

MOTHER INDIA

JUNE, 1969

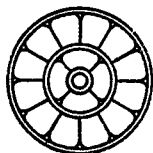
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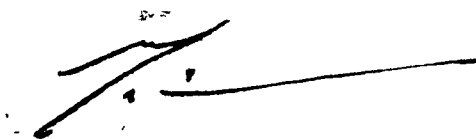


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXI

No. 5

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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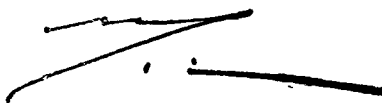
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THE MOTHER ON AUROVILLE

Q: Est-ce que c'est la Volonté Divine qu'Auroville naisse ou bien le Divin regarde la tentative de construction d'Auroville comme une expérience ?

R. La conception d'Auroville est purement divine et a précédé de beaucoup d'années son exécution.

Naturellement dans les détails de l'exécution la conscience humaine intervient.



17.4.1969

Q. Is it the Divine Will that Auroville should be born or else does the Divine look upon the attempt to build Auroville as an experiment ?

A. The conception of Auroville is purely divine and has preceded by many years its execution.

Naturally in the details of the execution the human consciousness intervenes.

17.4.1969

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Q: Depuis quelque temps j'ai du mal à dormir à cause du bruit intérieur et extérieur.
Je Te prie de m'aider.

Avant d'essayer de dormir,
quand tu te couches pour dormir,
commence par te détendre
physiquement (j'appelle cela faire le
chiffon sur le lit)

Puis avec toute la sincérité dont
tu disposes, offre toi au Divin
dans une détente complète.
et c'est tout.

Essaye jus qu'à ce que tu réussisses
et tu verras

bénédictions

Q: For some time I have been having difficulty in going to sleep on account of inner and outer turmoil. I pray to You to help me.

A. Before trying to sleep, when you lie down to sleep, begin by relaxing yourself physically (I call this the becoming a rag on the bed).

Then with all the sincerity at your disposal offer yourself to the Divine in a complete relaxation.

and....that's all.

Keep trying until you succeed and you will see.

Blessings.

March 1969.

ORDEALS

Ordeals are there for everybody. It is the way in which one faces them that makes the difference. Some have a smile, some make a fuss.



LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

8-8-1934

Q: Yesterday evening, an Ashramite and I had a talk about snakes. The same night during my sleep I saw a big snake coming out of a basket kept in a cupboard. Seeing the snake I got very frightened, got up from the bed and went to my neighbour Venkatraman. He at once came to my room. Then I read a book of the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. After a time, I went to sleep again, placing your photograph under my pillow. Then there was no dreadful dream and I slept well.

What was that nightmare due to? Kindly keep me under your protection so that such terrifying figures may not appear before me.

SRI AUROBINDO: It must have been merely because you talked of snakes—it created an impression in the mind which came up from the subconscious in sleep. Fear of things seen in sleep or vision should be altogether dismissed—the attitude taken should be that the divine protection is with you and these things cannot harm you.

10-8-1934

Q: I kept the photos of the Mother and yourself in front of me and then began to meditate. Through them I prayed to you to grant me happiness while I was here, and also for some experiences as I could not have any for a long time. Afterwards I felt the reflection of your photo in my heart. Later I felt as if there was no body except the head. In the place of my body there appeared a house where Lord Krishna as a boy was playing on a flute, sitting in a cradle. His mother and some other persons were moving the cradle forward and backward. I experienced happiness.

After the meditation I went to take my meal. On the way I felt the presence sometimes of yourself and sometimes of Lord Krishna.

SRI AUROBINDO: All these are experiences attended by mental images. It is your aspiration that awakes these forms and brings an answer in this kind of experiences which are preparing your consciousness for a more lasting and profound kind about which you yourself will not have any questioning—for they will be too vivid and real for that.

Your experience about the head and body would seem to indicate that the natural centre for your sadhana is in the heart and not in the head. If it is so, it is in the heart-centre (not the physical heart, but the cardiac centre in the middle of the chest) that you must concentrate, for there will be the focus of your experiences.

13-8-1934

Q: X asks me to write you this for herself: "I feel the Mother's presence in my heart. I have not so much devotion that I can get an opportunity to see you. I pray for your blessings for the shortcomings of my worldly life."

SRI AUROBINDO: Convey to her our blessings. Devotion and all else will develop if she makes the presence she feels the centre of her life, referring and offering all to it.

17-8-1934

Q: During my evening prayer your image surged up before me and thus I talked with it: "I do not want anything except your presence within me." Kindly explain.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is something that took place in the mind—it can hardly be called an experience.

Q: Mother, I pray to you to arrange for Sri Aurobindo's darshan once before I go from here. I understand it is against the rule. But I do feel that for a bhakta there is no rule.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am afraid it is impossible. No separate personal darshan can be given at this stage—it is not a rule, it is a necessity for the work that Sri Aurobindo is doing.

From DR. R. S. AGARWAL

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. 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 25, 1940

IN the radio there was the news that Alla Bux had been shot at while returning from Ramgar.

SRI AUROBINDO (*to P*): Have you found out why he was shot at?

P: No.

S: Alla Bux says that there was a European in his compartment. So it can't be said that Alla Bux was really shot at.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who would shoot such an inoffensive man? One may as well shoot Malaviya or Pattabhi Sitaramayya. (*Laughter*)

S: In Sind the Muslim League seems to have been dissolved and a Nationalist Party formed.

SRI AUROBINDO: There was no Muslim League in Sind... The Sind Ministers appear to be as fluid as the French ones.

S: The French Ministers seem to last about 9 months. Only Daladier remained a little longer.

SRI AUROBINDO: About two and a half years. The shortest period of a Ministry was one day. (*Laughter*)

N: It couldn't be shorter perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then they can write "Ex-Ministers" and hope by that to govern some day.

P: There was a joke in the *Indian Express*. Somebody in England during the air-raids wanted to camouflage his house with palm leaves over the chumney. He was asked: "Why palm leaves?" He replied: "The German pilot will then think he is in Africa."

SRI AUROBINDO: There is another joke somewhat similar. Somebody went up in an aeroplane and was trying to learn things. He was calculating where he could be at the time. Then suddenly he told the pilot: "Take off your hat." "Why?" asked the pilot. He replied: "Don't you see we are under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral?"

MARCH 26, 1940

N: You have said in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Volume II, Chapter entitled "The Difficulties of the Mental Being", that there are divine planes in the mental being just as there are divine planes above into which one ordinarily enters in Samadhi. What are these planes? Higher Mind, etc. ?

SRI AUROBINDO: But there are divine planes everywhere. It depends on the context.

N: Here is the passage.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after reading it*): I must have meant the reflections of the higher planes in the mind. Thus, for instance, one may receive a reflection from the Overmind. One may not oneself know this. What is called Genius is the reflection from the higher planes—from the Intuitive Mind, for example. But it does not mean that one is living in that plane. There may be reflections in the vital being also.

MARCH 27, 1940

P: Professor Attreya of Benaras has brought some "psychic" photographs.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is he a spiritualist?

P: Looks like that.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what is the good of photographs of these things? You know about the famous photograph by Conan Doyle of Fairies. I don't know how it was done, because Fairies don't lend themselves to photography.

P: There has been one good result of Attreya's visit. K. S. has broken his silence and was talking with him.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was not due to that. Nolini spoke to the Mother about the silence and afterwards told K. S.: "Sri Aurobindo doesn't like silence." He at once started talking. It seems he was fading away into the Ineffable—couldn't talk or walk or do anything. Such things happen to those who force themselves before they are ready. They either go into that condition or become rajasic. One kitten of ours became like that. Whenever we used to concentrate, it came and lay down near us and afterwards it couldn't move or walk. With great difficulty it had to be pulled out of that condition. It was a remarkable cat.

P: Was it "Baby" perhaps?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it was "Goldie". "Baby" was possessed by a devil. While a procession was passing, it got a sudden fit. Perhaps a devil came from the procession and entered her. It is always the kittens that are affected. Old cats are too much fixed in cathood.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

A REVIEW ARTICLE

NIRODBARAN is a doctor without a *penchant* for medicine, a poet without conceit, a Bengali without exuberance. His literary skill is of the first order and his reportage of Sri Aurobindo's Talks, in which he was an active participant, remains unexcelled for grace, accuracy and chaste expression. His portraitures of Sri Aurobindo are vivid to the core and his inspired writing after the passing of Sri Aurobindo under the title '*I am here, I am here*', will be remembered by the devotees and disciples of the Master for its regenerating power. Lovers of literature will turn to his poems and essays, general readers and those interested in history may prefer his Talks, but spiritual aspirants will always treasure his *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* which contains extracts from his letters to the Guru and the Guru's answers in a style and vein that was always reserved for Nirod. Superbly edited, this volume is divided into convenient sections dealing with Sri Aurobindo's own life and yoga, his views on several topics of importance, Yoga Sadhana, Art and Literature, Matters Medical—altogether an incredibly extensive field.

To begin with the autobiographical observations of Sri Aurobindo.

Replying to a query about the action of Yogic Force in his own case, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Why was it that I, who never understood or cared for painting, suddenly in a single hour by an opening of vision got the eye to see and the mind of understanding about colour, line and design? How was it that I who was unable to understand and follow a metaphysical argument and whom a page of Kant or Hegel or Hume or even Berkeley left either dazed and uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested because I could not fathom or follow, suddenly began writing pages of the stuff as soon as I started the *Arya* and am now reputed to be a great philosopher? How is it that at a time when I felt it difficult to produce more than a paragraph of prose from time to time and more than a mere poem, short and laboured, perhaps one in two months, suddenly after concentrating and practising Pranayama daily began to write pages and pages in a single day and kept sufficient faculty to edit a big daily paper and afterwards to write 60 pages of philosophy every month?" He refers again to painting: "I understood nothing about painting before I did Yoga. A moment's illumination in Alipore Jail opened my vision and since then I have understood with the intuitive perception and vision. I do not know the technique, of course, but I can catch it at once if anybody with knowledge speaks of it. That would have been impossible to me before."

Voicing the doubt of many a disciple, Nirod asks Sri Aurobindo whether meditation or work is more important in yoga and which discipline takes one earlier to the goal. Here is the answer:

“To set up an open competition or a closed one between work and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have all along been declaring an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, Works, light of Consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the *Arya* all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of Works nor Works greater than Yoga by Knowledge—both are equal.”

The right way is to combine the two; meditation must form the background of work and work the testing ground for the assimilation of the fruits of meditation; each should balance the other.

“If the meditation brings poise, peace, a concentrated condition or even a pressure or influence, that can go on in the work, provided one does not throw it away by a relaxed or dispersed state of consciousness. That was why the Mother wanted people not only to be concentrated at pranam or meditation, but to remain silent and absorb or assimilate afterwards.... Half an hour’s meditation in the day ought to be possible—if only to bring a concentrated habit into the consciousness which will help it, first to be less outward in work and, secondly, to develop a receptive tendency which can bear its fruits even in the work.”

Giving a few practical hints on concentration, Sri Aurobindo notes:

“You need not meditate at once—but for a few moments take a concentrated attitude calling the Mother’s presence for the day. At night, you have to pass into sleep in the concentration—you must be able to concentrate with the eyes closed, lying down and the concentration must deepen into sleep—that is to say, sleep must become a concentrated going inside away from the outer waking state. If you find it necessary to sit for a time you may do so, but afterwards lie down keeping the concentration till this happens.”

What exactly is meant by works as a means of sadhana?

“I mean by work action done for the Divine and more and more in union with the Divine—for the Divine alone and nothing else.... Works done in this spirit are quite as effective as bhakti or contemplation. One gets by the rejection of desire, rajas and ego a peace and purity into which the peace ineffable can descend—one gets by the dedication of one’s will to the Divine, by the merging of one’s will in the Divine Will the death of ego and the enlarging into the cosmic consciousness or else the uplifting into what is above the cosmic—one experiences the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and is liberated from the shackles of the outer nature; one becomes aware of one’s inner being and sees the outer as an instrument; one feels the universal Force doing one’s works and the self or Purusha watching or witness but free; one feels all one’s works taken from one and done by the universal or the supreme Mother or by the Divine Power controlling and acting from behind the heart. By constant reference of all one’s will and works to the Divine, love and adoration grow, the psychic being comes forward. By the reference to the Power above, one can come to feel it above and its descent and the opening to an increasing consciousness and

knowledge. Finally, works, bhakti and knowledge join together and self-perfection becomes possible—what we call the transformation of nature.”

Regarding transformation, Sri Aurobindo points out:

“There are different statuses of the transformation. First is the psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the Divine through the individual psychic consciousness. Next is the spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the last that there can begin the complete transformation of mind, life and body—in my sense of completeness.”

No doubt much depends upon the Grace in spiritual life, but Sri Aurobindo observes:

“One must yet do some enabling sadhana. The Divine gives the fruits not by the measure of the sadhana but by the measure of the soul and its aspiration.”

The course of sadhana is not smooth:

“Yoga is not a thing that goes by one decisive rush one way or the other—it is a building up of a new consciousness and is full of ups and downs. But if one keeps to it the ups have a habit of resulting by accumulation in a decisive change—therefore the one thing to do is to keep at it. After a fall don’t wail and say, ‘I am done for,’ but get up, dust yourself and proceed farther on the right path.”

It is helpful to look at the positive side instead of being preoccupied with the negative:

“It is always better to dwell on the good side of things within yourself. I do not mean in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence, calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable so that a constant positive growth can help in the rejection of all that has to be rejected.” “Cheerfulness is the salt of the sadhana. It is a thousand times better than gloominess.”

Yoga is supported by *brahmacharya*:

“In that physical support the ojas produced by brahmacharya counts greatly. The transformation of retas into ojas is a transformation of physical substance into a physical (necessarily producing also a vital physical) energy. The spiritual energy by itself can only drive the body, like the vital and mental, but in driving it, it would exhaust it if it has not a physical support.”

Among the many other important subjects touched upon is the truth of the Avatar:

“There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions of Nature and it uses it according to the rules of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game.”

Illnesses, the role of medicine and the use of the Yoga-force in effecting cures, Homeopathy and Allopathy, Poetry, Inspiration and the necessity of industry to

support the action of inspiration, and many other fascinating subjects come in for treatment. All fields of life claim attention, not indeed on their own account but in order to participate in the Divine Manifestation. Declares Sri Aurobindo:

“Rasa of poetry, painting or physical work is not the thing to go after. What gives the interest in Yoga is the rasa of the Divine and of the divine consciousness which means the rasa of Peace, of Silence, of inner Light and Bliss, of growing inner Knowledge, of increasing inner Power, of the Divine Love, of all the infinite fields of experience that open to one with the opening of the inner consciousness. The true rasa of poetry, painting or any other activity is only found when these things are part of the working of the Divine Force in you, and you feel it is that and it exists in the joy of that working.”

M. P. PANDIT

BROKEN...

By a lightning stroke broken is the granite roof;
 The walls have cracked and the house is in a mess.
 No more in the old convenient room of the self
 Can I seek shelter. How shall I close calm eyes
 To the all-demanding unconditional Light
 That brooks no shadow nor a mortal sheen?
 The sphere is ablaze, a main of God-fire roars.
 A twig caught in a diamond flame, I float,
 A quenchless spark of the Infinite, the One.

VENKATARANGA

A GREAT YOGI: P. B. SAINT-HILAIRE

P. B. SAINT-HILAIRE, known in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as Pavitra, was born in 1894 of a noble and aristocratic family in France. He was a student at the "École Polytechnique" when the First World War broke out in August 1914. The École Polytechnique, was founded by Napoleon I to give to France a body of artillery and engineer officers of the highest scientific stature. Since then a number of former students of this school have been leading personalities in France. During the War, Pavitra was first an officer in a battery of guns and later a captain at the headquarters of the 4th Army. He was then in charge of artillery intelligence.

It was during the War that Pavitra became interested in occult questions and then in Eastern spirituality. After the War, he finished his time at the École Polytechnique, spent one year at the "École nationale des ponts et chaussées" and was appointed a public works engineer by the Government. Shortly after, he asked to be put on leave without pay and started his quest for the meaning of life.

He went to Japan, worked in a laboratory and eventually met a Mongolian monk with whom he spent nine months in Mongolia. After that he decided to go to India but announced to his family that he was returning to France *via* Colombo. At Colombo he decided to visit Pondicherry and meet Sri Aurobindo of whom he had heard. He did meet Sri Aurobindo in 1925, and the Mother accepted him. Since then he has never left Pondicherry.

He was one of the few present with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on November 24, 1926, the day which is known in the Ashram as the Day of Victory. Asked what his experience had been on the occasion, Pavitra said that his way had become perfectly clear to him.

The path of Yoga which he chose as his life's path he followed with the depth and intensity of his soul. His one-pointedness was exemplary, as also his simplicity and amiability. "I am a brother to you all" were his first words to those who were with Sri Aurobindo when he joined the Ashram. Indeed he remained a brother to all till the end. This shows how large and great his heart was. Sri Aurobindo's giving him his Ashram name—"Pavitra" (Purified)—signifies much more than the word generally means. There was nothing in him of the sordid elements of life. He might be called a born Yogi. Indeed he did the Yoga completely surrendered to the Guru—the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The service he rendered to the Ashram was actually a most important part of his spiritual life. And this he did, not only with all devotion and sincerity, but also with a rare mastery of the science and technique of things. Of course, this was largely due to his early technical training.

When in the late twenties the Ashram, under the Mother's direct guidance, started to grow, it was Pavitra who gave form to almost all its utility services—Atelier (Workshop), Laundry, Bakery, etc. His practical advice was sought in every

constructional work, and he gave it always with the Mother's direction and approval.

Pavitra gave to the French Government of Pondicherry whatever help they would ask of him. A very notable instance was his designing the Central Park (in front of the Government House) at Pondicherry. He even supervised its laying out. He was one of the chief examiners of the local French College and a juror of the High Court during the French regime.

When the Mother founded the Ashram school in 1943, she gave to Pavitra its charge, although the ultimate direction and guidance in every detail was hers. Pavitra knew how to give shape to the Mother's vision and made a remarkable contribution to the growth and expansion of this work of the Ashram in the field of education. He wrote a series of illuminating articles on the new approach to education which have proved of immense use to teachers not only of the Ashram but also from outside. These are now included in his book *Education and the Aim of Human Life*, every press review of which has been highly appreciative. Right from its very inception Pavitra was Director of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, the present name of what the Ashram school has developed into. He was the Mother's personal secretary and handled nearly all foreign correspondence.

He wrote a number of articles on the Ashram and the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. A very important work of his is a compilation from Sri Aurobindo's major works under the title, *The Future Evolution of Man*, of which the French edition was published by Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, and the English edition by Allen & Unwin, England. Both the editions are having wider and wider circulation. Another anthology of his is *The Mother and Sri Aurobindo on Love*. His last work was an adaptation in French of the Bhagavad Gita with Sri Aurobindo's commentary. It was published by Tchou, Paris, about a month before Pavitra left his body on 16 May 1969.

Combining in him a highly developed European mind and a highly evolved Indian soul, Pavitra was a quiet but dynamic force of Synthesis, an essential world-necessity. A disciple of the Integral Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, he dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the realisation of this great Ideal. His modest and simple way of life, his inner realisations as a Yogi, as in the general case of all sincere Yogis, cannot but be a help forward to his fellow-seekers.

(Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 2.)

THE ANNUAL SEMINAR AT THE SRI AUROBINDO CENTER, CRESCENT MOON RANCH, SEDONA, ARIZONA, U.S.A.

THE annual four-day seminar at this American Center, run by Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Duncan, opened on Thursday, April 24.

At 5 p.m. Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* was heard on a recording with the Mother's voice and with music by Sunil Bhattacharya. At 8 p.m. there was an original presentation of the poem with slides and music by Ann and Richard Eggenberger, young musicians from Santa Monica, Calif., who had been married in 1962 according to the Hindu ceremony and who have both visited India.

On Friday evening, April 25, at 8 p.m., Harry N. Olsen, Vice President and Director of Research for Plasma Sciences Laboratories, Inc. of Van Nuys, Calif., addressed the group on Teilhard de Chardin's book, *The Phenomenon of Man*, followed by a slide presentation illustrating the principles revealed in the French scientist-philosopher's masterpiece.

