hymns must have been reduced to writing at a very early age, for the script as it appears on the seals is in a highly developed form. Some scholars are inclined to find evidence of writing in the Rigveda itself. In any case it seems almost unthinkable that the whole enormous mass of the Vedic hymns were compiled in the four Samhitas in a well-arranged order—and this was long before the Brahmana books were composed for the latter mention the Samhitas as the main texts for study—without the help of writing materials.

More important than these questions of authorship, date and manner of composition, is the striking manner in which these writings so widely removed from one another in date resemble one another in their approach to the problems with which they deal. Let us illustrate.

Long before the Samhitas assumed their present form, there were initiates who had been seeking to find a way out of our mortal state into the realms of Freedom and Bliss; they are known in the Vedas as the “early fathers”, *pūrve pitaraḥ*, the men who found the paths, *aṅgirasah*. These early pioneers apparently left a record of their achievements, perhaps even of their methods in the form of a floating mass of incantations, *nivid*. If we are to believe the tradition recorded in the Vishnu Purana, the number of original hymns out of which the present collections were made by Veda-Vyasa for the convenience of us mortals of an Iron Age was not less than a hundred thousand. In any case, the existing Samhitas are a mere fragment of what was once known, a kind of Selected Works for the use of students.

The same phenomena seem to be repeated in the Brahmanas. These works, like the Samhitas, are the end products of a long formative age, as they themselves show. For they contain many references to the discussions that had been taking place of minute points of ritual and they frequently record the opinions of different masters who do not agree. The Upanishads too, especially the longer ones, the Chandogya and the Brihadaranyaka, give ample evidence of the widespread spiritual urge that seems for a time to have swept the whole body of India's Kshatriyas and Brahmanas. We can assume then that these works too are a mere fraction of a whole mass of literature, now unfortunately lost.

When we come to the period of the Sutras and the Great Epics, one is almost overwhelmed by the mass of intellectual activity that must have preceded these encyclopaedic works. The Sutras by their brevity hide the long discussion that gave them birth; even so they do not conceal the fact that there were other opinions

different from those they care to record. The Epics, at least in their present heterogeneous form, are obviously a compilation from many sources. They reveal by their contents that almost everything that could be known at the time had formed the subject of long and vigorous discussion and only what was found to be best suited to the temperament of the compilers—Veda-Vyasa again, according to the Indian tradition—found its way into the books; the rest has been irrevocably lost.

These three groups of works resemble one another in another respect. All of them contain two distinct elements, one meant for the masses, the other for the initiate and elect. No attempt has been made to keep them separate, perhaps in the belief that whatever will not be understood or appreciated will be automatically left out. This explains at least in part what has been often commented on as bizarre, the sudden transitions we notice in these old texts from the sublime to the most commonplace.

Thus, in the Rigveda, the most homogeneous of the ancient texts, the tenth Mandala contains side by side with the grand hymn of creation the gambler's lament and other pieces equally "disreputable". The Atharvaveda is frankly a compilation for the use of the householder and the magician-priest; but here too there appear in the same Books sublime pieces of poetry and hymnal. The Brahmanas again are mainly intended for the use of the ritualist and priest; their main purpose is to justify in detail the minute routine of the various sacrifices. And yet we find in them "popular" stories which could be enjoyed by the masses; indeed some scholars have sought the origins of the later Sanskrit drama in the interesting dialogues that these dry works of ritual have preserved. The Sutras are of a very technical nature, of interest only to the specialist—the priest, the jurist, the teacher. But the Epics will appeal to everybody, to the priest and pundit, to the philosopher and the man in the street.

This comprehensiveness of the ancient records made for catholicity. It gave to our culture a width and variety which was well in consonance with the continental proportions of our land.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

THE MYSTERY OF ATLANTIS

THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC VIEW AND THE OLD TRADITIONS

(Continued from the July issue)

III

SRI AUROBINDO ON ATLANTIS

THE mass of humanity evolves slowly, containing in itself all stages of the evolution from the material and the vital man to the mental man. A small minority has pushed beyond the barriers, opening the doors to occult and spiritual knowledge and preparing the ascent of the evolution beyond mental man into spiritual and supramental being. Sometimes this minority has exercised an enormous influence as in Vedic India, Egypt or, according to tradition, in Atlantis, and determined the civilisation of the race, giving it a strong stamp of the spiritual or the occult...¹

If the tradition of Atlantis is correct, it is that of a progress which went to the extreme of occult knowledge, but could go no farther. In the India of Vedic times we have the record left of the other line of achievement, that of spiritual self-discovery; occult knowledge was there, but kept subordinate.²

...man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and the mastery of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but undeveloped in heart and spirit, becomes only an inferior kind of *Asura* using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal. According to dim traditions and memories of the old world, of such a nature was the civilisation of old Atlantis, submerged beneath the Ocean when its greatness and its wickedness became too heavy a load for the earth to bear, and our own legends of the *Asuras* represent a similar consciousness of a great but abortive development in humanity.³

Q. Paul Brunton in his book, A Search in Secret Egypt, repeatedly speaks of Atlantis. I always thought belief in Atlantis was only an imagination of the Theosophists.

*A. Atlantis is not an imagination. Plato heard of this submerged continent from Egyptian sources and geologists are also agreed that such a submersion was one of the great facts of earth history.*⁴ (22.6.1936)

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome One (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1958), p. 3

² *Ibid.*, p. 5

³ *The National Value of Art* (Fourth Ed., 1953), pp. 19-20.

⁴ *Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual*, 1955, p. 29.

IV

COMMENT BY THE EDITOR

I

WE have seen what is the modern scientific view of the mystery of Atlantis. It tells us that the tremendous volcanic eruption at Santorin (or Santorini), one of the islands in the Aegean Sea some 70 miles north of Crete, in *c.* 1450 B.C. by radiocarbon dating, was responsible simultaneously for two facts. First, the destruction, datable on archaeological grounds to about the same period, of Minoan civilisation in its typical form—the civilisation of the great palaces like those of Knossos and Phaestos—in Crete and its neighbouring islands. Second, the creation of the legend of Atlantis as reported by Plato after the story brought home by the Athenian lawmaker Solon from the priests of Sais in Egypt, whom he had visited round about 590 B.C.—the legend of an island-continent where a highly developed civilisation, once very virtuous but later decadent and grown greedy enough to wage unprovoked war on both Europe and Asia, was first defeated by the Greeks and then destroyed by earthquakes and floods which sent it to the bottom of the sea. The physical dimensions and the chronological position of Plato's Atlantis can be suited to the Cretan empire by assuming that Solon mistook hundreds for thousands—a confusion arising not unnaturally from the shapes of the two Egyptian hieroglyphics concerned.

On a close scrutiny by us, the scientific view emerged as very well founded but in need of a slight emendation. The Cretan civilisation suffered not only by operation of natural forces: it suffered also by a sack from the mainland of Greece just prior to the earthquakes and floods. The double destruction brings the modern picture into closer touch with the Platonic legend. By a diversion into Egyptian history and literature we brought further support to it and synchronised *c.* 1450 B.C. with the time of the exodus of the Israelites under Moses from Egypt after a series of abnormal phenomena of nature whose essential character is preserved, in the midst of much exaggeration and invention, by the Biblical account of the "Ten Plagues".

