MOTHER INDIA

JULY, 1969

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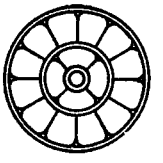
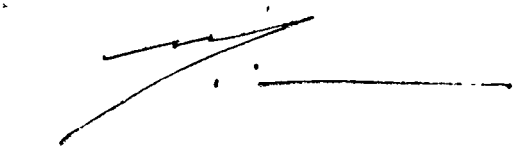


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. 6

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You must never forget
that you are much more helpful
when you are quietly happy
than when you become dramatic.

5.10.1932

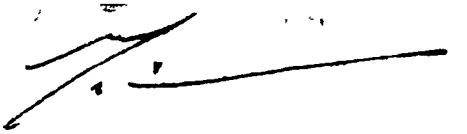
Increase steadily your own aspiration. Try to perfect your consecration to the Divine and your life will be arranged for you.

8.6.1969

ON SUICIDE

Know for certain that to commit suicide is the most foolish action that a man can do; because the end of the body does not mean the end of the consciousness and what was troubling you while you were alive continues to trouble you when you are dead, without the possibility of diverting your mind which you can get when you are alive.

July 16, 1969



AUX AUROVILLIENS

POUR établir à Auroville l'atmosphère harmonieuse qui, par définition, doit y régner, le premier pas est, pour chacun, de regarder en lui-même ce qui est cause des frictions et des mésententes.

Car ces causes sont *toujours* des deux côtés et l'effort de chacun doit être de les supprimer en soi-même d'abord avant de rien exiger des autres.

4.7.1969 LA MÈRE

TO AUROVILLIANS

To establish at Auroville the harmonious atmosphere which, by definition, ought to reign there, the first step is for each one to watch within himself whatever is the cause of friction and misunderstanding.

For these causes are *always* on both sides and each one's endeavour should be to efface them in himself first before demanding anything from others.

4.7.1969 THE MOTHER

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 29, 1940

S WAS smiling at N without any apparent reason.

N: What is the matter? What makes you smile?

S: I was thinking: "N thinks himself so important but if he knew how much empty space there is in his body, he wouldn't."

SRI AUROBINDO: It is because of the empty space that he feels important.

N: What empty space?

S: I was reading a popular book of science where it is said that the empty space between protons and electrons is comparatively greater than between the stars and that the table which looks so solid has more empty space than we know: the very earth we stand on is mostly empty space!

SRI AUROBINDO: But somewhere in the *New Statesman*, perhaps in an article by Haldane, I read that the empty space of the infinite cosmos is not of the same kind as that within the atom. But how do they know that the space between protons and electrons is empty?

N: Because they can't find anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Science is full of emptiness then.

MARCH 31, 1940

N: Nishikanta says that B has asked for his poems.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why does he want them when he says they are too philosophic and thus unfit for publication?

N: Nishikanta asks the same question and, besides, he wonders why one who speaks against the Ashram should want them.

SRI AUROBINDO: But since he is asking for them Nishikanta can send them.

Criticism is no reason why poems shouldn't be sent. And B himself doesn't want his criticism to be taken seriously: otherwise why should he ask for poems he doesn't like?

P: Yes, and if the poems are published the public will see that B is himself going against his own criticism.

N: According to Bhattacharya, there seems to be a section of the public in Calcutta that says Nishikanta lacks a little refinement in poetry.

SRI AUROBINDO: In what way?

N: In the use of some expressions like যোনি (womb)

SRI AUROBINDO: What is wrong with it? Why do they find it vulgar or unrefined? Is it because it is sexual?

N: I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO: But I want to know. It has been used in all Indian languages for a long time. If you say that such expressions should not be used, it is different. But how are they vulgar? Since when has Bengal become so puritan? It seems to be a Brahmo Samaj influence.

N: Tagore never uses such words. In Sanskrit they are used extensively.

SRI AUROBINDO: Has Bhattacharya been to Santiniketan?

N: But he is a Sanskrit scholar. Why then does he object? Some people object to Nishikanta's use of গণিকা (prostitute) also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Bah! That is too much. In English they use "harlot" and "whore". At one time in Europe, particularly in England, such words were considered vulgar and they were not used. But now everybody is using them. The pre-Brahmo Bengal also was to a certain extent puritan. Moni said that he was not allowed to sing in school by the teachers: it was considered immoral. If music is immoral, then there can be no question about dancing, and yet in ancient India even the princesses were taught dancing and used to dance before the public. Music, painting, dancing, all these were publicly encouraged. The objections have no substance in them: they are just finicky.

N: D doesn't like the use of কৃমি কীট কফ. (worm, insect, phlegm). He gets a repugnant sensation because he is reminded of their associations.

SRI AUROBINDO: Madhusudan has used such words, I think. In English they use the word "worm". I myself have used it.

N: He may not object to it in English.

P: Why? It doesn't give those associations?

SRI AUROBINDO: Should one write only of aesthetic things in poetry?

N: নিতম্ব (buttocks) too is regarded as vulgar.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is frequently used in Sanskrit. In English one won't use "buttocks" but that is because of the prosaicness of the word itself: the English say "posterior".

N: Have you seen the song of Nishikanta sent you the other day by Dilip?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, what about it?

N: There is one expression in it—আপন স্বপন(own dream)—about which there is a dispute. Nishikanta says he has used the first part of it in the sense of the Self, which Dilip says nobody will understand and so should be changed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it can't be taken as the self, but I understood it to mean one's self-dream which one can't get away from. It is one's own creation and has not been imposed upon one and one has to fulfil it. In that sense it is all right.

N: Dilip says that what the poet has tried to express is not important: what is important is whether the expression has come right and people will understand it in that sense. According to him, Nishikanta's word will be understood as "own dream".

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not the question of understanding only. The feeling too has to be considered. We must see whether one feels something even if one does not understand.

N: Nishikanta says that we have to see the drift of the whole poem instead of considering a single expression taken separately. His whole poem's idea, he says, is that what appears as মায়া or স্বপন (illusion or dream) is not স্বপন (dream), it is something real of one's own Self. If that word is changed, the entire meaning will be spoiled. The two words coming together have produced the emphasis.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is quite right. If the word is changed, the lyrical beauty of the poem will be spoiled. One has also to see the implication.

N: N seems to agree with Dilip. Dilip goes too much by the mind: what is intellectually not clear to him is suspect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he follows the old tradition of his own father and others. Here the poetry is trying to be suggestive. In his own poetry intellectuality is quite in place.

N: S said she employed the expression আপন পারে (own shore) in a recent poem; by আপন (own) she meant the Self, but N objected that it couldn't have that meaning in Bengali and so she changed it.

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the context. (*After a pause*) I don't see how it can be taken in any other way. It seems a fine suggestion.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

A TALK BY PAVITRA

(This intimate and enlightening talk was given, at the request of some old students of his, by Pavitra (P. B. St. Hilaire) to the students and teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on August 8, 1964. A tape record of it was made at the time.

Remembering what a passion the speaker had for precision and perfection and how he used to want all his own English writings to be scrutinised by the Editor of Mother India *before publication, we have ventured to do a bit of editing here and there to the translation from the French submitted to us. The few touchings-up are strictly of a technical kind, and care has been taken not to interfere anywhere with the essential turn of thought and language, the happy informality of the manner, the expression of the spirit of quest vaguely feeling out for things or the suggestion of the various shifts of apparently uncertain fortune.)*

How difficult it is to be perfectly sincere!

I shall try my best to be exact but what I shall tell you is only the broad outline of the great voyage. I shall not be able to convey to you all the steps in thought, the ups and downs of feeling, or even the experiences, inner or outer.

I do not know if you have seen a film on the First World War. You have seen some on the Second, and perhaps you know the main difference...at least in practice for those who were engaged in the fighting. In the First War a considerable part of the four years that it lasted consisted of what is called 'trench warfare': that is, the two armies faced each other in trenches. They had dug trenches and shelters, and lived day after day, night after night, in conditions often difficult, at times though not always dangerous, with cold and rain as enemies and, of course, sometimes shells, bullets, illness and boredom.

Well! I was in those days a young officer. I was only twenty in 1914. I had finished—I am obliged to speak of myself because you have asked me to speak of myself—I had finished my science education. I was at the Polytechnic School, I had done a year at the Polytechnic, and like all young men there I had undergone military training even before I joined that school; so, in 1914, when the War was declared in the month of August I had to go for training as a private in an artillery regiment after a year of school where we had been doing mostly Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.

The War was declared just on the eve of the day on which I was to leave to rejoin my regiment. I rejoined the regiment, but the conditions were different and we were immediately put under pressure. That is to say, we had to do riding for four or five hours a day. That was considered the best training for war. There was theoretical

instruction... anyway, it was rather severe and at the end of some months, because of this military training we had undergone, we were appointed sub-lieutenants... sub-lieutenants in the Artillery, and in the month of October, that is, in three months, ...at the end of October, let us say, four months after the declaration of the War... we left for the front. I was in the Artillery, a junior officer, in a battery of 105's which the English call a four-inch gun. It was a new-given firing weapon of which France was very proud—and an interesting one.

At that time—I shall not keep it from you—I was a young man who had exactly the preoccupations of an ordinary young man of his age. I was like all my companions. I had the same preoccupations and the same interests as of those around me. I liked studies. In general I liked what I did because I preferred to like it rather than to dislike it. It is better that way, is it not? It goes better in life—but really when I look back on the past I cannot say that I had spiritual aspirations. I had been brought up in the Catholic religion; it had not interested me particularly. Truly speaking, I had not put any questions to myself. Well, during the war we had at times what are called 'hard knocks', difficult moments, but also, from time to time a lot of leisure which it was necessary to fill up.

I do not know how—it was probably the hand of destiny—I started reading some books on what are called "psychic phenomena", that is, phenomena which the science of that time, of that age, did not study at all but pushed aside, considered as outside its domain, extra-scientific.

There were all sorts of things... there were telepathy, clairvoyance, all the mediumistic phenomena—I do not know if you have heard of them—all those things, ...even the pendulum and divination—all that is a little on the borderline of science. I approached everything with a scientific spirit, only to know, telling myself: "Look, here is a whole domain that science does not study." Why? Nobody knows. I have never tried for, I was never interested in, the actual experience of a medium... seeing the future .. and all that. That did not interest me; I was concerned with the possibility of these phenomena, their existence. Do they exist? Are they true? Are they false? Why does science not study them? It was not that I wanted to acquire them, or to know the future, or anything regarding myself, no!

Then, little by little, from book to book, I was led to read what are called in Europe books on Occultism. They included many things... I shall not quote the names of the authors... anyway, I read all that one could read on the subject: that which is called magic—not witchcraft, that did not interest me, but magic, precisely the possibility of handling certain forces, of proving their existence; and then, going on to the Middle Ages—because, naturally, when one studies Occultism one must go back to the times when Occultism flourished—the Kabbala, the secret societies, initiating bodies, the Hebrew tradition, alchemy, the alchemists—in the spiritual sense, that is to say, in the sense of transformation of nature—then, afterwards, the modern occultists, the door to India.

I must say that it was Theosophy which opened to me the door to India, and for

that I am extremely obliged to it. For one thing, in Europe there was not much else, especially in those days; it was Theosophy which translated many sacred books of India, and which put within the reach of the Western intellect—one can almost say brought into vogue, though it wasn't a question of vogue really—matters like reincarnation, karma, perfection on earth, the ideal of the *jivan-mukta*, that exist in Theosophy.

Talking of myself, as far as I remember, when I learnt of reincarnation and karma, they seemed to me completely axiomatic. One need not, there was no need to, discuss them. Never for a second, since the time I came across these ideas of reincarnation and karma, have I argued about them. I accepted them as part of myself. They seemed self-evident to me. I knew, moreover, that one could not prove them; consequently, there was no point in discussing them: either one admitted them or one did not.

So, with these ideas of India I entered a new phase: it was—what shall I say?—of aspiration for spiritual perfection. There are two ways of studying the religions of India; one is the external—such as the Westerners, the French, generally follow, without participating in them, without living them: they study India as they study—really!—a colony of bees or ants. One gives an account of what they think, what they do.

But the other way, and the only one which interested me, was to live it all, to understand it first and then to live it. This was the ideal of perfection, realisable by man in time and through successive lives, which really satisfied me, seemed to me true and worthy to be lived.

Meanwhile the War continued. For two years I was at what is called "the front", moving from one place to another, always in the artillery, in the 4-inch battery. And then for another two years or so I was at an Army Headquarters. In that position, as an officer of artillery intelligence, I had a job, almost like office work but very interesting because it meant compiling all the information we had, and giving it to the artillery, to the artillery corps of the army. An army comprised a varying number of corps, each corps consisted of two or three divisions, each division contained two brigades, and each brigade was made up of a certain number of regiments, therefore some thousands of men, so that a corps of the army represented, roughly, one or two hundred thousand men at the front with a considerable quantity of artillery and twelve or fifteen flying squadrons. My appointment involved study, compilation, scrutiny, sifting all that one could gather by way of intelligence. And at the same time, I had another work, a humane job: to keep contact with the units—that is, the units on the front, the visitors and strangers, because after a time we had the Americans in large numbers, and the English also.