"The Global Vision of Sri Aurobindo" was the topic of a short talk on Saturday, April 26, at 10 a.m. by Rear Admiral (Retired) Rutledge Barker Tompkins of Dorset, Vermont, who discussed "the unique complementary relationship between the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo", and "the exceptional contributions of Sri Aurobindo to an indispensable integral knowledge". He touched upon the truths which he regarded as the keystones of Sri Aurobindo's teaching:

1. Existence, Nature as an evolution of Consciousness which proceeds by certain great principles.
2. The nature of the divine Being, Omnipresent Reality, the Spirit, God.
3. The concrete synthesis of Spirit and Nature—a unique requirement of Sri Aurobindo's teaching.
4. The status of Man—mental being at the stage of transformation into spiritual being.

The same speaker continued with another short paper, "Sri Aurobindo's Grand Synthesis". It was intended to provide a preliminary glimpse of the essential integral nature of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and a summary description of the nature of his great philosophical and Yogic writings where his teaching can be best pursued.

Both the papers were very well received.

"Some Aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Truth-Vision" was the title of a talk on Sunday, April 27, at 10 a.m. by Robert M. Kleinmann, Professor of Philosophy at Pensacola Junior College, Pensacola, Fla., and Adjunct Professor of Religion at the University of West Florida. We are reproducing in full this paper in the following pages.

Also included in the seminar activities were daily periods of meditation; two sessions of Yoga exercises led by Mrs. Lou Keller of Sedona; a showing of recent slides of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and of Auroville in India, by Nicholas G. Duncan; and informal discussion groups.

Mrs. Lois Duncan was the unobtrusive presiding spirit who quietly sustained the whole sessions with her smiling attention, devotion and energy.

RENAISSANCE

BEFORE Man's fragile flesh would come to an end,
And he would join the Blessed and the Good,
The Almighty for his use decreed to send
Some sounds to make with them whatever he could.

Man made right use of them, untiringly
Shaped epic, lyric, ode—and not in vain
Poem-on-poem's heart-rending harmony.
Surely to the ages this was no small gain.

But the voice of the Silence, the mantra of the Real
He has not captured yet nor cast in song;
They haunt him siren-like, afar, ideal:
He must find the Word to raise the earthly throng.

And kingdom after kingdom at its zenith
Of sway has felt the aching sense come on,
Has known its vast foundations quake beneath
And perished as the rolling years have gone.

Still is it true that now the path is clear
For the song of the Heart, which God has willed to be—
The Adventure of the Apocalypse is here
And kindles in Time the Eternal Mystery.

C. SUBBIAN

SOME ASPECTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S TRUTH-VISION

This contribution—profound yet lucid, wide-ranging yet simple, one of the finest brief exposés of the subject—by Dr. Robert M. Kleinmann, Professor of Philosophy at Pensacola Junior College, Pensacola, Fla., and Adjunct Professor of Religion at the University of West Florida, may be best introduced in the informal words of Mrs. Lois Duncan in the course of a letter to the Editor of Mother India about the four-day Seminar at the Sri Aurobindo Center, Crescent Moon Ranch, Sedona, Arizona, U.S.A. and about the various friends whose participation has made the annual occasion a success:

“We were deeply touched by Dr. Kleinmann’s offering, and as he will be leaving for India in June, on an exchange program, you will be meeting him later on in the year. He is to be at a college in a place named Sringeri—famous for the influence of Shankaracharya. This spring he is teaching a senior class The Life Divine. Thirty copies of Sri Aurobindo’s book have been ordered by the University of West Florida, where he is to have a seminar. Both Bob and his wife are dear, sincere, dedicated souls. You will surely welcome them.”

I MUST begin by explaining to you the sense in which this paper is being offered. Anyone attempting to expound the teachings of a Master of Yoga must be fully aware of the enormous distance between his own fragmentary transcription and the unfathomable depth and richness of the luminous source of Truth. He is sure to engender insistent questions in the minds of his hearers which go far beyond his ability to provide definitive answers to them. I have no idea how Sri Aurobindo would answer the questions which my poor attempt at interpretation will surely arouse in your minds. If you have a sincere aspiration, my best hope is that your questions will lead you into the writings of Sri Aurobindo with renewed vigor and interest. Each person must eventually see Truth according to his inner light and stage of spiritual development. So, if you disagree with some of the things said here, please do not feel that there is an unbridgeable gap between your understanding and mine. I have made an honest attempt to bring forward certain leading principles in the abundant writings of Sri Aurobindo, and can only pray that there is no glaring mistranslation of his Vision.

For, whatever the hopes of the future may be, we are still primarily mental beings, and Mind—as he so clearly points out—is a very limited and imperfect instrument for gaining Knowledge. It is capable only of singling out one, or a few, aspects of Infinite Reality and seeing things from this side or that to the distortion, and even exclusion, of other points of view. Even when it rises to a larger synthetic vision, it makes out of it a mere intellectual abstraction, calling it the One, the Absolute, and

so forth. Then it requires a valiant effort to hold on to this concept in the face of ever-recurring doubts and contradictions. All this will change, we are told, when the creative Truth-Power, or Supermind, becomes organized in the earth-field. But, meanwhile, we must make do with what we have. If this is done with a sincere effort to remain open and receptive to whatever illumination can come down and fix itself here, perhaps something of value can be achieved.

We wish to consider some fundamental principles of Sri Aurobindo's world-vision and God-vision. For we are all seeking to deepen our consciousness of Truth, the truth of the Self, and the World, and God—and Sri Aurobindo has much to tell us about all this. But first we must state what truth means according to our ordinary ways of thinking. Most Western philosophers today hold that truth and falsehood are properties of statements about the world of everyday experience. If a statement signifies an actual state-of-affairs we call it "true"; if not, it is called "false." For instance, if I say "The sun is shining outside today," you can easily check the truth of this statement by going outside and seeing for yourself. However, it would be very difficult in practice to test the statements of a complex scientific theory in this way. The atomic theory, or the biological theory of evolution, for example, require very sophisticated procedures of validation. But it is claimed that it must be possible to achieve such validation, at least in principle, if the theory is at all meaningful in a cognitive sense.

This conception of truth is very shallow indeed, and it is of little value to the spiritual seeker. Statements of empirical fact require endless qualification in the light of logical analysis, and no final or complete truth can be achieved in this way. Even a simple statement like "The sun is shining outside today" involves deep problems concerning the nature of time, space and our perception of the material world for which no completely acceptable solutions are available. Once this is fully realized, we need no longer be concerned with it, for it is a subtle product of what is called *Māyā*. It simply will not do. There is an inner aspiration which cannot be satisfied with this view of truth. We aspire to a Truth that can open the inner doors of knowledge and reveal to us a world of Wisdom and Delight which is not ordinarily a conscious part of our daily experience. Truth appears to us like the overarching sky above, holding the promise of a vast and inexhaustible freedom. Through the centuries men have tried to reach this sky of Truth by mental effort alone, piling abstraction upon abstraction in the attempt to build an intellectual Tower of Babel to the very gates of heaven. But this building from below upward has been of little avail, and a loss of spiritual momentum, so characteristic of modern society, is the poor result. If we carry the figure a step farther, we may say that Sri Aurobindo has shown us another way to the sky of Truth. Not by a labored building from below upward, but by an insistent call for the descent of Force from above, is the goal to be achieved by evolutionary man. Labor and effort there will be, but this is the Sunlit Path of the ancients and we have Sri Aurobindo's assurance that it is full of sweetness and delight. For man in his inner being is above as well as below;

the transcendent and all-pervading Reality is his own deepest Self here as well as there.

This fundamental principle of the continuity and oneness of all existence has been known in India from time immemorial—it is the heart of that wisdom which is known in the Upanishads as “the breath of the Eternal.” India has nursed it throughout the centuries as part of her Sanātan Dharma, the Eternal Religion. And it was the Sanātan Dharma to which Sri Aurobindo was led at the beginning of his spiritual work. In the famous “Uttarpara Speech” at Baroda, after his release from prison in 1908, he relayed the call of the Divine to the awakening Indian Nation-Soul.

I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanātan Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanātan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanātan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanātan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanātan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their paths. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help on my purpose. They also are doing my work, they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment.¹

“Shakti,” in the above passage, is the Sanskrit term which means “energy,” the Force or active power of the Divine, and it signifies a female principle. In the Tāntric tradition, and for Sri Aurobindo, it is a name of the Divine Mother, the Consciousness-Force of God. It is possible to see Her reaching out to us here, bringing us all together for this seminar. What a mystery it is! And how many Great Souls have labored in the service of Her Dharma! Let us, then, examine some of the

principles of this Dharma in the light of Sri Aurobindo's unsurpassed Vision.

There are a few fundamentals which go to the heart of things, and it will be best to concentrate on these. In each case, we shall begin with a quotation from Sri Aurobindo as a basis for proceeding. The quotations present four essential aspects of his Truth-Vision, which can be called (1) the Divine, (2) the Cosmic Manifestation, (3) the Purpose, and (4) the Key. We shall select a leading phrase from each passage for comment (note underlined words).

The dynamic conception or impelling sense with which our Yoga can best set out would be naturally *the idea, the sense of a conscious all-embracing but all-exceeding Infinite*. Our uplook must be to a free, all-powerful, perfect and blissful One and Oneness in which all beings move and live and through which all can meet and become one. This Eternal will be at once personal and impersonal in his self-revelation and touch upon the soul. He is personal because he is the conscious Divine, the infinite Person who casts some broken reflection of himself in the myriad divine and undivine personalities of the universe. He is impersonal because he appears to us as an infinite Existence, Consciousness and Ananda and because he is the fount, base and constituent of all existences and all energies,—the very material of our being and mind and life and body, our spirit and our matter.²

Throughout the ages philosophers have sought for the one principle or reality which would give significance to the rich world of multiplicity and change which we find confronting us. Some have been satisfied with Matter, or some sort of inconscient physical energy, which is held to be the basis of the universe. Others have sought reality in more subtle principles, such as a universal Life-Force or cosmic Desire-Will. Still others have found in Mind itself the foundation of all reality—witness the many forms of philosophical idealism in the thought of both the East and the West. But the ancient Vedānta of India has always placed the essence of reality in a supreme and all-inclusive Spiritual Being, a Pure Existence, Consciousness and Delight transcending the derivative principles of Matter, Life and Mind. So strong has been this intuition of transcendent reality, that it has led in the course of centuries to an infinitely subtle metaphysical philosophy which places the knowledge of the One at the pinnacle of Truth-realization. Many persons have interpreted this to mean that the ultimate goal of life is to be found in a great world-negating absorption in the Absolute, a spiritual release from further subjection to ignorance, pain and death. Authentic as this experience is—and we have Sri Aurobindo's word for its authenticity—it falls into a pattern which has been all too common among the world's religions. Salvation, liberation into another kind of existence beyond this present one of travail and death, is held before us as the only legitimate goal of a spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo found this interpretation too narrow to support his perfectly wide and integral realization.

This is not the place to examine the rich background of experience and reflection which led the great teachers and avatārs of the past to recommend such a view of things. It has many difficulties which Sri Aurobindo has carefully pointed out in his many writings. Simply put, it is hard to make sense out of a teaching which suggests that the secret significance of world-existence is only to get out of it. The ancient sources of the Vedānta—the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā—do not entirely support such a one-sided view. The Divine is given to us in the great formula *Sachchidānanda*, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. It has a transcendent self-absorbed aspect, but also a dynamic, many-sided fullness which continuously pours forth a flood of worlds and enters into them as their inner substance and support. Sri Aurobindo speaks of God as Bliss, the Divine Delight which is the secret substance of all things. It transcends the common phenomena of pleasure and pain, which are only our mind-distorted translations of the creative joy of the Divine. In *Savitri*, he writes:

This universe an old enchantment guards;
Its objects are carved cups of World-Delight
Whose charmed wine is some deep soul's rapture-drink.³

Thus he solves the perennial problem of the One and the Many in a beautiful synthesis which holds both poles of the Divine Unity in an integral fullness of Delight. For the more we see of the Many the more we long for the bliss of the One, and the more we know of the One the more we delight in the Many. The movement of Cosmic Manifestation is not a falsifying of Divine Oneness, but rather the progressive Self-Revelation of that Oneness in the infinitely joyful expression of its manifold hidden potentialities. But what can be said of the Cosmic Manifestation itself? Let us read the second passage we have chosen.

We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedāntic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, *the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind*, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she has planted in forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms of Life.⁴

We have seen that, for Sri Aurobindo, the Divine is not only a stable, motionless Absolute, but also the dynamic heart of all this moving universe—a dual status of Being and Becoming. We must realize the Divine as transcendent beyond all manifestation, universal as the support of cosmic existence, and individual as the immanent spiritual center of each being. As the Upanishadic formula declares: "All this is indeed Brahman." However, the process of the Becoming is given special attention in Sri Aurobindo's Vision. We all use the word "evolution" familiarly enough, but, as he says in the above passage, this merely states the fact without explaining it. Thus it is very important to understand the basis of the ancient Vedāntic formulation. And this in turn goes back to an even older Vedic conception of the Cosmos. According to the Vedas, the physical universe constitutes only one world or plane of cosmic manifestation. There are other planes which are simultaneously above and within the physical. Traditionally, the total number of planes is seven. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes them in ascending order as Matter, Life, Mind, Supermind or Truth-Consciousness, Delight, Conscious-Force and Existence. Each plane is qualitatively different from the others, with the Supermind functioning as a link between the Higher Hemisphere of Existence, Conscious-Force and Delight, and the Lower Hemisphere of Mind, Life and Matter. Just as the universe can be understood in terms of these tiers and plateaus of the Cosmic Divine, so man is a microcosm who contains within himself a portion of each plane. Thus far, in our surface consciousness, we have succeeded in formulating only a superficial, externalized part of the lower planes of matter, life and mind. Behind this surface consciousness lies a vast subliminal mind, hidden and subtle, as well as superconscious heights which still remain in an undeveloped seed-state on the peaks of our being, and murky subconscious depths which hold the repressed memories and habitual responses of the past. In this conception, the heights, depths and widenesses of the individual self are unimaginably extended, and it calls for an approach to the meaning of human existence on this earth which is entirely different from the ordinary one.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, the processes of involution and descent are prior to that of evolution, and they give to the latter its inner significance as the gradual Self-disclosure of the secret Divine. Not only has God limited Himself in a graded hierarchy of worlds at the beginning of cosmic manifestation, but, at certain climactic points in the course of the upward evolution out of Inconscience, the power of the next higher plane descends into the lower one. In the process of descent, there is a gradual increase of pressure from above in response to the rising aspiration and call from below. The process has been going on in Nature unconsciously from the beginning of this cycle of manifestation and it is responsible for the appearance of living and thinking organisms on earth. In man, however, the process has become self-aware, and a conscious cooperation with Nature is now possible in order to fulfill the Divine Purpose in evolution. Sri Aurobindo sees the persistent strain of spiritual aspiration in humanity as a sign of the inner purpose of Nature urging man, the mental being, to move forward in the direction of self-transcendence. Once a major descent has taken

place, and is able to fix itself in the earth-consciousness, a process of assimilation is possible by which the lower is taken up into the higher and transmuted into a qualitatively new being. This is the glorious possibility held open to present-day humanity. The ancient Vedic symbol for the process of gradual spiritual awakening is that of the Dawn. This perfect symbol of Divine Self-Revelation in Nature can be found at the very beginning of *Savitri*, and recurs throughout the poem which, significantly enough, ends with the promise of future dawns to come. The image is beautifully presented in the following lines:

The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
 Persuaded the inert black quietude
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.⁵

It is in this spirit that Sri Aurobindo tells us: "We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future."⁶ But what purpose is served by the tremendous travail of earthly evolution? Will the noons of the future be any brighter than the dawns of the past? Let us look at the third passage chosen for discussion.

(3) *For we have set out to conquer all ourselves and the world for God; we are determined to give him our becoming as well as our being and not merely to bring the pure and naked spirit as a bare offering to a remote and secret Divinity in a distant heaven or abolish all we are in a holocaust to an immobile Absolute. The Divine that we adore is not only a remote extracosmic Reality, but a half-veiled Manifestation present and near to us here in the universe. Life is the field of a divine manifestation not yet complete: here, in life, on earth, in the body,—ihaiwa, as the Upanishads insist,—we have to unveil the Godhead; here we must make its transcendent greatness, light and sweetness real to our consciousness, here possess and, as far as may be, express it.*⁷

It may be asked at once, "Why should we have to conquer ourselves and the world for God? Against whom must we do battle in order to achieve the Victory?" There are problems here which must be met head-on, even though it is usually very difficult for Westerners to grasp the full meaning of the solution. For many centuries now, our minds have been trained by an intellectual and theological tradition which has cut reality to the bone in order to justify its own mental constructions. One side of this tradition is rational and scientific, originating with the ancient Greeks and receiving a strong stimulus in modern times from the resurgence of the empirical scientific temperament after the Renaissance. The emphasis here is on the close application of controlled observation and logical reasoning to the world of experience, with the consequent clearing away of a great mass of ignorant superstition concerning the laws and processes of the physical world. According to Sri Aurobindo, this severe intellectual purgation was necessary for a time, but it has been carried so far in the

direction of materialism and scepticism that it has become a hindrance to further spiritual progress.

On the other hand, the religious side of the Western tradition has been molded in the heat of theological controversy which was aimed primarily at establishing the truth of a rigid and unalterable monotheism, and has produced an almost complete and unbridgeable gap between Heaven and Earth, God and the human soul. All vestiges of a diverse and intimate transaction between the Divine and Nature have been exorcised from the orthodox tradition as mere polytheism, or ominously labeled "pantheism"—as if this were an appellation of the Devil himself. The result has been a doctrinal purism which has left little enough of the living sense of the Cosmic Divine, which sensitive souls have continued to feel within themselves and Nature despite the systematic attempts to expunge it from the Western consciousness. Here science and religion have worked together to root out something of incalculable spiritual value, and to recover it we must again return to the ancient Vedic view of the Cosmos as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo.

Fundamental to this view is the conception of One Divine Being which manifests itself in the form of multiple Powers and Personalities, identified as the Gods and Goddesses of the Vedic Pantheon. If we are to understand this, we must divest ourselves of our prefabricated monotheistic inclinations and recognize the reality of these great beings. Western scholars, when they first began to study the Vedas, were horrified by the apparent polytheism, and confused by the fusion of this with an underlying monism which referred to One Reality pervading and sustaining the entire universe. Even worse, each God in turn was worshipped as the One Supreme. There was also reference to a Great Goddess, called Aditi, the Divine Mother, which was even more repellent to their masculine-oriented theological views.

We need not follow the scholars in their intellectual gyrations to explain away the Vedic Hymns as primitive nature-worship or mere ritualism. For Sri Aurobindo, the Gods are there, regardless of what names men call them by. Their true home is on the inner heights of this universe and they are the divine helpers and protectors of humanity in the vast evolutionary process. As we grow, we build the Gods within ourselves, and rise to them, and share with them the spiritual treasures which they carefully guard. For there are other beings in this universe too, dark forces of the lower vital and physical planes that are hostile to human progress. There is an ancient background of Cosmic Warfare whose lines have been drawn within, in the inner parts of man himself. This earth has been the field of pain and defeat and death for centuries, and so difficult has the struggle been that the greatest religious teachers of the past—both East and West—have counseled an ultimate withdrawal and escape as the only hope for beleaguered man. Many have been the doctrines of salvation—a heavenly state after death, *nirvāṇa*, *moksha*, and so forth. In India, the apparent impossibility of a final victory here was summed up in the observation that you cannot straighten a dog's tail. The world was thought of as an illusion, and only when the illusion vanished could pain and death disappear too.