However, both by Plato's narrative and by extra-Platonic tradition we could conjecture that the disaster which Crete met with did not completely fill the role of the disappearance of Atlantis and that the very name "Atlantis" seemed to point beyond Crete. The suspected inadequacies we set out to examine in juxtaposition with whatever references Sri Aurobindo has made to Atlantis and its fate.

2

Atlantis, according to the "dim traditions and memories of the old world", which Sri Aurobindo mentions, was at the same time master of science and master of occultism and it used both of them for Asuric, for Titanic purposes. Further, the destruction connected with it involved the land no less than the civilisation. Can Crete still qualify?

Crete was certainly advanced in some scientific directions: its drainage system and its flush closets anticipated modern technical skill, and we may take stock in general of the words of H. G. Wells: "There must have been some active and curious minds in Knossos, for later on the Greeks told legends of a certain Cretan artificer, Daedalus, who attempted to make some sort of flying-machine, perhaps a glider which collapsed and fell into the sea."¹ Actually, Daedalus did better than Wells records. Not he but, as Apollodorus recounts, his rash son Icarus came to grief by flying too near the sun so that the glue melted and the wings dropped off. Leonard Cottrell rightly remarks: "Daedalus, a practical mechanic, made no such mistake.... He flew on, unscathed, to the court of King Cocalus, in Sicily."² Daedalus, we may recall, is also the traditional architect of the Cretan labyrinth. Engineering enterprise is thus attributable to ancient Crete. But this is a long way still from the triumphs of modern science in the true sense.

As for occultism, we know that the Mystery-cults—Eleusinian and Orphic—prevalent in Greece and elsewhere were connected with Cretan rites too. As Sidney Spencer tells us, "Orphic teaching is also known on a number of gold tablets found in tombs in South Italy and Crete, where brotherhoods were established at an early date."³ And many of the Mysteries revolved round the "Great Mother", the Earth-Goddess. Now, in the words of H. D. Kitto, "many cult images have been discovered in Crete, and they make it fairly clear that this people worshipped a goddess.... The goddess was evidently a Nature-goddess, symbolic of the fertility of the soil.... Cults based on the mysterious life-giving powers of nature... taught doctrines of rebirth, regeneration, immortality... the goddesses [of ancient Greece] came down in a straight line from Minoan Crete."⁴

What the Mysteries, with their various myths, sought to produce in their participants was a state of "blessedness". And here, explains A. C. Bouquet, "Blessedness is achieved, not by straight thinking but by obedient acceptance of doctrine, which is administered by a sort of spoon-feeding. The knowledge so administered is occult rather than rational."⁵ But obviously here is a mystico-occult ceremony: a psychological transformation is aimed at through a sacramental ritual, dramatising—as we learn from accounts—the act of dying and resurrection, ending in "a vision representing one or more of the divinities concerned".⁶ Spencer observes: "it is clear that for some initiates the rites of the Mysteries were the vehicle not only of a genuine devotion to the divine, a real inner change of heart and mind, but of an actual experience of mystical apprehension and mystical union."⁷ Sri Aurobindo

¹ *A Short History of the World* (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1949), pp. 67-8

² *The Bull of Minos* (Pan, London, 1960), p. 113

³ *Mysticism in World Religions* (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 126-7.

⁴ *The Greeks* (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1951), pp. 18, 19, 20.

⁵ *Comparative Religion* (Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1945), p. 65

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ *Op cit*, p. 157

himself has compared the essential movement of the Mysteries everywhere to the Vedic cult: "there was indeed almost everywhere an age of the Mysteries in which men of deeper knowledge and self-knowledge established their practices, significant rites, symbols, secret lore within or on the border of the more primitive exterior religions. This took different forms in different countries; in Greece there were the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries, in Egypt and Chaldea the priests and their occult lore and magic, in Persia the Magi, in India the Rishis."¹ The prevalence of the Mysteries in ancient Crete, therefore, does not point to the sort of Asuric civilisation for which old Atlantis, according to Sri Aurobindo, provides the legendary exemplar.

Moreover, the destruction which Galanopoulos and others have shown of Cretan civilisation owing to the volcanic eruption of Santorin left practically intact the island that was its very centre. Crete did not disappear by either a submersion or a blow-up.

At the same time, there is no denying that the latest archaeological theory answers to a good deal of the data we have from Plato, once these data are seen from a certain standpoint which is both novel and legitimate. We may also acknowledge that when Sri Aurobindo refers to geologists he must be having some older authorities in mind, whose word, because of new researches, is no longer current.

The older scientific evidence is well brought out in the second volume of H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (London, 1893), where we are told also of the esoteric tradition of Atlanteans as magicians and occultists.

We discover the great Thomas Huxley removing the red signal: "There is nothing, so far as I am aware, in the biological or geological evidence at present accessible, to render untenable the hypothesis that an area of the Mid-Atlantic or Pacific sea-bed as big as Europe should have been upheaved as high as Mont Blanc and have subsided again at any time since the Palaeozoic epoch if there were any grounds for entertaining it."² The general possibility is granted more positively by W. Pengelly, F.R.S., F.G.S.: "Was there, as some have believed, an Atlantis—a continent or archipelago of large islands occupying the area of the north Atlantic? There is, perhaps, nothing unphilosophical in the hypothesis. For, since, as geologists state, 'The Alps have acquired 4,000 and even in some places more than 10,000 feet of their present altitude since the commencement of the Eocene epoch' (Lyell's *Principles*, p. 256, 2nd Ed.)—a Post-Miocene depression might have carried the hypothetical Atlantis into almost abysmal depths."³

Dr. Berthold Seeman, Ph.D., F.L.S., V.-P.A.S., going by the evidence of botany, has a passage very much in tone at the end like Sri Aurobindo's answer to a disciple. Seemann says: "The facts which botanists have accumulated for reconstructing these lost maps of the world are rather comprehensive; and they have not been backward in demonstrating the former existence of several large tracts of solid land in parts

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1946), Foreword, p VI

² P. 825

³ Pp. 822-3.

now occupied by great oceans... The singular correspondence of the present flora of the Southern United States with that of the lignite flora of Europe induces them to believe that, in the Miocene period, Europe and America were connected by a land passage, of which Iceland, Madeira and the other Atlantic islands are remnants; that, in fact, the story of Atlantis, which an Egyptian priest told to Solon, is not purely fictitious, but rests upon a solid historical basis."¹

An argument is also adduced by analogy. For, while the existence of Atlantis was still debated, that of a continent—"Lemuria"—in the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and India was taken for granted by most scientists in the nineteenth century. Thus Ernst Haeckel surmises: "Probably Southern Asia was not the earliest cradle of the human race; but Lemuria, a continent that lay to the South of Asia, and sank later on beneath the surface of the Indian Ocean."² But, if scientists could swallow a Lemuria, why should anyone strain at an Atlantis? The same kind of botanical and zoological evidence spoke up for it. And perhaps the most telling testimony of geology came from sea-soundings. Blavatsky sums it up:

"The sea-soundings undertaken by H.M.S. 'Challenger' and the 'Dolphin' have established the fact that a huge elevation some 3,000 miles in length, projecting upwards from the abysmal depths of the Atlantic, extends from a point near the British Islands southwards, curving round near Cape de Verde, and running in a south-easterly direction along the West African coast. This elevation averages some 9,000 feet in height, and rises above the waves at the Azores, Ascension and other places. In the ocean depths around the neighbourhood of the former the ribs of a once massive piece of land have been discovered."³ After writing this, Blavatsky draws upon the *Scientific American*, July 28, 1872, for the characteristics of that massive piece of land: "The inequalities, the mountains and valleys of its surface could never have been produced in accordance with any known laws for the disposition of sediment, nor by submarine elevation; but, on the contrary, must have been carved by agencies acting above the water-level."