But I can say that all the free time I had—there was not much, we were very busy—I devoted to study, often till late into the night. And more and more these ideas took possession of me, that is to say, I gave myself up to them, devoted myself to them. And in a few years—I can say from 1917, that is in two years—my point of view

changed completely. I had been—I cannot say a materialist, because I did not have any opinion on the subject—I had been, as I have told you, a young man who had received a scientific education, logical, strict, but who had never asked himself questions on these subjects, and once they occupied my thoughts and feelings, well, I gave myself up to them totally.

In 1918, an epidemic, which at the time was called the Spanish fever or influenza, occurred in France, an epidemic which lasted sufficiently long, and which in all the world caused the death of 20 million people. I have seen recently a book on the subject. Well! I had the flu exactly at the time of the Armistice, that is, in November 1918. I was at the front, we had just pierced through the German lines and marched on Germany. It was in the German lines that I caught this influenza, but it was not an epidemic peculiar to Germany, all the world had it, all the countries.

That moment, I can say, was the decisive date in my life. In the country hospital, on the front, under the tents where I was, the sick died. Every morning there were three or four dead. I remember a very strong idea which removed for me all fear of death: it is the surrender, the giving of myself so that destiny, my spiritual destiny, may fulfil itself, whatever it be—with the offering, truly, sincerely, of my life if I must die, and, if I must live, well, consecration to the Divine.

I was 24 at that time, or a little over 24. After that I was demobilised soon enough, and it was necessary to take up my studies again. I did that...to finish something which I had begun, without much enthusiasm; but in any case I did not have anything else to do.

So I finished the Polytechnic School, the School of Bridges and Highways, and I was appointed a junior engineer in Paris. And, there, the very strong feeling that I could not live that life seized me. It was—was it not?—a life which in itself had nothing that might have made me recoil. It was a life of the engineer, with no lack of interesting jobs—a whole section of the Seine, particularly Paris, was under my jurisdiction, including all that required new construction, repair work, all that; but—how shall I put it?—I was completely submerged by work, it did not interest me: I did it because it had to be done but my mind was no longer there.

And then, in 1920, I took the decision to leave that life and to devote myself to the search for my spiritual teacher, my guru. I knew—I knew at last, it was for me a certitude—that my life was to be a life of spiritual realisation, that nothing else counted for me, and that somewhere on earth, on EARTH, he must exist who would give me, lead me to, the light.

This was at the beginning of 1920, in the early months of the year. I continued for some months with increasing inner difficulties, and finally I asked to be discharged. You understand, I had all my family against me. This was normal. I had my relations, a father, a mother, a brother. None of them appreciated what I did, nor why I did it. My father may have understood, he understood very well, he had followed me he had followed me as well as he could—that is to say, he had tried to

understand the reasons for my action, and he sympathised with me. But he said: "Well, my son, look. If these things, these psychic phenomena, interest you, all right. I shall give you whatever is necessary so that you may become a doctor and study them as a medical man would. For that, you should study medicine for the necessary time, and you can study these phenomena with—what shall I say?—all the knowledge and the method of a doctor of medicine."

But what he could not understand was that I wanted to LIVE that life.

"But no, you should not commit yourself; because you lose your critical faculty. You cannot come to know the truth if you adopt, if you accept, one idea and if you try to put it into practice."

That was the kind of difficulties I met at home. But I can say I was somewhat of a fanatic like all beginners. For example, I have not told you that when I was a junior officer at the front I was in charge of the officers' mess, the officers' kitchen. I ordered the menu and I had the money. Well, I had become a vegetarian with much conviction...yes, conviction. To be a vegetarian at the front, in a French officers' mess, I can assure you, was not pleasant. I made everybody laugh, or else they pitied me and they wished that I would turn sane once more and go back to the traditional opinion of the French regarding food. I shall not keep from you that before the War I used to drink, to take wine, to take other drinks like the young people of my age. I did not have a particular liking for liquor, but, after all, drinking is something very normal for the French. You should not see it very severely; if I tell you this it is not in order that you should look at it with—what shall I say?—your traditional outlook that says: "Oh, that must be a very bad man"—because anyone who drinks is, according to Indians, generally a very bad man... I did not seek to sully myself, nor to [abstain]: I have told you just the truth.

Well, I was a little of a fanatic and I was ready to defy all to leave that life.

Then an opportunity came my way. I had friends who were leaving for the Far East, for Japan, and I decided to go with them. It brought me closer. As far as I was concerned I did not make a great difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Was there not the same spirituality animating all religions of India? So I left for Japan. I went, not as an engineer, but as an ordinary individual; therefore it was necessary to earn my living there, it was not very convenient. It was not easy in an Asian country like Japan which did not welcome strangers except, like India today (is it not so?), those who are famous or those who bring money or else are supported by financial institutions. I was neither the one kind nor the other.

But at last, after some vicissitudes, many difficulties, a life somewhat hard, I remained in Japan four years. It was a series of several experiences, the study of Buddhism, especially of Zen Buddhism, life in the temples, work in the laboratories and, at home, in the evenings, the pursuit of my studies. My studies were on India, Japan and China. I went through the alternatives—rather the alternations, to speak French—the alternations of light and darkness, of an advance and stagnation, all the difficulties which meet those who look for light and who look by themselves, or at least seemingly so.

Then a delegation of Mongol monks, lamas, came to Japan and visited the laboratories, the factories where I worked. I entered into contact with them, because it is always (isn't it?) Asia and Central Asia which—from the point of view of location, place, centre—reunites things, makes them converge under the ridges of the Himalayas... on one side or the other, the North or the South...Tibet...the Himalayas.

And I saw here an opportunity. I asked myself if it was not a hint to go to Tibet. I had made the acquaintance of these monks. It was not very easy to talk to them because we did not have a common language. There was an officer of the old Russian army who was Mongol, who did not know even English or Chinese. And there was his wife who knew Chinese and English. Then we could chat through this intermediary, it was not very convenient, but little by little the possibility arose to go and live for some time in their monastery, lamasery. It was necessary to go across China from the North, to go up to what is called Outer Mongolia, that is, Mongolia which was under Chinese suzerainty. This was in 1924. To put it briefly, I went with a Mongol lama who was a man full of wisdom, open. I learnt the Mongol language during this time, because I had to talk at least something to him. And so I applied myself to Mongol. How difficult it was to find books to learn the Mongol language—and with the few books I could find! I went across North China, Peking,...I shall not speak to you of this experience, the adventures, of all that, no, I do not have the time—but my attitude was somewhat like the following: "I know that I am on the way to the Truth, towards him who will take me to the Truth. I do not know where he is, and how to reach him. What I can do is to remain completely attentive and open to all signs that I perceive. If I see a door opening in one direction, I'll follow it. If I see nothing, well, I stay, I wait." And even today I think that it was the right attitude.

And so I left. It was necessary to cross China from the North and reach a monastery where there were only Tibetan lamas. I stayed there nine months, a whole winter, a winter in a cold country. But anyway I cannot say that I suffered from the cold. The place was well protected, completely isolated from all contacts. I did not see any European during those nine months, only some Chinese—merchants—and then the Mongols. It was, at certain times, rather hard. We withdrew into ourselves, abandoned to our conflicts, in periods of crises.

But what dominated was: "My God, if only I knew what I must do on earth, whatever it be, whether it be to sweep the street, well, I would do it with joy. But what is it that I have to do?" And already it was three years or four that the search had lasted. What must I do on earth? Where shall I find the clear indication?

I knew at that time of the existence of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother through common friends. I had even had an issue of the French *Arya* in my hands before I left France. I had seen it. I must admit that it had not particularly attracted me. I had read the contents. I had said: "Yes, it is interesting." But that which I wanted was the contact with something that I was looking for in the book, the book itself conveyed nothing to me....Moreover, it included the first chapters of "The Life Divine"—and then the studies on "Eternal Wisdom". I had seen them all. Yes, it was

really interesting. But it did not touch me more than the other things... I tell you that frankly.

Japan I reached just a little after the Mother had left. It was in 1920, and the Mother had left a few months earlier. Consequently I heard about Her. I had friends, common friends, I was interested in what they told me of Her and that is why I decided to write. So I wrote to Pondicherry. I did not get an answer....Never. I wrote twice. No answer. I think that at that time they did not answer letters often. Perhaps...I hope...they answer some more now.

Well, after that winter in Mongolia, a little severe, I felt very clearly that that experience was over and I must go elsewhere. But where? Why not to India? The moment had come for me to go to India. To what place there? This I did not know. As I returned from Japan I had to go somewhere. To others, to my family, to my friends I had said: "I am returning to Europe *via* India."

But within me I knew I would stay on in India. I could not say that out, because they would ask me: "Where would you go?" "Oh, but I do not know." I had nothing material, on which I could base my inner certitude, except: "It is in India that I must find what I seek."

So I left....I set out again....I passed through Indochina where my brother was an engineer in the telecommunications, that is, in the TSF network in Indochina. I stayed there a month and then arrived in Ceylon, going South. I reached Ceylon with India before me, the door to India.

"Well, where do I go now?"

Pondicherry is very near, I shall go to Pondicherry. But I did not know what welcome I would receive. I did not even know if I would be received at all. I had not got any answer to my letters. I shall go to Pondicherry because it is the nearest port. Then? Well, we shall see. Perhaps I shall be able to go to Adyar, which is not far...perhaps! I shall see. This inner attitude was always the same, it was to see if a door would open.

I waited a fortnight in Ceylon because rail traffic to India had been disrupted by floods. You know, this still happens. The railway lines had been cut; and for three weeks I stayed in Ceylon. Then I arrived in Pondicherry one morning by train. I went to the Hotel d'Europe, and immediately came to the Ashram. At that time Sri Aurobindo lived in the room where Anilbaran has lived afterwards. You know that.

There I asked if I could be received by Sri Aurobindo.

At that time, Sri Aurobindo still received, still saw his disciples. He agreed to see me. I related to Him my story. What I was searching for, why I had left Europe and why I had come to India, and that which I hoped I would find here.

It was I who spoke the first day.

He asked me to come again the next day. In the evening I was received by the Mother—I remember particularly Her eyes, Her eyes of light. I repeated my story to Her, perhaps a little more briefly. She spoke a few words to me, and I returned to my hotel. I remember I went for a walk on Cours Chabrol and someone said: "There! they are the Swadeshis." That is, the people who were dressed in white and who were

members of the Ashram. There were not many. There were—how many?—twelve or fifteen.

The next morning I came back, and Sri Aurobindo received me. And it was He who spoke. He told me what I was seeking—that is to say, evidently I had revealed to Him my desire for liberation, I had told Him that it was that which I was seeking, not so much the liberation from rebirth, but liberation of the self, from the ego, from ignorance, and sin, falsehood, from all that which makes the ordinary human life. It was liberation, *moksha*, that was my ideal. I did not place it in another world. I did not desire particularly to avoid suffering. But it was the weight of ignorance, falsehood, ugliness, all that, and—more than avoiding something—it was something positive. I searched rather for the light, not so much the avoidance of suffering, the end of suffering or falsehood, but the light, knowledge, truth.

Then He said that there were in India some people who could give me what I looked for, but they were not easily accessible, not easy to approach, especially for a European. And then He continued, thus: He considered what I was seeking, that is, union with God, the realisation of the Brahman, to begin with as a first step, a necessary stage, but it was not all, there was another—that was the descent of the divine Power into the human consciousness to transform it, and it was this that He, Sri Aurobindo, was trying to do.

And he said to me: "Well, if you wish to try, you can stay." I fell at His feet. He gave me His blessings, and it was over. A leaf in my life had been turned. The search —the search for the source of light, the search for Him who would guide me to the Truth—was over. Something else was beginning...that is, the realisation,...to put it in practice. But I had found Sri Aurobindo. I had found my Guru.

Well, that is how I came here.

As I have told you, I was accepted. There was no Ashram then. There were some houses belonging to Sri Aurobindo, and the Mother looked after Sri Aurobindo especially, and some disciples; but all were left, more or less, to themselves. The Ashram was started a year later, in 1926. And so I had the great privilege to see Sri Aurobindo every day, to listen to him, to listen to him every day replying to questions which we put to Him. But that is another thing, and I shall not speak of that today. But I have something to tell you....How? If you permit me to give you an advice which this experience has taught me, I shall tell you that what is important is to give yourself wholly to whatever you do. Whatever it is that you do, do it completely, do not do it in part. And then, try to do something. . I say, if you have a choice of a profession, of a job—well, do what interests you, that which you are happy to do, do not seek a petty, easy life, in which you will be sheltered, in which you will not have much of boredom, much worry, or much work. It is not that which is important. What is important is to do something which interests you, to which you can give yourself completely. And if you do that, well, you will always be guided, because now, looking at my life with the perspective which, to be sure, is given by age, I see that, from the beginning, behind all that I did, even stupidities, even the errors, all that, behind it all, there was the

Hand ...the protecting Hand of the Guidance. And at bottom, even finally, all that I did, all my experiences—I am not trying to justify them—all had a sense. But finally I have reached where I had to reach.

There! I thank you.