But, from Sri Aurobindo's standpoint, this is not the last word on the significance of existence. From his unparalleled overview of past evolution he has grasped a deeper purpose, and the promise of an unsuspected victory, in the apparent insurmountability of the material inconscience at the root of this world. From the very beginning, God has slumbered hidden in the deep recesses of the universe. The Vedic Rishis recognized Him here as Agni, the Divine Flame to be kindled within, who becomes the leader of evolutionary humanity and its Messenger to the Gods. Sri Aurobindo invites us to drink the cup of Immortality here on this earth and manifest God in a future supramental epiphany when the supreme Truth-Consciousness will claim its own earth for itself in a diviner humanity. His ideal is not the traditional one of the liberated soul waiting for the earth-nature to fall away, but rather a change of consciousness which will transmute all the coverings of the soul—body, life, mind—into a divine instrumentation, and bring down immortality and bliss right here into the very camp of falsehood and death, this beautiful green earth which holds the promise of unimaginably richer dawns to come. We are all warriors in the struggle, whether consciously engaged or not. Like Sāvitrī, in her long duel with death, we must be able to say:

If the eyes of Darkness can look straight at Truth,
Look at my heart and, knowing what I am,
Give what thou wilt or what thou must, O Death.⁸

One more topic remains, and that is to consider the key to future spiritual progress. The fourth quotation suggests the way opened by Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga

(4) Life, not a remote silent or high-uplifted ecstatic Beyond—Life alone, is the field of our Yoga. The transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life must be its central purpose. *The means towards this supreme end is a self-giving of all our nature to the Divine.* Everything must be given to the Divine within us, to the universal All and to the transcendent Supreme. An absolute concentration of our will, our heart and our thought on that one and manifold Divine, an unreserved self-consecration of our whole being to the Divine alone—this is the decisive movement, the turning of the ego to That which is infinitely greater than itself, its self-giving and indispensable surrender.⁹

What is the key to these richer dawns we aspire to? How does Sri Aurobindo guide us toward a future victorious consummation of this adventure of humanity? First, we must understand that just as each one of us has been here since the begin-

ning of cosmic manifestation, so each will be a part of the New Age. For the great truth of rebirth is an integral part of Sri Aurobindo's Vision. The soul must have a large field consisting of many lives in order to consummate the Great Work which it has taken upon itself. There must be sufficient time for many returns, coilings-back of Nature in Her serpentine track, in order to pick up and assimilate undeveloped possibilities passed over in the original upward surge of evolutionary progress. He speaks of an individual formation of consciousness, the psychic being, a divine seed planted in the midst of the worlds, which assimilates the fruits of soul-evolution from birth to birth in an endless progression. This seed remains hidden behind the surface personality in ordinary life, but can gradually come forward through Sādhanā and become the manifest basis for further evolution. It is the Ancient One, spoken of in the Upanishads as the thumb-sized Purusha dwelling in the luminous space within the heart. There are many ways of preparing for the psychic unveiling, and these are spoken of in Sri Aurobindo's various writings on Yoga. For instance, the goal of traditional Vedānta—realization of the silent Self, the Brāhmic state of the Gītā—is indispensable. For without the large equality of a spiritualized consciousness as a foundation, further progress would be severely limited. But here we can simply suggest the basic and original feature of his view of the matter. The essence of the psychic being is pure delight in consecration to the Divine. Love, aspiration and self-surrender are the terms of its inmost nature. In ordinary consciousness, its divine purity is covered over by the complex lower nature and is apparently distorted by the nervous-emotional currents of that part of our being. But through a careful and persistent spiritual practice it grows and strengthens and finally comes forward as the leader of the lower elements, thus quickening the development of the entire being. When this takes place, life becomes a complete self-offering to the Divine, who can then take up the further work necessary for the descent and progressive unfolding of the higher powers from above. The psychic opening will be accompanied, sooner or later, by a rising of the individual consciousness to a new status from which the conditions of the present earth-life can be transformed.

The process of transformation is a Divine Work. The complex being of man—physical, vital and mental—must be purified and brought into full conscious awareness of the Divine if the work is to be consummated. An inner self-surrender and living in the Divine is the fundamental requirement. For the refining and transmuting power of the Divine Mother must wait until an adequate basis for further progress has been built in the individual. This great truth can be found in the ancient Vedic symbol of sacrifice, which has a cosmic significance pointed out by Sri Aurobindo in the following passage:

The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation

. . . The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much-fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service. . . The sacrifice and the divine return for our sacrifice then become a gladly accepted means towards our last perfection; for it is recognised now as the road to the fulfilment in us of the eternal purpose.¹⁰

Here we have the key to divine unfoldment, the Supreme Secret of action taught so long ago by Śrī Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. There is a Yoga of pure knowledge which, if followed faithfully, will eventually lead the aspirant beyond the world of bondage into the wide spaces of the Spirit, never to return again. And there is the round of ordinary life with its restlessness and ceaseless travail, subject to continual disappointment and defeat. But there is also the Sunlit Path in which one offers works as a sacrifice to the Divine Lord of the Universe who, in the words of the Avatār, calls upon us: "Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve."¹¹ We are to offer again and again, endlessly, our entire being, our works, our attainments, in the Fire of inner discipline which purifies all. In return we receive the divine gifts of delight and self-perfection. This is the great law of interchange between the Gods and men—the basis of cosmic existence. Nothing is lost in this interchange except the gross impurities of the lower nature which weigh us down and clog us with the dark obscuring substance of the Ignorance. In this way, the supreme Knowledge comes too, gradually, in the all-comprehending Divine Unity which takes up the entire being—mind and heart and will—into itself for the purpose of transformation, to manifest here the Power, Peace and Delight of the Godhead in a perfected humanity.

We can now sum up the principles of Sri Aurobindo's Truth-Vision which were brought forth in the course of this paper. The Divine is the one source and support of all existence. Cosmic manifestation is for the purpose of divine Self-Revelation in which the secret potentialities of the Infinite are loosed forth by the Divine Mother for the delight of the Supreme Lord of All. And the key to this dynamic self-disclosure of God is to be found in the cosmic Law of Sacrifice, the great principle of mutuality and harmony among all beings. If this be so, what have we to fear from entering into the divine self-abandonment which is required by this Law? For the Mother, the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme, is on earth with us, and the atmosphere around us is bathed in Her luminous Love and Grace. We have but to open ourselves with inner sincerity in order to receive them. Everything is prepared, and the future is in our hands. "All can be done if the God-touch is there."¹² So Sri Aurobindo tells us in *Savitri*, the master-poem of this age, and the words of Sāvitrī, in the moment of her triumph, express the long-sought fulfilment of the divine quest:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
 Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
 Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
 Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.¹³

This is the beauty of life, you see. The Divine Sweetness must come down through individuals, but it is not for a single individual. It is for all, for the entire earth—not even for humanity alone. There is a sweetness of existence even for these great rocks which surround us. Without it they would cease to exist—they would be in *pralaya*, the night of cosmic dissolution.

ROBERT M. KLEINMANN

NOTES

- ¹ W. T. de Bary (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition*, pp. 178-9.
- ² Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 93-4. (Italics added.)
- ³ Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 707.
- ⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (American Edition), p. 5. (Italics added.)
- ⁵ *Savitri*, pp. 5-6.
- ⁶ Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (American Edition), p. 9.
- ⁷ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 83-4. (Italics added.)
- ⁸ *Savitri*, p. 714.
- ⁹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 101. (Italics added.)
- ¹⁰ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 120-1.
- ¹¹ *The Bhagavad Gitā*, XVIII. 66
- ¹² *Savitri*, p. 5.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 783.

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN*

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

VIII

WELL OF TEARS

SUMANTRA, after taking leave of Rama, drove in his chariot to Ayodhya. Arriving there he narrated to Vasishta all that had passed between him and Rama in the forest. The Sage, who anticipated the effect of it all on Dasaratha, said in distress, "Alas! Finished is the King!" He followed Sumantra to Dasaratha's palace, sobbing and sighing.

At the sight of the returning chariot, the kinsmen of Dasaratha wishfully thought that Rama had returned, too. When they saw the lonely Sumantra with his eyes welling with tears, they became desperate.

As everyone yelled,
 "The chariot has arrived,"
Dasaratha stirred out of his stupor,
 hoping Rama had returned.
Hurriedly
opening his stainless eyes
 and seeing but the austere Sage before him,
 he asked,
 "Has my gallant hero arrived?"
Not having the heart to say "No,"
the Sage remained gasping;
but, the woe-begone face of the charioteer
showed Rama had not come;
and the King sank, exhausted.
Out rushed the Sage, saying,
 "I cannot bear this tragic sight."

Turning to the charioteer,
the King asked,
 "Is the Prince far or near?"

* Readers are requested to pick up the thread from the March issue containing Chapter VII. The last two instalments—Chapter VI—filled a gap inadvertently left after Chapter V which had appeared in February. (Editor)

And he replied,
 "Into the remote jungle of rising bamboos
 the Prince is gone,
 followed by his brother and his sweetheart of Mithila".
 The moment he uttered the words,
 "The Prince is gone,"
 gone was the soul of Dasaratha.

The tragedy of Dasaratha stirs Kamban to his depths and what a well of tears
 has he dug out of them!

As the King lay,
 without pulse and without breath,
 doubting Kausalya
 felt his body
 and making sure that life was extinct,
 she fell down in a faint.
 Like a boneless worm
 caught in blazing summer's heat,
 she withered.

In her anguish, Kausalya thinks that Dasaratha has wantonly abandoned her.

"Fled,
 fled is the King;
 betraying his trust
 he's fled;
 the King has fled,
 oh! the merciless King!"
 So said the Queen,
 who reeled and fell down.
 When the rain-clouds fail
 and the springs dry up,
 the bewildered fish
 shrink and shrivel;
 so did the Queen,
 who reeled and fell down.

Samparan was a Rakshasa and a great enemy of the Celestials. Out of compassion for the gods, Dasaratha killed Samparan and gave enduring peace to the Gods. Kausalya recalls this incident and says,

"In ancient times
 you vanquished in battle
 Samparan, that master of a myriad chariots;
 and thanks to you,
 the Celestials live in glee.
 And you are now
 by the Celestials entertained."
 So said the one,
 who writhed in agony
 like the loving she-elephant, separated from her kingly groom,
 with whom she had been interlaced.

Of all the love-gestures in the animal world, the most vivid and dramatic is that of an elephant couple with their eloquent and massive trunks tenderly interlaced in love. Kamban could not have chosen a more moving simile to portray the pangs of separation.

Kausalya fancies that the disembodied spirit of Dasaratha must be preoccupied in Heaven with those happy pursuits which marked his life on the earth. While he was here, he used to revel in the performance of sacrifices (yagas) and in the edifying company of saints and in sustained research into the intricacies and subtleties of jurisprudence.

Are you engaged
 in the happy performance
 of Yagas?
 or perhaps
 in relishing the joy derived
 from the company of truthful friends?
 or are you, oh! King,
 drawing pleasure from the eternal verities
 of Manu's Laws?"
 Thus wailed the one,
 who had brought forth from her womb
 (for the edification of the Gods)
 a living commentary
 upon the hearsay of the Scriptures.

All scriptural truths remained, according to the Poet, in the bookish state of hearsay, till they received authenticity and illustration from the life and conduct of Rama.

As Kausalya was bemoaning the death of her husband, the widowed figure of Kaikeyi comes there with her unplaited hair and this sight further rouses Kausalya's

grief and pity. Addressing her, she says:

“Oh! daughter of Kekaya,
 well, indeed, have you loosened
 your plaited hair!
 and how merrily
 have you taken the sceptre over!
 Alas! and what blossoming boons
 have you obtained!
 Certainly you have implemented
 your intrigue-woven plan!”
 With these words
 she rolled on the chest of the King and quivered
 like an arc of lightning
 trembling athwart the clouds.

SEAWORTHY BOAT

As Kausalya was uttering such loud lamentations and as Sumitra, her co-wife, lay exhausted with grief and the entire palace reeled as if the whole cosmos would fall down and break, the numerous other wives of Dasaratha, who had eyes like tiny mangoes, surrounded his body like a flock of peacocks and raised an uproar.

They eyed the one who had died,
 the mate of their souls;
 and, shocked, they stood with their frames quivering
 as with swallowed poison.
 Yet
 they feared not,
 nor did they break down and fall:
 for their minds were attuned
 to their resolve
 to follow the guileless King
 to Heaven.

This heroic resolve of loving women provokes the Poet to make the acute observation:

Is there a greater hardener of the heart
 than love?

It is interesting that love, which usually softens the human heart, could also

harden it. As these queenly women stand around the dead body of the King, they look like an assemblage of peacocks hanging on to a lone immovable hillock, as the jungle stream rises in spate all around it.

The sight of the bereaved wives holding fast to the body of Dasaratha leads the Poet into a mood of profound reflection upon the glory that was Dasaratha. At the cost of his life he had kept his pledged word and, by dying for an ideal, he had achieved the life eternal. The body-boat, in which Dasaratha had sailed, had ferried him safely across the vast ocean of earthly life to the shore of Bliss, it had steered clear of the sharks of delusion, thereby proving its sea-worthiness; it had returned safe after landing its passenger in Eternity. As the wives held fast to the dead body, it seemed as though they had boarded this trustworthy vessel in the confidence that it would likewise safely take them to the same destination.

Lamenting,
 they clung, without ceasing, to the holy corpse
 of the King,
 who had vindicated Truth
 up to the very end
 and suffered separation from his sons
 and even death,
 just to keep his bitter word;
 and as they stood holding fast to the body of the King,
 they looked like mariners, who,
 with a view to voyage across the endless sea of birth,
 braving the assailing sharks of Delusion and Ignorance,
 now boarded the same vessel
 as had taken the King ashore
 and returned intact.

As the queens were immersed in sorrow, Sumantra conveyed the news of Dasaratha's death to Sage Vasishtha, who, reflecting on this act of Fate, was choked with grief. He was distressed that none of the sons of Dasaratha was in the city to perform the funeral rites. Pending Bharata's arrival, the body of Dasaratha was lifted and immersed in medicated oil. As Dasaratha's body is being embalmed, Kamban rings down the curtain on the palace scene and takes us back to the forest grove, where the citizens of Ayodhya had come in pursuit of Rama and were fast asleep. They did not know that in the darkness of the night Rama had given them the slip.

THE SOLAR DYNASTY

It is dawn now. The Sun rises in regal splendour and panoply. He comes in a chariot with all the paraphernalia of royalty. His arrival is announced by a beat of

drums. The Saints salute him in adoration. On his flanks he wears dazzling swords of light Why does the Sun come in such majesty? Being the originator of the solar dynasty of Dasaratha he has a responsibility to step into the breach created by Dasaratha's death.

As the fishful ocean
 sounds the drums,
 and the celestials praise him
 and the earthmen pray,
 the dazzling Sun appears,
 mounted on his lustrous chariot
 with his swords of spotless light
 shining on his flanks;
 he seems to say,
 "Gone to Heaven is my beloved son,
 his sons are away, and till they return
 I shall protect this world myself."

The men and women lying pell-mell around the grove rose with the Sun. They rose thinking that Rama was still there, but when they went to see him he was not to be found.

The Blue Cloud
 with the large lotus eyes
 was nowhere to be found
 and they stood perplexed,
 suffered as they had
 never suffered before,
 and forgot themselves;
 "Our past Karma
 has plotted to kill us
 by closing
 our unclosing eyes."
 So saying, they rolled on the ground.

They would rise,
 with intent to run in all the eight directions,
 and fall.
 "He has drowned us in a sea of grief
 and left us," they would say.
 "Merciless is Rama's act,"
 they would cry.

“Is not the dense expanse of the forest
 within the limits of this Earth?
 If we but collect the faculties of our mind,
 we can still get at him.
 Let’s follow the trail of the chariot,”
 they shouted.

They looked for the wheel-marks of Rama’s chariot and, detecting the trail, they made the joyous discovery that the chariot had gone in the direction of Ayodhya and must have taken Rama along with it. This discovery gave them new life. They triumphantly proclaimed, “Let no one have any fear. Our Prince has reached Ayodhya.” They sped towards the city, roaring as if thunder-clouds and the sea had joined in an uproarious unison. As they went on and on, they found further corroboration of their discovery; the wheel-marks proceeded continuously in the direction of Ayodhya without making any detour or diversion. This made them exultant and joyous and what did these joyous people look like as they entered the fortified city of Ayodhya?

Once upon a time, the whole Earth was overspread with the Sea. In order that life might flourish on the Earth, Brahma the Creator commanded the Sea to recede and at once the Sea receded far into the distance. After the land was made fit for habitation, Brahma commanded the Sea to come near and the Sea came joyously surging towards the land and stopped, restraining itself within the prescribed limits. Likewise, says the Poet, the citizens of Ayodhya surged back with avidity into the city.

As they entered the city, they heard that Dasaratha was dead. This piece of news plunged them in inexpressible grief. They also learnt that their worthy Prince instead of coming to Ayodhya had gone farther into the forest. They felt like dead.

Sage Vasishta comforted the grieving citizens and commanded them to dwell in the city without leaving it. The people implicitly obeyed the Sage.

Afraid of the mare-headed Goddess of Fire,
 who lives in the ocean’s midst,
 the waters of the ocean transgress not the prescribed limits.
 Likewise
 the citizens, by command of Vasishta,
 transgressed not the limits of the city.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

THE SKY, THE SEA AND THE BOY

THE vastness of the sky, its remoteness and silence,
the depth of the sea, its mystery and moaning call
attract the boy immensely...
That is why he goes to the sea-side, looks far and wide,
stands speechless with awe and wonder.
High above him is the voiceless void of the blue.
Down in front is the sombre fullness of the sea.
The two are alike yet how different and opposite.
From the two opposite poles of existence they stare at each other,
creating a vague expectancy in the boy.
He also stares at them. He stares on and on...

2

The sun sets, the sky closes its brilliant and only eye.
Darkness descends on all sides.
But the sky looks again, this time with its numberless tiny eyes.
The gemlike eyes twinkle and speak in signs. Who knows what?...
Gradually comes up from behind the horizon a lovely face,
a face beautiful as a thousand-petalled lotus of light.
The deep and dark sea below raises up a thousand hands
to embrace the body of beauty.
The waves dance and toss with ecstasy.
It seems that the sea strives to go up and merge itself with the sky
so as to get the lotus in its own bosom.
O, what a restlessness and yearning anguish!
But alas, all its efforts go in vain.
The impulse of unity rushes in despair towards the rocky shore
and bursts itself into so many mad laughs of frustration.

3

The boy's heart is stricken with pain.
He cries out in distress addressing the unknown nothingness:
Why this fruitless urge and self-torture for nothing?
Why should there be no return to such an aspiration?
Suddenly, to his utter surprise, the boy hears a call.
The sky speaks not to him but to the sea:

"O aggrieved ocean, be quiet, calm yourself down, stop your tumultuous waves.
 Then only can I plunge in you with all my treasures of love and beauty:
 I myself seek unity with you and am eager to come down.
 Simply quieten your angry waves for a while.
 O my beloved sea, listen."
 The sea does not listen. The waves do not stop.
 The luminous lotus does not bloom in the bosom of the sea.
 The boy goes back with a heavy heart. He comes back once again—
 He goes and comes back time and again.
 But alas, there is always the same sorrowful sight...

4

One day the boy gathers courage and appeals to the sea:
 "O great sea, why do you not harness your mad waves?
 Why do you not become calm and quiet? Then only can your aspiration
 be fulfilled. Then only will the sky descend into you
 with its treasure of beauty and love."
 Immediately a groaning voice comes up from the depth of the sea.
 The sea speaks. It speaks not to the sky but to the boy.
 "O son of the soil, you are too young, ignorant and innocent
 to appreciate the titan pangs of separation I bear within me.
 I do not aspire to unite with the sky. Nor does the sky descend into me.
 It only projects its image, a reflection, simply a product of the defect
 of your vision. I want the Lord of the sky who is at the same time
 the Lord of you and me as well. My aspiration rises upwards eternally
 for Him only. I do not want to get the sky but I aspire to become like the sky,
 as blue, as clear, as spotless and perfect as itself.

5

Abruptly a new light dawns in the boy's heart. He wants to speak something,
 but before he can open his mouth the sea starts speaking again:
 "You want me to be quiet and tranquil. But you cannot imagine
 the profound peace and tranquillity I have within me.
 You ask me to stop my waves. It is because you do not know
 that the waves are the vigour and voice of my soul. How can I stop
 the waves? They are the hymns of my heart, rhythm and music of my life,
 beauty and dance of my muscles. I have neither craving
 nor aspiration for the jewels of the sky. I have my own
 precious stones within me. Do you not know that I am called
 'Ratnakar,' the source and origin of all gems? The time is nearing

when the multicoloured lustres of my treasure will twinkle through the crystal clear dancing waves, the waves which you want so much to stop.”