Blavatsky has collected anthropological and ethnological observations too. Quite an impressive array of scientific pronouncements is put before us. But today science has made short work of the Lemurian hypothesis, and the Atlantean seems to fare no better. All that can be urged is no more than the information we come across in the *Encyclopedia Americana* (New York, 1966) "Geologists have discovered that the coast line of Western Europe did once run further in the direction of America than now..." But the *Encyclopaedia* at once continues: "its submergence seems to have taken place long before historic times."⁴ And even if the event had occurred in historic times, would it not have covered only what Sir Gavin de Beer calls "the continental

¹ P 825.

² P 833.

³ P. 837 Blavatsky (p. 826) quotes also W. Duppa Crotch, M A , F.L S., on the findings of the "Challenger"

⁴ Vol II, p 507a col 2.

shelf which extends a little way away from dry land” and what he refers to as “the submergence of small regions”? Can it have any bearing on a whole lost continent in the Atlantic Ocean?

The *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* (London, 1959) has the following report on the topic in hand: “Cores taken in 1936 from the Atlantic floor between Newfoundland and Ireland and others obtained in 1947 between Madeira and Martinique, together with reliable estimates of the thickness of the bottom sediments, disproved a North Atlantic Continent in Pleistocene and later times”¹—that is to say, in the last one million years. Even *Australopithecus* and *Pithecanthropus*, leave aside Rhodesian Man and Neanderthal Man, were not evolved before this.²

The story of Crete would appear definitely to have something to do with Plato's account of lost Atlantis. But that is not the same thing as saying: “All accounts transmit nothing else than a memory of Crete.” The Atlantis-legend has more to it, and in Plato himself, as we have already remarked, the “submersion” of the island and the name of the submerged centre of a powerful civilisation are pointers beyond Crete. We have also noted Egypt's awareness that Crete as a country continued to exist and that its people's name was “Keftiu”, not anything like “Atlanteans”. The priests of Sais appear to have inextricably mixed up two memories, one comparatively recent (about 900 years old for them) and the other very ancient. How ancient we cannot say for sure, but some general notion we may form by considering a statement of Sri Aurobindo's in the same context where he speaks of the “occult knowledge” of Atlantis and the “spiritual self-discovery” of Vedic India.

“We may say,” Sri Aurobindo writes, “that here in India the reign of Intuition came first, intellectual Mind developing afterwards in the later philosophy and science. But in fact the mass of men at the time, it is quite evident, lived entirely on the material plane, worshipped the Godheads of material Nature, sought from them entirely material objects. The effort of the Vedic mystics revealed to them the things behind through a power of inner sight and hearing and experience which was confined to a limited number of seers and sages and kept carefully secret from the mass of humanity—secrecy was insisted on by the mystic. We may very well attribute this flowering of Intuition on the spiritual plane to a rapid re-emergence of essential gains brought down from a previous cycle.”³

“A previous cycle”—there we have the illumining phrase. And a little earlier than the above passage we have the words: “The cycles of evolution tend always upward, but they are cycles and do not ascend in a straight line. The process therefore gives the impression of a series of ascents and descents, but what is essential in the gains of the evolution is kept or, even if eclipsed for a time, re-emerges in new forms suitable to the new age.”⁴

¹ Vol. I. p 739, col 1

² Sir Alister Hardy, *The Living Stream* Evolution and Man (London, 1965), p 27, fig. 7

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 3-4

Each cycle, according to Sri Aurobindo, passes broadly through certain psychological stages: the symbolic, the typical and conventional, the individualistic and the subjective.¹ Every nation or civilisation follows this complex curve. The curve repeats itself, often apparently with a fall-back into a lower condition than what was attained, but secretly with a higher starting-point than the preceding curve's. The cycles are really a spiral slowly moving upward as it were. The present cycle in India began with the Vedic time. What lies beyond this time belongs to a previous cycle whose history is just a vague glimmer in the minds of the Vedic Rishis. The Rishis who are to us the utmost of ancientness speak of themselves as "new" or "young" (*nūtanah*) and refer to "old" forefathers (*pūrvah*) who are like myth-misted demigods.²

No doubt, this vision of the Vedic time stumbles over the modern opinion that the Rigveda is no older than *c.* 1500 B.C. and that it was preceded by the Harappa Culture, the Indus Valley Civilisation which is at present dated to *c.* 2300-1750 B.C. rather than *c.* 2500-1500 B.C. as previously held. The Vedic Indians, constituting the so-called Aryan race, are regarded as "northern barbarians who broke in from their colder climes on the old and rich civilisation of...Dravidian India."³

"But the indications in the Veda on which this theory of a recent Aryan invasion is built," remarks Sri Aurobindo,⁴ "are very scanty in quantity and uncertain in their significance. There is no actual mention of any such invasion. The distinction between Aryan and unAryan on which so much has been built, seems on the mass of the evidence to indicate a cultural rather than a racial difference.⁵ The language of the hymns clearly points to a particular worship or spiritual culture as the distinguishing sign of the Aryan,—a worship of Light and of the powers of Light and a self-discipline based on the culture of the 'Truth' and the aspiration to Immortality,—Ritam and Amritam. There is no reliable indication of any racial difference. It is always possible that the bulk of the peoples now inhabiting India may have been the descendants of a new race from more northern latitudes, even perhaps, as argued by Mr. Tilak, from the Arctic regions; but there is nothing in the Veda, as there is nothing in the present ethnological features⁶ of the country to prove that this descent

¹ *The Human Cycle* (Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, 1945), p. 2.

² *On the Veda* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1956), p. 13, fn 1

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 30-1.

⁵ It is urged that the Dasyus are described as black of skin and noseless in opposition to the fair and high-nosed Aryans. But the former distinction is certainly applied to the Aryan Gods and the Dasa Powers in the sense of light and darkness, and the word *anasa* does not mean noseless. Even if it did, it would be wholly inapplicable to the Dravidian races, for the southern nose can give as good an account of itself as any "Aryan" proboscis in the North. (Sri Aurobindo's footnote)

⁶ In India we are chiefly familiar with the old philological divisions of the Indian races and with the speculations of Mr. Risley which are founded upon these earlier generalisations. But more advanced ethnology rejects all linguistic tests and leans to the idea of a single homogeneous race inhabiting the Indian peninsula (Sri Aurobindo's footnote)

took place near to the time of the Vedic hymns or was the slow penetration of a small body of fair-skinned barbarians into a civilised Dravidian peninsula.”

We may observe that, in the wake of recent study of Mohenjo-daro and its environs, the once-popular notion of the invading Aryans destroying the Harappa Culture is given up by archaeologists. The Harappa Culture is now believed to have come to an end as the result of tectonic disturbances causing tremendous inundations and with this shift of view the invasion-hypothesis itself stands in need of a reassessment. George F. Dales in a competent survey entitled “The Decline of the Harappans” in the *Scientific American*¹ writes: “for one thing, no one has any exact knowledge of the date when the Aryans first entered the Indus valley area; they have not yet been identified archaeologically. For another, the sole purpose served by the invasion hypothesis is to explain the demise of Harappan civilization. If evidence can be found that Mohenjo-daro declined for other reasons, the invasion hypothesis goes by the board. Such evidence, in the form of traces of catastrophic floods, is now being subjected to close scrutiny.”

So the question remains, to say the least, quite open, and nothing militates against holding the Vedic Indians to have been, for all practical purposes, autochthones and to have preceded the Harappa Culture. This culture may well be considered as at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from Vedism, introducing into an already many-sided India some new shades of Sumero-Iranian motifs mingled with Vedic and Post-Vedic.

What we have written of a previous cycle can stand. And, just as to the Vedic Rishis their remote forerunners, founders of Knowledge, glimmered out from a fabulous past beyond the historical cycle in which they were living, so also the story of Atlantis appears to have come to Egypt and elsewhere from a cycle preceding the one in which the priests of Sais existed and it has blended in their minds with faint historical recollections of the natural catastrophe that put an end to the civilisation of Crete in c. 1450 B.C. within their own cycle.

But where, we may ask, was this Atlantis? Going by its name, must we locate it in the Atlantic Ocean in spite of Sir Gavin’s scientific argument against such a location? We have remarked that the name derives, in Plato’s account, from “Atlas”, the designation of Poseidon’s son, and not from the name of the ocean to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar. Wherever Atlas could be put, there Atlantis would exist. Still, as matters stand, we have to take stock of the fact that somehow through Atlas the Atlantic Ocean has come to be linked up with Atlantis. The modern suggestion is: merely the mistake of Solon, understanding nearly 80,000 square miles instead of nearly 8,000, forced Plato to situate Atlantis in the Atlantic Ocean. But did this mistake lead also to the island itself getting associated with Atlas and being dubbed “Atlantis”? In Plato the Atlas-association is basic and independent and looks inseparable from the island’s name and its being located in the Atlantic. Solon’s mistake

¹ May, 1966, pp 93-5, 98, 100

carried the Greek mind away from the Aegean where Crete was and covered up the Cretan element in the Atlantis-legend: it did not cause the name "Atlantis" and the island's situation to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar.

So there is apparently a dilemma. Atlantis was consciously put where there never was such an island-continent in any computable time. Why? What was the necessity to place it there?

It would seem that, corresponding to the far dimness of the epoch to which Atlantis belonged, the mind of its tradition-carriers pushed it into a far dimness of space. The Pillars of Hercules forming the Straits of Gibraltar were the furthest outposts in general of the ancient world around the Mediterranean. "Beyond Gadeira (Cadiz), no man can go into the gloom of the west," sang the poet Pindar. Past those Pillars lay all the legendary islands, the semi-paradisal places of the ancient imagination and vision. Atlantis, being more earthly than they, was put in the unknown waters nearer than the rest: it was made to stand opposite the Pillars in the remote past which yet was felt to be in touch with the past of the period in which its tradition-bearers lived. The location was fundamentally symbolic and metaphorical, though couched in concrete terms and taken as such by the speakers and hearers.

If Galanopoulos's information that there are two promontories on the coast of Greece near Crete, which are also called "Pillars of Hercules", holds true for antiquity, we may realise how easily the particular symbol and metaphor concerned must have got adopted because of the mixture of the Crete-memory in the Atlantis-legend. The constant concretisation of the metaphor and symbol can also be understood along the same lines.

But, if we have the symbolic and metaphorical in the matter of location for that element of the legend which exceeded the Crete-memory, may we not believe the "submersion" pertaining to that element to be also such? What may have happened is the complete cutting of all links between Atlantis and the known ancient world. The civilisation disappeared *in toto* from view—as if the same waters of the unexplored sea into which it had been distanced by the remembering imagination had swallowed it up. Looking at it thus, we are saved from contradicting modern scientific findings about the Atlantic Ocean and still can keep this civilisation apart from Mediterranean Crete.

So we may say: "Neither the age nor the situation nor the fate of the Atlantis that was an Asuric adept of science and occultism and was believed to have been punished with thorough destruction by submersion has yet been ascertained." All that we have solved is one side of the mystery: we have discovered that the end of Crete's civilisation in *c.* 1450 B.C. is part of the legend and explains several major features of it. But something of Atlantis remains a ghost that has not been laid and, because it haunts us from a cycle prior to any known to us in the Mediterranean world, it will go on walking, perhaps for ever, a great truth of man's diversely evolving life on earth but historically and geographically elusive.

(Concluded)

K. D. SETHNA

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

BEFORE we attempt to answer all the questions we have to ask, we must be sure of the status of the soul and the role it plays in man's life. If it be eternal, what business has it in this deformative structure of mind, life and body complex? If it is not eternal, how does it lead the human evolution from birth to birth?

Christianity considers the soul to come to birth only once, after which it waits for the day of judgment. This means, the soul is part of the life and mind complex and it shares equally the wrongs and the rights of its own moral actions. This naturally means it is not eternal, in the sense of immutability, and for the sake of the Last Judgment it has to wait centuries along with life and mind. Perhaps Christianity is not so sure of the psychological formations and considers life and soul to be a single unit. Whatever the idea, the fact remains that its concept is primitive, tied down to the senses and does not attempt at any deeper psychological discovery. Such a soul cannot be the leader of evolution. And its path to immortality is most uncertain.

Modern psychology does not recognise the soul as an entity, it only recognises the reflexes and these are to it the supreme determinants of man. If it is not the reflexes, it is the desire soul, the life-drive that is considered the soul. It can imagine a world of life, a world of ego, but not an unfallen divine spark. As for evolution, it thinks it to be the outer animal evolution and cannot see the link with the soul as the leader of the evolutionary march. Thus barred by the physical senses and many confusing differing doctrinal principles, we get no clear concept of the soul. Christianity stops short at ethics, life and sensations. Modern psychology stops at the subconscious formations. Both seem to give us a confusing aspect that has no relation with Reality.

Sri Aurobindo accepts the Indian view of the human soul. He gives it a clarity and modifies its theory where confusion arises due to the disparity between experience and practice. Though unfelt in the commonness of the physical sensations, it is in fact the real guide of human destiny; because nothing else can explain, lend full significance to, the complex formation of human life and mind. And partial or total error is sure to ensue as we have seen with Christianity and modern psychology. We have marked the limitation of reason; such a limited entity could not be the guide. Life itself slips into despondency and quagmires of pain or sudden fleeting jubiliations of enthusiasm; such a formation could not be the leader of human destiny. In fact all our errors creep in, owing to our not discovering our soul, the light behind all these formations, sensations, strifes. This explains all else; this gives meaning to life and its vagrancy, to mind and its half-lit knowledge, by an unchanging quality, a secret causeless joy and a reality that never needs an outer support to be, no framework of limited

will to act and of groping twilight vision to know. Because Adam had not known his soul, he fell. Therefore he was led only by a partial light of Ethics which he could be persuaded to abandon. If he had known and touched the secret soul, nothing would have made him leave his path, as chalked out by the Divine. Savitri had, on the contrary, known her true divinity within. The outer defeats became thus to her the stepping stones to victory.

Soul, thus, is the secret reality in man that, although never changing, has nevertheless an upward curve of progression. It works from behind the veil and organises slowly this disharmonious structure of human existence. Until that is done, struggle, uncertainty, doubts, sufferings are the lot of the human instrument. But how does soul progress? What are its elements, the conditions of its upward movement and how does it profit by the experience of life's struggle?

We have before us the great example of Savitri. We shall refer to it in order to prove our point and answer the problem.

All souls are not equal in status; not all souls have attained an equal degree of perfection. This lends variety and multitudinousness to the scheme of the world. But mind can conceive or create only a uniform universe devoid of variety. World Nature and its laws are many-sided, its workings are innumerable, complex and yet all this diversity is not pell-mell, a creation without an inner source of order. There is a purpose in all. So too in the development of the souls. Each follows its own curve of fulfilment, its path is different; each takes its own time to develop into a full grown psychic entity, capable of becoming a leader of human existence. This development does not occur in its own soul space, where a soul merely resides to rest between its journeys of birth. Its development takes place while it is in birth and this earth is the ground of its development. Seeking fulfilment elsewhere is a fictitious idea and an escapist attitude. There are many elements of struggle, many contradictions that Savitri could have avoided if she had chosen. But avoiding difficulties is not the way to vanquish them. It is not without reason that difficulties are there in man's way; to conquer them is the path of the hero. And there is a delight in confronting them and subduing them.

Sometimes man is defeated. This defeat is only superficial, for it is not the Christian fall of Man, but a setback, a temporary check, from which the soul derives its wealth of experience—the honey of the thrill of defeat, the joy of overcoming. Because it is sovereign within, a defeat does not spell disaster to it. Because it is seated in the immutable seat of joy, it can afford to sink in the slime of pain and be trodden under by the rude hooves of destiny. The life-forces revolt against all odds: the mind's frowning doubts, the intense burning of sensations and passions are gathered by it as the manna of experience, on which it thrives and grows to larger and fuller stature. Life, mind and the senses, on their side, if they listened to its voice, would imbibe its calmness, its plenitude, its assurance and its unperturbed felicity.

And this drama continues from life to life, from stages of birth till the individual

soul becomes the full grown psychic entity ready to lead other souls and other collective entities. But the possibility of its escape into the infinite beatitude of the Beyond remains open to it. Some choose this and merge in the Transcendent Ocean of all-pervading luminosity while others come back as Avatars, Vibhutis, Saints, Prophets, and the great masters of human destiny. Savitri on her side is not one out of many souls, but the *one* soul that has come from age to age in different roles, names, aspects and individualities to guide the world and hasten the march of evolution. She did not begin as an obscure psychic entity, but was from the very outset the emanation of the Supreme Consciousness. She revealed more and more of herself as the world grew more ready for her light. Satyavan is the fully awakened soul, ready to obey the final call of the Supreme. He becomes the battling-ground of the power of Ignorance and the divine manifestation of Light.

Adam represents the ethical consciousness. His soul, as an entity, is yet in a raw state of development, and timidity, fear, the awe of an ethical divinity rules the being. His is the base where Satyavan's is the summit of soul-development. In him soul remains far behind, covered by the veils of ethical conventional doctrines and the physical mentality that moves along a beaten track, avoiding the surprises of discovery. And the disobedience that is so much cursed by the Christian is a deliberate choice of his soul. This at once liberates him from the hedged-in existence in Paradise and the scales of conventionalism are broken forthwith. The wrath of ethical Justice frightens the timorous physical entity; but he is now on his way to a fulfilment he could never have if he remained shut up within the precincts of paradisaical existence determined by moral laws and ordained by the vigilant eye of unfailing convention. No doubt, there would be hardship and suffering in front: but these are the anvils for the shaping of the soul's consciousness.

Soul thus is an emergent entity. It is the immanence of the divine in us and grows back to its own native status. Life and mind too are divine in their intrinsic essences but they are not conscious of their origin and the pall of ignorance is heavy on them; hence to guide them out of the chaos, the soul, the divine representative, comes and leads them and in the process is shaped itself. This is one point which the later Vedanta missed. The over-mature Indian mind thought all things in terms of Illusion and escapism and overlooked this cardinal factor of soul's role in the evolving world.

The problem is indeed not a problem when viewed from the Aurobindonian standpoint. The emphasis on Illusion, on reason, on the physical aspect of evolution, on the outer facet of determinism of fate, all this creates the problem and hinders the real solution. Together with it goes the mind's misconception of the soul's character. The misconception stems from lack of direct experience or from taking other parts of life or the desire-soul or the reason to be the soul. If authentic spiritual experience were to have a priority, there would be no misconception at all. The Miltonic Christian has no experience of the soul except to think of it as a moral entity bound by certain doctrinal concepts. The Indians too lay emphasis on the Shastra rather than on direct experience. The modern man thinks in terms of Libido, Sex, Ego and the

Unconscious. All these put stress on wrong elements because of misleading ideas; the last-named suffers also from the scientific callousness to all things spiritual and occult.

If we had the insight, we would discover all formations to have a significance in terms of soul-reality and soul-need. All acts, circumstances, occurrences, behaviour, even the larger units of national formations, their destinies, have a direct relation to the soul behind, which causes these as effects of its will. What happens exteriorly is only a minute portion of what has occurred within. Nothing is haphazard or pell-mell, each has a significance and is a symbol; each act is an experience for the soul; not the experience of an outer sense, but the experience of an inliving deity who feels the real essence of all experiences and not just their crude physical form which is sensed by life or the reason. Its will is not its own will based on ego. Its will is one with the will of the Unseen. It never revolts like the life-urge or doubts like reason. This constant faithfulness and sincerity are its cardinal marks of identification. There is no fall or rise, no good destiny or bad doom, no opposition of circumstances or aiding conditions. It does not bank on any outer support; it has no need of praise or blame; no stigma of evil sticks to it; no influence of any moral Good conditions it. While determined by none, it determines all actions and conditions. This is the path of the soul towards immortality.

Our whole essay may seem a refutation and negation of all western religious doctrines. We have touched those points that are at variance with the Aurobindonian view and we have indicated what seems to us the truth. We have no quarrel with Christ, but the moral and dogmatic precepts as enunciated by the later Christian apostles, thinkers and theologians are worlds apart from the real truth of spiritual experience. It is on these falsities that we have wanted to put our finger. The problems these scholars evoke and the answers they give do not satisfy us, who have seen the whole gamut of religious evolution and find the inability of religion to answer any valid human or psychological problem. This spiritual poverty is the cause of Milton's failure to give us a message, which was his mission when he began his epic. We have touched on issues raised by *Paradise Lost* mainly. But we have also seen some others that are beyond its scope so that we may have a more or less comprehensive picture of the main problems dealt with in the two epics. The treatment may appear too philosophical to have place in an essay on literature; but we are not confined to literature and Milton himself wants us to make a note of the theological content of *Paradise Lost*, which is strictly outside the scope of literature. Theology, religion, philosophy and spirituality are the inner contents of both these poems; hence an examination of all these issues would not be out of place if we must make a proper evaluation of the two poets. A mere criticism of form and style is not enough. We want to examine both from various points of view so that a full and unbiased evaluation may be arrived at.

(To be continued)

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the July issue)

CHAPTER VII

ATTEMPTS AT *Kāyāsiddhi* AND REJUVENATION

Then man was born among the monstrous stars
Dowered with a mind and heart to conquer thee.

Savitri, Book IX, Canto II.

The *Ars magna*, that royal and sacerdotal science of the alchemists, is verily a science of regeneration.... Many a seeker on the ways of the Divine has undergone spiritual regeneration. But very few are they who have known the mystery of corporal renewal.

D' Eckhartshausen, *La Nuée sur le Sanctuaire*.

SENESCENCE and natural death, '*La mort naturelle*', are thus seen to be not at all necessary and intrinsic attributes or accompaniments of incarnate life. Hence have arisen on the part of man various deliberately planned attempts at the physical conquest of death and at prolonging life indefinitely. Even from the point of view of science—science as it is understood and practised in the modern West—this battle for the victory over senile decay and the body's death is no longer considered to be farcical and futile, but rather as a veritable scientific problem and proposition. Already in the year 1924, S. Metalnikov of the *Institut Pasteur* (Paris) wrote: "All these efforts of the biologists and medical men to wage a successful battle against the onset of senescence and restore youth to the aged and decadent ought to be considered as practically possible and scientifically motivated (*pratiquement possibles et scientifiquement motivées*)".¹

Here we may briefly state the main attempts, both scientific and occult-spiritual, so far made for the physical conquest of death.

A. *Rejuvenation Procedures*: Indeed, in recent years, science has proceeded in right earnest to tackle the problem of aging and death, starting from the lower end²

¹ S. Metalnikov, *Immortalité et Rajeunissement dans la Biologie Moderne*.

² "In the pursuit of perfection [of the body] we can start at either end of our range of being and we have then to use, initially at least, the means and processes proper to our choice. In Yoga the process is spiritual and psychic, on the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, p. 13)

of the range of our being. It has sought to formulate theories, and act effectively, on the underlying physico-chemical factors and processes that govern the phenomenon of progressive senescence of the body-locked soma-cells and have for their ultimate and inexorable consequence the somatic death of the individual organism. In our time much valuable work has been done in this specialized field of biology and the interested reader may consult appropriate publications for relevant information.

In brief, we may state that many are the theories that have been put forward to explain the onset of the phenomenon of senescence (*e.g.*, those of Maupas, Hertwig, Mainot, Koltzoff, Metchnikof, Weissmann and others), and numerous have been the attempts to achieve rejuvenation of the aging body and lengthen the span of life¹ by various surgical alterations of certain endocrinal organs, particularly the essential organs of sex.

Indeed, it has often been thought that aging is brought about by the failure of one or other of the endocrine glands and attempts have been made to rejuvenate an aging body by grafting to it appropriate glands or injecting into it glandular extracts.

But, considered from the fundamental point of view, these have not solved the problem at its base. For, on the one hand, no theory of senile decline so far put forward can be regarded as entirely satisfactory or as generally established by the evidence. Also, "most of them suffer from the logical defect of setting up some particular observed attribute or element of the phenomenon of senescence itself, such as protoplasmic hysteresis, slowing rate of metabolism (meaning essentially only reduced activity), etc. as the cause of the whole".²

On the other hand, whatever may have been the immediate physical and psychological effects of the procedures of rejuvenation, these have proved to be no more than temporary heightening of some gland activities, altogether "transient results" as one distinguished biologist has termed them. There is as yet no evidence whatsoever that these medico-scientific procedures help to increase in any way the basic potential specific longevity of the individual. In the words of Prof. Vernon T. Schuhardt, an authority in the field:

"Although loudly proclaimed, these procedures were not well founded in theory and have not withstood the exacting and critical tests of time and confirmation. No evidence has been discovered that the aging of the body *as a whole* is dependent on either the activity or the failure of the sexual glands, *per se*.... The effects were temporary and did not offset the slow decline of old age. Indeed, some danger is involved

¹ "This experimental era of revitalization stemmed from the accounts of the physiologist, Charles Edward Brown-Sequard, who in 1889, at the age of 70, injected himself with testicular material from dogs and guinea-pigs and claimed a renewal of vigour, mental alertness and the 'enjoyment of life'. Twenty-five years later Jurgen W. Harms claimed the same thing for himself." (Vernon T. Schuhardt, *Rejuvenation*).

The foremost names in the field of induced rejuvenation are those of Steinach, Pezard, Zavadovsky, Lichtenstern, Schmidt, Holz, Voronoff and others.

² Raymond Pearl, "The Biology of Death", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 7.

in such a one-sided stimulation of the senile since the organism as a whole may not be physically constituted to withstand the sudden and abnormal stress.... The hormones may alter the background of physiological reactions and modify the structural integrity of the cells and tissues, but they have *little lasting effect on the primary causes of aging and senility*.... Thus while the germinal elements become the source of posterity, the body seems predestined to weaken, grow old and die, and by the latter 1950's no means have been found to seriously alter this decline."¹ (Italics ours)

So we see that the scientific attempts at preventing devitalisation and prolonging the individual life-span of man have so far proved futile and illusive, and we on our part venture to assert that these will prove equally so even in the future; for, the root of the malady lies somewhere else and is too deep and inscrutable for science to probe or to find the remedy thereof. To anticipate the line of suggested solution, we may state forthwith that "even if Science—physical Science or occult Science—were to discover the necessary conditions or means for an indefinite survival of the body, still, if the body could not adapt itself so as to become a fit instrument of expression for the inner growth, the soul would find some way to abandon it and pass on to a new incarnation. *The material or physical causes of death are not its sole or its true cause; its true inmost reason is the spiritual necessity for the evolution of a new being.*"² (Italics ours.)

B. Kāyāsiddhi Procedures: Leaving behind the field of scientific achievements as well as failures, we pass on now to a summary consideration of some of the attempts made by man, starting from the other, the higher, end of the range of our being.

These occult-spiritual attempts at *dehasiddhi*, the attainment of perfection of the material body of man, have in the majority of cases come down to us in the form of traditions and a lore whose sources sometimes have been lost in the obscure and remote past of the race.

Thus, in the words of the Mother, "in a very ancient tradition, preceding even the Vedic and Chaldean traditions, there was already the question of a glorious body which would be plastic enough to be constantly remodelled by the deeper consciousness, a body expressing this consciousness. There was the question of luminosity: the matter constituting the body being able to become luminous at will. There was the question of a kind of lightness being possible which would enable the body to move about in the air by mere will-force and some procedure of handling the inner energy and so on."³

Some Buddhist traditions speak of the Buddha's temporary victory over death, *Mṛtyumāra*. These are based on a Buddhist belief that just as an *arhat* can abandon the 'coefficients of life', so he can also stop them (*sthāpayati*). "According to the Vai-bhasikas, the saint says: 'May [the action] that is to ripen for me in enjoyment ripen

¹ Vernon T. Schuhardt, *Rejuvenation*.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 732 fn.

³ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, Vol. IX. No. 3, p. 123.

in life!' By its nature, life is 'ripening' (*vipāka*), and it can replace any enjoyment which normally ought to ripen from a former merit, and which the saint no longer desires and has escaped by his sainthood. By this process, 'vanquishing death', the Buddha prolonged his life three months for the salvation of men, and the disciples employ this to assure the duration of the *dharmā*. This term of three months seems to be given as a maximum, and as the mark of the victory of the Buddha over *Mṛtyumāra*, 'Mara, who is death'.¹

This question of a possible maximum limit to the postponement of death is very significant and highly germane to the problem we have been discussing. For, although there have been in the past "seemingly allied ideals and anticipations—the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of Yoga,"² these have been attempted for the most part as individual personal achievements, imperfect and precariously maintained by the help of Yoga-siddhis, and not as a *dharmā*, natural law, of the transformed physical nature. But "mental or vital occult power", warns Sri Aurobindo, "can only bring Siddhis of the higher plane into the individual life—like the Sannyasi who could take any poison without harm, but he *died of a poison after all when he forgot to observe the conditions of the siddhi*."³ (Italics ours)

Among the various attempts in the past, falling into this category, mention may be made of:

(i) attempts at *dehasiddhi* through *kālabancana*, conquest of Time, by certain schools of Hathayoga;

(ii) attempts at the attainment of a *rasamayī tanu*, body with divine essence, by the Raseswara sect;

(iii) attempts at *skandasiddhi* made by certain Mahayani Tantric schools among the Buddhists;

(iv) attempts at *kāyāsiddhi* by Nathayogis like Matsyendra, Goraksa, Jalandharanath, and others;

(v) attempts at the elaboration of a *bhāvadeha* by Sahajiya Vaishnavas.⁴

But none of these attempted siddhis became intrinsic to the material body and hence could not be made to endure. As a matter of fact, as we shall see in the course of our study, "there can be no immortality of the body without supramentalisation; the potentiality is there in the yogic force and yogis can live for 200 or 300 years or more, but there can be no real principle of it without the supramental."⁵

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 4, p. 448

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 165

³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴ *Vide*: Gopinath Kaviraj, *Akhaṇḍa-Mahāyoga*, Chap. 2

⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 333.

CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED?

(Continued from the July issue)

(This is a discussion between three philosophers: (1) an Anselmian (A) who believes that the existence of God can be rationally and strictly demonstrated; (2) a Kantian (K) who holds that all arguments that claim to demonstrate God's existence are fallacious; and (3) a Critical Philosopher (C) who agrees with K, but at the same time holds that the proposition 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise.)

- K. I have a feeling that this long-drawn-out argument is at last coming to a close. I think C has shown that though to believe in God is to believe in Him as existing necessarily, this does not rule out the alternative that God may not exist. He has answered A's objection that the proposition, 'If God exists, He necessarily exists, is modal nonsense by showing that it makes good sense if we interpret it to mean: 'If we assert that God exists, then we must assert that He exists necessarily.'
- A. Since we met last an objection to C's defence of the modal hypothetical proposition has occurred to me. The premiss which C and I share is what he has called the GE Principle according to which, what is true of God is necessarily true. I would in fact raise two objections to C's defence of the modal hypothetical proposition or, rather, there are two considerations which both show that, logically, we are restricted to only two alternatives: either God *necessarily* does not exist or He *necessarily* exists.
- C. I agree that if these are the only two alternatives, the existence of God is proved. What are your reasons for restricting the alternatives to these two?
- A. The first consideration is this. You have admitted that the proposition 'God exists', if true, is necessarily true. Now my contention is that if we say concerning a proposition that, if it is true, it is necessarily true, then we must also say that, if it is false, it is necessarily false.
- C. Why do you say this?
- A. Take, for example, a proposition in mathematics, e.g., $7+5=12$. This proposition, if true, is necessarily true. If so, it is clear that if we say ' $7+5=13$ ' or any number other than 12, then the proposition would be necessarily false. It could not be contingently false; for if $7+5=13$ were contingently false, it would not be possible for us to assert that ' $7+5=12$ ' is *necessarily* true. Hence 'God exists', if true, is necessarily true and, if false, necessarily false.
- C. A specious argument, but not valid!
- K. What is wrong with it?
- C. The example which A gives of propositions in mathematics is misleading. In

the case of $7+5=12$, for instance, we can see directly that it is necessarily true, *i.e.*, we have an insight into this necessity. But we do not, similarly, see directly that 'God exists' is necessarily true. In fact we do not see this at all. We only *infer*, with the help of the GE Principle, that if it is true it must be true necessarily. This being so, we also do not and cannot have an *insight* into the falsity of the proposition 'God exists', if it is false. And hence it could very well be contingently false.

- A. I admit that answers my first objection. The other objection is that you have yourself admitted, by implication, that 'God exists', if false, is necessarily false.
- C. How is that?
- A. According to the GE Principle which we both accept, what is true of God is necessarily true. Well, then, if it is true that God does not exist, does it not follow that His non-existence is necessary?
- C. I see your objection. I am afraid I was not sufficiently careful in stating the GE Principle. Its application really presupposes the existence of God and hence the conclusion you have just drawn from it does not follow.
- A. But isn't this an arbitrary restriction of the Principle made to avoid the admission that the existence of God can be proved?
- C. I assure you, that is not so. The GE Principle really says that whatever is in God is one with His essence, since there can be nothing in God which is partial, accidental or transitory. It would make no sense to say that what is not in God is one with His essence. Hence if you say, 'God does not exist', it would make no sense to say that the non-existence of God is inseparable from God's essence. The GE Principle, properly understood, is: What God is is God Himself, but what sense can we make of the proposition: What God is not is God Himself?
- A. That is an unfair and misleading way of putting it. What we should say is, 'What God possesses He possesses necessarily and what God lacks He lacks necessarily.'
- C. To say this would be missing the point of the GE Principle. A positive quality is what the Scholastics call a perfection and can exist in a super-eminent degree. Can you say likewise that the lack of something is a perfection and so may exist in a super-eminent degree?
- K. You want to suggest that only what can be present in a super-eminent degree is one with God's essence and hence it would make no sense to say that lack of existence is one with God's essence?
- C. Yes, that is so.
- K. What is meant by saying that if God exists, existence must be in Him in a super-eminent degree?
- C. There are grades of existence, as of qualities. I do not think A would be disposed to deny this. Hence the mode of the Divine Existence must itself be Divine. There would be no sense in saying that the mode of Divine Non-existence must itself be Divine!

- A. I am not quite convinced that you are justified in restricting the GE Principle to statements which either assert or presuppose the existence of God, but I will not press my objection any further. I shall now turn to the argument based on the Superiority Principle and try to counter your objection to it that we cannot directly refer to the ontological modal characteristics of a thing.
- K. According to C the only way to refer to an ontological modal characteristic is to say that it is the objective correlate of the corresponding logical modality. How does A propose to distinguish the characteristics of necessary being and contingent being directly?
- A. That which exists contingently merely *happens* to exist or, as Philo puts it, it is existence which is not 'according to essence'. Necessary existence, on the other hand, is self-existence or existence through self. Thus what exists contingently, even though it may not have been brought into existence, has a precarious mode of existence and is always under the threat of possible extinction. Hence we may say that contingent existence is dependent existence, while necessary existence is independent or self-existence. These are ontological modal characteristics which one can refer to directly, and not obliquely, as C suggests, as the objective correlates of the logical modalities, *e.g.*, 'God's non-existence is logically conceivable' and 'God's non-existence is logically inconceivable'.
- C. These are meanings which you put into the terms 'contingent' and 'necessary' which they do not normally bear. When you say that contingent existence is existence not according to essence, you are saying simply that it is contingent existence, or that it is not existence which is involved in the essence. That does not mean that it is dependent existence.
- A. You don't admit that what just *happens* to exist has a precarious mode of existence?
- C. I do not. One can say perfectly consistently, 'God, the uncreated and indestructible being, happens to exist, but one has no reason for saying that He exists necessarily.' Similarly the phrase 'existence through self' simply means that God cannot be brought into existence, that, if He exists, He is *causa sui*. One could, however, say that such a being does not exist or, if it exists, it might not have existed. I therefore do not see any valid reason for equating 'contingent existence' with 'dependent existence' or 'necessary existence' with 'existence through self'. To say that something exists contingently means simply that it exists and might not have existed, *whatever its specific mode of existence*. There is a further point. If contingent existence means dependent existence, then A's argument for the existence of God would be short and sweet and wholly convincing. Since God, by definition, depends on nothing for His existence, His existence is not contingent. Therefore He necessarily exists! Surely even A does not think it is as simple as all that?
- K. But one may say, 'God, though He cannot exist contingently, need not exist necessarily. He may be non-existent.'

- C. His non-existence would then be contingent. And this would mean, according to the definition of 'contingent' suggested by A, that God could be brought into existence. And that too would be ruled out by definition.
- A. Let us look at it this way. To say that 'X exists' is contingently true means that it is not true in itself, but its truth depends on something else being true. From this it follows that the existence of X is dependent existence.
- C. This is a specious argument since etymology is here in your favour. There are two ways in which a proposition can be non-contingently or necessarily true. Take $7+5=12$. You will agree that it is enough to understand the meaning of the terms it contains to see that the proposition is true.
- A. Yes.
- C. But can you say the same of 'God exists'? If it is claimed that this proposition is necessarily true, it is because an argument can be given to show that it is true. Now if you define 'contingently true proposition' as what is not true in itself, it would follow that 'God exists' would be contingently true even when it is demonstrated to be true. It is not true 'in itself'; we have to go beyond it to see that it is true. But you would not conclude from this that God's existence is dependent existence, would you?
- A. But even though one has to go beyond the words 'God exists' to see that the proposition is true, nevertheless we do, in the end, see it to be true. But if 'God exists' is contingently true, we can never see it to be true.
- C. That is so, but the point is that the mere fact that one has to go beyond the proposition 'God exists' to see that it is true does not entail that the existence of God is dependent existence. Your argument for deducing God's dependent existence from the contingent nature of the truth of 'God exists' is then not valid. And I do not think it can be argued that the fact of the undemonstrability of the proposition 'God exists' is sufficient ground for saying that God's existence is dependent existence. I repeat, there is no possible way of indicating the ontological modal characteristic of a thing except obliquely, as the objective correlate of the corresponding logical modality. And hence A's Superiority Principle cannot be used to prove the existence of God.
- A. A contingent truth is empirical, which means that it is to be tested by experience. Now if we come to know that something exists by observation, does it not follow that that object is something in space and time and hence exists in a dependent manner?
- C. Even if you say that a contingently true proposition is empirical, the experience required to verify it need not be sense-experience; it could be a spiritual or mystical experience, in which case the object experienced could well be eternal. But I think that to say that a proposition is contingently true means simply that it is neither immediately seen to be true nor can it be demonstrated to be true. It implies nothing about its truth being established by experience. A contingent proposition could well be *a priori*: contingent because it is not shown to be

incorrigibly true, and *a priori* because its truth or falsity cannot be tested in sense-experience.

- K. But are not all *a priori* propositions necessary?
- C. That is Kant's view, but there is no *a priori* reason why they should be so. I think Kant was mistaken in equating the *a priori* with the necessary.
- A. Let us consider this matter from another point of view. Can you say that a being which just happens to exist can possibly have the reason of its existence in itself? Is it not clear that the existence of such a being is not self-explaining? But God, surely, cannot be explained by anything outside Himself or receive the justification of His existence from anything else. If you grant this, then you must admit that contingent being *means* dependent being.
- C. When you use the words 'reason' and 'explanation', do you think they have a uniform meaning on all occasions of their use, or does the meaning one puts into them depend on the theory that one holds?
- A. I don't understand.
- C. 'Reason', 'explanation', 'adequate' and suchlike words are what I call 'criterion-words', that is, their significance depends on the use of a criterion. Two philosophers may have two different ideals of explanation, *i.e.*, they may be using two different criteria to determine whether something is satisfactorily explained or not. What one regards as a good explanation may not be so regarded by another, and that is because he has a different notion of what constitutes a satisfactory explanation. Take your statement that what exists contingently does not have the reason of its existence in itself. Why not?
- A. Well, we cannot rest satisfied with merely acknowledging the existence of something. In our search for an explanation we are necessarily carried beyond it till we reach that in which thought can come to rest.
- C. In saying this do you realize that your thought is operating with a particular ideal of explanation which may not be shared by other philosophers? You are saying in effect, with Spinoza, that whatever is, is in itself or in something else. And this means that nothing is *finally* explained unless it is shown to be comprehended in the being of that which is self-existent, *i.e.*, God! 'That in which thought comes to rest' is again nothing but the idea of the Infinite or the Perfect Being!
- A. Do you yourself reject this ideal of explanation?
- C. I do not. I must remind you that not only am I a theist, but, like you, I reject both atheism and agnosticism as untenable philosophical theories.
- A. Then, Good Lord! what is the difference between us?
- C. According to you 'God exists' is the *conclusion* of a chain of reasoning which proceeds *more geometrico*. According to me 'God exists' is the *prius* of metaphysical thinking, *i.e.*, the idea of God and that alone provides the criterion in the light of which thinking in metaphysics becomes possible.
- A. Is not 'God exists' also the conclusion of your thinking?
- C. Precisely because it is the *prius*. It is not the conclusion in the sense in which a

mathematical theorem is the conclusion which one reaches, starting with axioms and definitions. Thinking in mathematics is, if I may so put it, horizontal. Thinking in philosophy is a process of inwardization. It is not reaching out to a conclusion, but an effort to reach the truth by a growth in self-consciousness. According to me, Wisdom, at least intellectual Wisdom, is the state in which thought has become fully self-conscious. I hold that the proposition 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise.

- A. And yet you say the existence of God cannot be proved!
- C. That is because your idea of proof is derived from mathematical thinking. I think the major tragedy of Philosophy has been precisely this uncritical assimilation of its method to the method of mathematics, resulting in the attempt to construct philosophical arguments on the model provided by mathematics. The empiricists as well as the rationalists have fallen a prey to the easy assumption that if philosophy is to give us knowledge, it must use the method of demonstration and knock-down proof and reach conclusions which are incorrigible.
- A. Perhaps if you explain your way of thinking which has led you to believe that 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise, it might turn out that you and I are saying the same thing in different ways.
- C. I think my approach brings out the truth underlying your argument. But I also think this is a good time to adjourn.

(To be continued)

J. N. CHUBB