PAVITRA

EARLY ONE MORNING

THE sun got up; then so did I,
slow and cosy, half in sleep.
Stumbling out, I sat upon the step:
receiving nothing from the night
I expected nothing from the day.
There was a tree in flower,
a scratching dog,
the sun was shining on the sea.
But then, at half-past by the clock,
the world turned over... flip!...
and changed all that.
And when it all had settled down,
resplendently I saw:
A tree in flower,
a scratching dog,
and the sun O shining on the sea.

NORMAN THOMAS

THE WORK OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM*

AMID the encircling gloom, with confusion, inertia and selfishness within and without, where lies the future? Is this country destined to pass out of existence in a condition more or less ignoble or is it possible that the present does not bar the future and, in spite of appearances, India can yet be great and glorious and beautiful?

For those who believe, or at least would like, that India shall be great and occupy an honoured place under the sun, the question is: How is this greatness to be achieved?

Has India anything special, distinctive and still powerful enough to raise it from the present unhappy condition to an honoured status?

The answer is: Yes. But it is not mere money power or material development, which other nations have to a much greater degree. It is something which India had in a remarkable measure in the past, but which withdrew, apparently lost, but which can be revived and further developed.

This is the power of Yoga, not confined, as is commonly understood, to Hatha Yoga, but extended to an "Integral Yoga", which does not reject life, which transforms and divinises life. It is not religion, it transcends religion.

With this power we can change the present state of the country.

The research that is being done at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is directed to this end—to make a new India, a new World and a new Humanity. Those who wish to collaborate in this endeavour can collaborate.

How distant is the New India, the New World and the New Humanity? As the Mother has said, "At the present moment, we are in the very heart of a period of transition when the Old and the New are intertwined, the Old persists, but the New glides in. We are attending on the birth of a New World, altogether weak, not yet recognised, denied by most. But it is there, endeavouring to grow. The road to the future is new, never before traced, a path of risks and hazards, and of Victory."

The call is to the pioneers, the young in spirit, those who are prepared to stake all, the brave, the adventurous, who are sincere in their aspiration and steadfast in their will to undergo the discipline. This is the hour of God, when the breath of the Lord is upon the waters of our being. But such an hour is often terrible, a whirlwind, a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God. But one who stands firm on the truth of his purpose, he shall stand.

The present darkness is a preparation and a promise for future light.

This is the work of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

PRADYOT KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

* Based on the Mother's Talks.

PLEASURE, PAIN AND INDIFFERENCE

THE Taittiriya Upanishad says,

For who could live or breathe if there were not this delight of existence as the ether in which we dwell?

From Delight all these beings are born, by Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return.

And yet the world is not a phenomenon of continual bliss. Joy, yes, is there but pain too in plenty. Indeed there are those who exaggerate the existence of pain in the world and call it a world of sorrow, *duḥkha*. They can see, when they are inclined to regard things dispassionately and with an accurate and unemotional appreciation, that on the whole the sum of the pleasure of existence far exceeds the sum of the pain of existence and, joy being the normal state of existence, pain makes itself felt more acutely and intensely.

But that pain is there cannot be gainsaid. And there is the other response too: indifference. Pleasure, pain and indifference make the triple common vibration.

And yet another Upanishad, the Kena, says,

The name of That is the Delight, as the Delight we must worship and seek after it.

Those, who have the knowledge and experience of That, speak of a vast Bliss-Self, an *Anandamaya Purusha* behind the limited mental self, the latter being the transmitter of the triple vibration of pleasure, pain and indifference. And for man the mental being, governed by the mental nature, the inalienable and universal Delight of existence is not to be had, so long as he does not get into union with the Bliss-Self. And so long as he does not attain that union he remains bound to the various reactions.

At first sight it seems that these responses are absolute and inevitable. But when we go deeper the truth is different.

"There is no real obligation on us to return to a particular contact a particular response of pleasure, pain or neutral reaction, there is only an obligation of habit. We feel pleasure or pain in a particular contact because that is the habit our nature has formed, because that is the constant relation the recipient has established with the contact. It is within our competence to return quite the opposite response, pleasure where we used to have pain, pain where we used to have pleasure. It is equally within our competence to accustom the superficial being to return instead of the mechanical reactions of pleasure, pain and indifference that free reply of inalienable delight which is the constant experience of the true and vast Bliss-Self within us. And this is a greater conquest, a still deeper and more complete self-possession than a glad and detached reception in the depths of the habitual reactions on the surface. For it is no longer a mere acceptance without subjection, a free acquiescence in imperfect values of experience, but enables us to convert imperfect into perfect, false

into true values,—the constant but veritable delight of the Spirit in things taking the place of the dualities experienced by the mental being.

"In the things of the mind this pure habitual relativity of the reactions of pleasure and pain is not difficult to perceive. The nervous being in us, indeed, is accustomed to a certain fixedness, a false impression of absoluteness in these things. To it victory, success, honour, good fortune of all kinds are pleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce joy as sugar must taste sweet; defeat, failure, disappointment, disgrace, evil fortune of all kinds are unpleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce grief as wormwood must taste bitter. To vary these responses is to it a departure from fact, abnormal and morbid; for the nervous being is a thing enslaved to habit and in itself the means devised by Nature for fixing constancy of reaction, sameness of experience, the settled scheme of man's relations to life. The mental being on the other hand is free, for it is the means she has devised for flexibility and variation, for change and progress; it is subject only so long as it chooses to remain subject, to dwell in one mental habit rather than in another or so long as it allows itself to be dominated by its nervous instrument. It is not bound to be grieved by defeat, disgrace, loss: it can meet these things and all things with a perfect indifference; it can even meet them with a perfect gladness. Therefore man finds that the more he refuses to be dominated by his nerves and body, the more he draws back from implication of himself in his physical and vital parts, the greater is his freedom. He becomes the master of his own responses to the world's contacts, no longer the slave of external touches.

"In regard to physical pleasure and pain, it is more difficult to apply the universal truth; for this is the very domain of the nerves and the body, the centre and seat of that in us whose nature is to be dominated by external contact and external pleasure. Even here, however, we have glimpses of the truth. We see it in the fact that according to the habit the same physical contact can be either pleasurable or painful not only to different individuals, but to the same individual under different conditions or at different stages of his development. We see it in the fact that men in periods of great excitement or high exaltation remain physically indifferent to pain or unconscious of pain under contacts which ordinarily would inflict severe torture or suffering. In many cases it is only when the nerves are able to reassert themselves and remind the mentality of its habitual obligation to suffer that the sense of suffering returns. But this return to the habitual obligation is not inevitable; it is only habitual. We see that in the phenomena of hypnosis not only can the hypnotised subject be successfully forbidden to feel the pain of a wound or puncture when in the abnormal state, but can be prevented with equal success from returning to his habitual reaction of suffering when he is awakened. The reason of this phenomenon is perfectly simple; it is because the hypnotiser suspends the habitual waking consciousness which is the slave of nervous habits and is able to appeal to the subliminal mental being in the depths, the inner mental being who is master, if he wills, of the nerves and the body. But this freedom which is effected by hypnosis abnormally, rapidly, without true

possession, by an alien will, may equally be won normally, gradually, with true possession, by one's own will so as to effect partially or completely a victory of the mental being over the habitual nervous reactions of the body."

(*The Life Divine*, American Edition, pp. 98-100)

We shall be nearing the solution if we seek to know about the cause of pain and its continuance.

"Pain of mind and body is a device of Nature, that is to say, of force in her works, meant to subserve a definite transitional end in her upward evolution. The world is from the point of view of the individual a play and complex shock of multitudinous forces. In the midst of this complex play the individual stands as a limited constructed being with a limited amount of force exposed to numberless shocks which may wound, maim, break up or disintegrate the construction which he calls himself. Pain is in the nature of a nervous and physical recoil from dangerous or harmful contact; it is a part of what the Upanishad calls *jugupsā*, the shrinking of the limited being from that which is not himself and not sympathetic or in harmony with himself, its impulse of self-defence against others. It is, from this point of view, an indication by Nature of that which has to be avoided or, if not successfully avoided, has to be remedied. It does not come into being in the purely physical world so long as life does not enter into it; for till then mechanical methods are sufficient. Its office begins when life with its frailty and imperfect possession of Matter enters on the scene; it grows with the growth of Mind in life. Its office continues so long as Mind is bound in the life and body which it is using, dependent upon them for its knowledge and means of action, subjected to their limitations and to the egoistic impulses and aims which are born of those limitations. But if and when Mind and man becomes capable of being free, unegoistic, in harmony with all other beings and with the play of the universal forces, the use and office of suffering diminishes, its *raison d'être* must finally cease to be and it can only continue as an atavism of Nature, a habit that has survived its use, a persistence of the lower in the as yet imperfect organisation of the higher. Its eventual elimination must be an essential point in the destined conquest of the soul over subjection to Matter and egoistic limitation in Mind."

(*The Life Divine*, pp. 100-101)

We are naturally interested in the elimination of pain.

"This elimination is possible because pain and pleasure themselves are currents, one imperfect, the other perverse, but still currents of the delight of existence. The reason for this imperfection and this perversion is the self-division of the being in his consciousness by measuring and limiting Maya and in consequence an egoistic and piecemeal instead of a universal reception of contacts by the individual. For the universal soul all things and all contacts of things carry in them an essence of delight best described by the Sanskrit aesthetic term, *rasa*, which means at once sap or essence of a thing and its taste. It is because we do not seek the essence of the thing in its contact with us, but look only to the manner in which it affects our desires and fears, our cravings and shrinkings that grief and pain, imperfect and transient pleasure

or indifference, that is to say, blank inability to seize the essence, are the forms taken by the Rasa. If we could be entirely disinterested in mind and heart and impose that detachment on the nervous being, the progressive elimination of these imperfect and perverse forms of Rasa would be possible and the true essential taste of the inalienable delight of existence in all its variations would be within our reach. We attain to something of this capacity for variable but universal delight in the aesthetic reception of things as represented by Art and Poetry, so that we enjoy there the Rasa or Taste of the sorrowful, the terrible, even the horrible or repellent;[1] and the reason is because we are detached, disinterested, not thinking of ourselves or of self-defence (*jugupsā*), but only of the thing and its essence. Certainly, this aesthetic reception of contacts is not a precise image or reflection of the pure delight which is supramental and supra-aesthetic; for the latter would eliminate sorrow, terror, horror and disgust with their cause while the former admits them: but it represents partially and imperfectly one stage of the progressive delight of the universal Soul in things in its manifestation and it admits us in one part of our nature to that detachment from egoistic sensation and that universal attitude through which the one Soul sees harmony and beauty where we divided beings experience rather chaos and discord. The full liberation can come to us only by a similar liberation in all our parts, the universal aesthesis, the universal standpoint of knowledge, the universal detachment from all things and yet sympathy with all in our nervous and emotional being.

"Since the nature of suffering is a failure of the conscious-force in us to meet the shocks of existence and a consequent shrinking and contraction and its root is an inequality of that receptive and possessing force due to our self-limitation by egoism consequent on the ignorance of our true Self, of Sachchidananda, the elimination of suffering must first proceed by the substitution of *titikṣā*, the facing, enduring and conquest of all shocks of existence for *jugupsā*, the shrinking and contraction: by this endurance and conquest we proceed to an equality which may be either an equal indifference to all contacts or an equal gladness in all contacts; and this equality again must find a firm foundation in the substitution of the Sachchidananda consciousness which is All-Bliss for the ego-consciousness which enjoys and suffers. The Sachchidananda consciousness may be transcendent of the universe and aloof from it, and to this state of distant Bliss the path is equal indifference; it is the path of the ascetic. Or the Sachchidananda consciousness may be at once transcendent and universal; and to this state of present and all-embracing Bliss the path is surrender and loss of the ego in the universal and possession of an all-pervading equal delight; it is the path of the ancient Vedic sages. But neutrality to the imperfect touches of pleasure and the perverse touches of pain is the first direct and natural result of the soul's self-discipline and the conversion to equal delight can, usually, come only afterwards. The direct transformation of the triple vibration into Ananda is possible, but less easy to the human being."

(*The Life Divine*, pp. 101-102)

[1] So termed in Sanskrit Rhetoric, the *karuṇa*, *bhayānaka* and *bībhatsa* Rasas.

To end on a poetic note:

"Yet is infinity thy spirit's goal;
Its bliss is there behind the world's face of tears.
A power is in thee that thou knowest not;
Thou art a vessel of the imprisoned spark.
It seeks relief from Time's envelopment,
And while thou shutst it in, the seal is pain:
Bliss is the Godhead's crown, eternal, free,
Unburdened by life's blind mystery of pain:
Pain is the signature of the Ignorance
Attesting the secret god denied by life:
Until life finds him pain can never end.
Calm is self's victory overcoming fate.
Bear; thou shalt find at last thy road to bliss.
Bliss is the secret stuff of all that lives,
Even pain and grief are garbs of world-delight,
It hides behind thy sorrow and thy cry.
Because thy strength is a part and not God's whole,
Because afflicted by the little self
Thy consciousness forgets to be divine
As it walks in the vague penumbra of the flesh
And cannot bear the world's tremendous touch,
Thou criest out and sayst that there is pain.
Indifference, pain and joy, a triple disguise,
Attire of the rapturous Dancer in the ways,
Withhold from thee the body of God's bliss.
Thy spirit's strength shall make thee one with God,
Thy agony shall change to ecstasy,
Indifference deepen into infinity's calm
And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute."