6

On a sudden the voice recedes. The boy waits attentively till the voice comes back with a deeper emotional note:

“O my loving child, but for all that to be possible a touch is needed, the touch of the Supreme Truth. A light is necessary, the light of the Supreme Sun.

O my earth-born baby, this is the object of my love, longing and anguish, this is the reason of my existence and it is for this only

I pass sleepless and anxious hours throughout the ages.

To achieve that only the atoms of my dark and dense body are madly athirst and hungry, just in the same way as it happened with the Lord-intoxicated Nīmai of Nādiā. That is why, perhaps, at the end he mingled the God-inflamed cells of his body with the atoms of my seeking waves...”

7

The voice stops. The boy stands, stares and speaks not.

He stands as he did on the first day, but now with what a difference of mood!

Now he feels the movements of waves within himself.

He speaks out at last with folded hands:

“O boundless Sea, I bow down before you. Give me the touch of your great and mighty heart.”

He raises his hands high and prays to the sky:

“O vast Remoteness, I prostrate myself before you.

Open your secret doors and let the Supreme Sun-Flower shed its golden pollen on the fertile bosom of Sea and Earth and Heaven..”

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

(A free English rendering by the author of his own Bengali poem, not published yet)

WITHOUT SRI KRISHNA THE CHARIOTEER

A SERMON AND A STORY

Ego is enemy No.1 of a sadhaka. All saints and scriptures enjoin that one must be free from ego, if one wants to realise the Divine. The sadhaka also professes to understand this truth. But mostly it is a mental conception. Ego wears many forms and disguises and comes before the sadhaka in many guises. A stage comes in the sadhana when the sadhaka thinks that he is immune from ego. His works are according to the Scriptures and approved by people. But all the while he is dancing to the tune of his ego. Ego persists till the irrevocable step into the true Self is taken. Let us hear the Master.

“But how far has he to proceed in the elimination of ego? In the ancient way of Knowledge we arrive at the elimination of the ego-sense which attaches itself to the body, to the life, to the mind and says of all or any of them, ‘This is I.’ Not only do we, as in the way of works, get rid of the ‘I’ of the worker and see the Lord alone as the true source of all works and sanction of works and His executive Nature-power or else His supreme Shakti as the sole agent and worker,—but we get rid also of the egosense which mistakes the instruments or the expressions of our being for our true self and spirit. But even if all this has been done, something remains still, there remains a substratum of all these, a general sense of the separate I. This substratum ego is something vague, indefinable, elusive; it does not or need not attach itself to anything in particular as the self; it does not identify itself with anything collective; it is a sort of fundamental form or power of the mind which compels the mental being to feel himself as perhaps indefinable but still a limited being which is not mind, life or body but under which their activities proceed in Nature. The others were a qualified ego-idea and ego-sense supporting themselves on the play of the Prakriti; but this is the pure fundamental ego-power supporting itself on the consciousness or the mental Purusha. And because it seems to be above or behind the play and not in it, because it does not say ‘I am the mind, life or body,’ but ‘I am a being on whom the action of mind, life and body depends,’ many think themselves released and mistake this elusive Ego for the One, the Divine, the true Purusha or at the very least for the true Person within them,—mistaking the indefinable for the Infinite. But so long as this fundamental ego-sense remains, there is no absolute release. The egoistic life, even if diminished in force and intensity, can still continue well enough with this support. If there is the error in identification, the ego-life may under that pretext get rather exaggerated intensity and force. Even if there is no such error, the ego-life may be wider, purer, more flexible and release may be now much easier to attain and nearer to accomplishment, but still there is as yet no definitive release. It is imperative to go farther, to get rid of this indefinable but fundamental ego-sense

also and get back to the Purusha on whom it is supporting itself, of whom it is a shadow; the shadow has to disappear and by its disappearance reveal the spirit's unclouded substance."¹

The words of the Master are very clear and should penetrate our hearts. But the ordinary heart is rather dense and, to penetrate it, we may resort to what in ancient times was called Kathānu-yoga—teaching by means of a tale. Even Arjuna—the representative man of his Age—who after hearing the discourse (Gita) on the field of Kurukhestra said, "Destroyed is my delusion, I have regained memory through Thy grace, O Infallible One. I am firm, dispelled are my doubts. I will act according to Thy word"—even Arjuna fell a victim to this enemy No. 1. Let us hear the story.

It is common knowledge that the Pandavas won the war of the Mahabharata. And they won it because of Arjuna. Yudhisthir was crowned king of Hastinapura. He wanted to perform a Yajna. But before performing a Yajna, some ceremonies have to be gone through. One of them is that a horse is let loose. The horse wanders where it likes. If no one ties up the horse and it completes the round of the country, then and then only the Yajna can be performed. So Yudhisthir let loose a horse. The horse was followed by Sri Krishna, Bhima, Arjuna and a big army. They practically travelled most parts of the country, and other kings knowing the power and strength of the Pandavas allowed the horse to pass through their territories without let or hindrance, acknowledging thereby the superiority of the Pandavas. Some days more and the horse-followers would reach Hastinapura safely, triumphantly. At this moment, a soft, sweet, melodious, silvery tinkling voice spoke to Arjuna: "You are the person who has won the victory of Kurukshetra single-handed. All know your prowess. Who dares tie up your horse? Why unnecessarily bother Sri Krishna and others? Let them depart for Hastinapura."

Arjuna himself wondered why he had not done this simple thing earlier. So the next day he told Sri Krishna: "We are now nearing the end of our journey. Who dares to tie up our horse? They all know my strength and prowess; why not depart for Hastinapura with Bhīma? Even if anybody is rash enough to tie up the horse, he only invites certain death at my hands. Why should you take the trouble? Please, I pray to you to go to Hastinapura with Bhīma."

Sri Krishna knew the working of Arjuna's mind, but he also knew that it was no use speaking at that very moment; so he kept silence, gave his historic enigmatic smile and said: "You are right, we start for Hastinapura tomorrow morning first thing."

Accordingly Sri Krishna started with Bhīma the next day. They reached Hastinapura. A few days passed and Kuntamata had a dream in which she saw that Arjuna was in difficulty. So in the morning she called Sri Krishna and said: "I had a dream; it seems Arjuna is in some difficulty. Please do whatever is necessary." Sri Krishna said: "I also think so, let us go to Arjuna." So Sri Krishna, Bhīma and Kuntamata started to meet Arjuna.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 410-411.

Now let us see what happened to Arjuna after Sri Krishna had left him. A few days went by and news came that someone had tied up the horse. Naturally the march came to a halt and they had to prepare for war. So tents were pitched. But, before actually starting the war, Arjuna thought fit to send someone as a messenger to the king who had tied up the horse, and see whether he was amenable to reason. So Arjuna sent his messenger to the king. The messenger tried to explain the anger the king was courting, but all in vain. The messenger narrated the feats of Arjuna one by one, but they had no effect on the king. The messenger as a last resort asked the king to visit Arjuna before waging war. To this the king agreed.

When the king's mother came to know of this she asked the king to see her before he started to visit Arjuna. When the king came to see his mother, the mother said: "I have heard you are going to pay a visit to Arjuna. Is it true?" The king replied in the affirmative. Then said the queen mother: "Go, present to Arjuna the best jewels you have in your treasury and in no circumstances must you insult Arjuna."

So the king went with the best jewels to visit Arjuna. When he came into the presence of Arjuna, he placed the dish of jewels at his feet and stood before him. The king was very young and, on seeing him, feelings of paternal love arose in Arjuna's mind. Even Arjuna was surprised to find that, instead of feelings of anger and resentment, fatherly feelings were rising in his breast. He asked the king to take his seat and asked in loving tones: "Have you tied up the horse?" The king said: "Yes." "Please untie him," said Arjuna. But the king replied: "If I were to untie the horse for the mere asking, I would not have tied it up at all." Then Arjuna tried his level best to win over the king, but to no purpose. And when Arjuna saw that the king was not amenable, he got angry and said on the spur of the moment: "Weaklings like you cannot tie up the horse, your mother's milk is still on your lips; it is only persons who have sucked the breasts of a Kshatriyani, that can tie up the horse; so untie the animal or be prepared for certain death."

The king grew angry, but he remembered the words of the queen mother not to insult Arjuna in any circumstances. So he was on the horns of a dilemma. While he was cogitating the answer to be given to Arjuna, the Earth gave way and a woman appeared before the king and advised the king to challenge Arjuna to war. The king arose, pushed the dish of jewels away with his feet and asked Arjuna to do his worst. So Arjuna had no alternative to preparing for war. He began to clothe himself for war. But said Ghatotakacha, son of Bhima: "Uncle, why do you worry? I alone am sufficient to vanquish that nurseling. Allow me to go and fight the king."

So Ghatotakacha went to the battlefield. But no sooner had Ghatotakacha reached the field than the king slew him with such force that his head directly fell in Arjuna's lap. On seeing Ghatotakacha's head, Arjuna was bewildered and at a loss what to do. Then came the king and said: "Why are you perplexed? You sucker of a Kshatriyani's breast, let us see who has sucked the breasts of a Kshatriyani."

Arjuna went to the battlefield. The king asked Arjuna to strike the first blow.

But Arjuna laughed and said: "You naughty boy, you do not realise who I am. I am the victor of Kurukshetra, it does not behove me to strike first; strike the blow and take your chance." The king replied: "Do not be too sure, the same fate awaits you that awaited your nephew."

Ultimately the king slew Arjuna and went to the queen mother rejoicing at his victory. When the queen mother heard this, she said: "All right, you have won, but at the same time construct my pyre with Arjuna's. Arjuna was your father."

The king was thunderstruck. But there was no remedy to repair the loss. So they began to construct a pyre. At this juncture, Sri Krishna came with Bhima and Kuntamata and inquired what had happened. The whole incident was narrated to Sri Krishna. All awaited the decision of Sri Krishna with bated breath. Then said Sri Krishna: "There is only one way and only one by which Arjuna can be brought back to life." All present became hopeful and eagerly waited for the way. Sri Krishna said: "If the Amritakumbha (Nectar-jug) can be brought from the Patalaloka (Underworld)—Nagaloka (Snake-world)—then only can Arjuna be brought back to life." Said Bhima: "I will go and get the Kumbha." But the king interrupted him and said: "Wait, I will get it." So saying, he wrote a note addressed to the King of Nagaloka demanding immediate delivery of the Kumbha or to prepare for war and then tied the said note to his arrow and shot the arrow with such force that it went direct to the place where the King of the Patalaloka was holding his Court. On seeing the arrow and after reading the note, the King of the Nagaloka and his courtiers at first became angry at the audacity of the person who had written the note. But after some deliberation they decided to send the Kumbha on the one side and to steal away the head of Arjuna on the other, so that it would be impossible to make Arjuna alive. So they sent the Kumbha and at the same time stole away the head of Arjuna.

When the Kumbha came into the hands of Sri Krishna, naturally he asked for the head of Arjuna, so that he might place it with the body and then make him live. The king and the persons present searched in vain for the head and they were greatly perplexed as to where the head might be. Sri Krishna divined the fact that the people of the Nagaloka had taken away the head of Arjuna. He revealed the fact to the king, Bhima and others.

Hearing of the treachery of the Naga people, the king became furious and at once prepared for war. Bhima also became angry and he also prepared to join the king. But Sri Krishna asked them to be quiet and said: "Let me try." So saying Sri Krishna uttered the following words very solemnly: "If I have been a Naistic Brahmachāri all my life, if I have been sadāyno upvāsi—if I have observed celibacy all my life and fasted all my life—and if I have uttered nothing but truth in all my life, let the head of Arjuna come over here." The moment these words were uttered the bowels of the Earth gave way and Arjuna's head came there as if by magic. Then Sri Krishna put the head to the body, sprinkled the Amrita over it and lo! Arjuna came to life.

In a flash Arjuna realised that he had won the war because Sri Krishna had been

his charioteer and without Sri Krishna he was nothing. He also realised the folly and the egoistic nature of the words that he had uttered, when he had asked Sri Krishna and Bhimabhai to go home to Hastinapura. He at once made *sāstāngadandvat pranāma*—obeisance made with head, eyes, hand, chest, feet, thigh, mind and speech—to Sri Krishna and asked forgiveness of him. He knew he had become a victim of Ego, enemy No. 1 of the *sadhaka*

VALLABH SHETH

GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the issue of May)

ILLNESS IN YOGA

“THE human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces choose to lay hands on it, and illness is the price it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one Force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn.”¹

The sunny side of the picture as shown in previous chapters has its opposite too. Mere opening of the subconscious to the working of the Higher Consciousness is not all. In my own case I found that when the Higher Consciousness touched the lower regions the resistance from there was terrible. It took the shape of eye-trouble and rheumatism. It put the happy history of my sadhana under the shade of pain and suffering.

The cause of my trouble may be traced in the following words of the Master:

“At a certain stage attacks fall heavily on the body because opposing forces find it more difficult than before to upset the mind and vital directly, so they fall on the physical in the hope that they will do the trick, the physical being more vulnerable.”²

The suffering that had begun almost with the first year of my sadhana continued for more than twenty-five years. When I returned home after my first visit to the Ashram I had an attack of lumbago. Relatives feared that it was due to my taking up Yoga; if I left it off the pain also would be off.

As I was confined to bed a close friend came to see. He advised me to inform the Mother and also ask whether I should take any medicine. So I sent a wire.

In less than half an hour, before the wire had reached the telegraph office, I felt a current passing from the loins downward and with it all pain was gone. Immediately I got out of bed and walked about.

We very easily succumb to suggestions of illness. But there is a difference between ordinary illness and the one due to an attack of hostile forces. Defining the causes of illness Sri Aurobindo states:

“...When a force is thrown on you or a vibration of illness, it carries to the body this suggestion. A wave comes in the body—with a certain vibration in it, the body remembers ‘cold’ or feels the vibration of a cold and begins to cough or sneeze or to feel chill—the suggestion comes to the mind in the form ‘I am weak, I don’t feel well, I am catching a cold.’

“Hostile here means hostile to the Yoga. An illness which comes in the ordinary course as the result of physical causes—even though adverse universal forces are the

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 652.

² *Letters IV*, p. 536.

first cause—is an ordinary illness. One brought by the forces hostile to Yoga to upset the system and prevent or disturb progress—without any adequate physical reason—is a hostile attack. It may have the appearance of a cold or any other illness, but to the eye which sees the action of forces and not only the untoward symptoms or results, the difference is clear.”¹

In 1935 I had a terrible attack of eye-trouble. At the time the Ashram had only a nominal dispensary. For twenty-two days I suffered from piercing pain and passed the nights in great agony. Unable to bear the suffering I would send word to Sri Aurobindo through the Secretary even at dead of night.

Till 11 p.m. we could write. Thereafter anything urgent we could communicate through Nolini. Whenever I sent a report I got instantaneous relief. I would feel an action in the very spot where the pain was most acute as if it had been drawn or snatched away. But there was a relapse the very next day with redoubled force.

Why it so happened is thus explained in the Master’s letter to me:

“The illness has no doubt a physical cause but there is associated with it a strong resistance to the Force which is evidently seated in the subconscious, since you are not aware of it. This is shown by the fact that after Mother put a concentrated force there yesterday, the whole thing returned more violently after an hour’s relief. That is always a sign of violent and obstinate resistance somewhere. It is only if this is overcome or disappears that complete relief can come.”

Amid such sufferings Sri Aurobindo’s letters came like healing drops of heaven, and, more, as a message of strength and hope and good cheer. And the waves of joy that came in their wake turned the suffering into the very stuff of joy. Such was my experience on reading the first two lines of the following quotation while my body was in agony:

“Your experiences related in the letter were quite sound and very good. There is no delusion about the force working in the body, but there are evidently points where there is still much resistance. The body consciousness has many parts and many different movements and do not open or change together. Also the body is very dependent on the subconscious which has to be cleared and illumined before the body can be free from adverse reactions.”²

After three decades of the working of the Mother’s Force, the body now seems to be somewhat free from adverse reactions. But how can one foresee what turn the body will take tomorrow, what is in store for it next? Whatever little gain is there is due to the Mother’s Grace and Protection.

But Grace does not always bring pleasure, pain also comes as its gift. Al Hallaj was a great occultist; he could pluck flowers, fruits, pieces of gold from “wandering air”. He was prisoned as a heretic and nailed to death. Even then he did not blame

¹ *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 660.

² “...In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate samskars formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the conditions of the body” (*Lights on Yoga*, p. 12).

anybody but exclaimed: "Pain and pleasure, life and death are one to me. I am the Eternal One."

The more advanced an aspirant is in the evolutionary scale, the more he is made a target of the "haters of Light".

Consequently, those who are not well armed or strong enough to bear their blows need the help and protection of the Guru at every step. I think there is hardly anyone among us who has not tasted the joy of the Mother's Grace and protection sometime or other in his life. Instances of how the Guru's help comes in the nick of time are not rare even in the world of ordinary religion.

Mardana was a Mohammedan minstrel. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 A. D. Mardana followed the Guru like a shadow wherever he went. Songs used to flow from the heart of Nanak like a stream. The moment he felt inspired he would say: "Mardana, play the rebec. The song of Heaven is coming."

When on a tour, the Guru reached Assam. One day Mardana felt very tired, hungry and depressed and sought his permission to go in search of food. "O Guru, you are beyond fatigue, hunger and thirst. How can I, a mortal man, do so?" So saying he set out to find something to eat.

He had not gone far when he was captured by a cannibal tribesman. This cannibal was a terror to those who lived in that area. He was known by the name of Kauda. He took Mardana as a great gift of the day and, with a heart filled with joy, took him to the spot where a big pan was kept ready for frying the victim in oil. Ironically, the man seeking food was himself going to be eaten!

Tying Mardana hand and foot Kauda lighted the fire under the pan. Mardana raised inwardly a cry for help from the Guru.

Of a sudden the fire below the pan went off. The cannibal tried hard to rekindle it but he could not.

The moment Kauda raised his eyes he saw Guru Nanak standing before him. The Guru, sensing the danger, had started on his own to come there. Kauda heard him saying: "Do you know what would be the consequence of an evil act like this?"

Kauda was struck dumb. The lamp in him was lighted. There awakened in him a consciousness and the black deeds of the past shot up before his mind's eyes.

Overwhelmed with remorse and repentance he cried, "No more! No more! I shall stop what I have been doing so long. Pray save me. Do not leave me."

An affectionate smile of the Guru opened a new door in Kauda's life and he remained true to him till the end.

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I have said I had been suffering from eye trouble. When even after twenty-two days the disease could not be diagnosed I was sent to the General Hospital. While among the patients, to my surprise I found that the hospital atmosphere did not

touch me. I felt something of the Ashram around me.

On enquiry whether I was right in my feeling about the hospital atmosphere, Sri Aurobindo observed:

“The touch of the outside atmosphere tends to impair the consciousness generally, concentration and sadhana. In going to the hospital you were under the Mother’s special protection. It may probably indicate the spirituality in the physical consciousness.”

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

CHAPTER XI

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SENESCENCE AND DEATH

On life was laid the haunting finger of Death.

Savitri, Book II, Canto VII

A breath of disillusion and decadence
Corrupting watched for Life's maturity
And made to rot the full grain of the soul:
Progress became a purveyor of Death.

Ibid., Book II, Canto VII

“This is the scientific view of death. But it leaves death with all its mystery, with all its sacredness; we are not in the least able to the present time to say what life is—still less, perhaps, what death is. We say of certain things—they are alive; of certain others—they are dead; but what the difference may be, what is essential to these two states, science is utterly unable to tell us at the present time.”

DR. MINOT, *Age, Growth and Death*.

THE phenomenon of senile decay and natural death has remained till this date an insoluble riddle to science. We have willy-nilly come to accept the fact that all things born must live for a while; grow old with time and eventually die. But physiology knows no reason why the body should ineluctably wear out in this way. As Dr. Maurice Vernet has so trenchantly pointed out, “Biologically speaking and in natural conditions, that is to say, accidental violence being excluded, there should not and need not have been death at all.... Viewed from the aspect of the body, Death seems to us to be altogether meaningless (*un non-sens absolu*)”¹

The same idea has been expressed in different ways by some other eminent medical authorities as well: *e.g.*,

“There is no physiological reason at the present day why men should die.”
(Dr. William A. Hammond)

¹ Dr. Maurice Vernet, *La Vie et la Mort*, p. 225.

“Such a machine as the human frame, unless accidentally depraved or injured by some external cause, would seem formed for perpetuity.” (Dr. Gregory, *Medical Prospectus*)

“The human body as a machine is perfect... it is apparently intended to go on forever.” (Dr. Munro)

As a matter of fact, in contradistinction to all man-made machines, a multicellular body functions as a highly efficient machine which has somehow learnt the art of self-repair. And if this repair remains always commensurate with the wear and tear of biological functioning, life can then be terminated only through the intervention of some violent accident and never by the so-called senile degeneracy.

But still the body grows old and at length ceases to function. The physiological mystery of death lies in the fact that if the body is at all a self-repairing and self-renewing machine—which it undoubtedly is, as proved by the adolescent phase of a developing body—why it should not remain so indefinitely. Why does the body fall a prey to senile decay? What is this “rust of life” as mentioned by St. Peter due to?

Before we can hope to answer adequately the aforesaid questions, we must first know what life is and what are its functions and manifesting signs. We have already had occasion to point out (*vide* Chapter IX: THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND DEATH) how difficult it is for science to define life adequately or to draw a well-marked line of separation between the inanimate world and the animate realm. However, for our present purpose we may reasonably state that living matter is characterised by the following five properties:

(a) movement, (b) respiration, (c) nutrition, (d) circulation, and (e) reproduction.

Six fundamental laws seem to govern the functioning of a living organism. In the formulations as given by Dr. Vernet,¹ these “Laws of Life” may be stated as follows:

(i) *Law of organisation* — All life realises in time and in space a specific organisation which is characteristic of the species concerned, of course under normal conditions.

(ii) *Law of assimilation* — A living organism has the power to transform and make similar to its own substance the materials that it borrows from its environment as its nutrition.

(iii) *Law of regulation* — Whatever may be the quantity or the quality of exchange operations that a living organism sets up with the surrounding world, an incessant regulation intervenes to maintain the organisation in the specific equilibrium of its rhythms, functions and tissue composition.

(iv) *Law of reproduction* — Every living being, under normal conditions, possesses the power to self-reproduce itself identically.

¹ *Ibid*, pp 113-114.

(v) *Law of Specificity* — Every living form is, in its fundamental excitability (response), specific to the species to which it belongs.

(vi) *Law of reversibility* — For every new existence, there occurs a cyclic return to the state of indifferentiation, and, throughout the course of life, there manifests a tendency to come back to the fundamental equilibrium state of the species.

Without seeking to elucidate these laws of life in terms intelligible to non-scientific readers, let us concentrate on the second law alone. For, it is this law of assimilation that proves sufficient in itself to characterise a living body, and it is perhaps some defect in the proper functioning of this particular law that brings in the phenomenon of senescence and death.

In fact, the physical universe is in a state of dynamic flux; it is the contending ground of innumerable physico-chemical forces and reactions. Now, the essential difference between an inanimate thing and a living organism seems to lie in the fact that while external influences, whether physical or chemical, wear out and ultimately destroy the former, changing it into *something else*, in the case of the latter the temporary disruption induced by the foreign intrusion is not allowed to go to its destructive term, but rather used as an agent to provoke some counter-reaction in the living body that ultimately helps it in its self-reparative and self-maintaining activity.

The apparent fixity of form and stability of body of a living organism is a gross error and illusion of the senses. As a matter of fact, every single cell in a metazoan body as well as the total organization itself is continually undergoing a countless set of chemical reactions that form part of a simultaneously occurring double process: (i) the process of disruption, analysis, breaking down and running down (katabolism), and (ii) the process of construction, synthesis, building up and winding up (anabolism). Thus, "a living organism is never the same. It is changing from day to day, from minute to minute, from second to second of its existence. Its instantaneous physiological state is the resultant of all of its antecedent states".¹

Now, the characteristic feature of a living organism is a constant balancing of accounts so that the specific activity of each of its cells and of its correlated structure and organization continues. This "capacity of continuing in spite of change, of continuing, indeed, through change"² is a fundamental attribute of life. The living organism has been sometimes compared to a clock, as it is always running down and always being wound up. But unlike a clock, it can wind itself up, if certain conditions are adequately fulfilled. The chemical processes are then so correlated that "the pluses balance the minuses and the creature lives on."³ As has been aptly remarked, the riddle of life is that of the burning bush, '*nec tamen consumebatur*'.

But unfortunately for the individual form, this miraculous vital capacity of self-repair and self-maintenance is not unlimited. In course of time, in the process of continual exchange of energy with the environment, this power of active assimilation gets

¹ S. Metalnikov, *Immortality and Rejuvenation in Modern Biology*, p. 59.

² & ³ J. Arthur Thomson, *Encyclop. of Religion and Ethics* (Ed. Hastings), Vol. 8, p. 2.

stunted and atrophied, the katabolic operation has the upper hand over that of anabolism, and as a result fatigue and senile decay set in, culminating in the phenomenon of death when all metabolic activity ceases in the organism, turning it into non-living stuff. As X. Bichat has so graphically described the onset of the process of natural death:

“In the death which is the effect of old age all the functions cease, because they have been successively extinguished. The vital powers abandon each organ by degrees; digestion languishes, the secretions and absorptions are finished; the capillary circulation becomes embarrassed; lastly, the general circulation is suppressed. The heart is the *ultimum moriens*. Such, then, is the great difference which distinguishes the death of the old man from that which is the effect of a blow. In the one the powers of life begin to be exhausted in all its parts and cease at the heart, the body dies from the circumference towards the centre; in the other, life becomes extinct at the heart and afterwards in the parts, the phenomena of death are seen extending themselves from the centre to the circumference.”¹

But whence spring this circumscription of the capacity of an organism and the gradual corrosion of its metabolic functions, leading finally to the failure of life? Are we to suppose that a multicellular body ultimately dies because, in course of time, it somehow fouls its ‘internal environment’ (*milieu intérieur*)? That ageing processes do occur even in a body kept in good surroundings, with adequate and regular supply of nutritional requirements and protected from the invasion of other predatory organisms, is a well-attested physiological fact. But it has so far been very difficult to ascertain why organisms age in this way and what determines the species-longevity.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ X. Bichat, *Recherches physiologiques sur la Vie et la Mort*, quoted on p. 135 of *Death: its Causes and Phenomena* by H. Carrington and J. R. Meader.

THE PROBLEM OF THE INDUS SCRIPT

(Continued from the issue of May)

PART II

2

THE finishing touch to our view of the Indus-script, of the speech it expressed and of the culture behind that speech, would be given if we could discover some name in post-Rigvedic literature for the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.

The current opinion today is: this Civilization was of essentially non-Aryan type. Our first article has shown that opinion to be a capital error: all the main elements of Harappan religion can find their *point de départ* in some trend or other of a comparatively subdued sort within the many-aspected complex spiritual doctrine and practice of the Rigveda. Such being the case we may profitably inquire what epoch after the Rigveda would be synchronous with the Harappā Culture. With an answer to our inquiry we should be in a position to seek for the name likely to have been employed for it in the books of that epoch.

We can set out by attending to Sir Martimer Wheeler on the question: Did all that the Harappans represented perish with them? Like our Russian and Finnish investigators he shares the belief that the Harappā Culture peeped out in post-Rigvedic times under various guises. He¹ tells us: "reason has been shown to suspect that the later Hinduism, in spite of its Aryan garb, did in fact retain not a little of the non-Aryan, Harappan mentality and relationships, perhaps to a greater extent than can now be proved. The recurrent figures of a proto-Śiva, seated in sinister state or possibly dancing as triumphant Nataraja, the evidence of phallic worship, of reverence paid to animals, particularly of the cult of the bull, have nothing to do with Vedic faith but anticipate dominant elements of the historic Brahmanism."

Looking at the Harappā Culture as part Aryan in type and as post-Rigvedic, we must declare Wheeler's "historic Brahmanism" contemporary with the Indus Civilization, both being parallel developments in general despite several differences between themselves and from the Rigveda. Our declaration is surely more logical than imagining that after centuries of submergence various elements of this Civilization suddenly popped up. As this Civilization is pretty uniform from its start to its finish, we may equate in time its very beginning with the Brahmanical age and cast about for a clue to its name. And, if we can light upon such a clue, we shall eminently win cred-

¹ *The Indus Civilization* (Third Edition, Cambridge, 1968), p 136

ence for our chronology and our perspective of ancient India's development as well as for our view of the Indus script.

The age of the historic Brahmanism commences with that large species of post-Rigvedic literature known as the Brahmanas. The Brahmanas come after the later Samhitas—the Samaveda and Yajurveda—and before the Upanishads and Sutras. The Upanishads, in their essence, fall outside formal religion and popular cult. But the latter two keep growing, and the historic Brahmanism reaches its fullness with the huge mass of regulative writing that the Sutras are. Reviewing the Aryan settlements in India during the time of the composition of all these books, A. D. Pusalker¹ writes: "The main centre of the life of this period is Kurukshetra in the country of the Kuru-Pañchālas.... It is noteworthy that the sphere of civilization is gradually shifting eastward and its localization in the region to the east of the land of five rivers is an accomplished fact. The Punjab and the West not only recede in importance but the tribes of the west are looked upon with disapproval in the *Śatapatha* and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇas*."

Here is a picture which leaves room in the land of five rivers—the Indus Valley—for a civilization not entirely natural to the descendants of the Rigvedic Culture. And, to the Brahmanas written now, the process leading to the formation of the Harappā Culture must seem deserving of disapproval, for various forces at work from outside the Vedic ethos have found expression there side by side with the line of organic development and change from the Rigveda. Is there any term concentrating in itself this disapproval? It might prove our path-finder.

The term in use throughout much of ancient history to designate in particular, though not exclusively, the peoples to the west of Kurukshetra is: "Mlechchha." The late Manusmṛiti (II. 17; 19, 23) is quite explicit in locating the Mlechchhas. R. K. Mookerji,² referring to it, speaks of Manu's *Mlechchhadēśa* as "comprising the territory from the Sutlej to the Kabul in the north and the Dravida country in the south". It is interesting to mark that the apparently non-Dravidian north-west and the obviously Dravidian south are lumped together. We may imagine how intensely Mlechchha would be an actual interblending of the north-western and the southern Mlechchhahoods in one and the same place.

The earlier Sutras do not directly give us the location, but it can be deduced with certainty. The oldest extant example, the Gautama Dharma-sutra (IX. 17), employs the designation Mlechchha, and a somewhat late example, the Vishnu-Dharma-sutra (84. 1-2), prescribes that one should not perform *śraddha* in a Mlechchha country nor visit such a country (except on a pilgrimage). So, when in between these two books we find the fairly early Baudhayana Dharma-sutra (I.i.2, 14-15) referring to countries that are of mixed origin and insisting that one who visits them needs purification, we know that it is dealing with *Mlechchhadēśa*. Among those countries it

¹ *The Vedic Age*, edited by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker (London, 1952), p. 261.

² *Hindu Civilization* (Bhavan Book University, Bombay, 1951), I, p. 188.

mentions Aratta (the Punjab), Sindhu (Sind), Sauvira (round about Multan), Surashtra (Northern Kathiawar): all the Harappā Culture sites outside the Ganges Valley are covered.

“Mixed origin”—this expression of Baudhayana’s supplies us with a general definition of “Mlechchha”, but it is a definition neither complete nor primary, as we shall see from hints in the Sutras themselves and as we realise from the very first employment of the term in India. The fundamental connotation comes out when A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith¹ write: “Mlechchha occurs in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in the sense of a barbarian in speech. The Brahmin is forbidden to use barbarian speech. The example given of such speech is *he'lavo*, explained by Sāyana as *he'rayah*, ‘ho, foes’. If this is correct—the Kāṇva recension has a different reading—the barbarians referred to were Aryan speakers, though not speakers of Sanskrit, but of a Prākṛita form of speech.”

The Sutras seem to have borne in mind the Satapatha Brahmana’s point about language. The Vasishtha Dharma-sutra (VI. 41), which is earlier than the Vishnu Dharma-sutra, states that an Aryan should not learn the Mlechchha speech. And the first thing the hoary Gautama Dharma-sutra enjoins about the subject is that one should not speak with Mlechchhas.

The Harappā Culture, as we have conceived it, with its Proto-Dravidian as well as Munda, Iranian and Mesopotamian elements superimposed on the Vedic Aryan, qualifies supremely as having been based on a Mlechchha language originally Proto-Prakrit. By a happy coincidence it is precisely in connection with the language of this Culture that, much before the present discussions were stimulated by the Russians and the Finns, Wheeler,² pointing to the ruins of the Indus Valley Civilization, had used the very label we have in sight: “Mohenjo-dāro remains an isolated and petrified complex of another world, a dead city of the *Mlechchhas* or aliens whose unintelligible words are not compensated for by any adequate pictorial art.”

A little later, W. F. Leemans,³ in a context with which we shall deal in the next section, cited C. J. Gadd’s suggestion of the term “Mlechchha” as perhaps applicable to the Harappā Culture from old Indian writings. The term, according to Gadd, is not of Indo-Aryan origin.

If this is so, we may well believe—even more than we may otherwise do—“Mlechchha” to have been primarily employed by the Harappā Culture itself for its own speech and meant to describe simply its mixed and complicated character. The Satapatha Brahmana may have synchronised with the first stirrings of the Indus Valley Civilization, before the mature form in which alone we are acquainted with it was reached. During that obscure initial phase, “Mlechchha” may have emerged into use as a concise general sign of self-recognition by a growing ferment of linguistic-cultural forces. It may then have passed to the Kuru-Panchalas to be

¹ *A Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (London, 1912), II, p. 161.

² *Archaeology from the Earth* (Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, 1956), p. 244.

³ *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period* (Leiden, 1960), p. 164.

applied in a different manner to several species of Prakrit-speakers, whether west or east or south of Madhyadesa. Primarily it might have borne no such derogatory overtone as found in the Sanskrit root *mlich* whence develops the verb *mlech* meaning "to speak indistinctly".¹ But the mixed and complicated character of Harappan speech could indeed be barbarously indistinct to the Kuru-Panchala country of pure Sanskrit culture which would introduce a note of derogation into the original term. If we could have any indication that the Indus Valley Civilization knew itself as Mlechchha and was not merely dubbed so with a tinge of contempt by the Indians further inland, we would be sure of the term's first significance. And, what is of the greatest importance, the indication would deeply dye the Indus Valley Civilization as post-Rigvedic, for "Mlechchha" has no earlier context than the Satapatha Brahmana.

Of course, the indication cannot be hoped for from the post-Rigvedic literature where, apart from the suggestion that in spite of their barbarous mode of expression the Mlechchhas were still Aryan speakers, we get little inkling of any original neutral meaning: the cultural look askance would not permit it. But the Indus Valley Civilization was in contact not only with its immediate neighbours either east or west: it was in contact also with Iran and Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia has yielded a substantial body of writing which deals with its relation to various countries—particularly commercial relation which is bound to be neutral in attitude and to call a country unprejudicedly by its own proper name rather than by a judgmental appellation. Have we in the records of Mesopotamia any name for the Harappā Culture, which might be an echo of "Mlechchha"?

3

Cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia, inscribed on clay-tablets, speak often of a far-away kingdom called Meluhha. Jean Bottéro, in his Introduction to the French translation of the famous Assyriologist S. N. Kramer's *History Begins at Sumer*,² tells us that in Sumerian the *h* is aspirated and hard, like the German *ch* or the Spanish *jota*: we may say it is equivalent to *kh*. Thus Meluhha is to be pronounced Melukkhha, as done in the *Cambridge Ancient History*.³ Gordon Childe⁴ uses the form: Melukha. Here is a name which could very easily be the Sumerian pronunciation of "Mlechchha".

All the more precisely could it be that pronunciation if we should look at the Prakrit version of "Mlechchha"—the version which would actually be in use among the peoples who might speak Sanskrit phrases like "he'rayah" as "he'lavo", peoples of the Indus Valley and elsewhere whom post-Rigvedic literature characterised as

¹ M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1890), p. 837, col. 3.

² *L'histoire commence à Sumer* (Arthaud, Paris, 1957), p. 11 Note sur le typographie et la prononciation des mots sumériens.

³ 1924 Edition, I, pp. 172, 416, 427 sq., 431, 544.

⁴ *What Happened in History* (A Pelican Book, Harmondsworth, 1952), p. 149.

Mlechchhas. Mookerji¹ draws a picture of Northern India from the Prakrit texts of Buddhism during the first few centuries after Buddha's death, when Prakrit of various kinds was the common language over many parts of India and "Mlechchha" had come to denote a jungle-tribesman or a non-Aryan rather than a speaker of corrupt Sanskrit. He quotes the Prakrit (Pali) equivalent of "Mlechchha": "Melakha." Have we not in "Melakha" a sound as good as identical with Childe's "Melukha"? Mookerji has quoted from the Anguttara Nikaya. If we consider the Digha Nikaya (III, 264) we get a very close model even for "Melukhka": "Milakkha." And this model is still closer to G. Maspero's constant usage "Milukhka".²

The doubt may be voiced: "The Anguttara and Digha Nikayas are much later than Harappan times. Their Prakrit cannot apply to them." The excuse is specious. If Prakrit existed in those times, the same or similar forms would hold good. At least a scholar like D. D. Kosambi³ has no hesitation to relate a Prakrit form of the same date as ours to a race-name of the early second millennium B.C. in the Near East: "Hatti" (= "Khatti", Egyptian "Kheta"). He writes: "the word *khatti* which means Hittite may possibly be connected with Sanskrit *kshatriya* and Pali *khattiyo*." "Khattiyo" occurs in the Anguttara Nikaya itself.⁴ Meluhha need not go begging for correct Prakrit echoes because of a chronological gap.

And, when we try to locate Meluhha by cuneiform indications and examine its relation to Mesopotamia, we are led in the end to identify it with the Indus Civilization.

"In the end"—because there are two completely divergent lines of interpretation. And only when we have pursued both, taken our bearings and compared results do we stand within sight of the goal we want.

Gadd was the first to propose the correspondence between Mlechchha and Meluhha. But, putting the Rigveda after the Harappā Culture and thus dating the Satapatha Brahmana to c. 600 B.C., Leemans⁵ had to leave the value of this correspondence undecided. A. L. Basham⁶ tried a way out by asking him whether Meluhha might be the region of Gujarat, where the Indus Civilization was certainly established but where the Aryans, in the current chronological framework, penetrated only around 600 B.C., so that the late occurrence of the term "Mlechchha" would not prejudice the existence of Harappan Mlechchha-hood more than a millennium and a half earlier. Basham's solution, however, would imply the con-

¹ *Ancient India* (Allahabad, 1956), p. 121.

² *History of Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Babylonia and Assyria*, edited by A. H. Sayce, translated from the French by M. L. McClure (The Grolier Society, London), III, pp. 41, 114, 116, 131.

The actual booklet of the Finnish scholars has just come into my hands. A point from it highly relevant here is: if, with an alternative phonetic value, we read "Melahha", the Prakrit (Pali) forms render "Mlechcha" "hypercorrect" (p. 4).

³ *The Civilization and Culture of Ancient India* (London, 1965), p. 77.

⁴ Mookerji, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fn. 1.

finement of Meluhha to Gujarat and render inexplicable the authenticated relationship of Mesopotamia to the Indus Valley.

Neither Gadd nor Leemans—in spite of the chronological difficulty under which they have to labour—wishes to bypass this relationship. And we shall look at their arguments as well as those of A. L. Oppenheim,¹ Sir Mortimer Wheeler² and the collaborators P. V. Glob and T. G. Bibby,³ all of whom, without directly bringing in “Mlechchha”, have developed the line that claims to reach the Indus Civilization in Meluhha. In addition, we shall pick out points from M. E. L. Mallowan⁴ who approaches very close to their line.