Savitri, Two-volume Edition—II, p. 98

Compiled by SHYAM SUNDAR

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of June)

IX

THE EXCURSION

THE poet, who realizes we have had enough of pathos, diverts our mind to romance and gives us, in lilting rhythm, a relief scene in the forest. Blissfully unaware of the tragic events in Ayodhya, Sita and Rama walk through the forest with great gaiety. In a holiday mood they enjoy the carnival of Nature. The spirit of tender and charming irresponsibility, which marks their picnicking excursion, is brought out by Kamban in a poem of exalting loveliness and charm. The following translation gives a remote idea of the design of the original

Frolicking through the woodland wild,
the playful couple moved—
Rama, to whose lips
coral weeds have given their crimson hue,
and
Sita, whose flower-decked curls
give to the jungle air
pollen dust and perfume sweet,
with her crescent forehead
given her by the lovely Moon.
Thus did Dark Rama with Golden Sita stroll
like a lonely cloud strolling with a lightning flash,
proud, like a tusker, with his mistress strolling.

As Rama reached the northern bank of the Ganges, the Saints performing *tapas* in the area rushed to greet him in the consciousness that the goal of all their *tapas* was now within their reach. They looked at Rama with a devouring look. That all Truth is ultimately voluptuous in its appeal is suggested by Kamban in the following song:

With that soulful look
which men cast at women,
they looked, with their gracious eyes,
at Rama and rejoiced.

They looked at that Bliss
which is beyond thought,
beyond sight,
beyond description—
they looked at that Nectar
which can only be perceived
through music.

Kamban believes, along with Saints Tirumoolar and Appar, that Music alone can reach out to God and the effect of great music is identical with the process of God-realization.

With a delirious joy the saints adored Rama. They sang and danced with bamboo poles in their hands, and with their eyes drank deep of his charm as if it had been the sweet deluge of ambrosia. They took him to their hermitage. They brought clean vegetables and roots and fruits from the forest and asked him to have a bathe in the Ganges, worship the fire and take his food.

HUNTER-BOATMAN

After food, as Rama was conversing delightfully in the company of the Saints, a hunter-chief came and waited outside the hermitage to pay his respects to Rama.

He was the Lord
of a thousand boats,
Guha by name,
who used for long to ferry the boats
across the sacred Ganges;
He was armed
with a deadly bow
and with shoulders shaped in stone.
He had thighs
cut in ebony.
He was tall,
of such height
as could plumb
the Gangetic depth.
A piece of red skin
flowed down from his waist
and a shiny belt of tiger's tail
fastened tight the hide around his loins.
He wore a necklace of beads
strung as if with a row of teeth,

he wore an anklet
strung as if with stones,
he had a tuft
strung as if with sheaves of darkness,
he had, like a lion,
bushy eyelashes strung as if with paddy grains.
Buckled to his belt
was a blood-stained dagger,
he had the fear-inducing look
of a venomous cobra,
but he lisped his words
like a babbler,
And his waist was strong
as Indra's diamond lance.

He was a native of Sringiberam, a town perched on the Ganges' shore. He came to pay a tribute of fish and honey to Rama. As he neared the forest cottage in which Rama was staying, Guha asked his men to keep behind, laid aside his bow and quiver, removed the sword hanging from his waist, and with a mind, which was free from guile and full of love, he approached the threshold of the hermitage.

Soon after he had announced his arrival,
Lakshmana met him and asked him, "Who are you?"
Guha lovingly saluted him
and said, "My lord!
I have come to offer worship at your feet;
I am a boatman-hunter,
a cur and a slave."

Asking modest Guha to wait at the gate, Lakshmana went in, saluted Rama and said, "My liege, Guha has come to meet you along with his numerous kinsmen. He is pure of heart, and more loving than a mother. He is the lord of the boats of Ganga." At once Rama asked Lakshmana to fetch him.

Honey and Fish

As Lakshmana ushered in Guha, the latter gazed intently at Rama and became riper and mellower. With his black tuft dipping in the dust, he bent his body and made obeisance to Rama and stood with his hand closing his mouth. He would not sit though Rama requested him to.

With love overflowing all bounds,
he said,

"I have brought honey and fish
well prepared and mixed
for your food.
May it please you to accept it?"

At once Rama looked at the Sages and smiled. Kamban's Rama and Sages were vegetarians unlike Valmiki's and regarded vegetarianism both as a virtue and as a hallmark of culture. The hunter-chief's request to eat fish must have shocked the assembled saints and sounded offensive. Smilingly Rama told the Saints:

"Should a man bring as a gift
a rare thing, of which he is fond,
and bring it as a demonstration
of his overflowing love,
wouldn't it be more precious than nectar?
And as it is bathed in love,
it has become consecrated
and can even be offered as oblation
to the spirits of my ancestors.
Should we not be deemed
to have eaten it with sweet relish?"

Turning to Guha Rama said, "We will stay here to-night and cross the Ganges tomorrow. You may please go back with your kinsmen to your place and return with your boat at dawn tomorrow." Guha, who was shocked by the hermit weeds worn by the blue-blooded Prince, replied·

"I am a knave
not to have plucked out these eyes of mine,
which have seen you in this plight.
I cannot bear to be away
from where you are.
Lord, I will be your slave
doing your bidding."

Rama was moved by these words. His eyes blossomed with compassion as he turned to Sita and Lakshmana and said:

"He is a friend inseparable."

Addressing Guha, he said:

"Oh! Friend, who are sweeter far
than everything else,
stay here beside us."

Guha was overjoyed to hear these words. He asked Rama why he had left Ayodhya, and grief-stricken Lakshmana unfolded the woeful tale, which drew tears from Guha's eyes. The boatman wistfully commented:

"Despite her penance
the Goddess of the Earth
has failed to retain
the fruits of her penance!"

It is Sundown now. Kamban rarely describes Nature in itself. Very often he projects the prevailing mood into his descriptions of natural scenery. The Sun sinks in the west like a hero, who, after driving out the ever-spreading forces of darkness, after conquering all the quarters of space, after bringing all realms under one protective umbrella, after establishing high fame and after winning a seat in the hearts of all, falls like a hero in battle, and dies fighting for the vindication of Virtue.

After evening prayer, Rama and Sita made a bed on the floor, which was spread over with reeds. Till dawn Lakshmana unwinkingly guarded the hermitage, bow in hand. With his kinsmen patrolling the area like a herd of elephants, Guha stood guard, too, with a bow ready-loaded, with a heart weeping with sorrow, with eyes wideawake, watching the watching Lakshmana, musing on the plight of Rama and shedding tears as copious as a mountain cascade.

THE DOUBLE SUNRISE

It is now morning and two Suns rise simultaneously and unfold the petals of two varieties of the lotus.

The lotus springing from the mire
looks at the dazzling Sun springing in the East
and blossoms;
and looking at Rama, who dazzled like a pitch-black Sun,
the lotus of Sita's face
blossoms, too!

After performing the morning ablutions, Rama, accompanied by the Rishis, goes to the bank of the Ganges and asks his loving friend Guha to bring a boat. As he heard these words, Guha's eyes became moist with tears; his gait became unsteady and his mind became unsettled. Bowing low to Rama, he said:

"We, Dwellers of the Jungle,
are unversed in Falsehood's ways.
Wearer of lovely flowers!
we are strong of limb
and whole of heart;
we will serve you well
and serve you true.
Take us for your slaves
and sojourn in our place
happily and for ever.

Rama was touched by this request and he smiled a gracious smile and said, "Warrior! we shall be with you in a short while, after bathing in the holy river, serving the Rishis of the forest and finishing our pilgrimage." Understanding the thoughts of Rama, Guha went and fetched a boat and Rama took leave of the Rishis and boarded the boat along with Sita and Lakshmana.

"Speed up fast," said Rama
and the one, who was verily like his soul,
propelled the boat with power and speed
across the curling waves of the river's expanse
and, as the boat moved fast like a swimming swan,
the grieving saints, who stood behind,
melted like wax melting in the fire.

Brothers Five

As the boat reached the southern bank of the Ganges, Rama asked the boatman to point out the way to the Chitrakuta hills. Guha, who would sacrifice his very life out of devotion to Rama, said:

"Good One! this cur-like creature
wishes to have a word with you.
If it is given to me to follow you,
I will be your path-finder
finding unerringly
the pathless paths;
luscious fruits and honey
I will bring you in plenty,
I will build for you a shelter;
and, without parting with you for a moment,
I will be by your side for ever."

Touched by Guha's devotion, Rama replied:

"You are like my dear soul;
My younger brother
is your younger brother, too;
and this my spouse
is your sister;
the whole of the sea-girt Earth is yours
and I stand enjoying
the privilege of your perpetual service."

Rama comforted Guha and asked him not to suffer the pain of separation:

"Can pleasure exist
unless pain exists?
and pleasure is sure to follow
close on the heels of pain.
Grieve not
that separation comes
meanwhile.
Hitherto
we were brothers four;
is there any limit to brotherhood?
Love increases the number
and from now on
we are precious brothers five."

It is a happy idea of the Poet that brotherhood is founded not in birth but in love and, with expanding love, the bounds of brotherhood expand, there being no limit to either. The following speech of Rama affords a further illustration of this truth:

"Your brother Bharata is there
to guard our kinsmen at Ayodhya.
Pray, tell me who but you is there
to guard our kinsmen here?
Are not your kith and kin
mine own?
Should you give yourself to sorrow?
By my command,
guard these my kinsmen
well and true."

Guha could not disobey this command With fortitude, he took leave.

And the Lord and his brother
and his charming spouse
wended their way through the tree-packed jungle
and vanished in the dim distance.

Evening Peace

The three reached the Chitrakuta hills in the morning. The whole day they spent under the shade of trees on the river bank. It is evening now. The Sun, which rose from behind a mountain peak in the East, is now setting behind a gaunt and lean peak in the West after sailing across the sky. With consummate skill Kamban brings out in words the personal temperament of the landscape. The inwardness of the evening peace is communicated by a resort to three processes:

Firstly, by a few daubs of paint, the Poet creates a grotesque blood bath, which by a suggestion of contrariety, prepares the reader for the mood of peace. Mythology is pressed into service in its behalf. Lord Vishnu had flung his toothed discus (chakra) at the neck of an evil Rakshasa by name Kalanemi and destroyed him. The Sun, like the Vishnu chakra, traversed the firmament from East to West and sank behind a precipitous mount in the West. The hills and the western horizon were splashed with scarlet. The headless precipice looked like Kalanemi beheaded by Vishnu's discus, and the scarlet on the sky looked like the spilt and sprayed blood of the Rakshasa. The crescent Moon that was visible in the sky looked like the curved tooth of the giant, which, at the impact of the discus, broke loose from the mouth and glanced into the sky. This grotesque scene paves the way by contrast to the stillness that succeeds.

The next device adopted by the Poet is to suggest the mood of restfulness by drawing attention to the animals and birds that go to rest after a hard day's toil.

The monkeys
clambered *up* the trees;
the elephants
plodded *down* to the pools;
the sweet Sakunta birds
darted *out* into their nests;
Rama, who gazed at the sunset,
darted *inward* into his mind
and gazed fixedly
upon the in-dwelling Light.

In this song Kamban works out an original rhythm, not merely of words, but of

ideas; the monkeys going upwards, the elephants going downwards, the birds darting outwards and the outward-going mind turning inward in contemplation. This peculiar technique conveys in some mysterious way the prevailing mood of increasing peace.

Not content with what he has achieved, Kamban proceeds to bring home the atmosphere by resorting to a telling flower symbolism.

The diurnal flowers
folded up their *tinted* petals
the nocturnal flowers,
unfolded their *perfumed* petals;
The eyes and hands
of sweet Sita and her lord
and of the younger Prince
became like the folding lotus.

The eyes of the three are closed in contemplation and their hands are folded in salutation, enclosed in the peace that folds up the diurnal lotus at dusk. This image and the rhythm in which it is set communicate the very aroma of a serene stillness. As one reads the originals of these three songs, one marvels at the way the Poet leads the reader through word to the very brink of silence.

Catharsis of Love

As the three remain meditating near a mountain pond, darkness falls, and Lakshmana takes Rama and Sita to a hermitage he has improvised for them on the slope of the hill. He built it with his own princely hands. He uprooted bamboos from the hill side, cut them into pieces of equal length, planted them in a row, put up a roof-frame over them and fastened it to the planted posts. He thatched the roof with closely-knit teak leaves and overlaid it with flowering reeds. He built a wall around the standing posts, plastered the walls with mud and treated the surface with water. Appurtenant to this hut, he built a private chamber for Sita with the same materials but decorated its walls with red loam and studded it with glittering stones picked up from the jungle stream.

Into the hermitage thus built
Rama with his consort went
and dwelt—
Mark you!
He is the One, who dwells
in Brahma's heart
as well as
in the unimaginably subtle
souls of all.

As he surveyed the hut lovingly put up by Lakshmana, Rama rejoiced. It is such acts of loving-kindness that give meaning and value to human life and Rama is deeply stirred by the love showered upon him by Lakshmana and Sita. He thinks such spontaneous gifts of love come only to those who have renounced all:

"The queenly *feet*
of Janaka's daughter
have trodden the Jungle path;
The peerless *hands*
of my younger brother
have built this hermitage:
what on earth
one could not have
once one has renounced
all?"

After pondering over this truth for some time, Rama turns to Lakshmana and asks:

"When did you learn,
my brother,
to do this wise?"
And as he said so
dewy tears misted
his lotus eyes.

All this joy of Rama suddenly turns into self-reproach:

"Why say
I have acquired a fame
more dazzling than the Sun
by obeying the King's command
and fostering Virtue?
The truth is:
endless misery have I inflicted upon you."

Rama thinks that his reputation for the vindiction of Virtue is underserved, as it is based, not upon his own sacrifice, but upon that of Lakshmana. Leaving us in this state of catharsis, Kamban takes us to Bharata, who is at Kekaya on a visit to his maternal grandfather, the King of Kekaya.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

TIRUVALLUVAR

(June 1 was Tiruvalluvar Day, commemorating the 2000th year of the Saint's death. Here is an offering to that great soul by an author who has undertaken the work of translating the Tirukural *in two-line stanzas. Three of them appear in this article.)*

THE street drama, called in Tamil "Theru Koothu", though fast disappearing, still survives in India amidst the advanced mode of dramas, the cinema and television. It is an ancient art of rural histrionic talents and is even now a common form of entertainment in the villages. Two thousand years ago, on a certain night Tiruvalluvar attended one such street drama on the shores of Mylapore.

To start with he noticed only a handful of men. But quickly the entire village assembled there and it was a wave of human faces. Lulled by the rustic songs and the jingling dance of the masculine actors on this stageless stage, composed of a couple of coloured sarees held as a screen by two tall persons, Tiruvalluvar dozed off to sleep, tired as he was by his deep thinking and writing of the Kural with a nail on the palmyra leaves for the benefit of the world to come. All of a sudden he woke up, only to find that the entire place was deserted by the big crowd. The stage was not there. The actors were not there. The spectators were not there. They had all disappeared with the same speed with which they had collected.

This gave sufficient food for thought to Tiruvalluvar. As he walked alone back to his house, counting the stars, fixed in thought, his hands locked behind, his mind was occupied in examining a golden truth, deduced from the incident at the street drama. The truth that struck him was that wealth accumulated in the same manner as the collection of the spectators at the "Theru Koothu" and, when the time came, it drained away at the same speed with which the crowd of spectators disappeared from the street drama before dawn, deserting the place which had afforded them such entertainment. He went home and wrote the couplet:

கூத்தாட் டவைகுழாத் தற்றே பெருஞ்செல்வம்
போக்கு மதுவிளிந் தற்று

Let me translate it in my own humble way:

Wealth gathers like the surging crowd before the dancing stage
And quits how quickly at the same receding speed.

There is yet another picture in Tirukural. A tired hungry villager plods his weary way home. The village has a tank beside a temple and a mighty tree full of ripe and luscious fruits. He draws near the tree to pluck the fruits and satiate his hunger.

But there a villager warns him, " Beware. It is poisonous. It will kill you." How sore is the disappointment! Tiruvalluvar had noticed that people lived in opulence and amidst this thriving wealth and pomp there existed suffering, need and hunger also. Many were the sad scenes that caught his sight, where the wealth of the rich failed to recognise even the immediate needs of the neighbours. So he wrote that the wealth of a miser, who does not help his poor neighbour, was like the ripe poisonous fruit of that picturesque tree in the heart of the town.

நசுப படாதவன செலவம் நடுவூருள
நச்சு மரம் பழுதி தற்று

Its near translation would be:

How envenomed is the wealth of an unhelpful neighbour,
Like the ripe poisonous fruits of the heart-of-the-town tree.

So wealth, even though acquired by right means, carries a stigma as an envenomed wealth, if it does not go to the succour of the needy neighbours. Even Jesus Christ, the exponent of Ahimsa, rightly cursed the fig tree, that bore no fruit and thereby failed to fulfil the function for which it had been created. The parables of "The Rich Man and Lazarus" and "The Good Samaritan" narrated by Christ, if read along with this couplet, will prove the futility of a miser's wealth.

Tiruvalluvar was fully conscious that this world was not for those who had no wealth—'Porul'. But he also knew that those who had no 'Arul' cannot enter the kingdom of God. It was Christ, his contemporary, who said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and everything will be added unto you." In the course of His Sermon on the Mount, He said that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God, just as a camel cannot enter the eye of a needle. So it is an established fact that wealth cannot purchase a passport to heaven. Tiruvalluvar wrote:

அருளில்லார்க் கவ்வுலக மில்லை பொருளில்லார்க்
இவ்வுலக மிலலாகி யாங்கு.

The word 'ARUL' in this couplet is a unique enigmatic word, for which, according to me, there is no equivalent in the great English language. It is a combination of Love, Mercy, Grace, Compassion, Kindness and Illumination. So I do not propose to substitute it in my translation. It is high time that the English language borrowed this Tamil word 'Arul' as it has borrowed several other words from other languages.

Just as this world is not for those devoid of wealth,
That WORLD is not for those devoid of Arul.

Tiruvalluvar has not only chalked out a right way of living in this material world but also charted out the course to heaven.

This is the Economics of Tiruvalluvar. His 'Aram'—virtue—was to acquire wealth by right means and to spend it in right ways. The wisdom contained in these three couplets is now two thousand years old. Yet it is young as ever and sound in sense despite its age. The Tirukural is a collect of immortal truth from the pen (nail) of the immortal poet Tiruvalluvar eternally shining as a beacon light set atop a hill even in this atomic age and the moon-reaching-stage.

Tiruvalluvar, the poet *par excellence*, lived two thousand years ago. Though in the sight of God, it would be like a night that has passed, it is a long span in the history of the world, which has seen the disappearance of many a culture, rule and misrule. It was about this time that Christ was born. England was not so civilised as Rome. The civilised Romans had sea-borne trade with India. The glory of Pompeii, the victories of Julius Caesar and the illuminating era of King Augustus have gone down in history. But two figures of this period stand immortal and foremost. They are Christ and Tiruvalluvar. The didactic couplets of the Kural contain "full many a gem of purest ray serene". The Kural has lured quite a number of western scholars and savants like the Italian Father Beschi, otherwise known as Veeramamunivar, Bishop Caldwell, Dr. G. U. Pope, Rev. H. A. Popley, Rev. Father Haras, the Spanish Jesuit, and several officers of the Indian Civil Service to study and interpret its worth and message to the western world and thereby to illuminate the world-firmament with the torch of Tamil literature. It is because the truth contained in the Kural is universal. It rises above "the narrow domestic walls" of regional, religious and sectarian bias.

The Kural is Ethics to the searcher after truth. To those who are after politics, it is Political Science. If you hunger after wisdom, you will find it an open Book of Knowledge. It is an Epic, though in couplets, to those who wish to enjoy the flavour of literature and poetry. It is a Romance and a Love-lore to those who want them. It is a path to heaven to those who search it. But it is a guideline and a signpost also to the husbandman and the housewife.

Long live Tiruvalluvar for ages and ages to come.
Let generation after generation read the Kural.

GEORGE MOSES

TOWARDS THE BLAZING TEMPLE

THE ultimate end of all knowledge is Truth. The scholar in his closed room poring over books days and nights, the poet meditating in solitude on the beauty and pathos of the world, the scientist in his laboratory studying life under a microscope, and the philosopher standing reverently before a starlit sky, all have the same goal to reach, that is, Truth. But a seeker of Truth when he has analyzed and exhausted all the subtleties of the material phenomenon by the application of physical and intellectual methods, finds that his work has not yet come to an end. For him there lies another world to be discovered, far beyond the show of colours and forms, the 'vast region of the invisible' where the light of his physical senses is too weak to reach and for the attainment of which intellect is no instrument.

DISCOVERY OF TRUTH THROUGH A SPIRIT OF DEEP FAITH

Physical and intellectual methods reveal only a fraction of truth and not the whole of it. For discovering the Unexplored Regions of Absolute Truth which lie far beyond even the super-sensitive methods known to science, what is needed is an utmost of moral faith. A true seeker of truth is a devotee who works with a spirit of loyalty to the Lord and a feeling of faith. "The Genius of Science, calm and brave, holding high the Torch of Reason," says S. W. Davis, "ascends the Heights of Knowledge on the Stepping-stones of Solid Facts to the Blazing Temple of Truth built upon the Eternal Rock of Faith." Man has to develop faith in the Supreme, faith in the overruling Lord, faith in his adventure and in his power to accomplish that adventure. For exploring the inexhaustible treasures of this world, he has to give up the temporal and build upon the Rock of the Eternal, and with the materials of the Eternal erect such a structure as will never be dissolved, for it will transcend all the accumulations of material luxuries and riches, the end of which is dust. Whether he is thrown into the depths of sorrow, or lifted upon the heights of joy, he will ever retain his hold upon this faith, ever return to it as his rock of refuge, and keep his feet firmly planted upon its immortal and immovable base. Content in such a faith, he will become possessed of a spiritual strength that will shatter, like so many toys of glass, all the forces of evil that are set against him and at the end achieve a success such as the mere striver after worldly gain can never know or even dream of. In the face of faith pains become pleasures and difficulties the cause of our success. "The man of faith and courage learns lessons from his failures, makes a fresh start, and profiting by his painful experience, builds for himself a more stable and enduring success. The man of little faith, on the contrary, fails to rise above his calamity, refuses to learn the lesson that it would teach him, and never tries again," wrote H. T. Hamblin. The kind of faith, which a true seeker of truth has to cultivate before he can achieve any measure of success in his

quest of the Absolute, has been beautifully defined and described by James Allen in these words: "To follow, under all circumstances, the highest promptings within you; to be always true to the divine self; to rely upon the inward Light, the inward Voice, and to pursue your purpose with a fearless and respectful heart, believing that the future will yield unto you the need of every thought and effort; knowing that the laws of the universe can never fail, and your own will come back to you with mathematical exactitude, this is faith, and the living of faith."

Hard Work and Persistent Struggle with Circumstances

The life of a true seeker after truth is not a bed of roses. It is one long story of struggle with varied circumstances of joy and sorrow. One who sets out to disclose the mystery of life and nature has to 'scorn delight and live laborious days' or, as the Persian poet Saadi has said, melt himself like a taper in the pursuit of knowledge. For him there is no 'so far and no farther.' Like Shelley's Skylark, he flies higher and higher till he reaches the zenith. He has to work with unremitting zeal and courage, and instead of quarrelling with his circumstances accept them as 'the ladders that lead to heaven.' In no moment of his life has he to forget that he belongs to a race which has accomplished great things with simple means. Success does not come to the weaklings. It smiles on the patient and the perseverant, as Longfellow teaches us:

> The heights by great men reached and kept
> Were not attained by sudden flight,
> But they, while their companions slept,
> Were toiling upward in the night.

The path of a Truth-seeker is generally thick with painful obstacles but pains and sorrows are not the things that should stop him from progress. Says Cowper, "The path of sorrow and that path alone /Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown; No traveller ever reached that blessed abode/ Who found not thorns and briars on his road." After sorrow and struggle, joy and success are bound to come. El Dorado will not remain unattainable for the 'toiling hands and unwearied feet'.

Spirit of Self-renunciation

A passionate lover of truth considers nothing superior to the possession of soul and aspires for immortality through the ideal of sacrifice and self-renunciation. He believes in the ideal of *tapas* as the only weapon of conquering Truth and Knowledge. *Sa tapo'tapyata, sa tapas taptvāidam sarvam asṛjata*: "He performed tapas; having performed tapas he produced all this whatever." This is the ideal to the music of which a searcher of truth has to set his soul. He has to resign the prizes of the world and bear in pain the burden of defeated hopes, and yet not lose his heart but go on melting

himself like a taper for discovering the invisible avenues of knowledge. He should work not for himself but for the good of others, like Asoka and Dadhichi, and sacrifice all his possessions, nay, even his life for the benefit and happiness of others. He should not hanker after popularity and personal gains. He should work with a spirit of giving and not getting. His ideal should be 'concentration on work, without the consideration of reward.' He should not avoid the labour of imagining that he is the member of that Noble Community of saints and sages whose ideal of self-suffering for the cause of virtue and goodness has been dominating through the ages. To follow this ideal, kings laid down their crowns and sceptres and assumed the garments of poverty, fighting heroes forgot the pride of victory and broke their weapons, skilled traders and workmen pursued their toil with steadfast mind surrendering to God the fruits of their labour, and lovers of truth abandoned the pleasures of the earth and went into the silent caves of the mountains for the attainment of spiritual knowledge. The seeker after truth is required to work in the spirit of this ancient ideal and aspire for immortality not through material possessions but through the excellence of his moral ideas and ideals.