Meluhha belongs to a series of three kingdoms: Dilmun (or Tilmun, Telmun), Makan (or Makkan, Magan), Meluhha (or Miluhha). Their names occur in connection with the sailors returning to the city of Ur, which served as the chief port-of-entry into Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf. Lexical texts and the *Lipsur* litanies, as well as general royal epigraphs, enumerate them as sources of imports from the same direction. The historical accounts of the campaigns of Sumerian and Babylonian kings mention also these three kingdoms as lands of the Lower Sea—*i.e.*, reached *via* the Persian Gulf. Wherever listed together, they stand as a rule in the order we have given, as if the sequence answered to the order of their respective distances from Mesopotamia. Even the one glaring exception seems to confirm such a drift. Leemans⁵ observes: “The three countries are mentioned in the reverse order in the inscription of Sargon of Akkad. . . Sargon may have mentioned Meluhha first, because in the relevant passage he boasts that boats from far away came to Akkad.” Noting all this, we may consider it a fair conclusion that Makan lay beyond Dilmun and Meluhha beyond Makan.

A further suggestion of this geographical placing is derived from a number of commercial details which Wheeler picks out of Oppenheim. In the time of Sargon of Akkad (*c.* 2350 B.C.) ships hailing from or destined for these kingdoms are said to have been moored in the harbour outside his capital: some at least of the trade thus appears to have been direct with each of them. But under the 3rd Dynasty of Ur (*c.* 2100 B.C.) direct trade is sustained only with Dilmun and Makan: Meluhha fades into the background as only an indirect supplier of goods. Later, during the Dynasty of Larsa (*c.* 1950 B.C.) Dilmun alone remains in direct touch with Mesopotamia: shippers from Ur use it as a “middleman” through whom they barter their stocks for products of Makan and Meluhha which are brought to it. Finally, in the time of the Hammurabi Dynasty (*c.* 1700 B.C.) even Dilmun loses

¹ “The Seafaring Merchants of Ur”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 74, I (1954), pp. 6-17.

² *Early India and Pakistan* (Bombay, 1957), pp. 109-10.

³ “A Forgotten Civilization of the Persian Gulf”, *Scientific American*, October 1960, pp. 63-71.

⁴ “The Mechanics of Ancient Trade in Western Asia”, *Iran* (Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies), III, 1965, pp. 1-8.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

trading contact not only with Meluhha but also with Makan. What is the implication of these commercial details? The dwindling of Mesopotamia's trade with Makan and still more with Meluhha and its longer persistence with Dilmun are due to the lying of Dilmun, Makan and Meluhha at successively greater distances across the Persian Gulf.

Now, if Meluhha is the farthest kingdom known to Mesopotamia across the Persian Gulf, we are surely drawn by it in the direction of the Harappā Culture, the farthest south-eastern point with which archaeology connects Mesopotamia.

What is more, the archaeology of Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley bears out, according to Wheeler, the story of diminishing trade between Mesopotamia and Meluhha from 2350 to 1700 B.C. He writes: "...the main stream of Indus relics recovered from identified strata in the Mesopotamian cities dates from the Sargonid period of direct contact with Meluhha, with a diminishing trickle into the Larsa period of indirect contact. With that maritime enterprise which characterized Indian trade in many ages, we may imagine cargoes of woods and metals and ivory—and why not also apes and peacocks, both familiar to the Indus artist?—setting sail from the Indus ports in the heyday of the Civilization; and in the sequel, with the long-drawn-out decline which...is evident in later civic standards, it is easy to visualize a corresponding decline in the scope and volume of overseas traffic. Inference from the records and the material evidence are at one."

Another touch from archaeology that Wheeler brings is about the goods from Meluhha mentioned in the records. He speaks of woods, ivory and copper. He reminds us of the forests and elephants of the Indus Valley and its sources of copper in Rajasthan. Then he gives a vivid archaeological glimpse apropos of what he is inclined to regard as a massacre caused by an Aryan invasion of India, a "massacre" G. F. Dales is disposed to regard as "mythical"¹ and as at any rate nothing with which to conjure up the sweeping presence of invading Aryans: "Ivory-working was an Indus craft; one of the victims of the last massacre at Mohenjo-dāro, for instance, was attempting to carry away an elephant's tusk when he was cut down."

The extremely probable identity of Meluhha with the Harappā Culture on all the above grounds appears to become as good as certain in view of two points made by Glob and Bibby. The points, in more or less the authors' own words, may be drawn up thus:

1. Dilmun, as described in the cuneiform texts, is an island with abundant fresh water, lying some two days' sail, with a following wind, from Mesopotamia. It served as a trading centre. Its chief god, according to the Mesopotamian god-lists, was Inzak. The island of Bahrain, off the coast of Arabia, in the Persian Gulf, 150 miles south-east of Mesopotamia has long been suspected to be this Dilmun because a cuneiform inscription naming the god Inzak was found there. The recent extensive excavations by a team of Scandinavian archaeologists leave us hardly in

¹ "The Mythical Massacre at Mohenjo-dāro", *Expedition*, No. 3, 1964.

any doubt. The various finds have proved Bahrain to be as old as the civilization of Sumer and the Indus Valley, a place of considerable wealth and power which, while possessing an individual culture and specific trade-goods, was a bridge between these two civilizations and a clearing-house for their products. The products of Makan were chiefly copper and diorite, those of Meluhha gold, ivory and precious woods, the ones of Dilmun dates and pearls.

Some of the finds at Bahrain may be mentioned. There was a distinctive red-rigged pottery. At Barbar, on the north-western coast, in a temple datable to the third millennium B.C. axes and spears of copper and a magnificent copper bull's head were discovered. The last-named brought to mind those that adorned the harps in the Early Dynastic royal graves at Ur. The copper statuette of a naked and shaven priest evidenced unmistakable Sumerian affinities. Several lapis-lazuli pendants were of a type unearthed in the cities of the Indus Valley. Harappan too in appearance may be adjudged the rectangular pattern of streets at a site east of Barbar. The temple at Barbar was reminiscent in its layout of the temples of Early Dynastic Sumer, but with its bathing pool, it recalled the ritual baths of the Harappan cities. Round soapstone seals were dug up, like the seventeen found in Mesopotamia among the thousands of cylindrical seals. Those seventeen were not native to Mesopotamia and seemed to date to the period between 2300 and 2000 B.C.¹ Many bore inscriptions in the language of the Indus Valley Civilization. Moreover, three examples of the same type of seal had been found in Mohenjo-dāro.² But they were obviously not native to the Indus Valley: large square seals collected by the hundreds were the native type, just as the cylindrical ones were native to Mesopotamia. The round seals, long a problem to archaeologists, were now proved to have been native to Bahrain.³

2. Work in a little island off the coast of the Trucial Oman on the Strait of Ormuz, the eastern entrance to the Persian Gulf, and again at the oasis of Buraimi, three days' camel journey into the interior, has brought up evidence of a new culture, with unique practices. The pottery from the burial vaults resembled Bahrain's in several ways but even more clearly that of the Kulli Culture of Southern Baluchistan, whose beginning is believed to have preceded the Indus Civilization. Here we may be on the fringe of the next great civilization towards the East, the kingdom of Makan.

The first point from Glob and Bibby, equating Bahrain to the Dilmun of the Mesopotamian traders, suggests inevitably the location of Makan and Meluhha in the direction of the Strait of Ormuz and the north-western coast of India.

The second point strongly indicates the part location of Makan in the Trucial

¹ Wheeler offers the information that one of these seals is now usefully dated to the tenth year of Gungunum of Larsa: that is, 1923 B.C.—setting up a firm general chronology for the rest (*The Indus Civilization*, pp. 81, 116).

² Wheeler mentions a discovery also at Lothal in Saurashtra (*Ibid.*, p. 116).

³ Wheeler, calling these seals "Persian Gulf Seals", says that, although rare in the Indus Valley, they are nevertheless an Indus, not a Mesopotamian, type and the bulk of them must be considered in terms of a varied but related extension of the great Indus series, made largely in and around the Persian Gulf in connection with long-range Indus trade (*Ibid.*, p. 115).

Oman and the extension of it beyond the Strait of Ormuz into Southern Baluchistan and its western neighbourhood.¹ And all the more compelling becomes the idea that Meluhha is the kingdom of the Indus Valley, the home of the Harappā Culture.

But what should clinch this idea is that the indications about Makan land us in just the region where we get, in ancient history, names echoing the Sumerian designation of that kingdom. Arrian, the Greek historian in the first century A.D., describes in the second half of his *Indika* the voyage made by Nearchus, one of Alexander's generals, from the mouth of the Indus to the Persian Gulf. In Chapter XXXII the promontory of the Trucial Oman jutting into the Strait of Ormuz he calls Maketa and adds that cinnamon and suchlike articles were carried from it to Assyria. Again, the map, at the end of J. McCrindle's edition² of Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* and other Classical writings on Alexander's invasion of India, gives to the people of the region behind Cape Maketa (covering, among other places, Buraimi) the name "Macae". "Macae" (or "Makae") is a Latin form whose Greek would be "Makai" or "Makoi". Further, on the opposite side of the Gulf of Oman, the territory whose coast is now termed "Makran" was in ancient times a district of the Persian Empire and termed "Maka". The inscriptions of Darius I (522-486 B.C.) refer to it and, apropos of their references, A. V. William Jackson³ writes: "The district of Maka is believed to be identified with Makran, once occupied by the Mykans of Herodotus (III, 93; VII, 68), and now a part of Baluchistan." Richard N Frye⁴ notes about the place-names: "W. Eilers *apud* W. F. Leemans, 'Trade Relations of Babylonia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 3 (1961), 29, proposes the etymology *Mak-kīran* 'Maka coast' for Makran, while Maka itself would be the Iranised form of the ancient place-name Makan, Sumerian *Mā-gan*."

All these facts would make the kingdom of Makan comprise the lands on both sides of the Gulf of Oman and on part of the Arabian Sea. Such a situation would eminently qualify Makan for the description of it in the Sumero-Babylonian documents as "the land of ships".⁵ It would also be in conformity to the reputation of this kingdom for copper and to the predominant type of copper—"with a slight nickel content but with no significant arsenic"⁶—imported into Mesopotamia. "There were old copper workings in Oman, at Jebel Ma'adan inland from Sohar, and 75 miles north-west of Jebel Akhdar."⁷ What is more, a study of the copper received by

¹ Wheeler would probably not agree to a location of Makan in two compartments, for he speaks only of "the occasional presence of Kulli elements on the southern side of the Persian Gulf in Oman" (*Ibid.*, p. 61) and takes that presence as merely providing "some evidence of trade across the Persian Gulf" (*Ibid.*, p. 17). However, his likely hesitation may be countered with confidence by attending to the matter of our next two paragraphs.

² *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great* (Westminster, 1886).

³ *The Cambridge History of India*, edited by E. J. Rapson (1922), I, p. 338.

⁴ *The Heritage of Persia* (A Mentor Book, New York, 1966), p. 294. n. 73.

⁵ Christopher Dawson, *The Age of the Gods* (London, 1928), p. 78.

⁶ Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India* (Harmondsworth, 1961), p. 196.

⁷ Leemans, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

Sumer—mostly from Makan—has traced the particular type to the ores in Oman.¹

Taking everything into consideration, we may affirm that the Scandinavian archaeologists have provided us with an actual material basis for accepting the highly significant clues fixing Makan behind Cape Maketa where the Makai lived and in modern Makran, which was ancient Maka, inhabited by Herodotus's Mykans and linguistically equating to the Sumerian term.

This location of Makan in two compartments instead of only on the Perso-Baluch coast is just right to meet two opposite historical situations: (1) the long peace which, according to Stuart Piggott,² Baluchistan enjoyed in the third millennium B.C. and even later; (2) the conquest of Makan by Sargon as well as the defeat of its rebels by his grandson Naram-Sin whose records say that he "marched against Magan and personally caught Mandannu, its king".³ The war must have been in Oman, behind Cape Maketa, leaving yet the region of Maka undisturbed. Were we to confine ourselves to the latter we would give the lie to the Akkadian documents.

But if Makan is thus located between Bahrain (Dilmun) and the Indus Valley whose immediate neighbour it proves to be, then surely Meluhha would be this Valley itself and fully justify our equation of the sound "Melukhka" to "Mlechchha", "Melakha" and "Milakha".

A point of interest here may be brought in with the help of a statement of Maspero's:⁴ "possibly the Makae and the Melangitae of Classical historians and geographers were the descendants of the people of Mâgan (Mâkan) and Milukhka (Melugga)..." In the Melangitae, derivable from Melugga, we may have the late representatives of refugees or colonists from the Indus Civilization. Their association with the Makae is meaningful. If Makan included coastal Baluchistan, we have a locality where Harappan sites have been discovered (Sutkagen-dor, Sotka-koh, Bala Kot⁵), as if the part of Makan along the Arabian Sea formed in some respects common territory with the Harappan kingdom. The Melangitae coupled with the Makae in the region of Oman in Classical times seem one more proof that the Harappā Culture was covered by Meluhha.

What we need to add is that both Makan and Meluhha stretched to the west even beyond the general limits we have conceived. Mallowan⁶ has stressed Ilya Gershevitch's fresh scrutiny of a passage in an Achaemenid inscription. "Gershevitch," he says, "has identified the old Persian name of the timber imported by Darius for his palace at Susa as the Sissoo tree, a Himalayan species of hard wood which still grows freely in S. Iran, for example in the district of Kerman. Now in the Akkadian version of Darius's trilingual inscription this same Sissoo tree (O.P. Yaka) is referred to as the *mesu* wood of Makkan. And to the same country and to Meluhha adjacent

¹ British Association, Report of Sumerian Copper Committee, 1926.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

³ Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (A Pelican Book, Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 143, 145.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 41, fn. 1.

⁵ Wheeler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-1.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

to it a Sumerian priest-king named Gudea sent expeditions in the twenty-second century B.C. in search of the same hard wood. In these early inscriptions many passages make it perfectly clear that Magan or Makkan was a part of Iran beyond Elam..."

Mallowan¹ also quotes a letter of Gadd's, which speaks of Meluhha's association not only with Makan in particular but also with Anshan, Parahse [=Markhashi], Tukrish and a land called Sherikhum. Gadd writes that although none of these can be precisely located "it is certain that they were all lands in W. and S.W. Persia, and very probable that at least Magan and Meluhha were somewhere on the N. shores of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, how far eastward extending we have yet to obtain satisfactory evidence..."

Leemans² informs us: "The carnelian from Meluhha in Gudea's inscription is mentioned together with a stone of certain eastern origin (lapis lazuli). In a Sumerian hymn it is stated that both lapis lazuli and carnelian were brought from Meluhha." Leemans³ affirms: "Lapis lazuli came only from Afghanistan." So Meluhha must be extremely close to Afghanistan, if not partially inclusive of it.

Finally, there is the ancient "Survey of Sargon's Empire", which Mallowan⁴ quotes to the effect that "120 *biru* (about 800 miles) [is the distance] from the tail of the Euphrates to the border of Meluhha". Several possibilities are open to us in deciding where the "tail of the Euphrates" lay. One of them mentioned by Mallowan⁵ himself arises from the likelihood that a part of the area now under water was relatively dry, especially along the lower reaches of the Euphrates. In that case, "we might easily calculate the western confines of Meluhha as lying as much as 100 miles east of Jask" on the Gulf of Oman. Meluhha would then begin round about Chahbar (in Persian Makran where we may expect Harappan sites awaiting identification⁶), comprise Gwadar and cover the very localities we assign to the Harappā Culture—Sutkagen-dor, Sotka-koh, Bala Kot and beyond. There is no reason why, starting within South Persia on some common ground with Makan, it should not take in the whole range of this Culture known to us at present. And this it could do even if, as is also possible, it began at Jask itself.

All things considered, the Harappan realm and Meluhha must have been one.

And yet we have to ponder certain objections. For, they are raised by none other than the famous name we cited, in passing, at the opening of this section: S. N. Kramer.

4

Kramer's objections are, in appearance, indirect, since a new equation is brought forward essentially for Dilmun. Yet the indirectness is powerfully relevant not only because the entire balance of our identifications gets disturbed but also because the new equation is concerned with the Harappā Culture itself.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45, fn. 16.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 163.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5, fn. 17.

⁶ Wheeler, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

Romila Thapar¹ speaks with deference to Kramer's authority. B. K. Thapar, another contributor to the debate on the Indus script in the *Hindusthan Times*,² attaches a good deal of weight to Kramer's arguments. Even Wheeler in *The Indus Civilization*³ withholds final judgment in view of Kramer's preference, although he quotes Mallowan⁴ in favour of Bahrain and alludes to his old standby of *Early India and Pakistan*: Oppenheim. It behoves us to ponder with care the whole of Kramer's case.

In a letter to the *Sunday Times of India*, Bombay, January 29, 1961, he summarised his case in advance of the article "Dilmun: Quest for Paradise" which he contributed to *Antiquity*⁵ two years later. For the sake of convenience and brevity we shall run together both the pieces of writing.

Kramer takes his start from the mention, by Mesopotamian literature, of a mythological Dilmun over and above the commercial. Glob and Bibby tell us that in the Sumerian poems and epics of gods and heroes there figures a Dilmun which is no trading station but a land which before the creation of man was the abode of the gods, the home of immortality, a paradise of gardens and fresh water where neither sickness nor old age was known. It was to this Dilmun that Ziusudra (Utnapishtim in the Old-Babylonian version), the sole survivor of the Flood, retired when the waters had subsided and he had been granted immortality. There, too, Gilgamesh, the greatest hero of Sumerian legend, came in his vain search for immortal life. But of that golden-age Dilmun no archaeological signs have been discovered in the island of Bahrain. Nor, of course, has any other location actually yielded them. But there is a phrase connected with this Dilmun, which may make us pause before venturing to say that the Sumerian paradise is the idealised original of the Dilmun of trade-relations, a legendary vision of Bahrain's own extreme past.

The phrase is a suggestive geographical index. To quote Kramer:⁶ "In the Sumerian flood-myth Dilmun ... is further described as 'the place where the sun rises', a phrase which clearly indicates that Dilmun is to be sought in the rather distant east." The implication is that Bahrain is too near and that we are directed to the easternmost kingdom of which the Sumerians were aware: the Indus Civilization. But to give concreteness to the implication we must scrutinise all the other references to Dilmun either legendary or historical, and acquire the impression that they do not suit Bahram and can fit nothing less than the seat of the Harappā Culture.

Kramer, scanning the historical texts, urges: (1) Ur-Nanshe, who lived about 2450 B.C. and founded an ambitious and powerful dynasty in Lagash, records on stone stele and tablet that the ships of Dilmun brought him wood as tribute (?) from foreign

¹ March 30, 1969, "Romila Thapar's View", p. ii, col. 2.

² April 6, 1969, "Dating of the Indus Civilization", p. 14, col. 6.

³ P. 81.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵ XXXVII (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 111-15.

⁶ Letter.

lands; (2) about a century and a half later Sargon the Great, the Semitic ruler who conquered and controlled, at least for a short time, much of the ancient Near Eastern world, records on the memorial steles and statues which he erected at Nippur that the boats of Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha docked in his newly built capital, Agade; (3) some 150 years later, Gudea, the well-known god-fearing *ensi* of Lagash, records that the lands Dilmun, Magan, Meluhha, and the still unidentified Gubi supplied him with wood by ship;¹ (4) what is obviously a historical passage in a literary text containing the Dilmun myth, excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley at Ur more than thirty years ago but made available only recently, describes Dilmun as an all-important prosperous maritime city-state rich in barley, dates and timber and dotted with "good dwellings", to which practically all the known countries of the civilized world brought their goods and wares by boat: Tukrish and Marhashi in Iran (to the north of Elam), Meluhha and Magan, the still unlocalized Sealand and Zalamgar, Elam, and Ur (that is, Sumer itself);² (5) a group of letters and administrative documents from Ur of the Old-Babylonian period mentions seafaring merchants bringing back with them from Dilmun such imports as gold, copper ingots and copper utensils, lapis-lazuli, fish-eyes (perhaps pearls), beads of semi-precious stone, ivory and ivory objects made of, or inlaid with, ivory such as combs, pectorals, boxes, figurines and pieces of furniture.

According to Kramer, everything here, pertaining as it does to a kingdom of considerable magnitude, points in the direction of the Harappan cities and to the equation Dilmun-Harappā. Particularly the information that ivory and ivory artifacts were imported from a Dilmun which could be described as "the place where the sun rises" strikes Kramer as pinpointing the ancient land of the Indus Civilization.