Discovery of Unity in Diversity

The ultimate aim of one devoted to the quest of truth and attainment of knowledge should be to grasp the unity that underlies the different forms of creation, the organic and the inorganic. The excessive specialization of modern science should not make him lose sight of the fundamental unity of all knowledge. He should try to discover that the same divine spirit is manifesting itself through various forms of life and the universe of God is not a meaningless jumble of disjointed parts but a systematic and well-co-ordinated whole, possessing great beauty and significance. The entire universe, from the minutest particles of dust to the most magnificent stars of the sky, is the manifestation of Divine Spirit. Outwardly, things appear to be diverse and even inconsistent in their mutual relationship, but inside their body there is the same thrill and sensation of life. "The world in its variety," says one, "is a fairy tale written by the golden fingers of God." It is not a plotless tragedy but a systematic and spectacular comedy, full of colour and cadence. It is not a chaos but a cosmos, the embodiment of

> That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves.

This is the great truth to the realization of which a seeker of salvation devotes his life. On the attainment of this truth, there remains no desire, no passion, no longing in his heart. He attains a blissful and ecstatic state of mind which, like a dumb man, he

relishes but cannot relate. It is a kind of blessed mood

> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,
> Is lightened.

But the attainment of this 'blessed mood' is no easy task. Years of toil and failure go into its realization. Physical and intellectual powers are of no avail in this field. It is only through the power of faith, self-sacrifice and steadfast devotion that one gets a passing glimpse of that 'fugitive and gracious light' about which Matthew Arnold says,

> This does not come with houses or with gold,
> With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
> 'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
> But the smooth slipping weeks
> Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired.

DR. J. N. TANDON

SWANS

LIMPID stream, white they gleam
Through the foliage like a dream,
Bright and slow in sovereign grace
Make the place a holy stead,
Where the dormant soul is fed,
Quietly lights teem.

Clear and still, calm to fill,
Rapt in psalm and raised the will,
O the way of the sheer glide,
Flow beside the fearless curve:
Beauty and peace every nerve
Makes dark feeling nil.

Never leave, neither grieve,
Severing from the ether's weave:
Now the life is opening,
For the spring, and strife no more;
Nobly breast out, sing the fore
Where the depths receive.

JESSE ROARK

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(*Continued from the issue of June*)

CHAPTER XI (*Contd.*)

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SENESCENCE AND DEATH

VARIOUS theories have been advanced from time to time to account for the phenomenon of senescence and death but none of these has stood the test of universal scientific validation. The more significant of these theories of aging are as follows:

(1) The life-span of the members of a species is in direct ratio to the period of time the individuals take to reach the stage of biological maturity (Buffon).

(2) The life-energy and the vital characteristics with which a living organism begins its career get used up with the passage of time (Bichat).

(3) The cells composing a multicellular body are in constant internecine fight for existence, whose final result cannot but be the wasting away of the whole. This is the theory of cellular anthropophagy (Cholodkowsky).

(4) The conjunctive tissues undergo hypertrophy with time and by and by invade and overwhelm the more vital epithelial tissue (Demagne).

(5) The somatic cells cannot go on self-dividing indefinitely. For some reason or other, they progressively lose with time the power of self-fission, thus bringing about the phenomenon of senile decay (Maupas, R. Hertwig and Mainot).

(6) With the passage of time there occurs an increase in the protoplasmic mass of the cells at the cost of the nuclear material. Senescence is the natural outcome of this process (Minot).

(7) Senescence is due to the pigmentation of nerve-cells (Muhlmann, Ribbert).

(8) The protoplasmic mass gets altered with time and exhibits a tendency towards flocculation. This is the colloidal theory of aging (A. Lumière, Marinesco).

(9) A progressive induration and ossification taking place in the body are the causes of old age and natural death (Homer Bostwick, De Lacy Evans).

(10) The intestinal contents are supposed to be full of millions of types of microorganisms secreting toxins or poisons whose re-absorption in the bodily system provokes the setting in of the process of aging (Metchnikoff).

(11) Senile decay is due to the process of progressive cellular differentiation (Delage, Minot).

(12) Senescence is mainly due to the destruction of the higher elements of a multicellular body by microphages (Metchnikoff).

(13) The glands of internal secretion are the agents for the onset of the aging process (Horsley, Lorand).

(14) There is an intimate connection between reproduction and death. The primary object of living is to bring ever new specimens of the species into being. Thus the body contains two types of protoplasm: germinative protoplosm and somatic protoplasm. The former is essentially immortal and continues its existence in the offspring's body, while the latter is doomed to decay and perish some time after the animal has attained to reproductive maturity (Weismann, Hansmann, Gotte, *et al.*)

These are some of the theories of senescence[1] mentioned in their briefest outline. Most of the theories advanced so far fail to take into account the real and fundamental underlying mechanism of senile decay; instead they try to bring into focus one or other of the factors that come into play as a result and not as the cause of aging. It is amply clear that the scientific world as a whole has not arrived till this date at any definite conception about the real nature of the mysterious process of senescence and natural death. But, as far as can be judged from an external analysis, biological thought seems to list the following as contributory factors:

(1) The extreme complexity of the organization of a metazoan body rendering the task of self-recuperation well-nigh impossible and forcing the organism to accumulate what has been termed physiological arrears and biological debt;

(2) lack of complete coordination and cohesion among the various elements of the bodily organization, giving rise to physiological disorders and malfunctionings of different sorts, and eventually wearing out the internal organs and tissues;

(3) exposure to environmental stresses and strains, unbearable for the organism beyond a certain limit, and thus inexorably leading to the ultimate breakdown and dissolution of the structure;

(4) specialization of the somatic cells for diverse and specific functions, resulting in their loss of "embryonic versatility", so much so that the organism as a whole, owning to the lose of plastic adaptability, fails to cope with the varying demands of the ever-changing situation and eventually falls an easy prey to death.

The absence of internal harmony and co-ordination, the inability to withstand the shocks of the 'not-self' and a progressive loss of adaptability and plasticity—these, then, are in the main the symptoms of the *malaise* as manifest on the bio-physical plane. No doubt, they are suggestive and significant; but they reveal no more than the frontal aspect of the malady.

And, then, what is it that becomes missing at death? What are the indubitable criteria with which to distinguish a dead body from the same body which was living a moment before? How to know that life has indeed ebbed away and the body has passed into the state of absolute death? Here, too, medical science finds great difficulty in pronouncing unequivocally. Indeed, some of the common signs and symptoms of death as ordinarily listed are:

[1] *Vide* Ed. Retterer, *De la durée des êtres vivants*, Chap 13, "Théories du vieillissement.—Critique".

Cessation of breathing and of the beating of the heart; insensibility of the eye to luminous stimulus; pallor of the body; complete muscular relaxation; reduction of the temperature of the body; *rigor mortis* or statue-like rigidity; *etc., etc.*

But the curious fact that has come out of detailed scientific investigations is that none of these signs or symptoms are definitive and absolute; every single test of death —death in the sense that the body has irrevocably passed into the state of inanimate stuff and the vital functions cannot be brought back to activity again—has proved to be utterly unreliable, with the single exception of *putrefactive decomposition.* But putrefaction sets in quite a long time after 'life' has actually 'departed' from the body. And even this process of decomposition can be prevented with the adoption of some preventive measures. Hence we come back to the crucial question:

What is life and what is death?

Prof. Joseph Le Conte emphasised this very point when he wrote:

"...But death? Can we detect anything returned to the forces of nature by simple death? What is the nature of the difference between the living organism and a dead organism? We can detect none, physical or chemical. All the physical and chemical forces withdrawn from the common fund of nature and embodied in the living organism seem to be still embodied in the dead, until little by little they are returned by decomposition. Yet the difference is immense, is inconceivably great! What is the nature of this difference expressed in the formula of material science? What is it that is gone and whither is it gone? There is something here which science cannot understand."[1]

In order to seize the problem of life and death at the base, we must now turn to metaphysics founded on an integral vision of things.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

[1] Carrington and Meader, "*Death*", pp. 158-159.

Someone asked the French writer Jean Cocteau if he believed in luck. "Certainly," he said, "how else do you explain the success of those you don't like?"

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

English-Hindi Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Terms *by K. D. Acharya;* published by Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan, Pondicerry-2; price Rs. 8.

THIS welcome book is a good and significant embryo of a wider attempt at providing the synonyms of words from all of Sri Aurobindo's books, which have a special application in his philosophy and Yoga.

It will be very helpful to all Sanskrit or Hindi knowing readers of Sri Aurobindo's literature: they will understand it more clearly, especially *The Life Divine* from which most of the words have been taken.

The three types of synonyms which the author has included are: (i) those that have been searched out from the ancient Sanskrit literature; (ii) those Sanskrit synonyms which Sri Aurobindo himself has used and are current in Hindi; and (iii) those which the author has newly formed for such English terms as have special connotation in Sri Aurobindo's literature.

The author seems to have taken great pains to find or form new words, taking into consideration the synonyms that have been evolved for scientific and technical terms. The author has our praise for his efforts, and we hope that in the next edition he will include more words from Sri Aurobindo's other works to make the book more comprehensive, and even include synonyms which are already existent in other Indian languages in their appropriate forms.

As most of the synonyms selected by the author are from Sanskrit, they can be very well used in their present form or with the necessary modifications in other languages also, and it will be a step in the right direction if the various Indian languages use the same technical terms for the translation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical and Yogic works, so that persons from the numerous States of India may easily understand one another in their exchange of Sri Aurobindo's ideas and thus come closer. This makes an opportune appearance at a time when efforts are going on for translating book Sri Aurobindo's works into Indian languages.

Fine printing, superior quality of paper, attractive design of the cover enhance the value of the book. Libraries would be enriched by the addition of it.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

IS THE INDUS SEALS' LANGUAGE AN ARCHAIC SANSKRIT?

TWO LETTERS TO THE MADRAS DAILY, *THE HINDU*, AND SOME OBSERVATIONS APROPOS OF THEM

1. Letter From S. K. Ray, 12.6.1969*

SIR,—As a result of an intensive research on the Indus script conducted during the year 1968-69 at the Ananda Coomaraswamy Institute of Asian Art, Midnapore, with the funds provided jointly by the Government of India and the American Philosophical Society, a definite clue has been successfully brought home to lead one to identifying the language of the script as an archaic Sanskrit.

A hitherto neglected but well-known specimen of the Indus seal found at Ur in Mesopotamia has thrown a new light on the language problem of the Indus Valley Civilization. This unique seal, now in the British Museum (B.M.120573), belongs to the pre-Sargonid period (before 2350 B C.). The seal, the oldest of all and popularly known as Gadd No. 1., is strangely having an inscription with the archaic Sumerian cuneiform instead of the usual Indus script. An Indus bull with the bent head in the lower register and a manger modelled in miniature scale and placed horizontally in between the bull and the inscription are there. This led the archaeologists to identify it as an item connected with the Indus Valley.

Although the inscribed word written with cuneiform was readable material to the Sumeriologists, its meaning remained ununderstandable to them for the reason that the word was alien to the Sumerian language. Recently, it was surmised that the word might be of Indic origin. After a lapse of a few decades the seal was brought to light from oblivion. At the request of Mr. S. K. Ray, the Founder-Director of the Institute, who has been working on the Indus script since 1935, Dr. E. Sollberger, the noted Sumeriologist in the British Museum, re-examined the seal and made an exhaustive list of sounds of the three cuneiform signs appearing on it.

From a lot of 35 sounds of the three polyphonic signs listed by Dr. Sollberger, Mr. Ray made a table of $18 \times 9 \times 8 = 1295$ words, out of which one only revealed the plausible sound, the others remained meaningless. Surprisingly it noted the name of the famous and popular Indian linen known as "Dukūlam". Kauṭilya knew of it in the 4th/3rd century B.C. "*Pauṇḍrakadukūlam śyāmaṇisṃgdham*," he wrote in the Arthaśāstra (2.11). Even during the 5th century A. D. in the Kumārasambhava, Kālidāsa mentioned it in a poetic expression—"*vadhū-dukūlam kalahansalakṣmaṇam*" (Canto 5). The seal, Mr. Ray thinks, was used in sealing packets of linen which the Indian traders used to export to Sumer from India. Trade relations between the two countries in ancient times are well-known and a linen like Dukūlam was certainly

* This seems to be really a report about S. K. Ray, turned into letter-form without the appropriate changes (Editor).

amongst the important trading commodities from India.

As "Dukūlam" is a Sanskrit word Mr. Ray thinks that his reading of other Indus seals denoting a kind of Prākṛit form of Sanskrit has been corroborated by this unique one which is inscribed with the cuneiform script but bears a word in Sanskrit. This fact, he said, will revolutionise the very concept of Indian history; it will refute especially the thesis of the Indologists professing the Dravidian origin of the Indus civilization on the one hand and withholding the claims of the Indo-Aryans on the other.

Midnapore S. K. Ray

2. Letter from K. D. Sethna, 29.7.1969*

Sir,—In the *Hindu* of June 12, Mr. S. K. Ray claims that the word in archaic Sumerian cuneiform on an Indus seal belonging to the pre-Sargonid period of Mesopotamia can be read as "Dukūlam". According to Mr. Ray, "Dukūlam" is the Sanskrit term for linen. Linen, Mr. Ray tells us, was certainly one of the important trading commodities exported from India to Sumer and so the discovery of its name as "Dukūlam" finally confirms Mr. Ray's attempted reading of a kind of Prākṛit in other Indus seals.

I myself believe that a Proto-Prākṛit is a basic element along with whatever Proto-Dravidian and Proto-Muṇḍā components there may be. But it seems to me that to drag in "Dukūlam" is to catch at straws.

First of all, "Dukūlam" is not a sufficiently ancient term. The oldest source Mr. Ray cites for it is Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra (2.11), which is indeed a far cry from the pre-Sargonid period (before 2350 B.C.). Even the 4th/3rd century B.C., which Mr. Ray gives for it, is a disputed point: several historians, as he must know, date it a few hundred years later.

Secondly, even in the Arthaśāstra one is not sure that it means linen exclusively or pre-eminently. R. K. Mookerji, in his *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times* (Madras, 1943), translates it in one place (p. 192) as "linen" and in another (p. 197) as "silk". In V.S. Apte's celebrated *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Ed. 1958), we note under "Dukūlam": "Woven silk, silk garment, a very fine garment in general" (Vol. II, p. 819, col. 2). Obviously, silk from India in pre-Sargonid times is unthinkable. Then the choice of "Dukūlam" out of various alternative sound-combinations possible of the cuneiform word would be fanciful.

Thirdly, the genuine common word for "linen" in Sanskrit is quite another and is even differentiated from "Dukūlam" by M. Monier-Williams's still more celebrated *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Ed. 1956). This authority reads under "Dukūla": "a kind of plant, a very fine cloth or raiment made of the inner bark of this plant...(differ-

* We are giving the full version instead of the slightly abbreviated one which appeared in *The Hindu* (Editor).

ent from *kṣuma*, Mahābhārata XIII, 7.175; opposed to *valkala*)" (p. 483, col. 3). And when we look up "Kṣauma" in Monier-Williams we see: "made of linen, linen, covered with linen" (p. 333, col. 3). "Kṣauma" is the true Sanskrit common name for linen. And it is present in the Arthaśāstra itself and is rendered "flax or jute" by Mookerji (p. 197). Flax is the material from which linen is made and, in view of it, linen clothes in literature older than Kauṭilya are often called "Kṣauma" (Ram Gopal's *India of Vedic Kalpa-sūtras*, Delhi, 1950, p. 156). The much later Kālidāsa, Mr. Ray's second source for "Dukūlam", has also the same term for linen (Śākuntalam, 4,5, and Raghuvaṁśa, 10. 18). Pāṇini, however, speaks (IV.3.150) of clothes made from flax—that is, linen clothes—as "Auma" or "Aumaka" (V.S. Agrawala's *India As Known to Pāṇini*, Lucknow, 1951, p. 125). And indeed the most ancient term for "flax" is "Umā", as in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VI. Hence "Dukūlam" on that seal is irrelevant and, for our purposes, meaningless.

Lastly, have we any evidence that linen was at all a product of the Indus Civilization to be exported to Sumer? Let us hear two authorities.

A. D. Pusalker in *The Vedic Age*, edited by R. C. Majumdar and himself (London, 1953, pp. 181-2), writes apropos of Mohenjo-dāro, Harappā and other sites: "There is no indication from the ruins as to the existence of flax, which is largely grown in India at present and was known in ancient Elam and Egypt." Sir Mortimer Wheeler, in *The Indus Civilization* (Cambridge, 1968, p. 85), says after mentioning cotton: "Bast fibres were also found at Mohenjo-dāro, in one instance wound round a fishhook, but linen has not been observed there."

Consequently, any word for linen would seem to be out of place on that seal. If I may venture a suggestion, what we have there is a purely Sumerian word. Among the several phonetic possibilities, three have been particularly noted. Gadd, who found the seal, read *sak-ku-si*. The two other readings are *sak-ku-ba* and *ka-lu-ba*. Differently combining the possible sound-values here and introducing in the last syllable a slight phonetic variation which may not be out of order, I would propose *kak-ka-bu* which, in Sumerian, means "the constellation" and often stands for the seven-star group, the Pleiades (Knut Tellgvist, *Elamrata* [Zodiac], Helsinki, 1943). The appearance of star-signs on some of the Indus-seals found in Mesopotamia is not in the least unlikely: consider especially the cylinder seal (Gadd No, 6) with Indus characters, where the sign of the Zodiac representing a crab (the Constellation of Cancer) appears pretty clear.

If, however, we are to search for a Sanskrit or Prākṛit word in the cuneiform script, it would be more advisable to seek a possible Mesopotamian echo of it than a direct representation. Such an echo might be unrecognizable to a Sumeriologist but prove suggestive to an Indologist. As an amateur in Indology, I should like to try my hand. Will Mr. Ray let me have his 1295 word-formations or at least the 35 sounds sent him by Dr. E. Sollberger?

Pondicherry K. D. Sethna

Some Observations

It is worth while pursuing the idea that there might be a Sumerian echo of some word from Sanskrit or Prākṛit (or any other ancient Indian language) among the various words arising from the contact that Mesopotamia had with the Indus Civilization.

Such an echo need not be confined to the seal considered by Mr. Ray. It is more likely to occur in the Sumerian list of articles imported from the lands said by the cuneiform records to lie across the Persian Gulf. We have already attempted to identify the farthest of these lands—Meluhha—as the Indus kingdom. To the host of arguments offered last month we may add a few more:[1]

(1) A couple of pieces of ivory work from Meluhha—a comb and two human-headed bulls mounted on a pedestal supported by wheels—were found in a grave of the Akkad period at Kish. Ivory combs and model oxen mounted on wheels as well as human-headed animal figurines are well-known Indus articles.

(2) At Lothal, the most important Harappan site in Gujarat, archaeologists have dug up not only a complete port with docks, etc., showing the Harappā Culture to have been strikingly maritime, like Meluhha with its ships—not only a workship for the manufacture of carnelian, a typical Meluhha-product—but also a seal of the Persian Gulf type such as unearthed both at Bahrain in the Persian Gulf and in Southern Mesopotamia and dated to *c.* 1900-2000 B.C. The Harappā Culture is thus directly linked to Mesopotamia's Persian-Gulf trade with far-away Meluhha.

(3) In a Mesopotamian text approximately of the same period the peacock (d*ha-ja*musen) is described as a bird of Meluhha—the peacock which is a characteristic Indian bird and often depicted on Indus objects.

We have also looked at the very name Meluhha, pronounced Melukhkha, as corresponding to the Sanskrit designation Mlechchha, whose Pāli-Prākṛit forms are Melakha and Milakkha. A somewhat derogatory term first occurring in the Śatapatha Brāhamaṇa and referring originally to the indistinctness of the Prākṛit corruption of Sanskrit, prevelant in certain areas outside Madhyadeśa (the Ganges-Yamuna doab), it may have been primarily a term used by the Indus Civilization itself for its own mixed linguistic and cultural character. In the historical view adopted by us, in which this Civilization is at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from the Rigveda, the Rigveda would recede into remote antiquity, synchronising with the earliest horse-knowing cultures east of Iran, those of Kili Gul Mohammed and Rana Ghundai in Baluchistan, the latter of which in a subsequent stage (RG III) is found underlying both Harappā and Mohenjo-dāro as well as several other Harappan sites in the Punjab, Raputana and Sind. The date of the Rigveda would then be of KGB and early RG—3500-3200 B.C.—and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa would fall precisely in the period which would be the initial formative one of the Harappā Cul-

[1] W. F. Leemans, "Old Babylonian Letters and Economic History", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. XI (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1968), pp 219, fn. 5; 221-2, 223; 222.

ture: *c.* 2500 B.C. Thus the equation proposed by us would be chronologically no less than linguistically valid.

On the strength of this equation we may turn to the expressions used in the Mesopotamian documents for products from Meluhha. Most of these are mentioned by way of Sumer's own terms for them. But there are some which seem to be Meluhhaite appellations—perhaps because there were no answering indigenous words in the Mesopotamian language. In this connection W. F. Leemans,[1] who also credits the Meluhha-Mlechchha formula, has a number of highly suggestive remarks which could serve as our starting-point:

"If, indeed, Meluhha was in western India, the region of the Indus civilization, in the period of the Larsa dynasty and before, it may perhaps be assumed that some of the unknown names of articles mentioned in the texts translated in chapter II 1-13 and perhaps no. 30, and also occurring in other Ur texts, were (prae-Indo-Aryan) Indian words, e. g., words like *kapazum* and *lahakitum*, mentioned in 119 and UET V 795 II 9, *arazum* and *ṭuharum*. It may be observed that most of these words have an Akkadian and not a Sumerian form On the other hand if Meluhha was western India, one could expect to find cotton among the imports into Ur. An impression of it on clay has been found at Ur but no Sumerian word for it is known unless it was among the unidentified names of articles."

Yes, cotton—whose earliest cultivation was in the prehistoric Indus Valley and whose sole cultivation in antiquity was there, since Egypt, which is at present an abundant producer of cotton, did not produce it in olden times[2]—cotton should be pre-eminently the commodity we must seek among the strange names that appear to be Indian (Meluhhaite) words.

Leemans calls them "prae-Indo-Aryan" because, like most scholars, he labours under the obsession that a Vedic-Aryan invasion of India is a historical fact. We have already shown that this "invasion" is a mere hypothesis without any foundation in the evidence of either archaeology or literature and that the sooner it is recognized as such the better chances shall we have of arriving at correct conclusions about the nature and the language of the Indus Civilization. The Indian words may as well be Indo-Aryan as not.

But, even if they were not, they could hardly be pointers to an utterly non-Indo-Aryan Harappā Cutlure. For, this Culture, admitting various influences outside the Vedic ethos, may have a lot of Dravidian, Muṇḍā, Iranian and Sumerian elements in diverse ways and still carry a basic Aryanism expressed through what I have called Proto-Prākṛit, an early form of the debased Sanskrit which the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa associates with the Mlechchhas. Our concern at the moment is to strike upon Indian words among the "unknowns" in the Mesopotamian trade-lists. Then we may see whether they are Indo-Aryan.

[1] *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1960), pp. 165-6.

[2] Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization* (Third Edition, Cambridge, 1968), p. 85.

About these words the question to be asked at once is: "Does any suggest the Indian term we employ for cotton?" The merest glance at Leemans's list should bring *kapazum* leaping to our eye. The word for cotton in Indian post-Rigvedic literature is *karpāsa*, and its Prākṛit a version naturally omitting the *r* would be something whose very likely echo in Mesopotamian mouths would emerge as *kapazum*.

This correspondence would, first of all, clinch our position that Meluhha was the land of the Indus Civilization. Secondly, it would conjure up just such a multi-strained picture of this Civilization as we have drawn. For, although *karpāsa* is in universal use among "Aryan" books from the time of its first appearance in the Sūtras and so its occurrence anywhere need not suggest a non-Aryan culture, it yet does not seem to be a word of Indo-Aryan origin. S. K. Chatterji[1] makes it out to be a Muṇḍā word absorbed into Sanskrit and, because of this fact, he ascribes the original cotton-cultivation to the Muṇḍās. If we accept his pronouncement, we may aver in our context that the Muṇḍā-element in the composite Indus Civilization was perhaps responsible for the growth of cotton by it. Our conjecture would be tantamount to saying that the workers in the cotton-fields were Proto-Australoid. And we would not thereby prejudice whatever Aryanism may be operative in the basis of the Civilization. Proto-Australoids have been among servants and labourers at almost all periods in India.

Thirdly, through *karpāsa* we should get a direct clue to at least one significant sound in the Indus language and be put on the alert to read it among the various inscriptions in our hands. Once we are able to decipher it we shall have made a breakthrough of immeasurable fruitfulness.

Fourthly, we shall be faced with a chronology at variance with the current time-scheme but markedly in tune with that which places the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in *c.* 2500 B.C. For by our chronology we get for the Sūtra-literature, where *karpāsa* originally figures, no low dating as at present but a fairly ancient epoch—an epoch posterior to *c.* 2500 B.C. but not too much so, because an early Sūtra like the Baudhāyana Śrauta-sūtra is more or less cast in the linguistic and stylistic mould of the Brāhmaṇas[2] and we have grounds to hold that there were Sūtras even before all extant ones.[3] From the familiar way in which *karpāsa* is mentioned in the Sūtras we possess, we may infer that the term was in sufficiently long usage by then and constituted a part of the Sūtras that are lost and that must be still more of the Brāhmaṇa-type. These latter may be dated round about 2000 B.C.—just the time we should expect books first to speak of cotton because cotton was being cultivated for the first time in the world by the Harappā Culture which ran from *c.* 2500 to *c.* 1700 B.C.

All these four consequences are of great moment for the history of ancient India. Starting from them, several lines of research may be followed—and we intend to explore these lines as occasions arise.

K. D. SETHNA

[1] *The Vedic Age*, p 150. [2] *Ibid*, pp. 235, 236. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 477.

GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the issue of June)

ILLNESS IN YOGA

SRI Aurobindo wants us to look upon illness as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as we try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors. He considers disease a habit and in *The Synthesis of Yoga* he goes on to say that the habit of disease can be minimised and gradually eliminated.[1]

A question was put to the Mother: "Can all physical illness be attributed to some mental disorder?" Her answer was:

"If there is a mental disorder which can cause all sorts of illness, it is fear."

Another cause of illness, she says in *The Conversations with the Mother*, is some sort of inner disharmony somewhere in the being. "If one could understand exactly where the mistake lies, find what has been unreceptive, open that part to the force and light, it would be possible to re-establish in a moment the harmony, and the illness would immediately go."

In the February issue of *The Bulletin* 1969 she again says that all illness is due to a break of equilibrium:

"If there is the slightest unbalance anywhere, immediately you get either some illness or a big illness, even a very big illness."

" ..if your thoughts run about and you begin to have dark ideas and formulate frightful things and make frightful catastrophic formations, then after that you are sure to fall altogether ill."

An Ashram doctor once gave an injection to a dying patient and then informed the Mother.

"Why did you give her the injection without my permission?" asked the Mother.

"The patient was on the point of death. From the doctor's point of view I did what was needed on the spot," said the medical man in a persuasive voice.

"You spoiled my working."

Perhaps there was some inner disorder; if that could have been set right the patient would have recovered.

Instances are there of people suffering from chronic diseases like piles, hernia and rheumatism and getting a radical cure by the Mother's working and Grace.

In reply to a question, the Mother once said:

"There are two ways of spiritually curing an illness. One consists in putting a force of consciousness and truth at the physical point which is ailing....Many of you

[1] P. 319.

here can tell how Sri Aurobindo has cured you. It is like a hand that came and carried away the pain.

"In the other case if the body altogether lacks receptivity...not much can be done. Let us say that the origin is in the vital. The vital absolutely refuses to change....You apply the force but generally an increase of the illness is produced."

X was working upstairs in the service of the Mother. She was suffering from a very bad headache. Perhaps it was a neuralgic pain which causes actute suffering. One day, as the pain was unbearable, she expressed her desire to put an end to her life by taking some drug. The Mother took her to Sri Aurobindo. No sooner did he place his hand upon her head than she became calm and quiet as if the pain had been snatched away. But she had relapses again and again. Daily she would go to Sri Aurobindo and he would put one hand on her head and do his writing work with the other.

C was not keeping well. Due to nervous weakness, almost daily he seemed to be half dead. But so long as he remained before the Mother in the Playground he felt all right. Once the Mother told him, "Your body is not open to the Force."

Sometimes we asked questions as a child would do.

Once I asked: "Since I was cured by the action of the force, why should there be a relapse of pain?" Sri Aurobindo wrote in reply:

"It is probably something in the physical, perhaps the subconscient, which is offering the resistance of inertia and dullness and the power flowed down into it to change it, but has not yet sufficiently penetrated it." (14-5-1934)

It is said: illnesses enter through the subtle body. When the Mother was asked what could be done to prevent them from entering, her reply was:

"...at the moment they touch the subtle body...you say, 'No' and it goes away.... All these things of which I speak to you can be methodically developed by the will.

"....If you are not conscious at that precise instant...you feel disharmony somewhere then you must concentrate with a great force of will, hold to the faith that nothing can hurt you, nothing can touch you. That suffices, you can throw off the illness at that very moment.

"When the thing comes from outside, it has an affinity with something inside.... If it has come, if it has succeeded in passing through the protection and has entered you...draw the force from above and if you have acquired the habit, you get the response...you are cured.

"...the first condition is to have no fear and to be quiet. If you begin to boil and bubble in your body, it is finished, you can do nothing."

The method shown by the Mother proved very effective with me but only after paying a very heavy price and a long struggle because I could not find a clue as to how to get rid of fear. The more I tried to get rid of fear, the more I fell an easy prey to it.

To quote Satprem: "Our medicine touches only the surface of things, not the source. There is but one illness: inconscience. At a more advanced stage, when we have established sufficiently well the inner silence and are capable of perceiving mental and vital vibrations as they enter into our circumconscient, we shall be able to per-

ceive similarly the vibrations of illness and throw them out before they enter. 'If you can become conscious of this environmental self of yours,' wrote Sri Aurobindo to a disciple "then you can catch the thought, passion, suggestion or force of illness and prevent it from entering into you."

The initial flashes of light and the touch of celestial peace that I had in the early forties gave me the strength to look at pain during illness as a happening in a corner of the body, the mind remaining pretty well in peace. It continued undisturbed for hours, despite the pain, but the nights were terrible.

In comparision with the present-day (1969) abundance of literature on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga there was practically nothing in those days.
The only support was the inner strength and the direct help of the Mother's Grace.

Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. IV, came out in book-form in 1951. When my eyes fell upon the lines:

"....One step towards it is to get the inner consciousness separate from the body—to feel that it is not you who are ill, but it is only something taking place in the body and affecting your consciousness." I remembered my case in the early forties. The dominant note at the time was peace. Not only was it the support of all activities but all seemed to emanate from it. The power that radiated from the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Presence helped turn the mind inward. At another time the Master wrote to me:

"You must get rid of the body's nervousness and softness to pain, for the body consciousness call the Yoga Force in it, remaining unmoved even by the severest pain." I shuddered even to read this. I felt I was lost.

The ideal set for us by Sri Aurobindo is still higher. Says he in *The Synthesis of Yoga* (p. 374):

"...for a heaven of personal joys, the sadhak of the integral Yoga has no hankerings even as a hell of personal sufferings has for him no terrors." And we saw this in the Master's own life.

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

The late Albert Einstein, whose initial research made the atomic bomb possible, was asked by friends what new weapons might be employed in World War III. He shook his head and, after several minutes of meditation, said, "I don't know what weapons might be used in World War III. But there isn't any doubt what weapons will be used in World War IV."

"And what are those?" a guest asked.

"Stones and spears," said Einstein.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SIXTEENTH SEMINAR

23rd FEBRUARY 1969

THE Sixteenth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 23rd February 1969 from 8. 30 to 10. 15 a.m. in the New Hall of the Centre of Education. The two subjects chosen by the Mother for this Seminar were:

1. *The God of the Religions and the ONE Divine.*
2. *Asceticism and True Austerity.*

The following six members of the Association participated as speakers:

Abhijit, Bharati, Debranjan, Henning, Sandip, and Romen.

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

Friends,

The New Age Association was formed in June 1964 with the Mother's approval and blessings. Since then it has been regularly holding Seminars 4 times a year on subjects given or chosen by the Mother. So far we have held fifteen Seminars on various subjects. This is our sixteenth Seminar.

The two subjects which the Mother has chosen for this Seminar have already been announced to you. On the first subject—*The God of the Religious and the ONE Divine*—we had put some questions to the Mother to which She has given written replies in Her own hand. I Shall read them to you before our members begin to deliver their speeches.

Q. 1. What should be the attitude of the sadhak of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga towards the various forms of God worshipped by different religions in the past and the present? If he continues to worship them, will it create an obstacle to his progress and prevent his realisation of his aim?

MOTHER: A benevolent good will towards all worshippers.

An enlightened indifference towards all religions.

As for the relation with the beings of the Overmind, if this relation exists already, each case must have its own solution.

Q. 11. What will be the role of the different Gods of the religions in the supramental age? Can they help in the establishment of the supramental Truth upon earth and in the work of the transformation of matter?

MOTHER: It is too soon to put such a question.

19-2-1969

A clear understanding of the two subjects which we shall consider in this Seminar is essential for all who are drawn towards Sri Aurobindo's Supramental Yoga because they are intimately related to its central object and discipline which are radically different from those of the traditional religious and spiritual systems.

A belief in God and a worship of Him in some way or other are the indispensable foundations of all religions, but different religions (and often different sects of the same religion) have created different forms of God, and each one considers its deity to be the Supreme Divine. Without entering into a detailed explanation of this phenomenon, I will only mention that it was unavoidable in the past spiritual evolution of humanity which was governed by what Sri Aurobindo has designated the Overmind plane in the ascending scale of spiritual planes beyond mind. The characteristic trend of the Overmind in dynamic action is to take the multiple aspects of the one infinite Truth and to give to each of them its separate self-fulfilment independently of the others. The different religions of the world have been originated and maintained by the beings of the Overmind plane according to its characteristic action. The great gods of the different religions are the beings of this Overmind plane, each one of whom has tried to represent its partial and limited spirituality as the Supreme Truth.

But now in the spiritual evolution of humanity a new phase has commenced, for the overmental principle is being superseded by the higher principle of the Supramental Truth. The New Age, of which we speak in these Seminars, is the Age of this Supramental Truth whose characteristic action is radically different from that of the Overmind. In the Supramental Truth all the multiple aspects of the One Reality are integrated and harmonised together in its infinite unity. For this reason in the Supramental Age the manifestation of the spirit in human life will take a different turn than that it took in the overmental age. It will not be a manifestation of the different aspects of the One Truth on their separate, independent and often conflicting lines but a harmonised manifestation of them in a concordant unity. Also the manifestation of the Supramental Truth will do away with the rule of the overmental gods who have, through the different religions created by them, governed the spiritual aspiration of humanity till now; in their place it will bring the rule of the ONE Divine.

We may therefore say that at the present juncture of evolution the hour of religions is over and with it also the hour of the gods who created them and whom they worship. In the Supramental Age these partial and limited gods will be replaced by the

ONE God, the Supramental Ishwara, who will directly rule the earth and humanity by His infallible will.

So also in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga the religious practice of austerity will be replaced by true austerity. The discipline of austerity is indispensable in all religions and spiritual systems, but so far it has everywhere based itself upon an attitude of denial and condemnation, suppression and mortification of the life-energies. This negative attitude was derived from that view of the world which considers it as an illusory Maya, a kingdom of the devil, a snare of falsehood from which the only way of escape was a total rejection of life and worldly existence.

But Sri Aurobindo's Yoga takes a totally different view of world-existence and human life. It regards the world "not as an invention of the devil or a self-delusion of the soul, but a manifestation of the Divine, although as yet a partial because a progressive and evolutionary manifestation."[1] Therefore it does not reject life but, accepting it in its entirety, seeks to divinise it by liberating it from its present imperfections. Its aim, therefore, is not to condemn and suppress life but to transform and divinise it.

The austerity of the Integral Yoga is the discipline intended to achieve this liberation and transformation; it is positive, constructive, creative in its aim and method and radically opposed to the past religious austerity which was negative, destructive and escapist.

You will thus realise that both the subjects which we have for this Seminar are of paramount importance in understanding the difference between the aim and the method of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and of the various religious and spiritual systems of the past. The six speakers who will now read their papers on these subjects will endeavour to elucidate and clarify some of the issues related to them. After they have finished I shall read a few passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bearing on the subjects.

After this, the six speakers were called to deliver their speeches. Some of these speeches and the passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India.*

[1] *On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga,* p. 375.

HOW MY BLIND EYE GOT CURED

A Report

WHEN I was twelve, I often suffered from headaches and my eyes were examined. It was found that my left eye had always been blind, I could not see even the biggest letter of the eye chart and no glasses could improve the vision of this eye.

At the end of May 1967 Dr Thadani came to our School for the eye check-up. All the students were excited to see whose eyes were best. They read the Snellen Test Card perfectly—all except me. I knew about my bad eye but the children were stunned to see that I could hardly read even the big letter from 20 feet with my left eye though the right eye was quite normal Dr. Thadani gave a long discourse on how to improve my eyesight with natural methods He said that since I had only one good eye, if something happened to it, then I would be quite blind. Would I like it? He encouraged me to go to Dr. Agarwal's Eye Clinic and be under his treatment. He talked to me about his own eyes and how at the age of 69 he still read without glasses. So finally I did decide to go to Dr. Agarwal.

It was on the 4th June 1967, Sunday, that I went to his clinic. There I saw many patients, mostly children; they were busy doing their eye exercises. The doctor welcomed me very warmly. He tested my eyes carefully and examined them in the dark room. Immediately he told me what was wrong with my left eye. He explained to me that I had Amblyopia, which means blindness: the eye cannot be helped with glasses, and for this no apparent or sufficient cause can be found in the constituition of the eye.

At first I was given a book *Better Sight*, then *Mind and Vision* to read. I learnt many things about the eye and I found the books quite interesting. I was surprised at myself, for usually I am not in the least interested in medical subjects; I just don't have the nerves to read all that with quaint names. But luckily the books were quite simple and I was glad to read them.

On the very first day Dr.Agarwal told me with quiet confidence that I would be cured in two months' time. I was overjoyed and agreed to take up his treatment as guided. I somehow just wanted to be cured. And surprisingly within two months, with regular exercises for about two hours a day, my sight slowly came back, then considerably improved and I began to read fine print. I also saw the cinema on every Saturday with the left eye only and I greatly enjoyed it.

I may end by saying that along with the scrupulous treatment given me, there were two other curative aids: the doctor's faith in the Mother's help with his treatment and his loving personal attention to me.

A TEACHER
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