Another facet of this civilization which, to his mind, speaks strongly for his equation is "the extraordinary role which water and cleanliness seem to have played in the life of its people, as evidenced by the large number of wells and baths in both public and private buildings, as well as by the carefully planned network of covered drains built of kiln-baked bricks. For this seems to justify the inference that the Indus people had developed a water-cult of deep religious import centring about a water-god and featured by sundry rites concerned with lustration and purification. All of which is equally true of Dilmun."³ In one of the Dilmun-myths, it is "a place blessed by Enki, the Sumerian water-god, with fresh, sweet water",⁴ and Enki is "the deity most intimately connected with Dilmun"⁵. "And in this very same myth we find Dilmun described as a land that is clean, pure and holy, adjectives which seem to suit such ancient Indus

¹ *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1924), I, p. 416, puts Gubi (or Gubin, as it calls it) next to Dilmun and not, as here (evidently by an error), after Meluhha

² The order of places here appears, at least broadly, to be from the farther to the nearer in respect of Dilmun, so Meluhha naturally precedes Makan just as Tukrish and Mahrashi precede Meluhha. Another line of sequence, which perhaps should be taken jointly with the first, would be from the more inland parts north-east of Dilmun to more coastal ones, the former being listed from west to east, the latter in the opposite direction

³ Article.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

cities as Harappā, Mohenjo-dāro, and Lothal.”¹ “Nor is this Dilmun-myth the only Sumerian composition which characterizes Dilmun as a land noteworthy for purity and cleanliness. In ‘Enki and the World Order’, a mythological poem of close to 500 lines,... we find Dilmun among the lands whose fate is decreed by Enki as he goes about organizing the earth and its cultural processes. The passage involving Dilmun consists of six lines, but only two of these are fully preserved; interestingly enough, these read:

He (Enki) cleaned and purified Dilmun,
Pleased the goddess Ninsikilla in charge of it.

In fact, Ninsikilla, the name of the goddess whom Enki charged with the care of Dilmun, is a Sumerian compound word, meaning ‘the pure queen’, which is probably a further indication of the value put on purity and cleanliness in Dilmun.”²

So much for the Dilmun-Harappā equation. As for Makan and Meluhha, Kramer³ writes: “Most cuneiformists would probably agree that, from about 1500 B.C. on, Magan and Meluhha corresponded roughly to ancient Egypt and Ethiopia.... It is for the earlier periods that this identification has been generally thought to be unlikely since it would involve the seemingly incredible assumption that the peoples of those early days had sea-going ships that could reach the coast of Africa. This has led to the hypothesis that over the millennia there was a shift in toponymy, that is, that in the third and early second millennium B.C. the names Magan and Meluhha actually corresponded to Baluchistan and India and only later were transferred to Egypt and Ethiopia.... Now, methodologically speaking, the verification of an hypothesis involving a name shift in the cuneiform documents for countries so important as Magan and Meluhha should be based on evidence that is reasonably assured and decisive. But as of today this is hardly the case; there is every reason to believe that the Mesopotamian scribes had a clear idea of the locations of the more important countries of the world about them. Thus, for example, in the historiographic document ‘The Curse of Agade’ (Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 1961, 317 ff) we find the Meluhhaites described as ‘the people of the black land’, a phrase which parallels closely the expression ‘the black Meluhhaites’ (that is, Ethiopians) found in Weidner, *AfO* [*Archiv für Orientforschung*], XVI, 1952, 7-8, sub 12 and 16.”

An additional touch Kramer gives to his case with the remark in the course of catching glimpses of Dilmun’s history right down to the time of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.): “The Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta uses in his titles the epithet ‘King of Dilmun and Meluhha’ reminiscent in a way of ‘from India to Ethiopia’ used of the king Ahasuerus in the Book of Esther.”

There!—we have Kramer all-round, in his full strength. Let us counter his arguments step by step.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, Note 16.

³ *Ibid.*, Note 11.

5

The fundamental argument is the very first, tending to fix Dilmun's location geographically where Sumer found the Harappā Culture. But should we really take the phrase—"the place where the sun rises"—in a literal and particularized sense? Georges Roux,¹ though following P. B. Cornwall² and leaning towards Bahrain, disjoins the phrase from any "local habitation". He opines: "the name 'Dilmun' here probably stands for any far-off and imaginary place rather than for Bahrain itself." But the puzzle must confront us: "If an island in the Persian Gulf, nearer than Makan and Meluhha, be Dilmun, why should it conjure up the far-off and imaginary by its name?" We must address ourselves to this central issue.

The legend in which the phrase occurs deals with an epoch centuries earlier than the one in which Dilmun is combined with Makan and Meluhha and in one form or another takes shape as a trading station. Even in the time of Ur-Nanshe of Lagash, Dilmun is the sole foreign place mentioned as trading with Sumer. If Sumer's horizon to the east came to an end with Dilmun, this region would be the most distant and, in a period of myth-making and imaginative dreaming, wear the colour of a pristine mystery and a paradisaical wonder and be "the place where the sun rises". In ancient ages, whatever bounded the vision on east or west was the place where the sun rose or set. Thus Lugal-zagge-si of Umma, who reigned a little after Ur-Nanshe, makes the claim for himself on a vase dedicated to the God Enlil in Nippur: "When Enlil ...had given him the kingship over the nation (Sumer),... made all sovereign countries wait upon him, made (everyone) from where the sun rises to where the sun sets submit to him, then he drew towards himself the feet of (everybody) from the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf) (along) the Tigris and the Euphrates to the Upper Sea (Mediterranean). From where the sun rises to where the sun sets, Enlil let him have no opponent..."³ There is here no question of deep penetration either eastward or westward. For, Roux⁴ tells us about all the Sumerian rulers prior to the Sargonid Dynasty: "The seashore to the south and Kish to the north marked the limits of their ambitions, and Mari and Assur were, it seems, as foreign to them as Elam. But shortly after 2400 B.C. Semite princes from central Iraq altered the course of events. Not only did Sargon and his successors subdue all the Sumerian city-states, but they conquered the entire Tigris-Euphrates basin as well as parts of the adjacent countries, embarked upon expeditions in the Persian Gulf and built the first great Mesopotamian empire." A phrase like the one out of which Kramer makes capital is only a generality applying to any locality, however close, which forms a sort of terminus in the eastern direction. Even in a fairly later era—that of the Assyrian Tukulti-

¹ *Op cit.*, p. 102

² "On the Location of Dilmun", *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, New Haven, 103 (1946), pp 3-11.

³ Roux, *Op cit.*, p. 133.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.)—we have a similar generality in a building inscription from Assur: “On the lower sea of the rising sun I established the frontier of my land.”¹ What here holds broadly for the Persian Gulf applies to the Dilmun that is the subject of Sumerian myth and poetry. “The place where the sun rises”, figuring in Sumer’s stories handed down about the world’s utopian beginnings and about her most ancient heroes, cannot be taken in a literal and particularised sense: it need not allude to anything beyond the none-too-far domain called Dilmun which had recently swum into the ken of Mesopotamia across the eastward Persian Gulf with a touch of dream-distances and the divine glamour of a dawn-land.

Kramer himself is too good a scholar not to know the true drift of the words that serve as his starting-point. Twice in his article he gives the correct interpretation: once he equates them to “a land somewhere to the east of Sumer” and again he remarks that they would “preclude the identification with any land not patently to the east of Sumer” Wheeler² also has a very restrained gloss in the same vein: “somewhere to the east of Sumer.” But such a gloss becomes fully illuminative not before it is set against the background we have sketched, explaining why what, in his words, “was... regarded as an other-worldly paradise” could have caught its name from a “local habitation” in the Persian Gulf 150 miles off from Mesopotamia. There is actually no call for Kramer to assert that Dilmun is clearly to be sought in the rather distant east.

Thus the very foundation of Kramer’s theory dissolves. Still, let us in all fairness examine what he says about the historical Dilmun of commercial contacts; for, in his article, it is after running through the various texts and on coming to the letters and administrative records from Ur in the Old-Babylonian period that he concludes about the land of the Indus Civilization: “this is the only large, wealthy, maritime region lying to the east of Sumer, which the Sumerian poets could describe as ‘the place where the sun rises’.” Chiefly these texts accumulate to give Kramer’s thought the *penchant* it shows.

To correct the *penchant* we require only to set Dilmun in the right perspective as a trading centre. Timber was no monopoly of Dilmun except at the time when the Persian Gulf had not been well explored. But even in that early age—the age of Ur-Nanshe—the monopoly is no more than indirect. For, Kramer’s citation unequivocally reveals that Dilmun’s monopoly lay just in being a timber-carrier: Dilmun’s boats brought the timber but the timber itself came from many foreign lands.

And therefore, most momentarily, we have at the very start of Kramer’s texts the clear-cut implication that Dilmun by carrying foreign lands’ timber in its boats acted the “middleman”, and the inevitable corollary that when on any occasion all sorts of goods are associated with Dilmun we need not believe them to be Dilmun’s own products.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237

² *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

In the third text, from the time of Gudea of Lagash, we have timber openly ascribed to Gubi, Magan and Meluhha no less than to Dilmun. Wheeler we have seen as specially listing timber as an export of Meluhha. Glob and Bibby speak of Meluhha's precious woods, and in the very passage from the Sumerian poem where Dilmun is a city-state receiving products from all over the civilized world we have the line:¹

"May the land Meluhha (bring) you tempting (?) precious carnelian, mes-shagen wood, fine sea-wood, sailors..."

Ivory too both Wheeler and the Glob-Bibby team trace to Meluhha. If seafaring merchants from Ur brought back from Dilmun ivory, objects of ivory, objects inlaid with ivory, we have no cause to assume they were Dilmunite goods and manufactures exclusively. Materials and artifacts brought from Meluhha could very well have been there ready to be taken by the Ur-merchants. The presence of ivory in Dilmun cannot prove the latter to be the Indus Civilization. Meluhha, on this score, has a legitimate claim. Nor does Dilmun's ivory rule out Bahrain as a candidate for Dilmunhood. There were large grave mounds at Bahrain which the excavators could connect up with the Barbar temple of the Sumero-Harappan period,² and in the massive tomb-chambers ivory objects were found.³ Whether these objects be native to Bahrain or imported from the Indus Civilization, they belong to Bahrain and can correspond to Dilmun's ivory and plead for the identity of the two regions.

There were also copper objects in the graves and we may recollect the axes and spears of copper, the copper statuette and the magnificent copper bull's head of the Barbar temple itself. All these may be balanced against the copper ingots and utensils Kramer's Ur-merchants carried back from Dilmun. The gold and lapis-lazuli that were included in their cargo have a counterpart too in Bahrain's tomb-chambers and temple-pit respectively.⁴

But perhaps it will be objected: "Kramer talks of the Indus land as 'a large, wealthy, maritime region' matching the picture we derive of Dilmun as a prosperous maritime land dotted with 'good dwellings'. Can Bahrain fill this part?"

Certainly. Glob and Bibby disclose Bahrain to have been "a place of considerable wealth and power". They⁵ also say of their very first season's work: "We discovered one large city, a number of smaller settlements and an extensive temple-complex." And all of them were to be dated to the third millennium B.C.⁶ During the closing weeks of the first campaign "a colossal building" was discovered at Ras al Qala'a east of Barbar.⁷ "Built of squared stones a yard in length and more, it still stands to a monumental height of 16 feet, with imposing doorways and sheer walls."⁸ Begun perhaps at the close of the Barbar period, it was completed and occupied by a people different from those of the third millennium. Sometime in the second millennium the city holding this building was destroyed. We may add that the civilization discovered at Bahrain was not confined to the island. Bahrain was its centre, no doubt,

¹ Article.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 65.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

² Glob and Bibby, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 68.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

but "reconnaissance has extended the outer marches of this civilization ever farther to the north and east along the curving coastline of Arabia".¹

We do not have to go beyond Bahrain for the historical greatness of Dilmun and for its large trade in timber, ivory and copper. As for the other products listed by Kramer, they do not force the Indus Civilization on our sight, either. To be rich in barley and dates is scarcely to be something that puts the other kingdoms quite in the shade, qualifying Dilmun alone to be the Harappā Culture. These commodities were common over a wide area. Barley was one of the two main crops of Babylon itself.² Dates also were grown in plenty: as early as Manishtusu, the second son of Sargon, we can infer the existence of "large date-orchards".³ And the dates of Makan and Meluhha are found associated with those of Dilmun.⁴ Possibly the last-named were the best and the most plentiful, but this excellence in quality and quantity should count somewhat against the equation of Dilmun with the Indus Civilization. For, Wheeler⁵ proffers the news: "A few date-stones are recorded from Mohenjodāro, and two small faience objects from Harappā appear to represent date-seeds, but these may prove no more than occasional importation of dates, possibly from Baluchistan or the shores of the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, certain conventionalized tree-forms on pottery may be derived from palms, and a pot from Harappā has been likened to a coconut fruit." The Indus Civilization can hardly be said to shine out for its dates as does Dilmun in its role of trading centre.

However, the Indus Civilization was an abundant producer of an article which Glob and Bibby associate with Meluhha: gold. Gold was used for beads, fillets and other ornaments by the Harappans,⁶ and about its acquisition we learn: "Gold may be washed from the sands of many of the great rivers of India, and is abundant in the south, particularly in Mysore State where it is mined. It occurs also near Kandahar and elsewhere in Afghanistan, and sporadically in Persia."⁷ For Mesopotamia there were not many assured sources of gold. Now, we gather about Gudea's trade: "Gold was obtained from a mountain (har-sag), named Ha-hu-um, and from Meluhha."⁸ Kramer⁹ himself, quoting from the poem "Enki and the World Order", shows Meluhha as possessing gold. There is no such specific association of gold with Dilmun. All we have is its inclusion among the diverse objects the merchants of Ur brought from Dilmun. All these could be Dilmun's collection from various countries to distribute where necessary. Once we have the statement that Dilmun played the "middleman" we can imagine trade from all quarters foregathering in its docks and quays, as that literary text from Ur, excavated by Woolley, tells us. No sure link can be forged between it and Kramer's list of the goods carried home

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

² *The Cambridge Ancient History*, I, p. 541

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 416, p. 544.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸ Leemans, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁹ *L'Histoire commence a Sumer*, p. 136.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 543.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁷ *Ibid.*

from it by the merchants. The poetic passage itself attributes gold not to Dilmun but to another country (north of Elam in Persia, according to Kramer):

May the land Tukrish transport to you gold from Harali...¹

It attributes directly to Dilmun only a few things:

Its barley is very small barley,
 Its dates are very large dates,
 Its harvests three...,
 Its trees...²

Whatever its importance, its magnitude, Dilmun comes forth from all accounts as principally a clearing-house. And this very function proves it to be so placed as to be able to serve as a "middleman": it could not be farther away than the other domains. Indeed, its comparative nearness to Sumer emerges from its very occurrence in Ur-Nanshe's inscription earlier than either Makan or Meluhha. Its location and function equal precisely those of Bahrain as disclosed by the Scandinavian excavators—a bridge of substantial importance, of considerable magnitude, between Sumer and other cultures to the east and chiefly the Indus Civilization.

Besides, if we do not equate Bahrain to Dilmun, how shall we account for the continuation of Dilmun for almost two thousand years from the middle of the third millennium B.C. when we first meet with it? Kramer³ has himself recounted snatches of its history in order to demonstrate that Dilmun, though paradisaical in myth and legend, was not "just a literary fiction, a never-never land..." In the course of establishing both its reality and its greatness he tells us of Dilmun messengers and caravans. He makes the reference, which we have already quoted, to the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta and the Bible's king Ahasuerus. He adds: "There was a king of Dilmun by the name of Uperi who paid tribute to Sargon II of Assyria. There was another king by the name of Hundaru, in whose days booty taken from Dilmun consisted of bronze ingots, objects made of copper and bronze, sticks of precious wood, and large quantities of kohl. In the days of Sennacherib, a crew of soldiers is sent from Dilmun to Babylon to help raze that rebellious city to the ground, and they bring with them bronze spades and spikes which are described as products characteristic of Dilmun." An extra bit of history would be: in the period of the El-Amarna Letters (about 1389-1358 B.C.) the presence of the tribe Ahlamu which is first mentioned in those Letters is attested at Dilmun no less than at Nippur and in Assyria.⁴

Surely this Dilmun continuing in Near Eastern records down to the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 B.C. outlives not only Sumer, as Kramer points

¹ Article.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Roux, *Op. cit.*, p. 248.

out to us, but also the Harappā Culture which came to a close in c. 1700 at the latest. How then can we identify Dilmun with this Culture?

Perhaps Kramer means to suggest that Dilmun is a general appellation for India and not merely for one particular civilization in it. This suggestion is pretty explicit in his comparison between Tukulti-Ninurta's title "King of Dilmun and Meluhha" and the phrase about Ahasuerus's sovereignty "from India to Ethiopia". But is it possible to think of India as attesting the presence of the Ahlamu tribe? The Ahlamu, soon to be coupled with the Aramaeans, were part of "a confederation of troublesome tribes active in the Syrian desert".¹ They are found also "along the Euphrates"² and we may set them, as Roux³ does, "about the Persian Gulf". But it is impossible to extend their wanderings to India. Thus the historically continuing Dilmun can only be Bahrain. At least the Dilmun continuing from the past up to the El-Amarna period cannot be anything else. And if so, the earlier Dilmun, with which alone we are really concerned, must repel identification with the Indus Valley of c. 2500 (or 2300)-1700 B.C.

As Kramer has gone out of his way to compare Tukulti-Ninurta and Ahasuerus, we may pause a little over the matter and prove the incongruity of the comparison. The Biblical phrase about Ahasuerus is the sole title used of him: it sums up the entire range of the king's empire, which is said by the Book of Esther (I, 1) to consist of "a hundred and seven and twenty provinces". On the other hand, Tukulti-Ninurta boasted that he was "king of Ashur and Karduniash, of Sumer and Akkad, of Sippar and Babylon, of Dilmun and Meluhha".⁴ The title Kramer picks out is no brief yet comprehensive summary by a mention of two extremities but the tail-end of a long list of particular places. It has no right or power to catch any gloss from the Biblical indication: a combination of India and Ethiopia cannot sympathetically loom out of it (any more than out of Esarhaddon's later antiquarian flourish "[king] of the kings of Dilmun, Makan and Meluhha" to climax his titulary). It must allude only to Bahrain and Ethiopia. India can nowhere be in the picture.

Now for the relation Kramer sees of the water-god Enki to Dilmun and the *rapport* into which he brings the former with the Indus people's life. It is one thing to say that Enki is the deity most intimately related to Dilmun and quite another to imply that no land except Dilmun enjoys an intimate relation with him. We can draw upon Kramer's words in a different context to prove how intimately related Enki is to Meluhha. In his *Sumerian Mythology*,⁵ as in his *History Begins at Sumer*,⁶ Kramer refers to the myth in which Enki decrees the fates of Sumer, Ur and Meluhha and appoints the various minor deities to their specific duties. After blessing Ur, "no doubt the capital of Sumer at the time the poem was composed", "Enki then comes to Meluhha, the 'black mountain', perhaps to be identified with the eastern coast of Af-

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *The Cambridge Ancient History*, II, p. 242.

⁵ A Harper Torch Book, New York, 1961, p. 54.

⁶ French Edition, pp. 135-6.

rica. Remarkably enough, Enki is almost as favourably disposed to this land as to Sumer itself. He blesses its trees and reeds, its oxen and birds, its silver and gold, its bronze and copper, its human beings." Meluhha is as if, like Sumer, Enki's own beloved land. And a point of even finer significance is: a deep affinity, almost a secret oneness, is revealed between Sumer and Meluhha. It is as though a common origin lay behind them or else there were vital interfusions. And, despite the undeniable individuality and the typical Indianness of the Harappā Culture, do we not discern a Sumerian tinge in several aspects of it—including the very script which, as the Finns have emphasised, takes help of archaic Sumerian pictographs? Such a tinge would be just the thing to lead the Sumerians to make their Enki so favourably disposed to Meluhha. Kramer's introduction of Enki into the discussion leaves Meluhha more Harappan than ever.

Again, we may question whether Enki can be regarded as even the god most intimately connected with Dilmun. Kramer has brought in the goddess Ninsikilla and, on turning to his *Sumerian Mythology*,¹ we find him quoting Enki:

Let Nintul be the lord of Magan,...
Let Enshagag be the lord of Dilmun...

Enshagag is no other than Inzak, the deity whom Glob and Bibby name as Dilmun's and whose mention is made in an epigraph found at Bahrain. Enki is only the overall god of Dilmun as of other countries: he deals with it and passes on: the particular god of it, constantly connected with it, is Enshagag, along with the particular goddess who is Ninsikilla (or Ninsikal, as *Sumerian Mythology*² has it). And Enshagag at once tends to merge Bahrain with Dilmun.

Even if Enki were linked with Dilmun in the way Kramer supposes, he would not on that score fuse, as Kramer contends, Dilmun with the Indus Civilization. For, Kramer's attribution of a water-god to the Indus people is not borne out by archaeological evidence. Wheeler³ refers to a Mother Goddess represented in figurines, the seated "Śiva" of the seals, phallus-worship and "the composite, sometimes man-faced, animals and 'minotaurs'" presumably indicating "on the one hand the coalescence of initially separate animal-cults and, on the other hand, their progress towards anthropomorphism". But there is no depiction of anything like a water-god. Wheeler,⁴ while stressing the importance of water in the life of the Harappans, goes out of his way to add after the word "importance": "not necessarily the deification."

Enki's cleaning and purifying of Dilmun, the significance "the pure queen" of the name "Ninsikilla" and the description of Dilmun as a holy, pure, clean and radiant land do evoke a picture sympathetic with the Indus life of public and private

¹ P. 58.

² Pp. 42, 55.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

baths. But the central process which Enki is called upon to set up in Dilmun appears to be expressed by Kramer in *Sumerian Mythology*:¹ "The goddess of Dilmun, Ninsikil, pleads to Enki, the water-god, for fresh water." The process is not fundamentally unlike what Enki does in Mesopotamia proper: "Enki goes to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. He fills them with sparkling water and appoints the god Enbilulu, the 'knower' of rivers, in charge. Enki then fills the rivers with fishes and makes a deity described as the 'son of Kesh' responsible for them."² All this account can also be made to figure the Indus people's religious life if we hearken to A.D. Pusalker's words³ that, though no direct evidence has been found for river-worship, the Great Bath has been suggested as the temple of the River-God. What Enki's cleaning and purifying of Dilmun seem to have consisted in is the filling and flushing of the place with fresh water.

If fresh water is the central theme, Bahrain can easily qualify for Dilmun and all the more because of Bahrain's relation, as regards water and fertility, to its Arabian background. Kramer's full statement⁴ on Dilmun in this connection is that it was blessed by Enki "with fresh, sweet water and grain-abounding fields, so much so that it became the 'house of the docks and quays of the land'." Perhaps this special allusion to water and fertility reflects the conditions which have always marked Bahrain off from its neighbourhood and must have enabled it to develop as a trade-centre, conditions well hit off by Glob and Bibby:⁵ "The island has a plentiful water supply and a soil that is productive where it is watered, while nearby Arabia is sandy and waterless."

Lastly, even Kramer's allusion to water, cleanliness and purification in the strictly Harappan sense can be turned towards Bahrain. It is extraordinary how, while some features of Bahrain's ancient civilization are reminiscent of Early Dynastic Sumer, others reflect Harappan influence. One example is the "rectangular layout of streets"⁶ in the large city at Ras al-Qala'a of the Barbar period. Another, which is immediately relevant to us, is from the Barbar temple itself. If Enki's presence and activity involve that Dilmun should be a country of ceremonial bathing like the Harappā Culture's, we may cast our minds back to Glob and Bibby's comment on a striking detail of this temple—namely, that with its bathing pool the temple recalled the ritual baths of the Indus Valley cities.

Thus, from no angle of vision, do we require in the Dilmun-context to move towards the Indus Valley instead of stopping at Bahrain and letting Meluhha coincide with the former.

And if in the cuneiform records Dilmun is really said to be not only favoured with fresh water, as Kramer no less than Glob and Bibby affirm, and with rich grain-harvests, as Kramer adds, but to be also, as the Scandinavian authors make out, an island a mere two-days' sail from Mesopotamia, neither the talk of Enki's cleaning and purifying

¹ P. 42.

² P. 61.

³ *The Vedic Age*, p. 188.

⁴ Article.

⁵ *Op cit*, p. 63.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

nor the presentation of any other aspect should transport Dilmun to the Indus Valley or dislodge Meluhha from there. The island-character of Dilmun has been marked time and again, from the period of the earliest discussions. Thus Maspero,¹ referring to Mesopotamian sources, invariably speaks of "the island of Dilmun". No region of the Harappā Culture can be really called "an island."

Can Kramer's remarks on Egypt being Makan and Meluhha Ethiopia from c. 1500 B.C. onwards hinder our thesis? He thinks that sufficient cause is not offered to justify belief in a change of toponymy just at this time. According to him, Makan and Meluhha must have meant Egypt and Ethiopia before c. 1500 B.C. too. But actually these names are not so securely established as to be exclusive of any others for Egypt and Ethiopia even after this date. To take Ethiopia first: we must remember that in antiquity Nubia in its full sense covered Ethiopia and both were known as "Kush" (or its variants).² In the El-Amarna period, "Rib-Adda of Byblos," W. F. Albright³ informs us, "asks [the Pharaoh] at least a dozen times for troops, nearly always specifying equal numbers of Egyptians and Nubians (men of Kashu, biblical Kush, which alternates with Meluhha, an archaic designation for Negro Africa)." In other words, Nubia-Ethiopia is still often termed Kashu. El-Amarna Letter 14 shows us Pharaoh Akhenaton writing to King Burnaburiash of Karduniash and styling himself "King of sar Miisrii". Sargon II (721-705 B.C.) reports his victory over a revolt in Palestine supported by "Pi'ru of Muşru", whom Roux⁴ identifies for us as "Pharaoh of Egypt (probably Bocchoris)". We may also remember the Biblical name for Egypt: Mizraim.⁵ "Mizraim is a common name for Egypt," says Nelson Beecher Keyes,⁶ after mentioning "Cush" as the Bible's name for what is Ethiopia today. "Makan" for Egypt does not seem to have come down with any firm hold. The same may be asserted about "Meluhha" for Ethiopia. Thus, instead of them, "Muşru" and "Kuşu" do duty for Egypt and Ethiopia in Roux's Map of the Assyrian Empire on one of the last pages of his book. "Makan" and "Meluhha" have the look of novelties acquiring a slow grip. A *prima facie* case appears to be there for a different meaning of the terms in earlier times. And, as for reasons for such a meaning, we may declare that quite a number can be adduced. We have tried to marshal several and we may submit a few more with a comparative point in them.

Against Makan being Egypt in the earlier times, we may quote the *Cambridge Ancient History*⁷ on Makan's diorite: "its famous black diorite differs geologically from Egyptian diorite." Two arguments may be culled from Leemans⁸ for India as against Ethiopia: (1) trade-relations between the former and Mesopotamia are

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 38-9, 92, 116.

² *Cambridge Ancient History*, Old Ed. (1924), II, Map I (c 5, 6) facing p. 80.

³ "The Amarna Letters from Palestine—Syria, the Philistines and Phoenicia", *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Revised Editions of Vols. I & II (1966), No. 51, p. 10.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁵ *Cambridge Ancient History*, Old Ed., I, p. 185.

⁶ *Reader's Digest Story of the Bible World* (New York, 1962), p. 15.

⁷ Old Ed., I, p. 416.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, pp. 162-4, 125.

attested by the finds, among others, of seals of an Indian type both in Mesopotamia and Bahrain, while no such signs exist in connection with Ethiopia, not even indirect ones through articles with an influence from Egypt which must have exchanged goods with Ethiopia; (2) finished articles of ivory, in the form of combs, fruits, multi-coloured birds, hailed from Meluhha but there is no evidence of a technically and artistically developed civilization in Ethiopia in the period concerned: Egypt imported ivory and ebony from there in the shape of raw materials only. A concluding argument we may build from Oppenheim.¹ Southern Mesopotamia had very little ivory from Egypt and Syria in even the period 1500-500 B.C. during which the use of their ivory spread over a large area. Hence in the older epoch it must have relied exclusively upon ivory from the East. Meluhha, the then-source of ivory, must have been to the east of Mesopotamia and could not have been Ethiopia which was Egypt's supplier.

Leemans² offers also reasons why the names "Makan" and "Meluhha" got transferred to Egypt and Ethiopia. In the later Mesopotamian period, contacts with the distant eastern countries *via* the Persian Gulf were cut. "The main articles that had come originally from these countries were, however, known by means of the lexical texts and the litanies (perhaps with the exception of ivory which is not known to have been listed in them) and these texts kept the memory of the names of these countries alive. In the Cassite period, especially in the time of the El Amarna letters, several of the same articles, especially ivory and ebony (*usû* wood) were sent from Egypt to the kings of Kardunias (Babylon), Assyria and Mitanni. It is not surprising that from that time on the names should be applied, especially according to the imaginings of travellers *via* Syria, to distant countries to the south from which these articles came at that time, and that in this way Meluhha became the name for Nubia and/or Ethiopia."

Kramer's own pointers to Ethiopia for Meluhha by way of expressions like "the black mountain", "the people of the black land" and "black Meluhhaites" are rather weak. If at all they are deemed references in one manner or another to the colour of the population and therefore to indicate Ethiopia, we may answer that the conclusion is not binding. For, does not Arrian (*Anabasis* V, 4) tell us that the Greeks found the Indians blacker than any other men except the Ethiopians? The earlier Herodotus (III. 95, VII. 74) distinguishes the "Asiatic" or "eastern" Ethiopians from the southern Ethiopians of Africa, the former being grouped in Xerxes's army with the Indians. They were evidently inhabitants of Southern Baluchistan to which, as Piggott³ once reminds us, the name given in Classical times was "Gedrosia, the country of the dark folk". These folk would be at the gate of entry to the Indus Valley. But really we cannot be certain of the drift of those multi-aspected Mesopotamian terms. They may, for all we know, have an affinity to what is meant of the Sumerians

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

² *Op. cit.* p. 165.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

themselves in the prayer to the Sun-God which Kramer's *Sumerian Mythology*¹ quotes: "O Utu, shepherd of the land, father of the black-headed people..." Blackness as a characteristic variously figured forth may simply show a bond between Sumer and Meluhha without at all raising the issue whether the latter is Ethiopia or India.

Hence Kramer fails to shake our thesis anywhere. Meluhha remains the remotest kingdom to the east for the traders and rulers of Mesopotamia, and Dilmun cannot replace it as the Harappā Culture, and the Prakrit name we can attach to this Culture stands uncontroverted.

6

We may now sum up. Meluhha, pronounced Melukhkha, of the early Mesopotamian records (c. 2350-1700 B.C.) is the Indus Civilization which was post-Rigvedic and self-styled for its own mixed speech Mlechchha, Melakha, Milakkha before the more strictly Aryan and further inland India of the post-Rigvedic era coloured the appellation with some contempt for the linguistic indistinctness which to its ears was barbarous though still at its root not un-Aryan.

This civilization started at the time when in its eastern neighbourhood the Hindu Brahmanas were being written. It appears to have received a stimulus from ancient Mesopotamia, but fundamentally it held a legacy, however modified under new conditions and contacts, from the Rigveda. As a whole, partly Vedic and partly non-Vedic, it constituted a unique mixture, some of whose elements have survived but much of which has vanished along with its special script.

That script, now semi-deciphered by means of a computer, seems to carry a language with a Proto-Dravidian grammar and vocabulary in many respects, a Sumerian component of word as well as sign and most probably an Iranian plus Munda infusion, yet with a Proto-Prakrit spirit in its base no less than in its superstructure. Such a language may be expected from this civilization's very name discovered in Indian literature and confirmed from Mesopotamian sources.

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FIFTEENTH SEMINAR

28th April 1968

HOW TO REMAIN YOUNG? THE SECRET OF PERPETUAL PROGRESS

(Continued from the issue of April 1969)

THE passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pertaining to the two subjects of the Seminar, which were read at the Seminar, are reproduced below.

The first passage was read by Manoj before the speeches were delivered; the next four were read by Arati, Shobha and Chanda and the last three by Kishor Gandhi after the speeches were over.

(1)

By yielding to Nature, we fall away both from Nature and from God; by transcending Nature we at once fulfil all the possibilities of Nature and rise towards God. The human touches first the divine and then becomes divine.

There are those who seek to kill Nature in order to become the self; but that is not God's intention in humanity. We have to transcend Nature, not to kill it.

Every movement of humanity which seeks to deny Nature however religious, lofty, austere, of whatever dazzling purity or etheriality, is doomed to failure, sick disappointment, disillusion or perversion. It is in its nature transient, because it contradicts God's condition for us. He has set Nature there as a condition of His self-fulfilment in the world.

Every movement of humanity which bids us be satisfied with Nature, dwell upon the earth and cease to look upwards, however rational, clear-sighted, practical, effective, comfortable it may be is doomed to weariness, petrification and cessation. It is in its nature transient because it contradicts God's intention in us. He dwells secret in Nature and compels us towards Him by His irresistible attraction.

Materialistic movements are as unnatural and abnormal as ascetic and negatory religions and philosophy. Under the pretence of bringing us back to Nature, they take us away from her entirely; for they forget that Nature is only phenomenally

Nature but in reality she is God. The divine element in her is that which she most really is; the rest is only condition, process and stage in her development of the secret divinity.

Not to be immersed, emmeshed and bound by Nature, not to hate and destroy her, is the first thing we must learn if we would be complete Yogins and proceed towards our divine perfection.

Being still natural in the world to transcend Nature internally, so that both internally and externally we may master and use her as free and lord, *svarāj samrāj*, is our fulfilment.

Being still the symbol to reach through it the being that symbolises itself, to realise the symbol, is our fulfilment.

Being still a figure of humanity, man among men, a living body among living bodies, though housed in life and matter yet a mental being among mental beings, being and remaining all this that we are apparently, yet to exceed all this apparent manhood and become in the body what we are really, God, Spirit supreme and infinite, pure Bliss, pure Force, pure Light, this is our fulfilment.

(*The Hour of God*, pp. 32-3.)

Sri Aurobindo

(2)

Only those years that are passed uselessly make you grow old.

A year spent uselessly is a year during which no progress has been accomplished, no growth in consciousness has been achieved, no further step has been taken towards perfection.

Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years.

(*Bulletin of Physical Education*, April 1958, p. 124.)

The Mother

(3)

The moment you cease to advance, you fall back. From the moment you are satisfied and aspire no longer, you begin to die. Life is movement, life is effort; it is marching forward, scaling the mountain, climbing towards future revelations and realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in forward march that you must find rest, the true rest that comes from a total trust in the Divine Grace, the absence of desires, the victory over egoism.

(*Bulletin of Physical Education*, April 1957, p. 93.)

(4)

When you are in need of an external change, it means that you do not progress internally. For he who progresses internally can live under the same external conditions, these constantly reveal to him new truths.

All outward change must be the spontaneous and inevitable expression of an inner transformation. Normally, all amelioration of the conditions of physical life should be the outward flowering of a progress realised within.

29. 3. 1958.

The Mother

(5)

Like all things in Yoga, the effort for progress must be for the love of the effort for progress, the joy of the effort and aspiration towards progress must be sufficient in themselves, quite apart from the result. All that you do in Yoga must be done for the joy of doing it and not in view of the result you want to secure. After all, in life, always, in everything, the result does not belong to us. And if we wish to have the right attitude, we must act, feel, think, make an effort, spontaneously, because that is the thing to be done and not because you wish to get this or that result...

The spontaneous act, done because one cannot do otherwise and done as an offering with a good will, is the only thing that has the true value... .

(*Bulletin of Physical Education*, August 1958, pp. 99-100.)

THE MOTHER

(6)

There are three powers of the cosmos to which all things are subject—creation, preservation and destruction; whatever is created lasts for a time, then begins to crumble down. The taking away of the Force of destruction implies a creation that will not be destroyed but last and develop always. In the Ignorance destruction is necessary for progress—in the Knowledge, the Truth-creation, the law is that of a constant unfolding without any Pralaya.

(*On Yoga II*, Tome I, p. 35.)

SRI AUROBINDO

(7)

Modern society has discovered a new principle of survival, progress, but the aim of that progress it has never discovered,—unless the aim is always more knowledge, more equipment, convenience and comfort, more enjoyment, a greater and still

greater complexity of the social economy, a more and more cumbrously opulent life. But these things must lead in the end where the old led, for they are only the same thing on a larger scale; they lead in a circle, that is to say, nowhere: they do not escape from the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, they do not really find the secret of self-prolongation by constant self-renewal which is the principle of immortality, but only seem for a moment to find it by the illusion of a series of experiments each of which ends in disappointment. That so far has been the nature of modern progress. Only in its new turn inwards, towards a greater subjectivity now only beginning, is there a better hope; for by that turning it may discover that the real truth of man is to be found in his soul.

(*The Human Cycle*, p. 278.)

SRI AUROBINDO

(8)

Man's life is made up of the light and the darkness, the gains and losses, the difficulties and dangers, the pleasures and pains of the Ignorance, a play of colours moving on a soil of the general neutrality of Matter which has as its basis the nescience and insensibility of the Inconscient. To the normal life-being an existence without the reactions of success and frustration, vital joy and grief, peril and passion, pleasure and pain, the vicissitudes and uncertainties of fate and struggle and battle and endeavour, a joy of novelty and surprise and creation projecting itself into the unknown, might seem to be void of variety and therefore void of vital savour. Any life surpassing these things tends to appear to it something featureless and empty or cast in the figure of an immutable sameness; the human mind's picture of heaven is the incessant repetition of an eternal monotone. But this is a misconception; for an entry into the gnostic consciousness would be an entry into the Infinite. It would be a self-creation bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being, and the interest of the Infinite is much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interest of the finite. The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The delight of the Spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste of delight, *rasa*, of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it would be a greater and happier constant miracle.

(*The Life Divine*, American Edition, pp. 946-47.)

SRI AUROBINDO

At the end of the Seminar, Kishor Gandhi, on behalf of the Association, thanked all who had come to attend the Seminar as well as those who had participated in it.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT

ADDRESS ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY, MAY 5, 1969

Friends,

In the course of his development, man has discovered various means for the prevention and cure of diseases. The chief among them are Ayurveda, Allopathy and Homeopathy. In recent times, Dr. Bates developed the knowledge of the cure of defective eyesight. He noted that the eye and mind were under a strain in all the various types of defective eyesight and eye troubles. He, therefore, developed methods of eye education and mental relaxation. Dr. Bates has made many remarkable discoveries regarding accommodation of the eye and errors of refraction. Even with regard to so-called incurable cases, his methods of treatment bring quick improvement in eyesight and relieve pain and discomfort.

One of the aims of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is to promote a new synthesis of knowledge, and in this attempt a synthesis of various systems of medicine plays an important part. The SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT is one of the experiments in this direction, with Dr. Bates as the main scientific path-pointer. It was opened last year on this day and the Divine Mother gave a message:

“THE MORE THE MIND IS QUIET, THE MORE THE SIGHT IS GOOD.”

The School provides a course in Ophthalmic Science which will not be limited to any particular system of medicine but will draw from all systems and even attempt a fresh inquiry on new lines. The duration of this course will normally be of four years and the prerequisite for admission to this course will be a good knowledge of English and an interest in pursuing the course.

All along it has been my experience that mental relaxation is the key of success in life, in Yoga and in education. Under the present civilized conditions man's mind is under a severe strain, hence preservation of good eyesight is almost impossible without eye education and mental relaxation. In this direction *Mother India* has done a great service to educate the mind of the public. Many enquiries have come and many have attended the School. Often it is a surprise how quickly the vision begins to improve by simple methods of eye education. One girl student, Dolia, from our Centre of Education, whose eyesight had failed both for far and near, recovered normal eyesight in about a week's time. Our Registrar Mr. Kireet Joshi was surprised when he found that reading Fine Print in dim light or candle light improved his eyesight and produced good relaxation.

It is hoped that our future doctors will integrate all the systems of medicine harmoniously and bring quick recovery by their simple and harmless methods. At a later stage this SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT may be shifted to Auroville where it will be joined to the World University and will become a unique institution in the world, imparting medical knowledge to help bring perfection not only in eyesight but in the body as a whole and in the mind's general functions.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL