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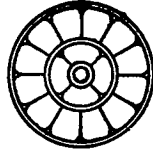
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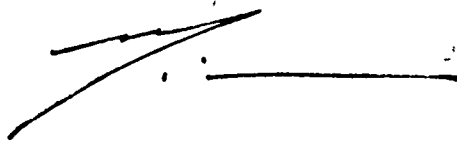


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXII

Nos. 10-11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 603
THE MOTHER ON STUDENTS BASED ON A TALK	... 604
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	<i>The Mother</i> ... 605
SOME ANSWERS BY SRI AUROBINDO THROUGH AMRITA	... 610
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 614
HOW CAN INDIA BEST FULFIL HERSELF AND SERVE HUMANITY? SRI AUROBINDO'S ANSWER	<i>Compiled by Kailas Jhaveri</i> ... 621
AT THE FEET OF SRI AUROBINDO (TRANSLATED BY SISIR KUMAR GHOSE FROM THE BENGALI)	<i>Jaya Devi</i> ... 623
NIGHTFALL AT MEDITATION ROOM IN THE ASHRAM (A Poem)	<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i> ... 625
RELIGION AND THE PROGRESS OF MAN	<i>Robert M. Kleinman</i> ... 626
DID YOU MAKE ME BARE...? (A Poem)	<i>Georgette Coty</i> ... 634
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD	<i>Dick Batstone</i> ... 635
A TALK TO THE STUDENTS AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION	<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i> ... 648

CONTENTS

CRITICISM AND CREATION	<i>Jesse Roarke</i>	... 659
YOUR KITE (A Poem)	<i>Janina</i>	... 662
KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN		
CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET	<i>S. Maharajan</i>	... 663
SRI AUROBINDO'S SAMADHI (A Poem)	<i>Punjatal</i>	... 667
NIGHT CHILD (A Poem)	<i>Richard Eggenberger</i>	... 668
CHOICES (A Poem)	<i>Bina Bragg</i>	... 669
ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>Romen</i>	... 671
GIVE ME THE LOVE (A Poem)	<i>Renukadas Y. Deshpande</i>	... 674
THE REVOLUTION SUPREME	<i>Jay Holmes Smith</i>	... 675
SADHANA ALL THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 680
THE SECRET SELF AND THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO		
PART II—THE SECOND LIBERATION	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	... 683
O SEEKER OF TRUTH: (2) FAITH	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 685
CIRCLES (A Poem)	<i>William Jones</i>	... 686
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
COLLECTED WORKS OF NOLINI KANTA GUPTA:		
VOLUME ONE	<i>Review by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar</i>	... 687
STORIES OF LIGHT AND DELIGHT by Manoj Das		... 689
8 SHORT STORIES, Edited by K. B. Sitaramayya		... 690
	<i>Reviews by Carman Neville</i>	

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		... 691
ANTENOR AND PARIS: TWO FACES OF TROY		
A COMMENT A PROPOS OF		
SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Iliad</i>	<i>A Student</i>	... 692
SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Perseus the Deliverer</i>		
AN APPROACH	<i>K. S. Lalitha</i>	... 694
WHEN WILL WE AWAKE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF EYE EDUCATION		
BASED ON A STATEMENT BY HENRY BELL		... 698

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

I

Q: Peut-on apprendre à contrôler son subconscient comme l'on contrôle sa pensée consciente ?

C'est surtout pendant le sommeil du corps qu'on est en rapport avec le subconscient. En devenant conscient de ses nuits on facilite beaucoup le contrôle du subconscient.

Le contrôle peut devenir total quand les cellules deviennent conscientes du Divin en elles et qu'elles s'ouvrent volontairement à Son influence. C'est à cela que travaille la conscience qui est descendue sur terre l'année dernière. Petit à petit l'automatisme subconscient du corps est remplacé par la conscience de la Présence Divine régissant tout le fonctionnement corporel." 13-4-1970

Q: Can one learn to control one's subconscient as one controls one's conscious thoughts ?

It is especially during the sleep of the body that one is in contact with the subconscient. In becoming conscious of one's nights the control of the subconscient becomes much easier.

The control can become total when the cells become conscious of the Divine in them and when they open themselves voluntarily to the Divine's influence. It is at this task that the consciousness that descended on the earth last year is working. Little by little the subconscient automatism of the body is replaced by the consciousness of the Divine Presence, directing the entire functioning of the body. 13-4-1970

2

Le monde est plein de souffrances et de douleurs.

Il faut vouloir n'être jamais la cause d'une souffrance de plus.

10-10-1970

The world is full of sufferings and sorrows.

One should try never to be the cause of any additional suffering.

10-10-1970

3

Those who still believe in gods can certainly continue to worship them if they feel like it—but they must know that this creed and this worship has nothing to do with the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and no connection whatever with the Supramental Realisation. 1964

THE MOTHER ON STUDENTS

BASED ON A TALK

STUDENTS should be told that they should work for transformation. The virtues or the qualities which they want in society should first be realised in themselves. The mistakes which others are committing should first be corrected in yourself. You should not wait for them to be corrected in others, because if everyone waits for others to change, who will be changed? The best way of changing others is to change oneself. This is the only way—to be an example. This is the way: it is not by preaching, but by changing yourself. There will then be no need to preach to others.

Of course, the argument will be: even if one changes oneself, what effect will it have on others? But one must change oneself and see for oneself what happens. The ills that are outside are in oneself and, if one changes oneself, things will change outside. This is universal. One is given a body for this purpose. Each one is given a problem or problems in oneself, so that they can be solved by an inner change. This is the work given to everyone. When this is done, you will know how change is brought about in others.

And you must know that each one has his own way of changing. What is one's way is not the way of another. This is absolute. The difficulties arise because this is not understood.

July, 1970

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

FEBRUARY 15, 1956

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo speaks of "this executive world-Nature". Is there an executive Nature on the other planes also?

ON the other planes, what do you mean?

In the mind and higher up.

Terrestrial Nature contains not only matter (the physical and its different planes), but the vital and the mind; all this is part of terrestrial Nature.

And after that there is no Nature, that is to say, there is no longer this distinction. That belongs essentially to the material world as it is described there.¹

But, as Sri Aurobindo says, this is "not all the truth". He has simply given a summary of what is explained in the Gita. That is what the Gita says; it is not exactly like that.

Only, as he says, this may be useful, that is, instead of causing a confusion between the different parts of the being, this helps you to distinguish between what is higher and what is lower, what is turned towards the Divine and what is turned towards matter. It is a psychologically useful conception; but, in fact, that is all to it. Things are not like that.

Sri Aurobindo writes: "Nature—not as she is in her divine Truth, the conscious Power of the Eternal, but as she appears to us in the Ignorance,—is executive

¹ In the passage of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (pp 111-113) the Mother had just read, Sri Aurobindo expounds the traditional distinction between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the Master of Nature and Nature, and describes the different stages of immersion of the Master of Nature in Nature, or of the soul in the activities of the world; then he shows the traditional path of the liberation of the spirit, which rises above Nature and becomes once again the Master of Nature.

Force, mechanical in her steps, not consciously intelligent to our experience of her, although all her works are instinct with an absolute intelligence."

(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 111)

Nature is not consciously intelligent?...

There is an intelligence which acts in her and through her, in her action, but she is not conscious of this intelligence. You can understand this with animals. Take, for example, ants. They do exactly what they ought to do; their whole work and whole organisation is something truly perfect. But they are not conscious of the intelligence which organises them. They are moved mechanically by an intelligence of which they are not aware. And even if you take the most developed animals, like the cat and dog for instance, they know exactly what they ought to do: a cat educating its babies educates them as well as a woman hers (sometimes better than a woman), but it is pushed by an intelligence which moves it automatically. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it do things. It is not aware, it cannot change anything whatever in the movement by its own will. Something makes it act mechanically but over that it has no control.

If a human being intervenes and educates a cat, he can make it change its action; but it is the consciousness of the human being which acts upon it, not its own consciousness. It is not conscious of the intelligence which makes it act.

And this kind of self-awareness, this possibility of watching oneself acting, of understanding why one does things, how one does them and, consequently, of having a control and changing the action—that belongs to the mind and in his own right to man. This is the essential difference between a man and an animal; it is that he is conscious of himself, that he can become aware of the force which makes him act, and not only become aware but control it.

But all those who feel themselves pushed by a force and say: "I was obliged to do it", without the participation of their will, show that they yet have deep roots in animality, that is to say, in the inconscient. One begins to become a conscious human being only when one knows why one does things and when one is capable of changing one's action by a determined will, when one has a control. Before having control, one is still more or less an animal with a small embryo of consciousness which is there just beginning, a little flame vacillating and trying to catch fire, and liable to be blown out by the least passing breeze.

"Nature as Prakriti is an inertly active Force,—for she works out a movement imposed upon her; but within her is One that knows..."

"The individual soul or the conscious being in a form may identify itself with this experiencing Purusha or with this active Prakriti. If it identifies itself with Prakriti, it is not master, enjoyer and knower..."

(Ibid., p. 112)

If Nature is led by the Power which is self-aware and if she does exactly what is imposed upon her, how is it that there are all these deformations? How can Nature deform things?

Yes, I was expecting that.

I was just telling you that this is the theory of the Gita, that it is not the whole Truth.

I heard that when I was in France; these are people who explain the Gita, saying there is no flame without smoke—which is not true. And starting from that they say: “Life is like that and you won’t change it, it is like that. All that you can do is to pass over to the side of the Purusha: become the governing force instead of being the governed.” That’s all. But as Sri Aurobindo says at the end, it is the theory of the Gita, it is not the whole Truth; it is only a partial way of seeing things—useful, practical, convenient, but not wholly true.

If that is so, how is it that the disciples of Sri Aurobindo preach the message of the Gita for the salvation of the world?

That’s their business. If that gives them pleasure, to me it is all the same.

But it has no connection with Sri Aurobindo’s yoga?

One can’t say no connection; but it is narrowness, that’s all. They have caught a small bit and they make it the whole. But that happens to everybody. Who is able to grasp the whole, I would like to know? Everyone grasps his bit and makes it his whole.

But Sri Aurobindo has explained...

Oh! but you are a propagandist! Why do you want to convince them? If they are satisfied like that, leave them in their satisfaction.... If they come and tell you: “This is Sri Aurobindo’s theory”, you have the right to tell them: “No, you are mistaken, this is the traditional theory, this is not the theory of Sri Aurobindo.” That’s all. But you can’t tell them: “You must change yours.” If it pleases them let them keep it.

It is very convenient. I saw that in France, at Paris, before coming to India, and I saw how very practical it was. First, it allows you to get hold of a very profound and extremely useful truth, as I said; and then it shields you from all necessity of changing your outer nature.

It is so convenient, isn’t it? One says: “I am like that, what can I do about it? I separate myself from Nature, I let her do whatever she likes, I am not this Nature, I

am the Purusha, ah! let her go her own way, after all I cannot change her!" This is extremely convenient. And that is why people adopt it; for they imagine they are in the Purusha, but at the least scratch they fall right back into Prakriti, fully, and then they fly into a temper or are in despair or fall ill. And so that's that.

I heard of someone who had, however, realised precisely this kind of identification with the Purusha and radiated a very remarkable atmosphere; but he treated as dangerous revolutionaries all those who wished to change something in terrestrial Nature, all who wanted things upon earth to change; for example, that suffering might be abolished or ultimately the necessity of death might be annulled, that there might be an evolution, a luminous progress which would require no destruction. Ah! those who think like that are dangerous revolutionaries. If need be, they should be put into prison!

But when one wants to be a sage, without even becoming a great yogi one must be able to look at all these things with a smile, not be affected by them. You have your own experience; try to make it as true and complete as possible, but leave everyone to his own experience. Unless they come seeking you as a guru and tell you: "Now, lead me to the Light and the Truth"; then there your responsibility begins—but not before.

(Looking at a disciple) He is longing to speak!

Sri Aurobindo has said: "The Gita...pauses at the borders of the highest spiritual mind and does not cross them into the splendours of the supramental light."

(Ibid., p. 107)

'By following the Gita, why doesn't one catch the central truth and come to the path of the supramental Yoga?'

I don't know what you mean. But there are many people who also believe they follow the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and who don't reach the supramental truth.

That does not depend very much on the path one follows; it depends on the capacity one has.

But I am asking: the central truth of the Gita is the surrender to the Lord, why doesn't one catch that? .. "Its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature, is the central secret."

(Ibid., p. 107)

But of course, this is what is written in the Gita, that you ought to give yourself entirely. You know, in the Gita, Krishna is the Guide and inner Master, and you must give yourself entirely to Him, make a total surrender—and then? I tell you, people profess one teaching or another, but they are not always able to follow it; they go up to a certain point and stop.

I don't understand your difficulty. You mean that those who are convinced about the truth of the teaching of the Gita do not realize this teaching?

The teaching of surrender.

Yes, well, the teaching contained in the Gita—and this surprises you? But there are throughout the world innumerable people who are convinced of the truth of a teaching, but that does not make them capable of realising it. For instance, all Buddhists, the millions of Buddhists in the world who profess that Buddhism is the truth,—does this make them capable of becoming like a Buddha? Certainly not. So, what is so astonishing in that?

I told you why there are people who accept this even after having read and studied Sri Aurobindo; why they accept it, hold fast to it, cling to this teaching of the Gita; it is because it is comfortable, one does not need to make any effort to change one's nature: nature is unchangeable, hence you don't at all need to think of changing it; simply you let it go its way, you look at it from the top of your ivory tower and let it do whatever it likes, saying: "This is not I, I am not that."

This is very convenient, it may be done very rapidly (at least one could pretend that it is done). As I said, in practice one is rarely in conformity with one's theory; if you have a bad throat or a headache or have grazed your foot, you begin to cry out or complain, to groan, and consequently you are not detached, you are altogether attached and closely tied up. That is a very human fact.

Or else, when someone says something unpleasant to you, you are upset. It is like that—because you are closely attached to nature, though you have declared you are not. That's all.

(To be continued)

SOME ANSWERS BY SRI AUROBINDO THROUGH AMRITA

(We are publishing four letters written by Amrita in the years 1924-26, conveying Sri Aurobindo's answers to questions sent him by those who had put themselves under his guidance. In those days Sri Aurobindo was referred to as A.G. (short for Aurobindo Ghose) and the Mother by the name "Mirra". The letters have been taken from a notebook of Amrita's and the order in which they were found there has been kept.)

I

My dear Purani,

All your letters to hand duly. I give below A.G.'s answer to your questions. As to whether your wife should meditate, A.G. says it is better for her to meditate as that will bring down the power from above and allow it to act on her, even create a condition to help her in curing her physically. Only she must be careful not to overstrain herself but to keep a quiet receptive attitude and receive the power and allow it to act in her.

With regard to the attacks that you get there, A.G. says they are bound to come as long as your entire consciousness is not transformed. Even when the higher power works in you down to your physico-vital consciousness, the attacks will find a way through the physical consciousness. Even if the power is in full action down to the physical itself, the attacks you complain of in your letter, especially those that take the form of illness, can get at you through the medium of subconscious vibrations of the physical. You have to fight them out of you, until your entire *ādhār* is completely transformed when no more attacks of any kind can trouble you. These things are always coming from the universal as you have had full experience; and now that you are no longer isolated they have the additional advantage of reaching you through the atmosphere of the people with whom you mix; for that is always full of the usual perturbed human currents.

Now to your question how you should move with people there: A.G. wants that you should retain and remain in your own Yoga consciousness, separate from and above the consciousness of those who are around you. But you need not show to them that you are in a different plane of being. It is enough to live in yourself, in the true inner poise and keep the protection of your own atmosphere without your outward manner, speech or action giving them any impression of aloofness or of being other than they are.

You say that you have to some extent lost the Divine Peace which had come to you on your way to Gujarat. A.G. says the Divine Peace that you speak of, like other

deepest states, comes and goes, increasing gradually in the return until it can be fully established in the various planes of your being—they cannot be ready at once to keep it in its fullness. Lastly A.G. wants you to communicate to him constantly your experiences and the progress that you make in your sadhana, in spite of any difficulty you may now and then feel in writing letters.

K. AMRITA

P.S. It is better for you to take your wife to Ahmedabad as soon as she is able to bear the journey. Obviously it is best for her to be in conditions which allow of constant good medical treatment and care.

2

TO N.S. CHIDAMBARESAN

In order to get to the higher consciousness the essential condition is quietude of the mind. The ordinary nature of the mind is either to be active or, if denied activity, to go to sleep. The method of counting 1, 2, 3, etc., only stupefies the mind and, though by this method you once accidentally got into the higher consciousness, it is not the right way. The other way which you yourself got afterwards, of “directing the aspiring *drishti* of your entire Antahkarana towards its own heights and from there watching” is the right process. Continue and make this progressively your normal condition.

As to Shakti Upasana you need not trouble about it at present as your sadhana is taking a different course from that laid down in *Yogic Sadhan*. Shakti is of two kinds, the lower of the mind, desires etc., and the higher divine Shakti. When the first has been quieted and the higher consciousness made normal in you, it will be possible for the divine Shakti to take up all your activities. This action of yielding and giving place to the higher Shakti is the aim of the Shakti Upasana. Let the quietude and the higher Consciousness establish themselves. The rest will come later on.

The replacing of the power of the lower Consciousness by that of the higher is the object of all self-surrender—the surrender of your small narrow personal being and its activities to the higher and vaster divine being and the divine activities. By this surrender one will cease to act from one’s personal motives, impulses, desires etc., as one is at present doing. By the progressively increasing self-surrender the action of the higher consciousness will gradually begin to play in the place of the personal. That is how works in life and surrender are reconciled. The works in life will proceed, as the result of surrender, from the higher Consciousness instead of, as now, from the narrow personal. But this will come at a later stage; you need not mind about it now, but go on with the method indicated. Only take care not to surrender to any suggestions or forces coming from the lower being as that is the chief danger of the Sadhana.

December 24, 1924.

K. AMRITA

TO A.B. PURANI AT MADRAS IN S.D.'S HOUSE

It is most regrettable that Dr. G .. should have been consulted and this suggestion made with the violent hostile effect—hostile to the saying of Punamchand—it has produced on your mind and on the atmosphere there. A.G.'s spiritual power working behind Dr. Rangachary's cautious treatment had just begun to work a little successfully and, tuberculous or not tuberculous, might soon have succeeded in purifying the wound. Now all is upset and an enormous difficulty created. The thing has been brought down to the usual physical level where doctors with their half-knowledge and violent remedies that maim and often kill are supreme and spiritual force counts for nothing.

All that A.G. can say now is this. Punamchand must at present hear nothing about amputation or tubercular affection. The suggestion of tubercular affection must not be accepted at all merely on the faith of a medical opinion made on the strength of a superficial examination without microscopic or other analysis. If it is at all possible for you there you must keep an atmosphere free from excitement, depression and nervousness and the haste to get irremediable things done. Amputation is a thing that means the physical ruin of Punamchand for life at the best and at the worst means the end of him; it can only be resorted to if all other means are hopeless. If it comes to that finally, A.G. will have to conclude that, for whatever reason, his spiritual force has failed and can no longer be of help to Punamchand and the adverse forces have conquered; nor has he any confidence that amputation will be the end of the evil. Then of course the decision will be for the doctors, for Punamchand and for Punamchand's father. The latter will have to come and give his sanction. A.G. will not take the responsibility of himself sanctioning amputation.

If the wound does not get better, if fever and the same symptoms continue without a turn to disappearance, then it is for Dr. Rangachary to examine the discharge microscopically and see if it is tuberculous. It is better if he arrives at this conclusion with a free mind for it is easy to force a suggestion which he will accept unconsciously by creating [it] in or out of apprehension or deference to other opinions. A free opinion will be of much greater value. In any case nothing decisive without thorough examination and a full trial for the opposite hypothesis.

This is all A.G. can say in the matter.

K. AMRITA

TO DAULATRAM SHARMA

Dear friend,

I have shown your letter to A.G. and below I give his answer to it.

Your letter is very interesting because it shows that you have accurate intuitions

which unfortunately your mind does not allow you to follow out. Your mind also interferes by giving your intuitions a mental form and mental consequences or conditions which are not correct.

You are quite right when you say that your sadhana will not open through the mind but through your psychic being. It is from there indeed that these guiding intuitions come.

Your intuition that in your case the effective impulse can best come from Mirra (you can call her Mirra Devi if you like but please do not call her Madame!) is also perfectly correct. When she saw you from the window or the terrace on your last visit, she herself said to A.G., "This is a man I can change. *But he is not yet ready.*" But it was your mind that interfered when you thought it was necessary to sit in meditation with her in order to receive what she had to give. There is no such condition for her spiritual or psychic action and influence. It is true that she was not mixing with the sadhaks at that time, partly because they themselves were not ready to take the right relation and to receive her influence, partly because the difficulties of the physical plane made it necessary for her to retire from all direct contact with anyone, as distinct from any indirect contact through A.G. Always however she was acting with him on the psychic and vital levels to do whatever might be possible at the time. All that is needed to receive a direct touch from her is to take the right relation to her, to be open and to enter her atmosphere. The most ordinary meeting or talk with her on the physical plane is quite enough for the purpose. Only the sadhak must be ready, otherwise he may not be able to receive the impulse or may not be able to fulfil it or bear its pressure.

Also it will be a mistake if you make too rigid a separation between A.G. and Mirra. Both influences are necessary for the complete development of the Sadhana. The work of the two together alone brings down the supramental Truth into the physical plane. A.G. acts directly on the mental and on the vital being through the illumined mind; he represents the Purusha element whose strength is predominantly in illumined (intuition, supramental or spiritual) knowledge and the power that acts in this knowledge, while the psychic being supports this action and helps to transform the physical and vital plane. Mirra acts directly on the psychic being and on the emotional vital and physical being through the illumined psychic consciousness, while the illumined intuitions of the supramental being give her the necessary knowledge to act on the right lines and at the right moment. Her force representing the Shakti element is directly psychic, vital, physical and her spiritual knowledge is predominantly practical in its nature. It is, that is to say, a large and detailed knowledge and experience of the mental, vital and physical forces at play and, with the knowledge, the power to handle them for the purposes of life and of Yoga.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of July)

(These talks are from the notebooks 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 Mulshankar. 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.)

MAY 21, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: In the present war it seems there is only one line of defence. That makes it possible to attack from the rear. In previous wars there were several lines. In the last war there was a wide front.

N: There may be more exposure to air attack.

SRI AUROBINDO: But there is anti-aircraft.

N: It is good that the French have after all started counter-attacking.

SRI AUROBINDO: Defensive warfare is all right if there are strong fortifications like the Maginot Line or like Namur and Liege. Otherwise in an extensive front it is very difficult to be always on the defensive. By standing and waiting all the time, one stands to lose and gets all the beating without being able to give anything in return. I thought that the Siegfried Line could be broken if the French were courageous enough. Of course it would involve loss of men. It is not a continuous fortification. There are gaps supported by troops. The gaps depend on the strength of the troops.

S: If the English also could launch an offensive...

SRI AUROBINDO: For an offensive you must have a sufficient army. In the beginning Chamberlain was violently against conscription and when he started it he didn't call everybody. He did not want to paralyse the industries and export by calling them. Only before resigning he called the last reservists, 3 million, and they will take about three months to be ready.

P: It seems K was in favour of Hitler. When he told C about it, C said, "If it is so, better not speak about it. You know it is very dangerous to talk like that." And then he kept quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is strange that it required C to say that. And yet it is said that people do not speak about it to outsiders.

N: C is not considered an outsider perhaps.

P: If he had spoken to a friend of B for instance, he would have at once reported it. They can't tolerate such views when their relations are fighting and dying at the front.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the great strategic retreat the British speak of?

N: They have fallen back in Belgium to keep in communication with the main army.

S: They have taken up their line of resistance, they say. Between Narvik and Trondheim they are again fighting.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and the British are in difficulty. Perhaps another strategic retreat may be expected. Now they are expecting a blow on England. So they may withdraw and prepare for that.

S: The *Indian Express* says that India has 70 aeroplanes to defend herself against 7000 German planes.

SRI AUROBINDO: And how many tanks?

S: None perhaps.

P: There are some tanks—more than 100.

SRI AUROBINDO: A very big number indeed!

S: Gandhi writes in the *Harijan* that there is not much to choose between Imperialism and Fascism. He finds very little difference.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a big difference. Under Fascism he wouldn't be able to write such things or say anything against the State. He would be shot.

S: And he still believes that by non-violence we can defend our country.

SRI AUROBINDO: Non-violence can't defend. One can only die by it.

S: He believes that by such death a change of heart can take place in the enemy.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it does, it will be after two or three centuries. Some reaction may take place and then somebody else may turn up. (*Laughter*)

S: He does not seem to make much distinction between moral and spiritual force.

SRI AUROBINDO: None at all.

S: N will bring down the Supermind to solve all the problems.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the prospect, N? Is it near?

N: I will bring it down for S.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Instead of bringing down the Supermind it will be better at the moment to enter Narvik and do something there. Churchill is speaking of an assault. He has to show he means it by doing something practical.

S: They are still two miles from Narvik.

SRI AUROBINDO: And still as far away as possible.

N: The *Hindu* says Gamelin recoils at the horror of the sacrifice of lives that will be entailed in an attack on the Siegfried Line.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he does not want to sacrifice life as was done in the last

war. No such repetition this time, he says. It will be a defensive war with as little loss possible. But his note is already changing.

S: These people didn't prepare themselves well because they thought Hitler was bluffing. They didn't take him seriously.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler does not bluff. He has done everything he has said—only, in his own time. Mussolini bluffs, but when he acts, he does it thoroughly.

P: He seems to intend to come in at the end and get a share.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but that share won't be for long. Hitler will finish him in no time. Italy is vulnerable on all sides. So he can't take any action suddenly.

MAY 22, 1940

P: Nehru is against Satyagraha at present in view of the condition of the Allies.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why don't the leaders come to an agreement?

N: They are all still thinking and thinking.

S: Yes, they are doing constructive work.

N: Charkha? Perhaps they are now waiting for Amery to make some move.

SRI AUROBINDO: He will be busy with the defence of England.

S: The German drive seems to be to encircle the Allies after they have reached the sea and then to attack the Maginot Line from the rear.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

P: The Allies' position here seems to be the same as in Norway and Denmark with a narrow strip of sea between. The English Channel is only 20-30 miles across. The Allies would be able to bring big navies there in case of a German attack on England.

S: Why not? And how will the Germans take their troops across?

SRI AUROBINDO: The position is not the same. In Norway they had no aerodromes. Here they have plenty of them.

N: At present the thrust towards Paris seems to have been suspended.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are driving towards the sea. After capturing the ports they will begin to attack England and continue their thrust to Paris from St. Quentin or other places.

N: After capturing the ports their aim is to prevent British reinforcements to France.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they can't do that. There will be still plenty of ports in the west and north-west.

N: The French can't launch an attack against the Siegfried Line today.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is impossible now.

N: Reynaud says that they have committed mistakes.

SRI AUROBINDO: A lot of them. They assume things. With Hitler one can't assume anything. He does what is unexpected. All these people go by scientific principles. Hore-Belisha is the only man who can do something new. Eden is good but

not for this. He could be better as Foreign Secretary, and Irwin in India Office where he could go on with his peace plan and appeasement. Pétain has something but he is too old.

S: Weygand?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know anything about him.

N: Is there an occult Influence behind the Allies as there is behind Hitler?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they are all ordinary persons without any such Influence pushing them.

N: Ordinary persons against an Asura? A bad look-out!

SRI AUROBINDO: There is nobody among them who can receive the Divine Force to counteract the Asuras. The Mother has not found anyone.

EVENING

P: Weygand seems to be hopeful of victory if the Allies can resist for one month.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. X says she has found the French going to war with reluctance and with a defeatist mentality. In that case, I don't see how they can beat Hitler.

N: But why is it so?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. Perhaps they want to lead a comfortable life. They have given good resistance in other parts—only in the centre the main army has given way. In the battle of the Meuse they forgot even to blow up the bridges during the retreat.

P: Herbert says that Hitler will get what he wants.

SRI AUROBINDO: France also? If that is the mentality, they will be defeated. It is a stupid and tamasically sattwic quality. It appears the Germans intend to occupy Ireland and make it a base to attack England and cut off supplies to her from America and other places. That is behind their plan to get to the coast. Ireland has only an army of 30,000. These plans were discovered in the custody of some Germans. And then along with Italy they will attack through Switzerland and crush France.

N: But how will they carry troops there?

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't say.

P: Jwalanti was telling me Neville Henderson says that in Germany even before Hitler the atmosphere of life had so much pressure that one felt constantly suffocated.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, practically most of Germany was like that. Boys and young men were being trained to be devilish. When there was some complaint against harsh treatment meted out by the German army, people said: "Wait till the Nazis come to power. Then you will realise what harsh treatment is."

MAY 23, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: The German Generals say that they are not in contact with the

main body of the French troops still. Where are the troops? What are they doing?

S : They may come in at the end.

P : The British Government have taken very strong measures.

N : They say it has turned Socialist and Communist.

P : This is due to the Labour influence probably.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. From individual liberty to totalitarian Socialism must be a great change, because it is against the grain of the British. Their whole history is a fight for individual liberty. In the last war also, they took such steps but they went back to their natural condition.

S : Lindbergh says that countries at war are bound to be dictatorial at one time or another. So he is against America joining in.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is all very well, but Hitler's next attack will be on America.

N : The Allies don't seem to be able to resist anywhere the German advance.

P : It was the same in the last war. About 2 years afterwards they recovered their position.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so late. It was at the battle of the Marne that the tide turned. At the beginning the English were running away before the German attack. There used to be wonderful stories by the correspondents. One war correspondent wrote that when the British army was running away, Sir John French was looking and coolly smoking a cigarette. Then suddenly he started the counterattack and the Germans were repulsed. What actually happened was that the German commander had outrun the support. Somebody saw this and the Allies, turning the flank, drove the Germans towards the Marne where the battle took place. The German commander had found the pursuit so attractive that he had forgotten about his over-advanced position.

S : The war will continue till 1942, according to astrology.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the prophecy by the Theosophists. According to astrology, there is to be some setback for Hitler in May. There is no sign of it yet.

N : Still 8 days to go. If they take Narvik, then...

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, then we can begin to think that the Allies will win. They want to take Narvik without the loss of a single man!

N : But they have again changed their position against the Germans, it is said. What does it mean?

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously it means retreat. They want to fight non-violently like Gandhi—without killing a single man to capture Narvik.

S : When Vidyarthi was murdered by a Muslim, Gandhi said that he would have considered it a great fortune if he could himself have given his life.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he would have expressed his love and gratitude for their having given him such an opportunity. He would have said: "My dear fellow, how good you are to give me a chance to get murdered."

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing P*): The Ashram has been declared a nest of Pro-Nazis and Pro-Communists by your friend the Consul. He says he can even produce documents.

N: Schomberg?

P: Yes.

N: A nice friend you have.

P: He is quite capable of this. I haven't seen him for a long time. Most probably the talks in the Ashram have reached his ears.

SRI AUROBINDO: That undoubtedly. But if he has any written proof it will be serious. If some people have written from here to their friends and the letters have been intercepted and sent to him, he will have documents.

P: Has the matter gone to the French Government?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not yet. But he must have sent his report to the British authorities. And they can be nasty, especially if they go down in the war. They may write to the French Governor who then won't be able to defend us and, next, to the Minister of Colonies. The movement against the Ashram is growing, some reliable friends have told us. Of course, we will try to counteract it but I don't see how it can be done. The danger is not only to the Allies but to us also. (*Looking at N*) I hear the place of H is a club for these discussions. Y and K etc. go there, I am told.

N: I don't know but it is quite possible. The other day H and Y were present when I repeated what you had said—and H agreed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then he shouldn't allow these talks.

N: Y, I think, is still unconvinced. He says he doesn't want that Hitler should come to India but he does want him to win. It is difficult to rid him of his absurd idea.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler will do according as Y wants or doesn't want? It is a very simple thing to see that Hitler wants world-domination and his next move will be towards India. But if Y goes on with such talks, evidently he doesn't care that the Ashram should exist.

P: D also has such ideas and finds it difficult to dislodge them.

SRI AUROBINDO: You reported the Mother as saying something to Nolini. What was it?

P: She said that if India were to get her freedom now, it would be catastrophic for her.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Mother didn't exactly say that. When Nolini said that it was because of the rancour against the British that people were talking in Hitler's favour, the Mother remarked that freedom at present would be dangerous for India, because India would play into the hands of Stalin. I am perfectly sure that if the Socialists and Communists don't get their way, they will call in Russia. S may say Stalin is almost Asiatic.

P: D says: "Let the Hindus and Muslims fight it out and see what happens. Some result will come."

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The Muslims will call in somebody and the Socialists somebody else. The Muslims may call in Mussolini because he proclaims himself defender of Islam. But he has removed half the Arabs from Tripoli and replaced them by Italians. India must get into the habit of freedom for about 20-30 years and then prepare for Independence. To my mind the best thing is to have Dominion Status at present and then later on get ready for complete independence. India is a poor country, has no army, can't afford to have modern armaments. So long as she has no defence, she has to rely on others, unless the Socialists have a Kamal Pasha up their sleeves or a diplomat like Ismet Pasha who kept the enemy off till the country was prepared. Very difficult work. S won't be able to do that.

P: One Kamal Pasha won't do for India. There must be at least 10. If the Hindus and Muslims go on fighting with each other, other powers are sure to come in and a fresh subjugation is inevitable.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly. That is from the national point of view. Spiritually Stalin and Hitler will never tolerate any kind of work like ours. Spirituality and liberty of conscience are impossible in their regime. The Socialists or perhaps the Communists may think that Stalin will give some autonomy as in Georgia or the Ukraine—but it is all humbug. Even in the Ukraine, their President was shot because he was too pro-Ukraine.

I have been reading that book of astrology. But there is not much of astrology there. It is a political and psychological treatment of persons and events, astrology coming in as a third factor only, where the stars regulate things. The author says that Hitler is playing into the hands of the army. The people will rise in revolt and kill him. His prophecies are obviously wrong. He says Chamberlain will bring in the reign of peace. Churchill won't be the Prime Minister. It is more or less propaganda for Chamberlain.

N: R is also speaking in favour of the Germans. When B told him the Mother did not wish that we should take sides with Hitler, he replied: "Sri Aurobindo says different things to different persons as Sri Krishna did to Arjuna, Vidura, etc. You don't know."

SRI AUROBINDO: R knows?

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

HOW CAN INDIA BEST FULFIL HERSELF AND SERVE HUMANITY?

SRI AUROBINDO'S ANSWER

INDIA can best develop herself and serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. This does not mean, as some narrowly and blindly suppose, the rejection of everything new that comes to us in the stream of Time or happens to have been first developed or powerfully expressed by the West. Such an attitude would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible and, above all, unspiritual; true spirituality rejects no new light, no added means or materials of our human self-development. It means simply to keep our centre, our essential way of being, our inborn nature and assimilate to it all we receive, and evolve out of it all we do and create.

India's nature, her mission, the work that she has to do, her part in the earth's destiny, the peculiar power for which she stands is written there in her past history and is the secret purpose behind her present sufferings and ordeals.

The principle, the essential intention of Indian culture was extraordinarily high, ambitious and noble, the highest indeed that the human spirit can conceive. For what can be a greater idea of life than that which makes it a development of the Spirit in man to its most vast, secret and high possibilities,—a culture that conceives of life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the Universal in the individual, of the Infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man, or holds that man can become not only conscious of the Eternal and Infinite, but live in its power and universalise, spiritualise and divinise himself by self-knowledge? What greater aims can be for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence? And that is the whole sense of the striving of Indian culture.

But we must recognise the great gulf between what we are and what we may and ought to strive to be. And original truth-seeking thought is needed if we are to take this stand and make this movement a strong and courageous intuition, an unfailing spiritual and intellectual rectitude.

We have to look on our cultural ideas and our social forms and see where they have lost their ancient spirit or real significance. Many of them are now a fiction and no longer in accordance with the ideas they assume or with the facts of life. Others, even if good in themselves or else beneficent in their own time, are no longer sufficient for our growth. All these must either be transformed or discarded and truer ideas and better formulations must be found in their place. The new turn we must give them will not always be a return upon their old significance. The new dynamic truths we have to discover need not be parked within the limited truth of a past ideal. On our

past and present ideals we have to turn the searchlight of the spirit and see whether they have not to be surpassed or enlarged or brought into consonance with new wider ideals. All we do or create must be consistent with the abiding spirit of India, but framed to fit into a greater harmonised rhythm and plastic to the call of a more luminous future. If faith in ourselves and fidelity to the spirit of our culture are the first requisites of a continued and vigorous life, a recognition of greater possibilities is a condition not less indispensable. There cannot be a healthy and victorious survival if we make of the past a fetish instead of an inspiring impulse. For it is our evolutionary push towards the future that will give to our past and present their true value and significance.

The highest truth is the truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature.... Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet, both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

A reshaping of the forms of our spirit will have to take place; but it is the spirit behind past forms that we have to disengage and preserve and to give to it new and powerful thought-significances, culture values, a new instrumentation, greater figures. And so long as we recognise these essential things and are faithful to their spirit, it will not hurt us to make even the most drastic mental or physical adaptations and the most extreme cultural and social changes.

If the spiritual ideal points the final way to a triumphant harmony of manifested life, then it is all-important for India not to lose hold of the truth, not to give up the highest she knows and barter it away for a perhaps more readily practicable but still lower ideal, alien to her true and constant nature. It is important for humanity that a great collective effort to realise this highest ideal, however imperfect it may have been, into whatever confusion and degeneration it may have fallen,—should not cease, but continue. Always it can recover its force and enlarge its expression; for the spirit is not bound to temporal forms but ever-new, immortal and infinite.

A new creation of the old Indian *Svadharmā*, not a transmutation to some law of alien nature, is our best way to serve and increase the sum of human progress.

Compiled by KAILAS JHAVERI

AT THE FEET OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME REMINISCENCES OF EARLY DAYS IN PONDICHERRY

(Concluded from the issue of August 15)

II

It was the month of Asvin in 1926. At the time of Sri Aurobindo's daily darshan I said: "Lord, the month of Asvin is here. Every year I celebrate Mahastami puja. I am wondering what to do now; shall I return home or what?" "Why, won't there be puja here?" he asked. "Yes, it's possible: the worship of Shiva-Durga. If I can perform your worship and the Mother's, then perhaps I need not go from here. That is why I am wondering..."

"Well, you can do that."

On the day of Mahastami Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sat in two chairs side by side. With the usual offering I performed the puja. I put garlands round both. Oh, it was as if Shiva and Durga had come down to accept the worship! It is impossible to describe all that I felt. It was ineffable, beyond thought. After the puja he left the room. The next day he asked: "You have to go now? You have done your puja." I said: "Yes, my Lord, it was a puja such as I had never thought of." "Well, well," he said.

In the old days the Mother did not leave the Ashram compound. She would sit for meditation in an upper-storey room. There were about twelve or thirteen of us including Bijoy Nag, Roti Nag, Rajani, Monibabu, Upen, etc.—with whom the Mother would sit in meditation. There were then only two Gujarati girls, I happened to be the only Bengali girl.

One night I dreamt that I was floating in the air while an elephant, hoping to catch me, was prowling below. All the time Upen was as it were pushing me up. I seemed to roam about, as if I had been in a state of daze or stupor.

In the morning I went for darshan. As usual I sat holding the leg of the chair. Then I spoke of the previous night and asked: "Lord, why did I dream like that?" "You are on the upward way. But the natural body does not like you to escape like that and so it is pursuing you. Upen is putting you up. It is the body that is obstructing." He said many other things as well, which I cannot now call to mind.

Next day Barinda said to me: "Didi, for long Sri Aurobindo hasn't tasted Bengali food. Now that you are here, what about preparing some dishes?" "All right," I answered.

Bijoy Nag procured a big *hilsa* fish, dressed it up and all that. I cooked it in an aluminium pot. Those days we had no crockery. Sri Aurobindo sat down for lunch in the room below, with five disciples around him. I placed the pot near his plate. He only smiled but did not say anything.

One day a sadhak from Chandernagore came to Pondicherry for Sri Aurobindo's darshan. He had set out on a pilgrimage and expressed a desire to see Sri Aurobindo *en route*. The next day I went to the darshan at eight in the morning. I told Sri Aurobindo, "Lord, a sadhu from Chandernagore is here for your darshan. He will come today."

"Have you seen him? What sort of sadhu?" he inquired.

"I don't know anything, Lord. But he didn't seem to be quite open and pure. You will see," I said.

After I had come away the sadhu said to me: "Didi, I am going for darshan but I have a feeling of fear about it."

"What is there to fear in visiting a holy person? Go," I said.

The sadhu left. But he could hardly walk up the stairs, his heart was trembling so. Reaching the door near the upper veranda he saw a luminous glow emanating from Sri Aurobindo's body. His eyes were dazzled and he was unable to have the darshan.

Somehow he reached the house where I was staying. There he fell into a kind of fit. After lying on the ground for a while he got up and said to me: "Didi, I didn't have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo, I could not bear so much power. I am going today."

The day after, at darshan time I told Sri Aurobindo: "Lord, the sadhu could not have your darshan. He said, 'When I was going up the stairs, my heart began to beat violently. Still I reached the upper storey but then I saw a flamelike light which blinded me. It was as if I lost consciousness and somehow reached your place. I shall not stay here any longer. I am going.' Saying this, he left last night." On hearing this Sri Aurobindo said: "He is like a chest, so tightly closed that he has only been wasting his energy. He has not gone round the four quarters... Except for that egoism, there is nothing else in him.

"Lord, why didn't you give him something?" I queried.

"One needs strength to receive strength. One cannot have that merely by speaking of it. It will be a long time before that sadhu can go round the four quarters. It is doubtful if he can do it in this life." After saying this he kept quiet. I also came away.

November came along. A strange feeling of joy took possession of all the sadhaks present. The whole of Pondicherry was fragrant with incense, a great delight seemed to be at play. There was the feeling one has during the time of Durga Puja, but this was more intense. I told Bijoybabu and Barinda: "Brothers, I am feeling so happy inside. Such peace! Why is it like this?" "Indeed, sister," answered Bijoybabu. "What feelings of peace and delight!" At the time of Sri Aurobindo's darshan I said, "Lord, for the last few days I have been filled with such a sense of peace and delight. The whole of Pondicherry has a festive air, one incense and perfume everywhere. Why is it like this, Lord?"

Smiling, he said, "You are able to feel this?"

"Not only I but all the sadhaks are able to feel this great wave of peace and delight. We are dancing with an inner joy. Why, O Lord?"

"Wait and see, there will be more delight to come," he said.

On November 24 a little before evening all the sadhaks were asked to assemble. One after another we trooped to the upper hall. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother blessed us all with both hands. I was told: "Mahashakti, the Supreme Consciousness-Force, has descended into Sri Aurobindo." I could myself see light and glory bursting out of his body.

Next day when I was carrying with me two garlands of *tulasi* leaves, I heard that Sri Aurobindo would not come out again but stay in his room. Disappointed, I placed the garlands on the door of his room and turned back. One chapter of our life was over.

(Concluded)

JAYA DEVI

(Translated by Sisir Kumar Ghose from the Bengali)

NIGHTFALL AT MEDITATION ROOM IN THE ASHRAM

THE utter hush of that shadowed passage—
The welcome coolth under unshod feet—
The need intense of inner peace
For Time and Eternity to meet.

The burning candle within heart's core—
The being afloat on a fierce loved sea!
The cherished churning of emotions
For heart's ease—to that Face a fervent plea!

Master of the world, King of all Grace!
Vast calms of mountain-tops in those Eyes!
Heart-piercing with a fiery magic balm—
Easing the mind of unsolvable ties.

Benumbed in withdrawal before that Look—
Lost to the earth in an infinite space,
Minutes stretched to a thousand years—
Heart cleaved with inseparable love to that Face!

MINNIE N. CANTENWALLA

RELIGION AND THE PROGRESS OF MAN

(The Pensacola Journal (U.S.A) of September 26, 1970, which was a Saturday, printed the announcement: "Dr. Robert M. Kleinman, a professor of philosophy at Pensacola Junior College, will speak at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the Unitarian Fellowship at Pensacola at 904E Scott St. His subject will be 'Religion and the Progress of Man.' Dr. Kleinman, who received his doctor of philosophy degree from Columbia University, is particularly interested in Indian philosophy and recently returned from a year's teaching assignment in India. He said he would consider the value of religion in man's life and his presentation would be influenced by his study of the teachings of the noted Indian sage Sri Aurobindo.")

Mother India, which published in June 1969 Dr. Kleinman's luminous talk "Some Aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Truth-Vision" to the Sri Aurobindo Center, Crescent Moon Ranch, Sedona, Arizona, is glad to publish his fine new paper. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram has happy recollections of the author who, along with his wife and sons, stayed in it recently for a few months.)

QUITE frankly, when I was first asked to speak to you I hesitated and thought seriously of refusing the well-meant invitation. For my own spiritual quest has been a long and lonely one, and the conclusions I have come to accept are different from those of the majority of my fellowmen. Consequently, it has always proven difficult for me to share them with others. But, on further reflection, it seemed that many of these conclusions have a value far transcending my personal commitment to them, and that I should make an effort to place them before others who could perhaps benefit thereby. This is especially so, since I feel a deep obligation toward those who have guided me on my way—particularly to Sri Aurobindo, whose writings and Ashram in Pondicherry, India, are radiating a new Light and Hope into a world which is apparently on the verge of darkness and self-destruction. I was also encouraged by the Unitarian reputation for approaching the central problems of religion in a spirit of free and flexible inquiry.

In this paper, I propose to consider Sri Aurobindo's views on the role of religion in the progress of man. In *The Human Cycle* (American edition, pp. 197-8), one of his many important books, Sri Aurobindo makes the following assessment of man's religious situation:

It is true in a sense that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. On the other hand, it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a

Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and there may therefore arise a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life. There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism on the contrary entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive.

We shall be primarily concerned with "true religion" as alluded to in this passage. But first let us examine the status of the "aids and supports" which are mentioned in it. For the essence of true religion encompasses the whole of life in its physical, vital, mental and spiritual nature. According to Sri Aurobindo, a religious life consists in constantly remembering God and seeking after him in all the parts of our complex being. But to speak of God in this way, we must divest ourselves of any preconceptions we may have which would tend to limit the nature of Godhead in order to satisfy a prior religious commitment. Although the transcendent character of the Divine is upheld in one sense or another by most of the major religions of the world, it is not always recognized that a complete concept of the Divine requires more. There is also a cosmic poise of the Divine in which it is spread out over the whole universe and serves as the inner support of all being. We must, at the same time, recognize a third poise of the Divine in which it stands within each individual as the core of his unique selfhood and conscious personality. It is crucial to recognize these latter two poises of the Divine as providing the substantial basis for the spiritual intuition of the immanence of God in the world.

For unless God is within me, impelling me toward a divine self-transcendence which I dimly intuit, I cannot see that there is any real significance to the struggles which life imposes upon me; and if God is not the Cosmic Spirit which the finest and most sensitive stirrings of my heart have responded to in Nature, then the material world can be little more to me than an opportune field for exploitation and rude conquest. Sri Aurobindo holds that God, or the Divine, can be directly realized in all three of these poises—transcendent, cosmic and individual. This integral realization is the real aim of religion. We must get at the eternal spiritual presence of God in ourselves and the universe, and ultimately recognize that God is even more than all this in the infinite depths of his transcendent being.

Has religion, as it exists in the world today, fulfilled its high destiny? I do not believe so. But, if not, can it be enlarged and heightened in the direction that we have suggested? A completely negative answer to this latter question would mean that religion has nothing further to contribute to the future progress of man. Naturally, I would like to avoid this extremely pessimistic conclusion, but, on the other hand, I do not feel that a sustained appeal to traditional religious ways can be of much help to us. In order to understand this, we must look more closely at the makeup and function of religion as a social institution. I do not wish to single out one religion rather than another in the course of our discussion. All of the major world religions seem to me to err in one way or another, and to a greater or lesser extent in their various ways. Each of these religions represents an aspect of the Divine, and it came into being in order to establish a certain truth on earth. For example, Christianity represents the principle of divine love and charity, Buddhism the principle of self-conquest and compassionate service, Islam the principle of zealous devotion to God. In Hinduism, which is the most complex of man's religions, several movements have occurred, each representing a different aspect of God in the world. This is the meaning of the doctrine of many Divine Incarnations, or Avatāras. Each Incarnation comes to reveal the possibility of establishing a new principle in the earth-nature, which already contains it in a latent form. But, insofar as any religion claims to possess the complete and final Truth, it misunderstands the nature of God. Nor will attempts to combine them all into a "universal religion" be very helpful. Each religion represents a fixed and limited truth which cannot be extended beyond its proper boundaries. Real progress lies in an entirely different direction. In short, the world is still evolving, and the goal of our spiritual aspirations still lies before us.

There are three principal fields of human endeavor which an organized religion must play a role in developing. These are the *intellectual*, which corresponds to man's mental being, the *ethical*, corresponding to his vital being and the *aesthetic*, which relates to his physical being. All of these fields of endeavor point toward definite goals and ideal ends, and it is the function of religion, in a very special way, to lead man toward these goals and contribute to their harmonious fulfilment in a spiritually-centered life. To the extent that it succeeds in its task, religion constitutes the most powerful civilizing force available to man in his present condition; but if it fails to do

so because of a premature and insensitive suppression of the inner impulse toward fullness and perfection which pervades the different parts of man's being, then it can easily become allied with those forces conspiring to drive us backward in the direction of that violence and savagery out of which we have emerged with so much difficulty. It would be tragic if we were to cast away so wilfully the heritage of human culture which has been gained by so many heroic efforts.

The great danger of religion in the field of man's intellectual development is that there is a strong tendency to confine his spiritual intuitions in a set of well-defined mental formulas. The inner aspiration of man as a rational being is to discover and to know the universal principles of truth. Insofar as religion aids him in extending his ontological horizons and deepening his awareness of the ever-present mystery of existence it is contributing to his intellectual growth; but there are inherent limitations of his rational powers, and religion has almost always lost sight of this by capitulating to the narrow demands of logical clarity and doctrinal purity at the expense of direct mystical experience. The result has usually been an exclusive emphasis on one vision of Truth which condemns all other views to perversity and falsehood. Although some religions are much more tolerant than others in this respect, and the greatest spiritual leaders are well aware that God always escapes our attempts to contain him in a mental formula, it is doubtful that any of the major world religions have been able to avoid these limitations altogether. In many areas of the world, during certain historical periods, the insistence upon doctrinal uniformity has led to extreme persecution and suppression. This is especially true when religious beliefs have become an intimate part of the social and political structure of a nation. As we saw previously, the Divine has more than one pose for its being, and each person must be free to widen his consciousness and open his complex nature to the full range of divine reality. The mind itself must be guided toward its consummation as a Power of the Divine in the world and any attempt, whether in the name of religion or otherwise, to restrain it in the interests of a fixed, institutionalized doctrine must be shunned.

The second field of human endeavor in which religion can contribute to the search for fulfilment is the ethical. As a living being, man shares the vital urge to grow and expand and conquer which is characteristic of all living forms. Life is also a Power of the Divine seeking for a perfect manifestation of its hidden divinity in matter. But the human vital impulse proceeds on two lines, the individual and the social. To be a "rugged individualist" is not enough for man, because true individuality involves a growth into harmony with others and a recognition of the unity of mankind. Ethics and religion play a central role in molding human nature in the direction of that ideal of practical life which is identified with the good. The first law of man's physical and vital being is that of self-interest and self-assertion, the seeking for personal gratification and outer domination at the expense of others. The customs and institutions of society, on the other hand, provide a necessary counterbalance to the impulses of the egoistic nature. Organized religion is closely associated with these social customs and institutions, and in many cases it constitutes their prime sanction and support. Unfortunately,

this unholy alliance between the state and religion has proven again and again to be a barrier to human progress. Each culture reaches a point where an ideal moral law is sought for as a basis for a purely rational ethics. Here the rule of reason is substituted both for impulsive desire and for the blind acceptance of social custom, which can itself become an instrument of our baser egoistic desires. A universal moral standard, such as a greatest happiness principle, or a categorical imperative, is formulated and appealed to as the ultimate source of moral value. The earlier conflict between the individual and society, which can be resolved only by force in the infrarational stage, is now tried at the bar of reason and dealt with accordingly. This was a tremendous step forward for humanity, contributing mightily to human progress by supplying a new intellectual and moral idealism to the religious consciousness. But the rule of reason has not been found sufficient to solve all human problems, and progress on a purely rational basis is a limited affair based upon compromise and uncertainty. At best, reason can provide an abstract concept of justice, defining the rights and obligations of each person in the light of a specified set of assumptions, and then try to fit everyone into the mold thus formulated—much in the manner of Procrustes with his victims.

These limitations of reason have been recognized by the world's religions, and several of them—preéminently Christianity and Mahāyāna Buddhism—have made an appeal to a higher principle of love and compassion as the basis of all moral value. Jesus Christ as the Incarnation or Avatāra of Divine Love, and the Bodhisattva as a center for the ingress of the Infinite Compassion of the Buddha-Heart into the suffering world of sentient beings, are sublime religious expressions of this fundamental principle. This is certainly a more satisfactory vision of the ultimate goal of moral life, but the ethics of love has not really fared much better than that of reason as a sufficient basis for the civilization of man. This is perhaps the most bitter lesson which we have to learn from the shambles of the international situation today. How is love to cope with the fierce vital urges of the mighty nation-powers of the world? For love also can become a tool of our aggressive impulses, and there is no more dramatic portrayal of this than the spectacle of Christian communities invoking the Cross for the purpose of exploiting their neighbors. In Sri Aurobindo's magnificent epic poem *Savitri* (p. 572), the compassionate Madonna of suffering sums up the situation by exclaiming:

I have brought no arm of strength to aid or slay;
God gave me love, hē gave me not his force.

If reason errs in the direction of inhuman severity and logical insensitivity, love errs on the side of excessive sentimentality and a weak-willed indulgence in the face of manifest atrocities. I think that most of us would agree that if we are going to err, it is better to err on the side of love and compassion than on that of a cold and impersonal application of abstract principles. But surely we can recognize that the time has arrived when the question must be raised: "May we not look forward to a

higher perfection of life in which error and falsehood will be taken up into a greater principle of Truth, and Wisdom and Love will be one with Power, so that God's peace can reign upon the earth?" We shall return to this question at the end of our discussion, when we shall see that it is possible to give an affirmative answer to it in the light of Sri Aurobindo's vision.

The third field of human endeavor, in which religion plays a role in leading man toward an ideal consummation, is the aesthetic. This is anchored in his physical being, and its fulfilment would be to enable the physical being to enter into oneness with an eternal beauty and delight at the heart of existence. All art contributes toward this goal by developing the refined sensibility and balance which is necessary for its attainment. But, as in the other fields of human endeavor, so also in this one, it is religion which can heighten and purify man's powers and guide him to his goal. The aesthetic element in religion is found in the forms and ceremonies which make up a large part of the content and expression of the various religions. Temples and churches, festivals and masses, sacraments and initiations—all play their parts in the ceremonial splendor of man's different approaches to his gods. And here the danger lies, as was the case in the other fields we have considered, for these forms and ceremonies tend to become complicated, conventional and mechanical in their use and performance. They are efficacious for spiritual progress only when the outer symbols are vibrant with the inner consciousness of the worshipper. Simplicity and sincerity are absolutely essential if religion is to fulfil its role in the spiritualization of man's physical being. For Matter too is a Power of God, and the hidden consciousness within it is also seeking to manifest its secret divinity. This is the most difficult barrier for the religious mind to cross. Traditionally, Spirit and Matter have been considered to be the great irreconcilable opposites of cosmic existence. Pure Spirit is taken to be the denial of Matter, and Matter is said to be the negation of the Spirit. As Death rudely insinuates in *Savitri* (p. 713):

Where Matter is all, there Spirit is a dream:
If all are the Spirit, Matter is a lie....

We may well ask whether this is the whole truth of things, and we shall have to return to this question in a few moments. But, with respect to the complex forms and ceremonies characteristic of organized religion, we may say that their real value in the spiritual life is questionable. One of the most beautiful statements in world literature on this topic is the following verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* (IX. 26. Sri Aurobindo's translation):

He who offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a cup of water,
that offering of love from the striving soul is acceptable to Me.

This is the essence of all religious worship. No elaborate props are required, but a sincere devotion to God springing from the utter depths of one's being is the essential means of entering into the supreme delight of the Divine Nature.

Now let us bring together the various strands of thought which we have been considering and, in the light of a comprehensive view of spirituality, attempt to evaluate the role of religion in the progress of man. We have said that the realization of God in his transcendent, cosmic and individual poises is the central aim of religion. And it is insofar as this aim is integrated with the intellectual, ethical and aesthetic fields of human endeavor, and serves as their guide and support, that religion fulfils its role in human progress. True religion culminates in spirituality, which is the mark of a life devoted to the seeking for and living in the Divine alone. In *The Human Cycle* (pp. 201-2), Sri Aurobindo states:

Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul, because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, *dharma*. This liberty it will give to all the fundamental parts of our being.... Only it will be vigilant to illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by a self-searching, self-controlled expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. For all these are potentialities of the spirit.

This passage presents the essence of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the spiritual destiny of mankind. Let us see how it applies to our present concerns.

There is a deep confusion in the minds of most people with respect to the apparently separate and conflicting principles of Spirit and Matter. Any reference to spirituality and the turn toward a spiritual way of life immediately conjures up the image of an intense struggle with the physical and vital impulses of the unregenerate nature. It is thought that a truly spiritual life must be based upon a denial of the lower nature which will eventually lead to its suppression and destruction. Most of the world's religions give credence to this interpretation in one way or another. Theistic religions offer to the elect promises of an ultimate heavenly state of existence in which the soul will be eternally free from the dross and stain of earthly life. Purely monistic religions look to a total absorption of the individual in the infinite being of the Absolute without remainder or return. Other religions, with a Buddhistic orientation, speak of an ultimate Nirvāna, a return to the non-being and emptiness at the root of apparent being. All draw the line between Spirit and Matter at one place or another, with a greater or lesser subtlety of mental fabrication. But we may well ask whether the last word has been said on this topic by the great religious founders and Incarnations of the past. For, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, wherever there is an aspiration for perfection there is something of the Divine seeking for fulfilment, and that fulfilment must not be denied. All things are divine, and the manifestation of that inner divinity can be seen in the human impulse toward growth, perfection, and completeness, in harmony with all existence and according to the inner law of the being—just as a seed unfolds its latent potentialities, flowers and bears fruit. This is not to say that we

must ignore all distinctions between higher and lower values or between different parts of the individual nature. The Divine takes many forms when it becomes a world, and each form has its own proper excellence and fulfilment in the cosmic adventure of God.

In terms of human nature, as we have already said, there are distinctive parts or principles of the individual being which can be identified, and each of them must be brought to its unique perfection. There is the *physical being*, whose locus is the material body; the *vital being*, which is an expression of the cosmic Life-Power; the *mental being*, as an expression of Universal Mind; and the as yet undeveloped *supramental being*, which is linked with the highest creative power of the Divine. The appearance of fully-developed Supramental (Gnostic) Beings on earth would represent the complete union of Spirit and Matter, and signalize the culmination of the present cycle of evolution, opening up the vista of a New Age characterized by the full flowering of Godhead in the world. This is not to be interpreted as an other-worldly achievement, but as something to be brought about on earth through a transformation of the present material organization of our existence. The lower parts of the nature—physical, vital and mental—are not to be neglected, but are to be uplifted and integrated in terms of the higher supramental principle (or Truth-Consciousness) and brought to their ultimate perfection. Just as the manifestation of Life unveiled hidden potentialities in dull, inert Matter, and the advent of Mind in the evolutionary process transformed the living body into the relatively pliant and responsive human form, so it is anticipated that all of these principles will be sublimated and perfected in the new supramental being. In this way, we may expect that Wisdom and Love will finally be united with God's Power to fulfil the future destiny of the earth. Insofar as religion has contributed in the past to the gradual refinement and upliftment of the lower parts of man's being, it has fulfilled its role in human progress. But religion cannot take man into the higher supramental regions. This is true not only of presently existing religions, but also of any others that man may seek to establish in the future. For, at best, religion can prepare him up to a certain point by helping to purify the lower parts of his being and properly directing his intellectual, ethical and aesthetic activities. The rest lies with a higher spiritual power which owns no master, individual, social or cosmic, but is one with the supreme Conscious-Force of the Divine in all Her creative splendor. In his small book *The Mother* (pp 1-2), Sri Aurobindo gives us the key to the ultimate consummation of God's purpose on earth in words so simple and profound that further elaboration upon them is neither possible nor necessary:

There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.

But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth; it will not act in conditions laid upon it by the Falsehood and the Igno-

rance. For if it were to yield to the demands of the Falsehood, it would defeat its own purpose.

These are the conditions of the Light and Truth, the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend; and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties.... There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.

ROBERT M. KLEINMAN

DID YOU MAKE ME BARE...?

DID you make me bare
 Of all things dear
 Like trees that lose their leaves at autumn time—
 Did you pour pain's bounty
 Upon me
 Whilst others dwelt in joy—
 For a reason?

Was all that many-mansioned sorrow
 Your gift
 For the chosen
 And was your love so great
 That you gave all these things
 To me?

Let then all pain fall
 Quietly at your feet
 Like flowers strewn
 In worship,
 And let my heart break into song
 For you.

GEORGETTE COTY

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(This valuable contribution from Dick Batstone, who stayed in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for a while some years ago and left behind many friends eager to see him again, is a paper read at a public meeting held by the Sri Aurobindo Centre, London, on August 15, 1970.)

I

I REMEMBER once talking with a German Pastor who had come to Pondicherry to stay for a few months at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram there. We were speaking about the relation of Christianity to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo, and he suggested to me that the way for a westerner to appreciate Sri Aurobindo lay through a study of the western mystics such as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Meister Eckhart, Rusbroeck, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa and George Fox.

There is indeed a kinship here, but it would take many years to follow through the course he prescribed, and I want today to try a different line of approach—to see if I can relate the teaching of Christ concerning the Kingdom of God to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

We have, after all, most of us here in the West, been brought up in the Christian tradition, in a culture owing much to the lives of generations of Christ-seeking and Christ-serving men. There is a danger in neglecting our childhood associations and teachings.

We have, I think, if we are dissatisfied with current religious practice and doctrine, to beware of too hastily rejecting where we may instead enrich and deepen.

Sri Aurobindo himself is a master of synthesis, and also a great encourager of individual and national differences, an emphasiser of the duty of each person to find his own way, without taking upon himself the way or dharma of another.

Let us then, as westerners, start by a consideration of the Kingdom of Heaven in the teaching of Jesus.

If, in what follows, I go on rather long without mentioning Sri Aurobindo, I hope you will be patient—I shall return to him again in time.

St. Matthew's Gospel describes, in its 3rd Chapter, how John the Baptist preached in the Wilderness of Judea. His theme was '*Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*'

In the 9th Chapter we can read that Jesus went about all the cities and villages in Galilee 'teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people...'

A little later it is recorded that Jesus sent the twelve disciples to preach to their fellow Jews 'saying *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*'

What was meant by John the Baptist, Jesus and his disciples by this phrase 'the Kingdom of Heaven'?

At the time of Jesus' teaching, the phrase would have been understood by his hearers in two possible ways, firstly as meaning the result of obedience to God's Law, or will, as revealed in the Torah. To submit oneself fully to that Law would be 'to take upon oneself the Malkuth (or kingly rule) of Heaven.'

In this sense, then, if and when there are enough righteous men, the Kingdom of God becomes a realised fact.

The second contemporary usage of the phrase was for an historical event yet to be revealed, a decisive intervention of God — the hope for the future. It was spoken of by the prophet Daniel when he described his vision of the end of Gentile world supremacy, when 'the kingdom and dominion... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High' for ever, and the divine kingship should become effective over the whole world.

This was the eschatological¹ idea, that had grown out of Israel's history. It was connected, in the writings of the prophets, with the coming of the Son of Man, or the Messiah, and with Judgement. Sometimes the Son of Man seems to have been envisaged as a temporal, political leader of the house of David, who would inaugurate a Jewish imperial rule. Sometimes, and particularly in the 'apocryphal' works of the scribes, he was understood as a supernatural being who would come, as suddenly as lightning, and inaugurate a final kingdom of all generations (following a resurrection of the dead) in eternity—on 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord,' as the prophet Malachi calls it.

The common underlying idea behind these views of the Kingdom of God, current at the time of Jesus, among his listeners, was, then, one of God's power becoming clearly and thoroughly effective in human life and affairs. This could come about either by the effort of man, or by the 'coming' of a Messiah from God.

There is a connection between the two ideas, similar to that between human will and divine grace—and it has been held by some Jews that when the tide of righteousness has risen to a certain level in a community or nation, then the Messiah will come, indeed that by enough people fulfilling the Law they may *compel* his coming.

Jesus himself used the expression 'Kingdom of God' in two ways similar to those I have mentioned. For example the Rabbinic saying about 'taking upon one the Malkuth of Heaven' is paralleled by 'Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter into it' (Mark 10:15), but whereas the rabbis meant the scrupulous observance of the Torah, Jesus meant something else. What this something else, or something more, was I will return to later.

Again, the Jewish synagogue prayer 'May he establish the Kingdom during your life and during your days' finds a parallel in 'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' in the Lord's Prayer.

Similarly Jesus echoes the apocalyptic² motif in such sayings as that recorded in

¹ From the Greek words *eschatos*, the last, and *logos*, teaching; i.e. doctrine of the 'last things.'

² From the Greek word *apokalypsis*, meaning unveiling or revelation.

Mark, where he says 'Verily I say unto you that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power', and again in his reply to the High Priest and Sanhedrin at his trial, when he says 'You will see the Son of Man on the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven...'

Where Jesus is unique in his teaching on the Kingdom is in his emphasis that it has already come. He is recorded by Matthew and Luke as saying 'If I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you,' continuing 'or else how can one enter into the strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.'

Here he clearly means that some new development or new possibility of development in God's manifestation has taken place—distinct from the taking of the yoke of the Torah. Jesus speaks as one who is conscious of the divine power at work in the world, and of himself being the agent of that power.

The texts discovered at Qumran witness to a contemporary belief that the world was under the dominion of Belial, was in fact the Kingdom of Satan. But Jesus speaks of a great victory by God over the Evil One, and as Rudolf Otto writes, 'His own activity lies in, and is carried forward by, the tidal wave of the divine victory.' In Luke 10:18 he is reported as saying 'I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightening' and he experiences in himself the resulting effectiveness of the kingly rule of God on earth in his own exorcising and healing ministry. He is conscious of the Divine as Father, not as a despotic judge, and himself as relayer of that Father's love. Indeed more: 'I and my Father are one.' He says 'Take *my* yoke upon you and learn of me... for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' He comes as a great wind of freedom dispelling all 'the calculations and double-entry book-keeping' of pharisaical piety.

John the Baptist, in prison, hears of the works of Jesus and sends two of his disciples to ask him 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'—probably because Jesus' teaching did not fulfil the temporal political expectations of John's ideas of the Kingdom, nor altogether meet the requirements of prophecy.

Jesus replies 'Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them'—indicating that the prophecy in the 35th chapter of Isaiah is being fulfilled and that the sovereign power of God is coming into visible operation. The strong man has been bound.

Further evidence that Jesus did not talk only in terms of a coming future event, but of the present, are such sayings as those in the Sermon on the Mount in which he says 'Blessed *are* the poor in spirit for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven,' and continues with a series of conditions for receiving blessedness (literally the state of bliss) here and now.

Again he is reported in Matthew's gospel as saying 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see: and your ears for they hear, for...many prophets and righteous

men have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them.'

In St. John's Gospel 'eternal life' is given as the goal of our living. The popular interpretation of this has often been to level it down to 'future life,' *i.e.* life in an after-death dimension, and to give to the word 'eternal' the meaning of endless time, time with no last day. It clearly does not mean this in the text, since it says 'This *is* eternal life to know God.' What is referred to is a here-and-now quality of life.

Rufus Jones, the Quaker theologian, puts this in an eloquent way: '“This is eternal life,” it is announced, “to know God,” which, as the verb indicates, is an expanding and ever heightening experience. We are not pointed away to some other place or to a time without terminus; we are raised to a new and more dynamic way of living, which carries its end in itself. To know the truth, to participate in the joy of loving, to be sanctified in the truth for the sake of others, is to be living eternal life. It is, in short, life like the divine life, inexhaustible in depth, infinite in grace and goodness, abounding in joy and peace, and forever being enriched... “In Him” (says St. John) was Life...'

'Life like the divine life'—he writes. That is life subject to the will of God, arising within us, and directing and ruling our hearts—life under the rule of God—if we know this we are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Rudolf Otto says of the Kingdom that it implies 'an absolute domain of salvation, indefinable and undefined.... Its highest content is that he who is pure in heart will see God, and what that signifies is again not defined. Enough to know it as the only treasure and the costly pearl.'

We cannot, however, in any review of the meaning of 'the Kingdom of God' in Christianity, ignore the element in Jesus' teaching which has to do with the supernatural 'divine event' of the coming of the Son of Man. Distasteful as it is to many Christians it seems undeniable that Jesus spoke in terms, current at his time, of himself appearing again in Glory, soon after a period of suffering and death. He seems to have associated with this idea that of a last judgement upon the living and the dead, and of a time of blessedness for his followers in a transformed Jerusalem—and an end to history. St. Matthew speaks of it as 'Thy advent and the consummation of the age.'

I have already quoted the difficult verse where Jesus says, at his trial, 'You will see the Son of Man on the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

This element, especially since the books of Albert Schweitzer, some of them written over 60 years ago, has posed the 'eschatological problem.' That Jesus and his followers expected the imminent coming of the Son of Man has now been accepted by practically all New Testament scholars.

There seem, as C.H. Dodd writes in *The Parables of the Kingdom*, to be two diverse strains in the teaching of Jesus, one of which appears to contemplate the indefinite continuance of human life under historical conditions—for example his ethical teaching presupposes this—'while the other appears to suggest a speedy end to these conditions.'

Dodd continues, 'A drastic criticism might eliminate the one strain or the other, but both are deeply embedded in the earliest form of the tradition known to us. It would be better to admit that we do not possess the key to their reconciliation than to do such violence to our documents.'

The embarrassment lies not only in the apparent fact that Jesus could be mistaken, but also in the opposed natures of the two strains of teaching. The one is a teaching about a way of life that brings its own reward, a teaching about inwardness, about the Kingdom of Heaven, that is an individual experience, a teaching of love. The other is a teaching of an approaching outward event of crisis, of judgement and 'weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

As C.J. Cadoux has put it, 'The picture of God in the parable of the Lost Sheep is simply inconsistent with the picture of Him consigning the guilty to Gehenna as their final home.'

Various solutions to the problem have been put forward. Cadoux's was to choose the picture he felt to be from the heart of Jesus and reject that which he felt came from the contemporary ideas of Judaism. 'If I am to make my choice between them—and I must'—he wrote—'I choose the first; and I am guided in my choice by that very same Divine Spirit which tells me that Jesus is the revealer of God.' And he calls this 'judging Christ by Christ.'

Rudolf Otto, however, claimed that the very essence of the Kingdom as taught by Jesus was paradox. His doctrine was full of 'strong inner bi-polarities.' Thus he urged people to make the strongest effort of will and yet he praised the child-like mind that simply accepts what is given it; he rejected all greed for reward, yet he encouraged people to 'lay up treasure in heaven'—and so, too, he spoke of loving forgiveness and also of stern judgement, and of the Kingdom that was already present and of its culmination in a 'coming' that was future. He himself referred to the 'mystery' of the Kingdom. We should not try to make it too logical and tidy.

Schweitzer's solution was to declare outright that Jesus was a child of his time, bound by its thought-forms and heroically mistaken in his expectations. But, he continued, this does not matter, for the important thing behind his imagery is the passionate faith in the Kingdom of God, '*the mighty striving for perfection of the world,*' which, now, can be reinterpreted for our age in terms of ethical-mysticism.

'The important thing,' he wrote in the final chapter of his famous *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, 'is a will-to-will understanding of Jesus, for in this the essence of the world-view is communicated. An analysis of the details of His activities and His preaching, the intention of which is to distinguish between enduring and obsolete elements, is unnecessary. His words translate themselves as it were automatically in the idiom appropriate to our conceptual materials. Many of these words which strike us as strange become true in a profound and eternal sense even for us, when we accept with open minds the power of the spirit which speaks in Him. When confronted with the difficulties of making His message clear and alive for present-day hearers, one could almost call to mind His saying "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and

His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”’

Professor Dodd, on the other hand, proposes a resolution of the conflict by making full allowance for the symbolic character of the ‘apocalyptic’ sayings. Apocalyptic is inherently symbolic, he says. The symbols stand for ‘realities which the human mind cannot directly apprehend, and are capable of re-interpretation as history unfolds,’ and he speaks of an understanding of the Kingdom as ‘that to which men awake when the order of time and space no longer limits their vision.’ Thus the Last Judgement may be taken nowadays to imply that ultimately it matters what path the individual chooses. Sooner or later each human soul will come to a consciousness of its condition in the light of the Divine Being—and will feel the pain or joy.

This interpretation is an interesting one, but it has been criticised on historical grounds as being an idea quite alien to 1st century Judaism—more Greek than Hebraic. Indeed it is characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic always to envisage the earth as the stage for the final act in the drama of man’s life. Hence the need for a final resurrection of the dead. Judaism is one of the few great religions which has had no truck with an after-life, or a consummation outside time and space. The prophets and scribes are of course aware of the imperfections of the earth, so they describe in more and more detail the purifications, the transformations and re-creations that will take place before perfection is established. The classic passage is in the Book of Revelation: ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had vanished and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready for her husband. I heard a loud voice proclaiming from the throne: “Now at last God has his dwelling among men! He will dwell among them and they shall be his People, and God himself shall be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain; for the old order has passed away!”’

Here, it is to be noted, the heavenly state descends on to the earth. The people do not go up to heaven.

Perhaps the most penetrating and enlightening understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven that I personally have come across, is that contained in a book by Maurice Nicoll called *The New Man*. It is extremely doubtful, again, however, if the interpretation offered in it has much in common with the mind of the historical Jesus!

The central idea of the Gospels, Nicoll claims, is of a possible inner evolution called rebirth. This inner evolution is psychological, an evolution of understanding. A man ‘born of woman’, the natural man, is at a certain level of understanding symbolised by Earth; the level above such a man, to be achieved by rebirth and by an inner change of consciousness, is the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God. ‘To reach it a man must reach a higher level in himself,’ says Nicoll. ‘If everyone did this, the level of life on this earth would change. The whole earth would take a step up in evolution.’

As Nicoll’s book is extremely condensed and well written it is impossible to give here an adequate summary of his detailed analysis of the parables of the Kingdom. I

will mention a few only of the suggestive interpretations which he gives.

Taking the Parable of the Sower and others he says that they are about Man being sown on the Earth as material for a step in development. He is the material for the Kingdom of Heaven. But difficulties arise. All are not sown in favourable places. Again Man must have teaching about the truth given him, knowledge about how to reach this stage of development called the Kingdom must be sown also—not upon the earth itself but upon the earth of men's mind. But new difficulties arise. Errors always creep into the teaching about inner evolution and about what a man must believe and think and do in order to reach a higher level of his own nature and understanding. These errors come because 'he sleepeth' but they cannot be separated from the Truth without danger of hurting the latter. This is shown in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. This particular parable is interpreted by Christ himself to the disciples, and ends on an apocalyptic note. 'As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

How then does Nicoll deal with this? He says that 'The destruction of the material earth is not meant,' rather 'the consumation of the age.' 'What does an *age* mean? An age is a period of time characterised by a particular teaching about inner evolution or the level of the Kingdom of Heaven. It comes to an end and a new form of the same teaching is then sown, adjusted to the prevalent conditions. A new harvest appears but always mingled with tares. A new reaping and new separation is made, and the process is again repeated. Each form of the teaching about the Kingdom, from its inception to its culmination, is an *age*.'

This cyclic recurrence of the true teaching is reminiscent of the conception of Avatars.

'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.' (Matthew 13:34) Here, says Nicoll, the man gets rid of something to obtain what he values most. It tells of getting rid of certain sides of himself,—old ways of thinking, feeling and willing, old anxieties and concerns, to make room for what is new and precious.

'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed.' (Matthew 13:31) The grain of mustard seed, rooted in earth, when it is grown reaches to Heaven—what is it?¹

¹ Editor's Note:—The author has overlooked one reference in the New Testament, Luke 17:20-21: 'And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.' Ronald Knox has the gloss to his modern translation: "'Within you": the Greek might also mean "among you"'. The Revised Version says in the margin: 'The kingdom of God is in your midst.'

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Looking back at the development of the idea of the Kingdom of God through the last 2,500 years one is struck by the way it has changed under the pressure of history.

The Hebrew prophets had proclaimed that Jehovah was the God not only of Israel, but of the whole earth, and that everywhere his will was for righteousness. In fact, however, they were forced to recognise that other countries were unrighteous and worshipped other gods, so the apocalyptic idea was born, of a time when God would reveal his sovereignty and rule not only *de jure* but *de facto*, as King of the whole world.

Whether we accept that Jesus taught that he himself would inaugurate this reign, whether we believe that the early Church so edited his message and overlaid it with their own time-bound expectations—or that Jesus and the early Church intended all along an esoteric doctrine of consciousness—we are faced with the fact that many believers expected an imminent second coming of the Lord, right down to the year 1000 A.D., and only gradually did the stress come to be laid on the Heaven attained at death, in the after-life, which is so characteristic of the Middle Ages.

Then, following the Renaissance and Reformation, and the more life-affirming outlook of the time, the Kingdom of Heaven is seen again as a possibility 'on earth.' We have the dream of Utopia, the hope of perfection in this world, but more and more based on ethics and the power of reason, both within and outside the Church. The welfare state itself owes much to dreams of the Kingdom.

Now we are witnessing a growing realisation that ethics and reason are insufficient. The hammer blows of history have driven us to interpret again and in a more spiritual way the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.

To many it has become apparent that it is man's nature itself that must change, and that not through control and education of and by the mind but by some more powerful agent, capable of transforming the very desires and body of this life, until people do what is right spontaneously from the depths of their being, without conflict, repression or hesitation.

This development in aspiration over the centuries has in the West derived, who can tell how much, from the living person of Christ, not only as represented in the Gospels but as apprehended and responded to by countless individuals in his spiritual reality. Let us not limit his influence to his revelation in his earthly life alone. There has been as it were a dialectic through history between his presence and man's response, in the changing conceptual materials of the time.

Now, however, when we may feel that the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth is an evolutionary goal, and that it can only follow from the realisation of the true nature of man—we find ourselves at a cross-roads. The path seems to lead away from Christ to those in the East who have not forgotten for so long the goal of man's life—realisation, as we in the West have forgotten. If Christ taught a method of realisation, his yoga seems lost.

For those who feel this to be a problem—and I realise that many will not see it like this at all—Sri Aurobindo's teachings are a wonderful discovery.

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Indian yoga has been labelled 'life-denying', though there have been periods when it was far from this. Latterly, however, its great teachers do seem to have taught transformation of consciousness, the rising into higher states of being and bliss, rather than aiming to transform the world.

It was this remoteness from life that repelled Sri Aurobindo from the current Indian spirituality when, as a young man, he returned to India after being educated in the West.

He saw the paradox and contradiction that lay in a country claiming and indeed possessing a supreme spiritual tradition of illumination, and also a standard of living among the lowest in the world.

His first work, that led him to prominence, was political. He became a leader among those dedicated to the cause of national independence, and for years gave himself to the task of revitalising an apathetic and disheartened nation. In the course of these years he began the practice of certain yoga exercises, not with any spiritual motive, but in a mood of almost scientific detachment—to see if there was anything in them that might increase his energies and powers for his work for India.

Later, after contacts with Lele, an Indian yogi who instructed him in silencing the mind, and during a year in prison, where he was put by the British for his political activities,— Sri Aurobindo had a series of overwhelming spiritual experiences. He settled in French Pondicherry, out of reach of the British, and, following an inner guidance, proceeded to practise a new type of yoga, synthetic of the best in the traditional yogas of India, but with a different and explicit aim—the bringing to birth of a Divine Life on earth, a terrestrial manifestation of what until now has remained supra-terrestrial.

From proclaiming initially that his yoga was one for humanity Sri Aurobindo from his new state of consciousness declared 'The yoga we practise is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal Mukti (enlightenment or salvation) although Mukti is a necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the human being. It is not personal Ananda (bliss), but the bringing down of the divine Ananda—Christ's kingdom of heaven, our Satyayuga—upon the earth.' (*The Yoga and its Objects*)

The priority is as in Jesus' injunction, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

In a letter to a disciple, countering the argument that we should seek union with the Divine for the sake of the Ananda or bliss of that state, he writes that man, woman, country, Truth 'and other things besides can be loved for their own sake and not for anything else, not for any circumstance or attendant quality or resulting enjoyment,

but for something absolute that is either in them or behind their appearance and circumstance. The Divine is more than a man or woman, a stretch of land or creed, opinion, discovery or principle. He is the Person beyond all persons, the Home and Country of all souls, the Truth of which truths are only imperfect figures. And can He then not be loved and sought for His own sake, as and more than these have been by men even in their lesser selves and nature?’

Why, then, if we are to love God for Himself, are we to trouble with the world, any more than did Plotinus, or many another great mystic?

Sri Aurobindo’s answer is that the world itself is the Divine, that Matter too is Brahman. So is Life and so is Mind. The divinity is, however, veiled and in degrees of emergence. Like Teilhard de Chardin he sees the evolutionary process as one that is groaning and travailing to bring to birth a fuller and fuller manifestation of the divine qualities of Sat-Chit-Ananda, placing the theatre and the consummation of man’s drama unequivocally here on earth, and not in some other-worldly heaven. ‘To fulfil God in Life is man’s manhood’ he has said in a striking sentence.

To use Schweitzer’s phrase, he expounds the growth of the kingdom in ‘the conceptual materials’ of evolutionary thought. The development of the series: Matter, Life, Mind, is undeniable. Through long ages, detours and set-backs notwithstanding, this development has taken place. It is indeed almost what one might call the ‘Common Sense View’ to assume that the series is not complete, that a new term is due which will be as superior and as different to mind as the human mind has been to the vital-mind of the older primates.

This next term Sri Aurobindo has called ‘Supermind,’ and the man who will embody it, the ‘Gnostic Being.’

‘The manifestation of a supramental truth-consciousness is...the capital reality that will make the divine life possible,’ he writes. ‘It is when all the movements of thought, impulse and action are governed and directed by a self-existent and luminously automatic truth-consciousness and our whole nature comes to be constituted by it and made of its stuff that the life divine will be complete and absolute. Even as it is, in reality though not in the appearance, it is a secret self-existent knowledge and truth that is working to manifest itself in the creation here. The Divine is already there immanent within us, ourselves are that in our inmost reality and it is this reality that we have to manifest; it is that which constitutes the urge towards the divine living and makes necessary the creation of the divine even in this material existence.’

A manifestation of the Supermind and its truth-consciousness is, then, inevitable in this world, sooner or later. ‘But,’ Sri Aurobindo continues, ‘it has two aspects, a descent from above, an ascent from below, a self-revelation of the spirit, an evolution in Nature. The ascent is necessarily an effort, a working of Nature, an urge or nîsus on her side to raise her lower parts by an evolutionary change, conversion or transformation into the divine reality, and it may happen by a process and progress or by a rapid miracle. The descent or self-revelation of the spirit is an act of the Supreme Reality from above which makes the realisation possible, and it can appear either as the

divine aid which brings about the fulfilment of the progress and process or the sanction of the miracle. Evolution, as we see it in this world, is a slow and difficult process and, indeed, needs, usually, ages to reach abiding results; but this is because it is in its nature an emergence from inconscient beginnings, a start from nescience and a working in the ignorance of natural beings by what seems to be an unconscious force. There can be, on the contrary, an evolution in the light and no longer in the darkness, in which the evolving being is a conscious participant and cooperator, and this is precisely what must take place here...there can be rapid conversion, quick transformation after transformation, what would seem to our normal present mind a succession of miracles. An evolution on the supramental levels could well be of that nature...'

His vision of the New Man is one which includes the transformation not only of his mind and of his vital-emotional being, but of the body itself. This has never in the past been a practical possibility because of the presence in us, unchanged, of the dark, reactionary or inert substructure of the subconscious and inconscient parts of our being. But Sri Aurobindo asserts that this can change. As the supramental principle descends from above, so there will be a corresponding supramental emergence of consciousness in what has hitherto been the inconscient, in the depths of matter, to support the evolution, and the laws of the body will no longer be determined in the old way. In this affirmation even the seemingly immortal enemies—sickness, old-age and death itself—are challenged, perhaps for the first time by a great spiritual leader.

There are references in Christianity, it is true, to a possible change even in the body of the New Man, and to its resurrection, but in Sri Aurobindo's teaching of the kingdom the radical change of the physical side of man's nature, as well as of his thought and feeling, is made explicit, and receives a unique emphasis, coming as it does as the culmination of his evolution.

Is there something of the crank, of the science-fiction writer about all this? One might say so of a lesser man, but with Sri Aurobindo there is behind his utterances the authority of one who has himself achieved realisation, who, besides having an impressive grandeur about him, is a realist, with a shrewd and balanced judgement and sense of humour.

It is also, is it not? a commonplace, nowadays, to say that science is continually realising and surpassing the imaginings of the most advanced science-fiction writers of older generations—such for example as Sri Aurobindo's contemporary H.G. Wells.

Not for a moment does Sri Aurobindo imply that his yoga or the attainment of transformation is easy. To one complaining disciple he says 'Do you expect the Supermind given to you on a plate?'

Indeed the yoga of transformation proper begins where other yogas end, when realisation has been attained, for only when the sadhak has raised himself, or when his effort has enabled the Divine Grace to raise him, to the supramental plane of consciousness, can he begin to bring it down to change the most unconscious levels of his being.

And not only is realisation the starting point, but there must be three kinds of

realisation. For, says Sri Aurobindo, the Divine has three aspects for us. *Firstly*, it is the Cosmic Self and Spirit that has to be realised—the Divine in the Universe, immanent in all created things. *Secondly*, we must find the Divine within us, in and behind our own Psychic Being, the individual being of God in our heart, and *thirdly*, we have to seek and find the Divine in His transcendent being and Spirit in the dimension of eternity. Any stopping at one or two of these attainments will be a falling short of the integral realisation necessary for the Divine Life on earth.

When we begin to observe and know ourselves as we are in all our ignorance, mechanicalness, perversity and lack of ardour, we may say ‘Hey Sri Aurobindo—this is all too remote, too lofty. It is a programme for giants like yourself. Count me out. I shall be content with far less.’

And to this I think Sri Aurobindo replies ‘All right, carry on as you are until you feel differently, until the pain and tragedy of life as it is has made you feel ready to join in the adventure, until the superconscient that is behind your surface being clarifies your vision, until you see that there is ultimately no other way for the Kingdom to come on earth. And remember—if you do decide to follow this yoga—you will not be alone. God will be with you. You will be on the side of the angels and all the powers of evolution.’

And let us remember that Jesus, too, taught the apparently impossible, in his exhortation ‘Be ye perfect.’ Sri Aurobindo fills in the details of this broad command. The distinction between the three realisations, of the Transcendental, the Cosmic and the Individual, ‘is not my invention’, he writes, ‘nor is it native to India or Asia—it is, on the contrary, a recognised European teaching, current in the esoteric tradition of the Catholic Church, where it is the authorised explanation of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—and it is very well-known to European mystic experience.’ But he brings these realisations into a meaningful pattern related to the future possibilities of the Divine Life on Earth.

How do we begin to relate ourselves to this pattern? Sri Aurobindo does not advocate physical exercises, breath control, religious discipline or, indeed, a mastery of his own philosophy. In a word he says ‘Surrender.’ The first process of the yoga is to make a firm central resolve of consecration. ‘Put yourself,’ he writes, ‘with all your heart and all your strength into God’s hands. Make no conditions, ask for nothing... nothing at all except that in you and through you his will may be directly performed. To those who demand from him, God gives what they demand, but to those who give themselves and demand nothing he gives everything that they might otherwise have asked or needed, and in addition he gives himself and the spontaneous boons of his love.’

Is it not the same voice which said ‘Take no thought saying “What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithall shall we be clothed?”...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you?’

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In conclusion let me summarise the main points which emerge from what I have been saying.

Firstly, common to the teaching of Jesus and that of Sri Aurobindo we find the dominant idea of the rule of God in man, acting not externally but from within, and the aspiration that 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' Concomitant with this are the themes of commitment of the will, dedication, surrender, the placing of oneself in the hands of the Divine who is Love.

Again we find a common stress on psychological evolution, prompted by aspiration and guided by right teaching and the experience of God: the sense, too, of a new manifestation of the divine power, with its accompanying ideas of change, of transformation, and finally 'The mighty striving for perfection of the world,' in Schweitzer's phrase, personified in men who have both themselves accepted worship though saying in effect 'Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, that is God.' And of each of these it may be said that they came and taught that we may 'have life and life more abundantly.'

I will end by quoting again from another letter written by Sri Aurobindo to a disciple:

'To the physical mind only the words and facts and acts of a man matter; to the inner mind it is the spiritual happenings in him that matter. Even the teachings of Buddha and Christ are spiritually true not as mere mental teachings but as the expression of spiritual states or happenings in them which by their life on earth they made possible (or even dynamically potential) in others. Also, evidently, sectarian walls are a mistake, an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth, which may serve a mental but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar, the Guru have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal; it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.'

If we ponder this and can accept its truth, then we must see that the true ecumenism or catholicity does not stop short at the boundaries of Christianity but that it must serve the spirit of the Kingdom and of the Life Divine, wherever these are found.

DICK BATSTONE

A TALK TO THE STUDENTS

AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

This is the report of the second of the two talks recently given by Amal Kiran. (K. D. Sethna). The first was on August 26 and the report of it appeared in the Mother India of October. The second was on August 29.

DURING the last talk I realised that the subject was as much myself as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but I could not really help it and I hope you will forgive me if I repeat the folly. I even made the claim that in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo had referred to me twice because twice he has mentioned lameness symbolically. I might take a cue from that procedure and complete the count by giving you some more lines from *Savitri*, which bring in the same characteristic. Only here the reference seems to be more general than particular. It is part of an occult vision of this enigmatic world of ours with all its play of contraries and its internal paradoxes. Sri Aurobindo figures it in the form of a strange bird which is hanging in the sky and disclosed to the eye of yogic vision. The lines run:

All things hang here between God's yes and no,
The white head and black tail of the mystic drake,
The swift and the lame foot, wing strong, wing broken
Sustaining the body of the uncertain world,
A great surreal dragon in the skies.

It's a tremendous vision. As the lame foot is there you might hold the passage to be a covert allusion which could again be considered unmistakable. But the wingedness gives one pause, until one remembers my versifying tendencies and Plato's idea that a poet is a winged creature who has no power over himself but sort of lives in the air of the mind blown by various forces good or otherwise. In any case it is difficult to think how so grandiose and dreadful a figuration as the dragon could be applied to a person, whether he be a versifier or not! I myself wondered until I suddenly realised what a tremendous drag on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo I had been! (*laughter*)

In fact most of us are so. And in that way the whole passage refers to the generality of the sadhaks who have come here. And if the central point can be taken to be Amal, well, then I can say, "Am all!" (*laughter*), representing everyone, and of course the first instinct of the poet would be to rhyme with "Am all!" "Damn all!" (*laughter*) But you cannot really damn all, all are lumped together and all are a huge brake, a massive retardation, on the yogic process carried on here with so much patience by our Gurus.

Last time I referred to my arrival in Pondicherry and my first Darshan. Perhaps it may be interesting to sketch the background of the life here before I came. Of course it didn't make much difference, my coming here; the same thing went on, perhaps a little worse, but still it did. The background was just a year earlier—the descent

of what Sri Aurobindo has called the Overmind. The Overmind, as you all know, is the world of the Great Gods, and also the unity of all the Gods in an all-covering God-head. Sri Aurobindo says that so far all the spiritual inspirations have had their source in the Overmind, which is a plane of infinite diversity. Though always its basis is unity, the unity is not in the forefront, the diversity is the prominent feature. And hence there have been innumerable religions throughout history, each one making an absolute of one aspect or another of the Supreme Reality. The consciousness known as Krishna's is also said by Sri Aurobindo to have been—at least in its dynamic aspect—a manifestation of the Overmind in the most concrete, the most physical way. So this occasion of the descent of the Overmind was, as it were, an extension of what Krishna had achieved—that is, the Overmind Consciousness coming down right to the physical. We may question whether Krishna brought it down even to the external physical, because if we understood the story of his death symbolically we would see why he died by an arrow shot into his foot: the foot is the symbol of the most material consciousness. That part, we may conclude, had remained vulnerable. Anyway, here was a great occasion on which a power, not unheard-of but unrealised in its fullness, had come down in its fullness, though perhaps not in all its details yet. As a result of this the Ashram as such could be started. Sri Aurobindo was always reluctant to start an Ashram. When disciples wanted to come to him, either he asked them not to do so or it was as if he felt like running away from them! I remember Purani telling me that when, on his arrival here, he first fell at Sri Aurobindo's feet and then raised his head there was no Sri Aurobindo! (*laughter*) He had quietly vanished into his room. And you may have known from his letter to C.R. Das how very careful he was to secure his base, his ground, and be absolutely sure before launching out on anything. So there had been no Ashram as such.

At that time people were staying in various houses and the Mother too was one of the residents, though a very looked-up-to resident. But on this day of the Overmind's descent Sri Aurobindo is said to have called the Mother to his side and made her the head of the Ashram, telling his would-be disciples that henceforth she would be the active Guru in front and he would be in the background. Now, I have learnt that in the months soon after, this Overmind manifestation, there was an unimaginable play of extraordinary Force resulting in what you may call minute-to-minute miracles. Everything in our Ashram-life, I believe, is miraculous but it often wears the guise of a natural event. Only when you think of it deeply you see the miraculous power behind it. But here it was an open display of extraordinary phenomena, because at that time the process of sadhana, according to the information I have gathered, was to bring down the Great Gods of the Overmind into human receptacles. And when such a constant descent takes place all kinds of wonderful things occur. The only wonderful thing the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had not quite foreseen was that the human receptacles would digest the Gods (*laughter*) and think they were themselves the Gods instead of being their instruments! (*laughter*) And this bit of surprise, of course, could never be accepted.

But the most astonishing result of the descent was—as to the Mother once related to me—that she got what is called the Word of Creation. Yes, the Word of Creation—just as the God Brahma is supposed to have created the universe by his Word. Now a Power came to the Mother to create as it were a new world by the mere Word: whatever she would say would come true. And a whole new World of Light was ready for precipitation: she had just to say the Word and that World would have come and taken possession of the earth. So she went to Sri Aurobindo and told him, “I have the Word of Creation. What is to be done?” It seems Sri Aurobindo, as usual, kept quiet for some time, did not give any kind of response immediately, but finally said, “This Word of Creation is of the Overmind and we do not want it. We want the Supermind.” The Overmind is so marvellous that if it were established here nobody would look beyond it, nobody would want anything more. It is so dazzling that everybody would think the ultimate had come. Actually what the “ultimate would have brought was a new religion, because, as I have said, the Overmind is the source of all religions. This would have swamped all the existing religions, but it would itself have been still like them. And it would have stood in the way of greater manifestations. So the Mother says she went back to her room, concentrated for some hours and dissolved the whole World which was ready for precipitation. I think this was the greatest renunciation the earth’s spiritual history knows of. A Power, such as had not come to anyone, had come and was ready to be put into effect; but, at a short No from Sri Aurobindo, the Mother blew it away as if it were a bagatelle!

And, once it was stopped, the whole process of the sadhana seems to have undergone a change. Instead of bringing down the Great Gods, the effort now was to start from the bottom, not from the top—to dig, as it were, into the subconscious and gradually prepare the purification of the human consciousness and nature and bring out what Sri Aurobindo has called the psychic being—the Divine’s representative in the very midst of the natural formation. Thus the evolutionary creature would develop slowly, gradually with a lot of hardships but still with a sure footing.

So that was the condition, the spiritual condition of the sadhana into which I happened to stumble.

At that time there were only about 80 people here—just a handful, and the life here was much more quiet, and people at least looked much more serious, and they were supposed to be concentrating much more on their inner development than on any outer action. I cannot give you an idea of what all the 80 people looked like or acted like, but I have memories of some of them who could not be bypassed. Of course Nolini was there, quite a young man but more or less the same. He used to go about with his eyebrows high up as if in concentration on some Beyond, not paying much attention to outer things. When we were standing together and talking he would pass along, stand, look with a very interested air and say “What?” and just walk away. (*laughter*) We tried to give some answer but before that he was gone! (*laughter*) Amrita was there also—more impulsive, more easy to get at. He used to come to my room pretty often, I remember. In fact he learned typing on my typewriter, in my room. And he was in

charge, at that time, of our milking department. (*laughter*) Cows were brought into the Ashram actually (*laughter*)—into the courtyard there, because when they were milked outside there was a lot of dilution of the milk (*laughter*); so they had to keep a close watch; 2 or 3 cows were brought into the courtyard before the Reading Room, and Amrita would sit there, supposed to keep an eye on things. But unfortunately he had a companion—it was a man named Dara, now dead. You might have seen him, a huge man from Hyderabad, a very aristocratic Mohammedan. And he was an incurable chatterbox. (*laughter*) So all the time he was talking with Amrita and poor Amrita could hardly attend to what was going on with the milking. Once I happened to come into the courtyard and found Dara holding his hands up and saying something and Amrita listening to him very raptly and the milkman doing something hurriedly with two cans. It struck me afterwards that he must have been pouring water into the milk! (*laughter*) Indeed Dara was quite a character—a very extraordinary character with a lot of eccentricity. He was also a poet, of course: at that time poets were budding up all over the place. But he was a very original kind of poet. His themes always used to be like how he sat in his canvas chair and the canvas tore apart. (*laughter*) Such exciting events became the subject matter of his poetry. On another occasion, as you might have heard, he exhausted his stock of tea, so he penned a furious poem to the Mother:

Mother Almighty,
I have finished all my tea! (*laughter*)

Among the others who were present, there was Champaklal, young but an old hand. He had come fairly earlier and he was one of the few, if not actually the only one, who from the beginning addressed the Mother as "Mother". Many were a little bit averse to accepting her; the chief argument was that she was not an Indian—how could there be a Divine Representation in a non-Indian? (*laughter*) All the Avatars had been Indians, so the Mother could not be an Avatar, she being French! But Champaklal had no such inhibition. And I believe Dyuman was there, too, though I am not very sure. He may have come a little later; at least he was later than Nolini, Amrita and Champaklal; but I think his devotional face was there when I arrived.¹ And on my arrival I found two Americans in the Ashram. They were the first Westerners to reach the Ashram in its initial period of 1926-27. Pavitra² was already present, he had been settled for a few years, and we had an English lady named Datta—Miss Hodgeson—who had been associated with the Mother in France. But after the early settlement these two Americans were the first to come from the West. They were an old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Macpheeters—the man was named Vaun and the lady Janet, and they

¹ It is strange that in my talk I missed mentioning the one person who had impressed me the most by his dynamic character and who, as the first talk recounted, had been the Ashramite I came the earliest to know, next to Pujalal who had appeared at the station to receive me. I mean Purani. Another sadhak I should have mentioned was the then-librarian of the Ashram—Premanand—with whom came to be associated very closely after a while.

² Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire,

had come just a month or perhaps not even that long before I arrived. So they too were preparing for the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

I happened to be just behind them in the queue and I couldn't help overhearing their agitated conversation. It seemed a big problem had arisen at the last minute: to whom to bow first, the Mother or Sri Aurobindo? (*laughter*) Vaun told his wife: "If we bow to Sri Aurobindo first, the Mother will feel insulted; (*laughter*) if we bow to the Mother first, Sri Aurobindo will get offended. (*laughter*) So what should we do?" I too was very much intrigued by this almost insoluble problem. (*laughter*) But they had remarkable ingenuity. Their solution was: not to bow to either of them (*laughter*)—but to put their heads, one after the other, on the empty space between the two! (*laughter*) Of course they had the unique privilege of having blessings from both Gurus at once (*laughter*) but they missed the feet of either! For the likes of me it was no problem because Sri Aurobindo was quite new and unknown to us, while the Mother had become familiar; and while Sri Aurobindo was sitting very gravely the Mother was all smiles to set us at ease. (*laughter*) So we went straight to her, got soothed by her, gained some moral courage, then proceeded to Sri Aurobindo and looked at him. I told you last time how I had looked. (*laughter*)

Now to come back to the people, all—the undamned all—who were there in the Ashram. Very soon after my coming Dilip Kumar Roy came with Sahana Devi. They came and settled down. And, soon after that, I saw the face of my friend Nirod. It was of course an unforgettable face. (*laughter*) I think he had come straight from England or *via* some place in Bengal, but he carried something of the air of England. (*laughter*) He had passed out as a doctor at Edinburgh. I saw him, we became friends and we have remained friends ever since. But when he came as a doctor he was not given doctoring work here. As far as I remember he was made the head of a timber godown! (*laughter*) All sorts of strange jobs were being given to people. Look at the first job I got. The Mother once told me, "I would like you to do some work." I said, "All right, I am prepared to do some work." Then she said, "Will you take charge of our stock of furniture?" (*laughter*) I said to myself, "By Gosh! To manage furniture, it's something unthinkable!" (*laughter*) But I said to the Mother, "Very well, I'll take it up." It was really a stunning blow. But then I saw that it involved getting the Mother's signature on a chit every now and then. People would ask for a table, a chair or a rack or something and I would have to go to the Mother and get her signature. It was a great Grace that one could come in contact with her through such a job. There was no other job, I suppose, open at that time which could bring one in touch with her so much. And then I found that as I kept listing the tables and chairs and other uninteresting items I was full of happiness. I said, "Have I become so perverse as to derive pleasure from noting down chairs and cupboards and stools?" (*laughter*) But I realised that the Mother, when she gives any work, gives two things along with it: first, Ananda of the thing because without that joy you couldn't carry on at all, and, secondly, the capacity—to some extent at least! I can tell you that I carried on this job of putting furniture into people's rooms and keeping an account, for about a year

and a half, by which time I found it a pretty tough affair because things were not organised in those days as they are now. I had no servants under me, I had to hire the rickshaw-wallas from the street and tempt them to carry tables and chairs. Sometimes they would go on strike, asking for more payment, and I didn't know what to do. Occasionally I had to break the strike by showing them that I could shoulder furniture myself too. (*laughter*)

Then in the course of my duties I had my first serious fall—a physical fall—in Pondicherry. It was a toss on the road and my knee became swollen. Quite a big swelling it was. So naturally the question arose: “What to do about the furniture?” Well, Amrita was sent to me to break the sad news that now my job would be taken away from me. I was lying in bed and he came and very sweetly asked me how I was and all that. He was beating about the bush. (*laughter*) I knew why he had come. (*laughter*) I said, “Amrita, please come out with it. If you have come to tell me that I shall be deprived of this job and lose it, please say it at once, because I will thank you most heartily.” (*laughter*) Then of course he came out with it and carried the report to the Mother that Amal had received the news like a yogi! (*laughter*)

To return to my friend Nirod—it was after some time that he got the dispensary. I don't know whether he wanted it, or liked it or not, but he established his reputation as the frowning physician. (*laughter*) People used to come to him with a cold and he would stand and glare at them, and say, “What? you have a cold!” Poor people, they would simply shiver (*laughter*) and this had a very salutary effect because they thought that it was better not to fall ill than face the doctor's drastic disapproval of any kind of illness which would give him any botheration. (*laughter*) But he did his job all right, and every time he frightened off a patient he went to his room and started trying to write poetry (*laughter*)—because that, he thought, was his most important job. And, whether he succeeded as a doctor or not, as a poet he has eminently succeeded. Sri Aurobindo has really made him a poet.

The doctoring as well as the poetry was a bond between us, because my father had been a doctor and medicine ran in my blood. We used to discuss medical matters sometimes, but more often the problems and pains of poetry.

Now I must go on to recount my own hardships. Before I come to them I might tell you that I gave up the house in which I had been staying for Rs. 12 a month; the whole house where Vasudha has been staying was in my hands. And, by the way, Vasudha arrived here not long after me. She was a girl of 15. She is now called the oldest sadhika in the Ashram—oldest not in the sense that she is the most advanced in years but as being the only one out of the early sadhikas, who has stuck out somehow or other. As soon as I left that house she was installed there. I had made an appeal to the Mother, saying, “The house is too big for me. So many rooms, and I don't know what to do with them and every night I have to shut so many doors and windows, it's a job (*laughter*) really beyond me. Give me just one room with one window from which I can watch the stars.” (*laughter*) The Mother said, “I'll see about it.” Very soon after, I got the room where Purani had been staying some years. It is the room in the

Dortoir Annexe—just opposite Pranab's place the corner room up there. Now Purani was promoted to a room within the Ashram compound itself and I was put in his place—a promotion for me also. But it is interesting that it was the very room into which I had stepped first, because as soon as I came from the station Pujalal took me there. But this room had greater associations. It was the room where Sri Aurobindo had spent several years; so it was really a Godsend for me to live in it and what was most remarkable was that Sri Aurobindo had done his sadhana walking 6 to 8 hours a day in that room and the adjoining one leading to it. He had walked with such vigour that he had actually dug a path in the floor with his feet, and that path had been cemented over afterwards but could be seen clearly—from one end near the window to the other end—almost up to the small terrace on the south—this was Sri Aurobindo's Path to the Supermind. (*laughter*) O how many times I have tried to walk in his footsteps (*laughter*), trying again and again to get some illumination! But I have a very sad fact to record: when I went back to Bombay the third time in the 10 years of my early stay here, and returned to this room, some fellow had got it into his head to renovate it and make it up-to-date. He had redone the whole floor, and Sri Aurobindo's Path to the Supermind was obliterated. I think it was one of the greatest pieces of vandalism that I can think of. The Path had been a veritable landmark; now there was a smooth red floor, which I think is there even today.

The trouble with me those days was, as I have said in my first talk, that I was using my head too much. Of course there has always been a controversy down the ages among the philosophers and others whether the soul is in the head or in the heart. Man is called a mental being, a rational animal and hence most Western philosophers have believed that the characteristic human consciousness is up in the head. The heart has been often so capricious, so impulsive, so whimsical, so changing that people have not put much trust in it. There are four lines by a poet-lover which go:

I put my hand upon my heart
And swore that we should never part.
I wonder what I would have said
If I had put it on my head! (*laughter*)

But those who believe that their souls are somewhere higher betray their own cause if they are questioned suddenly. You ask a philosopher, "Who says that the soul is in the head?" He'll immediately answer, "I", pressing his hand firmly on his chest and giving himself away. (*laughter*) However, we must observe that it is not in the emotional heart that the real soul resides. The emotional heart seems to be, by its very impulsiveness, a kind of representative of the real soul which also is impulsive, but in a deeper way—spontaneous with a truth-feeling, self-guided by a Light. So I had learnt during the early part of my stay here that we must have the opening of the inner heart. But how the devil was I to have an opening there? (*laughter*) It was beyond my understanding. Naturally I asked the Mother what I should do. She said, trying to make things as easy for me to understand as possible, "Think that there is an open book lying there." I was a little disappointed: "What, again books? (*laughter*) Books are what I want to get away

from and the Mother is asking me to think of a book lying open even in my heart and to concentrate on its openness!" Still, I said I would try to do this—though it was not a very pleasant job. Then as I went on doing it day after day I began to get an unnatural pain in the chest, as if something were resisting there. We don't realise what a wall there is in that region. We think that everything comes out of the human heart so very easily; but everything doesn't come out from the soul which is in the deep heart behind. As soon as I shut my eyes and tried to concentrate, there was a pain. I told the Mother about it. She said, "Don't worry about it, it will be all right after a while." And it was all right, because something like the breaking down of a wall took place and I felt that I was very free, I mean not shut up and cramped in a narrow ego or individuality. The sensation was something indescribable.

Many people have tried to give an idea of what the soul or, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, the psychic being, is like. He has himself quoted Matthew Arnold's words—"sweetness and light"—to convey the characteristics of the psychic being. And indeed they are quite apt because that sort of thing you do feel—the sweetness in the experience is of a bliss which has no cause; a self-existent bliss is there. It is not dependent on persons, occasions, circumstances, objects. To be there, deep within, to feel oneself there is to be perennially, and I might even say unbearably, happy. The light also is present, because some kind of natural truth-feeling is experienced, which guides you all the time. That is the positive side of the psychic being. On the negative side, in telling you what one does not do when one has some sort of psychic opening, I may hazard a punning paradox. First, I may say that one is not depressed, one does not bewail one's lot any more; secondly, one does not rebel, either against the Divine or against human beings. So I might state: "When you are psychic you neither sigh nor kick! (*laughter*)" That will perhaps sum up in a more intelligible formula this experience of the opening and the functioning of the deep heart.

But while talking about the guidance I must add that one has to be on one's guard against various kinds of voices which come from within. There are many parts of us which are occult and of whose existence we hardly know, and they come forward and give promptings, and often if the promptings suit us we think it is the soul talking. (*laughter*) One or two very striking instances I have come across here, of being completely misguided by the inner voice. There was a Telugu gentleman whom I had come to know because he and I used to eat opposite each other at a small table outside the Reading Room. We would bring our food from the Dining Room which was where Prithwisingh stays now. This chap used to bring with him some ghee every time and pour it on all that he ate. When I look at people I always try to fix them in my mind by comparing them to some author or other. And this person looked like the famous novelist H.G. Wells. So began to call him H. Ghee Wells! (*laughter*) Now, he was a man who used to be very sensitive and very impulsive. One evening he was found missing. And people wondered where he had gone. Those who were staying in the same house as he—that is, in Trésor House—came home at about 8 o'clock and heard shouts and screams. They didn't know

from where the sounds came, they could only recognise the voice. They looked in every room but couldn't find him. Then at last they found him sitting at the bottom of a well (*laughter*) and howling, "Please take me out!" "Why the hell did you get in there?" "I heard Sri Aurobindo's command and jumped into the well." (*laughter*) It was very very creditable that he had obeyed immediately, but it wasn't Sri Aurobindo telling him. Though proverbially Truth is found at the bottom of a well, (*laughter*) it cannot be the Supramental Truth; this Truth is to be found somewhere high up. (*laughter*) They had to haul him up. You see, these voices are dangerous and one has to be vigilant. Also I might say that even spiritual experience can be quite dangerous. One instance comes to my mind, of a friend who began to have extraordinary experiences. He wrote to Sri Aurobindo about them: he felt Light descending into his head, and he described its characteristics. Sri Aurobindo wrote back that this Light came from the Overmind. That simply went to his head—"I am getting Light from the Overmind, so I am something wonderful!" He wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "Now that this is happening the Victory is sure. You and I will do everything (*laughter*) and the Mother will surely help us." (*laughter*) Then Sri Aurobindo wrote to him that after all the Light from the Overmind was not anything very exceptional: it was remarkable enough, but so many sadhaks had got it and people in the past too had got it. My friend wouldn't believe this. "Sri Aurobindo is just trying to water down the uniqueness of my experience"—that is what he believed. So all the correspondence of Sri Aurobindo he used to carry with him and go about showing even outsiders the letters to prove how he had got the Light from the Overmind. Very soon after that, he became so side-tracked from the true Path that he had to leave the Ashram.

So you see how dangerous it is not to understand what sort of experiences one gets and how necessary it is to be guided by the Guru. He went away and we framed his spiritual epitaph:

"Undermined by Overmind." (*laughter*)

This theme of the Overmind is a very seductive one, as my friend Arindam Basu must know, and I am very much tempted to make a little digression about this plane in its relation to the Supermind, but where is the time for it? So I won't do it. We'll come to some other topics.

I stayed on for about six and a half years at first, at one stroke. And during those years I asked Sri Aurobindo to give me a spiritual name. It seems it was very difficult to find that name. Somebody else had asked for a spiritual name and that person had got it almost the next day, but I got it only after a year. I must have been quite a problem: how to pin down something for me? But after a year Sri Aurobindo did pin it down. He sent me the name, on a very small card, in Sanskrit, with the transliteration in English, followed by the translation. The name, as you know, was "Amal Kiran"—which means, as he says, "A clear ray." It was a very tall order to live up to such a name. To be a clear ray when one is so full of confusion, and one is so dependent on one's own intellectual capacity, to become really luminous was quite a job—and still is. But it's very curious that this word "ray" should have come in, for it repeated

itself a little later in a very important context. The very first time that I heard of *Savitri* from Sri Aurobindo was in connection with the mention of a ray. While critically commenting on a poem of mine, he referred to "the Ray from the transcendent penetrating through the mind's passive neutral reflection of the supreme quietude of the silent Brahman". To illustrate the point he cited two lines of poetry:

Piercing the limitless Unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.

The reverberations of these lines shook me so much that I asked Sri Aurobindo where they had come from. The reply was: "*Savitri*."

Savitri has been very closely linked with my life here, as you perhaps know. That is also why I have been quoting *Savitri* at the start of each talk. Naturally after those lines, I was goaded on to make more and more inquiries. And in the course of my poetic aspirations I was all agog to get the inspiration which Sri Aurobindo had called Overhead Poetry. Overhead Poetry is poetry which passes over everybody's head! (*laughter*) But how is one to receive an inspiration entirely new which comes from the planes which Sri Aurobindo has distinguished as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. So I got the idea once to make a very direct appeal to Sri Aurobindo. I pressed on him a singular request, emboldened by his innumerable favours of tutorship. I wrote to him:

"I shall consider it a favour indeed if you will give me an instance in English of the inspiration of the pure Overmind. I don't mean just a line like Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through Eternity
or Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone,
which has a brief burst of it, but something sustained and plenary. I want to steep my consciousness in its rhythm and its revelation. It will be a most cherished possession. Please don't disappoint me by saying that, as no English writer has a passage of this kind, you cannot do anything for me."

He wrote back in his characteristic vein:

"Good Heavens! how am I to avoid saying that, when it is the only possible answer—at least so far as I can remember? Perhaps if I went through English poetry again with my present consciousness I might find more intimations like that line of Wordsworth, but a passage sustained and plenary? These surely are things yet to come—the 'future poetry' perhaps, but not the past."

With the familiarity—almost the impudence—he permitted us, I replied:

"I think the favour I asked was expressed in perfectly clear language. If no English poet has produced the passage I want, then who has done so in English? God alone knows. But who is capable of doing it? All of us know. Well, then why not be kind enough to grant this favour? If difficult metres could be illustrated on demand, is it impossible to illustrate in a satisfying measure something so naturally Aurobindonian as the Overmind? I am not asking for hundreds of lines—even eight will more than do—all pure gold to be treasured forever. So please.... Perhaps it is possible only on

Sunday—the day dedicated to golden Surya and rich for you with leisure from correspondence: I can wait answerless for 24 hours with a sweet *samatā*.”

The answer came the very next morning:

“I have to say Good Heavens again. Because difficult metres can be illustrated on demand, which is a matter of metrical skill, how does it follow that one can produce poetry from any blessed plane on demand? It would be easier to furnish you with hundreds of lines already written, out of which you could select for yourself anything Overmindish if it exists (which I doubt) rather than produce 8 lines of warranted Overmind manufacture to order. All I can do is to give you from time to time some lines from *Savitri*, on condition you keep them to yourself for the present. It may be a poor substitute for the Overmental, but if you like the sample, the opening lines, I can give you more hereafter—and occasionally better.”

And then with an “E.G.” there followed in his own fine and sensitive yet forceful hand 16 lines of the very first Canto of *Savitri* as it stood then.

It was the hour before the Gods awake.....

Below the quotation were the words: “There! Promise fulfilled for a wonder.”

This day was October 25, 1936—I would say one of the most important days, if not *the* most important, of my life here. But the matter of keeping *Savitri* a secret was a difficult job. In those days Nolini was Sri Aurobindo’s postman. He used to bring the letters for everyone; we used to wait for him in the morning. And he knew that some special correspondence was going on between Sri Aurobindo and me, because the Mother might have been giving him the folded letters to put into the envelopes. Each time he handed me my letter he lifted his eyebrows. (*laughter*) I looked very innocent (*laughter*) and took it and waited for him to go away (*laughter*) before opening it. He would hesitate for a minute or two and then go away. (*laughter*) It happened like that 3 or 4 days, and then it got on my nerves, (*laughter*) so I wrote to Sri Aurobindo: “What should I do? I think Nolini is going to ask me.” (*laughter*) Then Sri Aurobindo very blandly replied, “Let us hope he won’t.” (*laughter*) But still the silent inquisition of the lifted eyebrows did not cease! Then I wrote in desperation to Sri Aurobindo: “I am sure it is going to happen now. Please tell me what to do. Can I take him into the secret or not?” (*laughter*) Then Sri Aurobindo said: “All right but only him.” (*laughter*) So this secret remained a secret between Nolini and me for 10 years. Only in 1946, when I began to write a book on Sri Aurobindo’s poetry, I divulged *Savitri* to the world—with Sri Aurobindo’s approval. *Savitri* came out in excerpts for the first time in that book of mine, *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*. Afterwards the Ashram published it in fascicles and then as a volume.

I think we can stop at this climactic point, though unfortunately I haven’t finished and I think I’ll never finish at this rate. (*laughter*) I thank you all very much.

AMAL KIRAN

CRITICISM AND CREATION

It has been remarked that there has never been a monument erected to a critic. While this may be true, at least if the term "critic" is given its narrowest signification, yet, reflecting on the kinds of people to whom monuments have been erected, one may find the observation to lose a good deal of its point. Perhaps it is the more superficial consciousness that is most concerned with the raising of public monuments. In any case, the function of criticism is important, and in fact indispensable to human life, and not even by the most Romantic heart can it be avoided.

A human being is a mental being. It is the mind that is the particular and distinguishing mark of humanity. This being so, a human being is continually criticizing; for it is the function of the mind to criticize, to divide, distinguish and discriminate. The mind is an organ of analysis: that is, criticism.

But of course people, not being altogether mental and dispassionate, frequently object to being the object of criticism; even though this by no means deters them from exercising, themselves, the critical function. As good an illustration of this phenomenon as one need look for is provided by Walt Whitman, who—as observed by Paul Elmer More—denounced criticism and critics, all the while delivering himself of the most positive critical pronouncements about many a thing, especially the work of other poets.

This case of Whitman points up the fact that those who are loudest in denunciation of criticism—not just of some particular instance of it, but of its whole office and function—are those who fear that it will dampen and thwart "creativity". This attitude would seem to be one of our dubious legacies from the Romantic period, itself a reaction against an age that was too subservient to narrow critical canons.

But why the critical faculty need be at enmity with the creative power is a question to which it might be difficult to find a cogent answer. The human consciousness, though inharmonious enough, is not fragmented to quite that degree; and even if we extend the word "creative" to include Whitman and all the many other writers who may have said and expressed a lot but have not really *created* anything—who have not had sufficient insight, inspiration, imaginative grasp to raise up live human beings moving in living worlds—or living worlds for inhabitation, still it may be hard to demonstrate that the "positive" capacity for bringing something forth into the world is so feeble as to be quelled by the "negative" capacity for disciplining, judging, and having standards.

Of course it is easily possible for any particular criticism to be as inept as it is unpalatable; and like everything else the critic himself is subject to criticism. He does not enjoy the happy status of a judge infallibly administering absolute law, or a school-master giving grades, against whom there can be no appeal. As a writer writes within the compass of his particular limitations, so does a critic criticize; and a writer is not bound to accept anything that may be said against him.

Still, the critic must judge: he cannot merely "appreciate," that is, find reasons for praising, in the acceptance of anything just because it has appeared. Standards may be hard to find, and the history of criticism may give little comfort to one who likes to make absolute pronouncements and tell everybody just how it is: but to give up the search is to abandon criticism, and to live a life below that condign to the human status.

Nowadays, to any literate person, a certain relativism is plainly and perhaps painfully evident: that is, there is no accepted standard, by which the whole range of literature can be put into an acceptable order. Some do not mind this, and are content to flounder, and more or less "keep abreast". Some of course do have their own standards in spite of fashions, and keep order for themselves. But to live in such a milieu is especially difficult for a writer; and this not because of severe criticism, but rather because of the confusion that makes any genuine and serious criticism impossible.

And of course the mind being what it is—always wanting to be sure and to lay down the law—in the midst of this relativism has arisen a new absolutism of an especially blighting and crippling kind: the absolutism of the critic who assures people that he has the key to what is right and proper for "this age," and who approves figures of the past only to the degree that they provide what "we need" here and now—that is, what the critic himself is in perhaps not very admirable need of. Mr. Eliot brought off this trick with a success that would have been impossible in any healthy and nobly intelligent age.

Yet—for all that he dismissed Milton as a bad influence and "dislodged" him on the ground that he has nothing to give anyone who aspires to the kind of poetry or so-called poetry that should be written now—the position of Milton remains secure, somewhere in the midst of the greatest poets of the world. For the kind of relativism that is apparent in the history of pronouncements and acceptances and rejections, the whirligig of tastes and styles, is not the deeper reality. There is agreement, gradually established, as to who the great writers are; and while the agreement may never be complete and perfect, it is sufficient.

What one is to do when the critics disagree is hardly a question for those whom great literature is written for—that is, those who can appreciate it. They will have their own standards and preferences, and will not hesitate to criticize the critic; they will not be brow-beaten by any self-elected guardians of "the present time" against corruption. They may well respect and enjoy a great poet, even though he has "nothing to give" to manifestly feeble mongers of words, who have gained some reputation for the moment. In short, they will not consent to a wilfully abject slavery to time.

To develop a competent judgment, to have sure standards, firmly based, and be able perceptively to apply them, is not an easy and simple thing. It requires serious application and much time: knowledge of literature both broad and deep, and mature experience of living, and of being a human being aspiring to the best.

To be a competent critic, or to be able to appreciate competent criticism, is not achieved in a day, or in a few years at school learning a "method". It is not for a very

young man, or for an ill-read man of any age: being ill-read not necessarily being a matter of not being acquainted with many books. In fact one may read too many bad books, or too many good books unintelligently, without the engagement of the larger nature. Perpetually to approach works of literature through a haze of what other people have said about them, is to be an academician, perhaps, but it is not to be a critic; and it is hardly to be a man to whom literature is a power of cultivation, and the enlargement and the improvement of the consciousness.

The mind is an organ of criticism, but the mind is not the whole man, and literary criticism that is of the mind alone is of no value. The whole nature must be engaged. The refinement of the vital nature as well as of the mental must be involved; the emotional nature must be elevated and purified. To have standards, to have values, is natural to the aspiring man; and the standards become higher, the values nobler and more refined, as the nature grows, and comes closer to the light. As the deeper nature is stirred, and hints of the higher nature come, as the pure psyche beyond the turbulent heart, and the spiritual being serene above, begin to have more influence upon the man, then a more acute and subtle perception comes, and a larger and more masterful view and capacity

Genuine education is a matter of freeing one's true self, and a matter of cultivating one's whole nature as one would cultivate a garden. This is what culture is; it is not just a matter of information, or of "training" in some way that is narrowing and stifling to the soul. Great works of literature cannot be cultural forces automatically, without the co-operation of the reader. He must read receptively, openly, with the large nature and a wish for enjoyment and enlargement; not with the closed mind alone, with a view to "evaluating" according to a set of rules and principles mechanically learned and mechanically applied. One may fear that this is tantamount to saying that to be a competent critic and reader and a cultured man one must not be a product of Modern "education" at all.

Every literate cultured man is his own critic, and does not depend upon somebody else's judgment. This applies to the writer too; and it may be doubted that the critic is of much help to him, or much influence on him at all. He has his own way of things and his own purposes, which his contemporaries as likely as not will be unable to understand. He is and must be his own critic and go his own way.

Criticism is not a matter of setting rules and making infallible pronouncements. It is rather a dialogue of cultured men. To read about a book or a writer, before one has experienced the real thing, is hardly helpful; and one enjoys and appreciates criticism best, who knows most about the work or the man being criticized. When he knows, and can see the truth of it for himself, one may keenly enjoy such a piece of criticism as Macaulay's comparison of Dryden's verse to the running of an ostrich, for example; but if one has not read Dryden, with a well-developed critical consciousness, to read this, and other criticisms, is to shirk the real task, and try to know more than one can know, and be wiser than one can be, in the circumstances.

But criticism is not just a matter of confirming one in one's own opinions. One

may enjoy and respect a critic with whom one does not agree; and the experience of another critical mind may give one, or put one in the way of, new insights and new modes of seeing and enjoying. And of course one may be led to the study of a work or a writer, by something that a critic has said. Agreement is not so important, as the really serious employment of the consciousness. And by serious of course I do not mean solemn, wooden and humorless: I mean truly engaged, in the search for the best and fullest in literature, and the larger life. Not "engaged" in the way of one whose horizons are bounded by contemporaneity, or rather by what he has been taught to think or finds politic to repeat about it; but truly and competently concerned with growth, and increasing grasp and clarity, with large experience, large understanding, and large promise and intimation.

The critic, in his fullest and most consummate character, constructs or expresses a large view of humanity and its achievements, with a look to the future: according to noble standards and with noble capacities, he unifies, and helps to the integration of the consciousness, that it may aspire more strongly and perceptively, and achieve more greatly. Writing of a purely critical character may not be of the rare class of supreme literature; but, when it performs its office most completely, and is most perfectly itself, it perhaps deserves the name "creative" more than many a thing to which that coveted designation is now so loosely applied. The critic can help one to discover and to create oneself, and that is the greatest and best thing that any writer can do—swelling, heightening, clarifying the universal symphony toward divine perfection.

JESSE ROARKE

YOUR KITE

HOLD firm the string, You Loveliest Sprite!
 I play with You the hide-and-seek
 Through Milky Way, sky-drunken kite
 In love with Earth's black fragrant cheek.

Grasped by your palm I chase You, Lord;
 In arms of winds, a glory-flight
 I glide on tempest's leaden cord
 And press to Sun my face youth-bright.

But when Your fancy pulls the ray
 And calls to fly in Earth's sweet night,
 Slave of Your breath in You I sway
 From bliss of sleep to bliss of fight.

JANINA

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of September)

XVII

SAINT Agasthya's erudition was as profound as it was encyclopaedic. He was an authority not only on Art, Poetry and Spiritual Culture but also on Science, Medicine, Weaponry, Dam-building, Irrigation and other branches of secular knowledge. People from distant lands used to come to the Podikai hills in Tirunelveli District to study at the University of Agasthya. He was a power-house of enlightenment and culture. As he heard that Rama was in the vicinity of his hermitage, he rushed towards him to welcome him, unlike Valmiki's Agasthya who asks a messenger to bring Rama into his presence.

The tradition in the Tamil country is that Agasthya published in the Tamil language several works summing up all available human knowledge, though those books were subsequently lost while a good part of southern Tamil Nad was submerged in the sea. Kamban, therefore, describes Agasthya as the one who, like Vishnu, scaled the heights of the Universe with the long rod of Tamil.

In the next song Kamban refers to a legend of symbolic significance. Long, long ago, there was a race of Asuras, who gathered all the spiritual and ethical treasures of the world and sank along with them into the depths of the ocean. Thereupon, the Celestials went to Agasthya and appealed to him to retrieve the sunken treasures. Agasthya responded to this appeal; he took the waters of the ocean in the palm of his hand and drank them dry; then, at the request of the Gods, he ejected the ocean waters from his stomach through his mouth, and made the hidden treasures available to mankind again.

Rasikamani T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar interprets this legend in the light of what Mirandola did five centuries ago. Greek Art and Literature were so subtle and intricate that the Italians who were out of touch with Greek tradition, grievously misinterpreted them. A horde of Italian Grammarians and Commentators, who had no aesthetic sensibility, allowed their barren intellect to play upon the exquisite works of Greek Art, and blacked-out all that was fine and graceful in Greek culture. In effect, these misinterpreters had become a race of anti-artistic Asuras, who, by their lack of perception, set at nought the brilliant achievements of the Greek mind. In this period of darkness Mirandola was born. He made a profound study of Greek Art, showed up the falsity of the Italian Grammarians and Commentators, and brought to light the inner soul of Greek culture. Frequently, we come across such phenomena in

the history of culture, a period of great artistic and spiritual activity being overwhelmed and succeeded by a dark period of misinterpretation. T.K.C. thinks with reason that Agasthya must have extricated Art and Wisdom from the grip of the barbarians and that the legend relating to his drinking up the ocean and then spewing it out at the behest of the Celestials must be a symbolic reference to the service of rectification and re-interpretation rendered by Agasthya.

In the next song, Kamban refers, again in symbolic language, to the spiritual feats of Agasthya.

Men, eager to seek the Unitive Way,
 approached Agasthya and asked,
 "Which is the painless path leading to God?"

Instead of giving a verbal reply, Agasthya gave a convincing demonstration.

Upon the Magic Hill,
 Which scraped the skies and which had around it
 a swinging garland of creeping clouds,
 Agasthya planted his feet and ascended.
 At once,
 the hill sank lower and lower
 till it reached the nether-world,
 and he stood triumphant on top of it
 like an elephant in Yoga.

This demonstration must have brought home to the interrogator of Agasthya the way to solve the central problem in spiritual evolution. The one obstacle that stands between Man and God is the human Ego, which has been referred to by Kamban as the huge, sky-scraping Magic Hill. But this hill, though illusory, is nevertheless an almost insurmountable projection of the human mind and is overspread with the clouds of unknowing like lust, anger and delusion. The moment a man puts his foot firmly upon it and submerges it, he realizes God. This is a mystical process, which, unlike the process of Hatha Yoga, involves no bodily pain and is, therefore, commended by Agasthya as the "painless path" towards God.

One other Agasthya legend is narrated by Kamban and it is presumably based upon some geological upheaval that affected Southern India. The wedding of Lord Siva and Parvati was scheduled to take place in the Himalayas. The whole of mankind rushed there to witness the wedding, with the result that the Himalayas, unable to bear the unprecedented burden, started sinking. At once Lord Siva sent for the diminutive Agasthya and requested him to hurry to the South. Agasthya obliged by shifting to the Podikai Hills as a counter-weight, whereupon the sinking Himalayas came up and the equilibrium was restored. What is weighed in this

legendary balance is, not masses, but values, and Agasthya's value as a cultural force is audaciously equated with that of Siva and the rest of mankind.

It is this Saint of prodigious learning and spirituality that hurries forth reverently to receive Rama, who has stepped into the premises of his Ashram. As he rushes out, he thinks that Rama's arrival marks the culmination and fruition of all the tapas Agasthya has performed.

His heart danced with joy
as he thought,
"Presently shall I see with my outer eyes
the materialization of that Principle,
which, my consciousness tells me,
resides in the Sky and the Earth,
in the difference-ridden phenomena of the Universe,
in the Super-Mind and in the Scriptures."

Agasthya is reputed to be the father of Siddha Medicine. In that system, they mix metals with herbs and grind the mixture in a mortar with a heavy pestle for years in order to extract the maximum potency out of the compound. Agasthya, who was well-versed in scientific experiments of this kind, applied the same scientific attitude in his quest for Truth. He is thrilled that he is going to have a vision of God in the shape of Rama and he proclaims in ecstasy:

"Let Brahma
Put the four vociferous Vedas
and the allied scriptures
on the huge grinding-stone of Wisdom
and let him grind them hard
for days and days on end;
Yet he cannot grasp Reality.
But that Unknown Quantity is come here bodily,
to hold converse with me,
face to face!"

Agasthya is sure that Rama, the Messiah, will purge Society of all evil and redeem it. He, therefore, shouts with joy:

"Redeemed are the Celestials;
Resurrected, the Rishis;
Resolute stand the holy men
in Virtue's Highway;
Arrived is the Physician
Who chops off
the poison-roots of demoniacal Evil!"

As Agasthya goes out, the lovely figure of Rama coming in strikes his eye, and he remains breathless, motionless, transfixed, tears of joy gushing out of his lustrous eyes. The poet is moved by this memorable meeting to exclaim:—

Thus did he stand,
 who brought down the Cauvery in his holy pot,
 in order that the eight quarters of the Globe
 the seven worlds and all living things
 might thrive.

The tradition is that Agasthya performed a great feat of engineering by bringing down the Cauvery river from Coorg to Tamil Nad and preserving every drop of its waters by digging a series of tanks and constructing dams at the appropriate levels.

Kamban celebrates the meeting of the two in a magnificent song:

The towering figure that came
 bowed at the feet
 of the figure that stood still;
 clasping him with love
 and with joyous tears gushing out of his eyes,
 the Saint uttered warm words of welcome—
 the Saint, who had achieved immortality
 by singing poems
 in the ever-living Tamil of the South.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

SRI AUROBINDO'S SAMADHI

THIS place is ever miraculous,
Here is a breath divine;
It animates the soul in us,
We drink an undrunk wine.

A thrill runs through the body rare,
Sensations sweet arise,
Before a light the being is bare,
The normal nature dries.

All fences fall and bonds break down,
The spirit is calm and free,
A wideness limitless we own,
Far wider than the sea.

The heart gets flooded with a love
That soon destroys all hates,
And soars sky-high to meet above
The Father of our fates.

Our sorrows are all swallowed up
By a sweetness ever new,
Our life becomes a nectar-cup
For God to take His due.

Our eyes begin to glow with dawns
And hearts to romp in rays,
Our tiny selves become but pawns,
And deathless grow our days.

We feel at one with all the earth,
And bluest is our sky;
A Some-One else has taken birth
This world to glorify.

This place is teeming with God's grace
Made universal here,
And we confront our Father's face
So dear to our souls, so near!

CHOICES

THE complex mind
Is a curse to man,
It has a reason
For everything:
 The wrong reason.

It has an urge
To control and mould,
To make the cosmos
Its very own:
 Ignorantly.

It has the need
To judge and chop,
To sift the wheat
From the apparent chaff:
 With sunglasses on.

Thus his mind
Is a curse to man
Because it puts
Blinders on his eyes:
 Cruelly.

The heart of man
Is no luckier
For it has an instinct
Too hard to control:
 For self-deception

In itself it sees
The microcosm
God has created
To mirror himself:
 Egotistically.

Yet none can blame
The mind or heart
For they're not responsible
For their own creation:
Paradoxically.

The Creator must
Himself one day
Swallow the ignorance
Of his own deep making:
 Irrevocably.

Few are they
Who achieve beyond
To the mountainous calm,
The inner ocean:
 Of a seer among men.

Till a decade or so
In fact few men
Felt disgruntled
With their minds or hearts:
 Their human trade marks

Enough, they said,
We have achieved
The all that is needed
To be unique:
 In the universe.

Let's enjoy
The carnival
Of mind and heart
Burst on the earth:
 Like some great bomb.

But even the bursting
 Of a bomb
 Can grate on human nerves
 Within six thousand years:
 Of multiform repetition.

And then the question
 Automatically
 Comes to mind—
 Is this all there is:
 For mankind to do?

A poor end, this,
 With a mind myopic
 And a heart created
 To make every error:
 Ever invented.

What of those seers
 We have heard about
 Who have clambered beyond
 This dreary round:
 Enviably?

To live longer like this
 Is to live like dogs
 Into the wastes
 Of eternity:
 Without hope.

What grace of heaven
 Will lead us where
 The seers proclaim
 We shall be free:
 From an exhausted monotony?

I do believe
 The Gods are trying
 To answer this plea
 Of their troublesome subjects:
 Before it's too late.

Their forces are marshalled,
 Their surgeons in place
 To perform an operation
 On their wriggling patient:
 Bewildered mankind.

The patient refuses
 To take anaesthesia—
 Howls wildly at every
 Incision and suture:
 Unconsciously.

But which is better?
 The old boredom and strife
 Or the hysterical fright
 Of this divine operation:
 Man cannot tell!

For each possibility
 There's consternation
 At which point a cosmic
 Aurobindonian chuckle:
 Is the only answer.

NIGHT CHILD

INTO a world of darkness born
Thy folded hands beseeching light,
A temple lamp of kingliness
Revealed in birth's tremendous plight.

A symbol journey through a realm of tears,
The dark oppressive weight of life,
That greets the soul new born in flesh,
While the dust of all infinity
Lies scattered on thy God-like feet;
Though speechless bringing forth the realms of sound,
And breathing gently in the sombre night,
One with the silent things of earth.

Night child, faint cries bespeak thy presence,
While motionless in dreams thou liest
Still grasping memories of pregnant worlds
Seen now through lids that still to earth are closed—

Frail wanderings through timeless groves of sleep
To wake in matter's stone-like trance,
To work, to mould the argent limbs divine
And clutch at stars that once were thine.

In stillness enter, to stillness return,
To cradle thought's organic harmonies,
Plastic energies moulding godhead's forms
In the dense and crowded jungle of our days.

Pale frame wherein Divinity rests,
Pale hands that hold the magic key of life
And eyes that through eternities have held
The radiance of the deathless spheres of God.

Arise, O Splendour, thrice-crowned Man, awake,
And dwell at the petals of Her Feet.

RICHARD EGGENBERGER

ESSAYS OF SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

(Continued from the issue of October)

Who is the Hero in Paradise Lost? (Contd.)

AMONG all the characters, the most potent in stature, most direct in will and most manifestly strong is Satan. His claim to hero-hood is the greatest. He overtly pervades the whole story, not only by his presence but by his acts, plots, influence and will. Although he is defeated twice, and the tale of this defeat narrated two times over, he seems undefeated and his greatness, in spite of his base and vile character, remains unchallenged. If really he is the hero, then we, at the very outset, have to doubt Milton's intentions. Milton comes to fight the immorality that is there in Evil; but this immorality assumes such a lofty stature that its error and evil do not appear something abhorrent. The support that he lends to Satan is unmistakable. But for what reason does he lend it to Satan and not to others?

Milton has two aspects in his character. One is the moral side, which gets its support in the Bible; and the other is the side of creation, which breaks all conventions in order to make an epic. Whenever his creativity has its sway, the moral aspect loses its force and, whenever his ethical tendencies lead, his creative urge becomes a subservient element. This is the reason why his moral creations lack the fire, the force and the living inspiration. There is no freedom in morality or theology and, in spite of his reason's strong support to them, Milton's creativity needs freedom in order to fulfil itself. In God or Adam there is no scope for freedom, for their characters are well-defined by the Bible and by Christian theology. But Satan, because he has no religious restrictions, is free. Milton cannot be censored for depicting him in one way or another, or infusing him with one trend or another. In other words, he need not keep up any religious decorum, moral prestige or theological status. Had Milton painted God or Christ with the same freedom, we could have had characters as living as Satan, and disputes regarding hero-hood would have been absent. Satan's greatness would then have been dimmed. Further, the greatness, character, determination, that is there in Satan, despite his baseness, crudity, vengefulness, gives him a real personality. Adam has only one major aspect. God reveals one side of his nature, but Satan shows many facets of his personality, which, even though diabolical, are human. And hence such a character seems possible and real. We do not question as we do with God whether Satan was divine or undivine. No moral issues arise. This is one side of the answer.

Satan, though supposedly an infrarational entity, has all the characteristics of man—a man that is intensely living, and wants to live fully, and not in some ideal atmosphere of calm beatitude; he is the antithesis of God (at least in theory) who is

suprarational. He is not limited by theology or by faith or by reason. He has human weaknesses which too are intensified by his intense subhuman nature. For his freedom he has to pay by his expulsion from Heaven, just as Adam has to pay for his independent thinking by getting thrown out of Paradise. The only difference is, that while Adam is cowed by the fall, Satan's lower nature gets more intensely awakened by his deprivation. God has a control over Adam, but Satan He cannot control; Satan lives on as a constant menace to theological purity. In a way he reveals a power which, even though fallen, is no less than God's or Christ's. They can only chastise his body, but his spirit remains free to revolt. Hence his freedom is as great as Christ's, who too, when crucified, does not admit defeat. But being infrarational, Satan plots, while Jesus with his infinite grace pardons man for his callous cruelty.

All these qualities show that this character is not only a possible character, but also a real one. The sole barrier that stands between him and heroship is the moral issue. The moral issue is the idea that an unmoral entity cannot be a hero, specially in an epic which stands for moral purity and theological justice. There is no barrier in the field of pure artistry or poetry, where the guiding principle is not a set moral issue, but the representation and manifestation of something aesthetic and real. We have seen, in our earlier essay on aim and purpose, that Milton puts moral issues above aesthetic ideals. And yet his artistic nature triumphs in spite of his moral affiliations. In fact all his failures are due to this wrong attachment. Now the point arises: should we take his professed ideal as the guiding factor to determine this issue, or should we take account of things actually achieved, and reject all else as fiction and let this be the one cardinal point of judgement? If we took Milton's own words as the sole criterion, then Satan must be pushed back to a status not worth taking account of; then certainly Satan is not the hero and the epic loses its last chance to have a leading character. Otherwise, he certainly is *the* hero—both in fact and in personality, in motivating power and in directing influence.

If we take Satan to be the hero, what is the result of such an attitude? We have to leave all other considerations aside. That would entail the rejection of God and Adam as artistic creations and giving Satan the centre and looking on Christ as only a powerful side-character. Much of the epic would then have to be condemned as negative or full of useless elements. But if we took a less severe attitude, then too the prominence of Satan cannot be avoided. Only on a narrow sectarian view, whereby Satan's importance is reduced to a minimum and the moral aspect regains its status as given by Christianity, would Satan be considered a negative fact. But as things stand, such an attitude is not possible, because to nullify so great a figure as painted here would be a gross underestimation of truth.

There are two ways of facing the power of Ignorance which Satan represents here. We may either ignore it completely, having the knowledge that it cannot prevail against light; or we may give it a larger importance than it deserves so that its negative and destructive qualities are never forgotten. One is the attitude of the pessimist, the other of Milton essentially. His aim was to glorify God and dwarf Satan and

impute to man the dire fault of faithlessness. But he succeeds in glorifying Satan and making God an unpleasant autocrat and man a tool of fate. And what he did he did without any premeditation. He intended Adam to be the hero, but his faulty concept and erroneous characterisation does not brighten up Adam but makes him a servant of the woman, of whom he was the master. All these points have complicated the issue.

So we come to the conclusion that *Paradise Lost* has no hero. But can a book, specially an epic, have none? It must have a binding and supporting character. It was perhaps not a character, but an event that Milton wanted to depict—an event in Heaven with a repercussive effect in Eden. The players, it may appear, are incidental; the forces and the struggle, the passion and defeat are the themes. God and Christ themselves occur here as incidental items of the drama and not its protagonists. Even Satan's ruling presence is necessary for the completion of the play, the fulfilment of the theme, the accomplishment of the unseen will. Milton does not want any one figure (Satan excepted) to predominate. He wants to stress the subjective as against the objective side of the issue. But a born empiricist and materialist at heart, his subjectivism is vitiated by his stress on the outer aspect. What was ethereal has turned out to be gross due to his theory that matter and spirit originate from the same source. The whole of the poem is more a narration of events than a depiction of characters. But it is not a narrative poem in the real sense of the word. There occur dramatic episodes, colloquies, sermons, and long flowing speeches describing events. The turn is too heroic to be a mere narration.

Such a turn naturally yields more freedom to the poet—but becomes an enigma to the critic. Thus to create was the aim of Milton—the burden of classification lay with the thinkers of later times. He had his aims, ideals and doctrines to which he adhered, without considering the consequence of criticism of his creation. Seldom is a poet weighed down by such things.

But, in a perfect poet, there is no enigma or ambiguity—his poetry can have an explanation, if not rationally, at least from the point of view of emotion, vision and mystic experience, from deeper psychological positions and from the standpoint of literature. Milton has posed for us a riddle which evokes questions but shows us no path to a satisfactory response—because the clue to the riddle lies with the complexities of his own many-sided personality and not in any terms of life or literature. His poetry, just as it is sonorous and needs a penetrating mind to seize its structure, needs as well an insight into his personality to catch the full import of his ideas. He would have most naturally made himself the hero. But he has three major facets contradictory of one another: the sublime, the rational, and the rebellious. The first is revealed in his ideal concept of God, with an ethical personality. The second is found in his love of order, symmetry, and precision, obedient to extant laws: this is expressed in Adam, the man, who like the poet himself reveals all the weaknesses and limitations of character, in spite of the external love for system and order. The last is seen in his painting of the character of Satan; here is the iconoclast, the rebel, the defier of codes and established laws.

If one of these could have ruled, he could have become the hero. But just as in the poem, so too in his life there was no ruling by one element, one aspect of the personality; hence no hero as a determining factor could be there. Further, each character, be it God, Adam, Christ or Satan, reveals predominantly one aspect of nature and is not a complete character; this does not make a character alive, but makes each appear one-sided, partial and hence incomplete. That incompleteness is due to the presence of many aspects in himself, which his ethical mind considers as a sign of failure.

The concept of a hero according to Milton has such a wide connotation that its fulfilment seems almost an impossibility. Its ethical bias, its theological foundation and its rational background need an exacting personality that can embody all these trends. But some concepts oppose each other, others need great effort to achieve reconciliation. Hence the result is an enigma, which the poet himself cannot solve. Milton can pose conditions, but he cannot meet them—this makes the position of the critic all the more complicated.

A harmony within results in the creation of harmony without. Milton does not possess this inherent harmony. He has not tapped the source of harmony. His is a world of struggle and dissatisfaction. He creates a world of struggle and unrest. He himself has not found the clue to his riddles, his questions. Hence there is no finality in all his characters. Presently we shall study the same question regarding *Savitri* and the contrast will appear most glaring. There we have not only harmony but answers to the questions that are posed.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

GIVE ME THE LOVE

GIVE me the love
 To look in the heart for the bird,
 Give me the sheen
 Quivering on the edge of the sword.

Give me the wind
 To cut across the breath of night,
 Give me the sleep
 To greet the soul beyond twilight.

Give me the goal
 For the strange path of the Unknown,
 Give me the height
 Where the thinker and the world are one.

R.Y. DESHPANDE

THE REVOLUTION SUPREME

(Concluded from the issue of September)

It is no accident that it has been revealed to us that there is at the heart of the persisting Cold War a great and strategic Truth issue (as we have seen in our previous instalment), for the Mother's divine insight has given birth to her striking emphasis on Truth in a great series of Messages on Truth in this supreme crisis of the human family, and in our analysis of the world crisis we have found the Truth-issue to be *pivotal*.

Let Auroville become not only the Lighthouse for Sri Aurobindo's Truth concerning the Integral Way to the collective fulfilment of mankind, but also the inspirer and the home of the nation-souls, and the unofficial but real world capital for the New Citizenship and the true Spiritual Statesmanship; indeed, for the Revolution which is, in reality, Sri Aurobindo's Revolution. Let Auroville be, in this way, a pioneer unit of the Life Divine on Earth, integrating our *individual* fulfilment with our *collective* fulfilment on the Aurobindonian level of spiritual world statesmanship—a role for the City of Dawn far beyond her present outlook of ideal or utopian city, however divine, a role in keeping with the Master's integral vision and work, his unique spiritual statesmanship. And now also let Sri Aurobindo's Action live up to its name and its declared purpose.

It is next to impossible that our Communist world neighbours, even China, will be able, even if their ruling circles are at first disposed to do so, to resist, for long, the great Truth-issue, plus a determined, positive, creative, winsome and persevering endeavour to build up a genuinely friendly nation-soul relationship between the nations of our world family, including themselves. Thus we shall go a long way toward bringing about the Great Detente (relaxation of world tensions) that can usher in the new era of peace, progress, prosperity for ALL—*provided*, of course, we also stand forthrightly, vigorously, for speeding economic and social justice to all, while keeping vigilant as to national defense, on both military and civilian levels.

Many disciples will be surprised to discover the extent of Sri Aurobindo's concern for economic justice. For example, that he declares in *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "In human life economic interests are those which are, ordinarily, violated with the least impunity; for they are bound up with life itself, and the persistent violation of them, if it does not destroy the oppressed organism, provokes necessarily the bitterest revolt and ends in one of Nature's inexorable retaliations." "One of Nature's inexorable retaliations" currently is surely the militant championing of the world's miserable masses by Red China! But here is a case of the "remedy", perpetual class warfare, being more fatal, in the age of the H-bomb, than the disease it professes to cure!

Especially will our forecast concerning our Communist world neighbours prove

true if the United World People's Forces, through their awakening to and development of *their own* nation-souls, and to the New Citizenship and resultant True Statesmanship, first clean up and regenerate their own society and remove from their present places of power their political and economic exploiters; then convey to their world neighbours, Communists included, a well-conceived, rishi-guided set of proposals for progressive cooperative measures and step-by-step disarmament and strengthening of the United Nations; all the while keeping sufficiently on guard to quiet the doubting and timid in their own nations; then intensify their appreciation of, and appeal to, the nation-souls of their Communist neighbours. We are under no illusions that this will be anything less than a formidable task, but it must be done.

One important result of the Revolution Supreme will be the new sense of security it will generate in all nations, both because of their own new purity and strength and that of their neighbours, making *the Great Détente*, which may now seem remote, the natural fruitage of the nation-soul renaissance.

Between now and that heaven-on-earth consummation loom many hurdles and a mighty struggle, calling for the utmost devotion, sacrifice and service. But having once seen the vision splendid, the Revolution Supreme with its nation-souls rebirth, we can never un-see it, and must achieve it at any cost. This way lies not only survival but unlimited fulfilment. We dare not shrink from our Kurukshetra!

An art to be cultivated with all possible diligence and skill in such a monumental crisis is the art of keeping *fully* awake and alive. It requires not merely a throwing off of the ordinary human lethargy, the somnambulism of the dead-level daily grind, in one forthright act of self-surrender and dedication to this cause supreme, but also the *practice* (not "habit"!) of reawakening to the fulness of the fateful drama and the task, morning, noon and night, the highest possible plateau of inspiration and endeavour.

Let us definitely build this reawakening practice into our daily lives. We must not underestimate the hold that the old deadly drag may have upon us. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of our building up a momentum of inspired action that will not only maintain and sustain us, despite the drag of the ordinary, but will also stand a good chance of igniting others, thus building up the further momentum of this movement.

Arnold Toynbee has spread before us in his *Outline of History* the tragic human record of our genius for sleeping through a major crisis. Again and again, with civilisation after civilisation—some two-thirds of them thus far—it has been the tragic folly of "too little, too late", and that civilisation has perished. But those were all *regional* cultures. Today we have the first *global* civilisation, and we have every means of communication for sparking the great awakening and then sustaining it. Let us not be found lacking in the will and the determination to go through to victory and write a new inspiring human chapter.

Beyond our utmost human effort, let each of us draw, to the full, upon what is to him the Inspiration Supreme, praying for the grace of an invincible perseverance, deeper than our human impulses, even at their best. The beauty of it is, that the momen-

tum that will carry us safely through the present world crisis can also give wings to our human progress through the great new age ahead.

Recent history offers an example of how hard it is for interests, otherwise negatively disposed, to resist a persevering campaign of determined goodwill. The Gandhi Centenary year was a good time to remind ourselves of how the Mahatma and other creative pioneer patriots led the Indian people in a campaign of resourceful and determined goodwill, in non-violent protest against, and non-cooperation with, the British Raj, until, aided by other factors, it brought about a genuinely amicable transfer of power over a vast subcontinent, with a population greater than that of Africa plus Latin America.

This is doubly significant, in that certain of Gandhiji's outstanding predecessors in India's freedom struggle, notably Sri Aurobindo, but also Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal, and others, had stressed *the reality and potency of the nation-soul*, and those deeper pioneer patriots, with Tagore, Gandhi and others, had set the tone for a high-level united endeavour for Purna Swaraj (Integral Self-rule). (It was other later leaders who, whatever their qualities, lacked that *depth*, and who were too content with a merely political Swaraj with economic and social objectives, who set the pace for the present serious decline.)

Churchill, noble imperialist, had set his face against Swaraj, declaring, "I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire," but even in his hour of victory he was swept aside and could not prevail against the tide. So it will be with all who try to resist the mightier tide of the Revolution Supreme, whether they be of the Right or the Left—or even the Centre!

There is a supreme wisdom, a simple genius, in Sri Aurobindo's nation-souls approach to the problem of human unity, of world neighbourliness. The discovery and development of your own nation-soul summons up the best in yourself. Your acting on your discovery and your appreciative understanding of your world-neighbour's nation-soul summons up the best in him. This creates a winsome combination that can defeat the worst in us and help make this the best of worlds!

(Other elements of effective peacemaking today, which are implications we have gleaned from a rather thorough study of Sri Aurobindo's works in this field, have been set forth in part II of this series "A Great New Hope: The New Creative, Dynamic, Integral Peacemaking of the Revolution Supreme", truly revolutionising peacemaking.)

This is but the briefest of introductions to our vision of the Revolution Supreme. Its fuller outlines are being spelled out in a compact volume, with all emphasis on implementation in adequate, spirited, united *action*. This introduction and the book are but a few of the early intimations of what must grow into a vast world peoples' enterprise.

To be in reality the Revolution Supreme, it must comprise a programme of action at least as integral and adequate as that outlined in, " 'Revolution Supreme' Action", which follows, too momentous and creative to be left in the hands of the old professional

forces which have fumbled the job of peacemaking these 25 years since Hiroshima, and all those bloody centuries before that grim ultimatum.

Again let us take heart for the struggle from these words of Sri Aurobindo concerning "The Advent and Progress of the Spiritual Age" at the end of *The Human Cycle*:

"For the principle of such changes in Nature seems to be a long obscure preparation followed by a swift gathering up and precipitation of the elements into the new birth, a rapid conversion, a transformation that in its luminous moment figures like a miracle. Even when the first decisive change is reached, it is certain that all humanity will not be able to rise to that level. There cannot fail to be a division into those who are only able to live in the light that descends from it into the mental level. And below these too there might still be a great mass influenced from above but not yet ready for the light. But even that would be a transformation and a beginning far beyond anything yet attained."

Even a brief introduction to "The Revolution Supreme" must end, as we began, on the note of ACTION. If the reader will now turn to the appended " 'Revolution Supreme' Action" he may find himself stirred as he ponders the potentialities of what we may call "a New World Symphony of Action" to which this epic peacemaking adventure calls us, in our Sri Aurobindo-inspired quest for human survival and fulfilment, the only adequate "Sri Aurobindo's Action" in reponse to the India and world crises.

It will be the privilege and responsibility of each of us to find his place in that grand symphony—if he is willing, for this high purpose, to be put under divine Arrest.

"REVOLUTION SUPREME" ACTION

(ON THE WORLD SCENE)

We may summarise by saying that the Revolution Supreme, as we see it, will endeavour to:

1. Challenge and summon up in all of us the will to awaken fully to this supercrisis, the will to live, the will to unite for survival and fulfilment.
2. Awaken all of us to the deeper spring of our collective life, to the secret of survival and the Way to human unity and world peace, including a thorough exposé of the menace of egoism, individual and collective.
3. Wage Peace "the New Way", with its eight elements of creative, dynamic, integral peacemaking. (See memo, "A Great New Hope".)

4. Summon us all to the New Citizenship and the new True Statesmanship it will develop, a new high responsible standard of public life, to replace the old superficial, egoistic and bungling politics.
5. Create a worldwide "Third Force", the "United World Peoples Forces" for Peace and Progress.
6. Foster a Great Truth Awakening, emphasising the potentialities for our common cause in the creative collaboration of scientific development with spiritual development.
7. Generate a worldwide mobilisation of moral, spiritual, and cultural resources for human unity, world peace, and our human fulfilment, individual and collective.
8. Foster the Awakening to the Nation-souls and inspire the utmost growth of their influence, nationally and internationally, through Auroville, Unesco and beyond.
9. Concentrate World Peoples Forces and Governments on speeding economic and social justice to ALL. This is absolutely imperative.
10. Take up the cause of the "Have-not" Nations with resourceful vigour, with a genuine brotherly concern for their tens of millions of have-not men, women and children.
11. Strive to help resolve the dead-end dilemmas of the Cold War, pursuing "the great Truth Issue", working for universal *Detente and Disarmament*.
12. Strengthen the United Nations to the point where a world union of free peoples or a world government, preferably "a federation of free nationalities" (as Sri Aurobindo says), can be created.
13. Undergird the Revolution Supreme, and foster its permanence by active promotion and support of a new way of creative, *integral education*.
14. Strive with resourceful determination for the all-out and full *implementation* of all above elements of Revolution Supreme action, and any others which may evolve.

(Concluded)

JAY HOLMES SMITH

SADHANA ALL THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

To learn to walk as children of Light, one has to be in a state of Sadhana all the twenty-four hours. The body has to remain in Service of the Divine all the time of the day and night.

“If you want to consecrate yourself to the divine life,” says the Mother, “give yourself wholly, do nothing for your own interest...live in the feeling that it is this presence which moves you and is doing everything you do. Offer all your movements to it, not only every mental action, every thought and feeling but even the most ordinary and external actions.” This is our mode of worship.

Here a question poses itself: when we eat, when we speak, sleep or do all sorts of things how are we to lead ourselves to thinking that we are doing Yoga? Will not that mean deceiving the Divine, saying one thing and doing another?

The answer is that the whole fabric of life must be woven in a different pattern. New fresh qualities must emerge from the core of the being.

For instance, when eating, thought must remain centred on the Divine. Food has to be taken as an offering to the Divine in us—the Viswanara as the Upanishad says; then it is not likely to be a vitalistic movement.

“One must eat in silence. Whoever knows how to perform this rite, this offering of the food to the Divine Being within us, eats purity itself, takes in strength itself.

“...through the offering of the concentrated food to the Agni...the Universal Purusha within trains himself and learns to feel that it is the divine being within that accepts the food as oblation...as the early Vedantic Sadhak did, one can purify the inner instrument...”

Sri Aurobindo is not against the tongue enjoying the taste of the food; only there should be no hankering, no desire for delicacies, for surprise dishes. “A yogi,” he says, “eats not out of desire but to maintain the body.” Food as such is not to be thought of.

Until one wriggles oneself out of the “endless circle of desires” one cannot even form a remote idea how detachment and enjoyment can fuse together. The fusion can be known only by experience. Each of us has his own way of looking at things and doing it in his own way.

B never cared for food. Whatever was served to him he took without minding much.

C always maintained a cheerful atmosphere round him. He loved the sweet things of life. “Mine is a free open life. The Mother is there to see what I am destined to be,” he would say. And this keeps him full of life and humour.

A boy, who has been here from the age of seven, did not find it necessary to buy anything worth a pice, for twelve years. Once his father left for him Rs. 2/—but he did not even touch them. On his return after a year or so his father found the money in the drawer where he had put it.

When D had his meals in the Dining Room it appeared he was in a state of meditation: eyes closed, hands quietly moving to the mouth.

In E there never arose a desire for delicacies. If some sweets were put into his hands on birthdays he would pass them on to somebody else.

G lived mostly on milk and plantains. One slice of bread a day was enough for him. He was of an ascetic trend of mind.

H claimed that whatever he gave to the stomach the vital being had to accept without a murmur, "This serpent power is never allowed to raise its hood in protest." It does not appear to be a very cheering instance. Does it not bear a look of suppression? Still his words carry weight. A weak-willed man cannot say so.

L argued that he was entitled to enjoy the gifts of life, if they came unsought for. Why should he deny himself the joy of the Mother's gift in the form of good food?

Even before taking up Ashram life, at times M had the good fortune of passing into Samadhi. Once when he woke up from Samadhi he found himself seized by a desire for sweets. Amazed, he allowed himself to go up to a sweet shop but declined to yield to the temptation.

This is not enough in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. No hankering, no suppression either. Complete inner detachment. To be in plenty but above it. Not a trace of desire even in the inmost recesses of the being.

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One whose whole day is filled with works is at once declared a *Karmayogin*. To be thus driven by the working fever is to remain always in tension. A scholar saint has said: "Forget your little self in work and entirely throw yourself into it, you will succeed. If you are thinking, become thought itself, you will succeed. If you are working become work itself and then you will succeed...the desire for success must die in your work before achieving success."

But if losing oneself in work is Yoga then the whole world is doing Yoga. A driver who drives his car as if flying in the air; a cobbler who turns out a superb quality of shoes in his shop, a speaker who sweeps all off their feet by the power of his oratory, a statesman who dupes others by the skill of his brain-power are all entitled to the status of a Yogi. If that be the teaching of the Gita then why should it find a place in the scriptures of the world?

According to Sri Aurobindo, skill in work means to know how to get the work done by the higher forces than doing all by the mind's efforts. Yoga is a long process. It is not easy to reach this stage.

The moment we are engrossed in work, we are lost. Lost in what?

In unconsciousness. That is not Yoga. If there is no attempt to free oneself from ego,¹ there can be no Yoga. Karmayoga is after all a yoga, and a very rigorous one. It

¹ "Nobody can become more than human if he refuses to make a sacrifice of his ego..." (*On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 355)

has its own law, its own principles. A slight deviation will amount to a fall in Yoga.

We lose the inner contact because the vital being takes the lead. The joy one gets in work, though quite welcome, is a vital joy. For us the rule is: whatever the nature of the work we must not lose the inner touch. And that is the first difficulty one meets with in trying to do Yoga through work.

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It is common knowledge that when we go to sleep in concentration and set our heart in prayer we are saved from being haunted by undesirable dreams.

“The consciousness in the night almost always descends below the level of what one has gained by sadhana in the waking consciousness, unless there are special experiences of an uplifting character in the time of sleep...”

There is a very curious story of X’s experience in sleep.

While given to the thought of the Mother before going to sleep he felt himself gripped by a force and lost all sense of the body. Only a thread of consciousness remained above the heart watching the scene like a witness.

Of a sudden he saw a vapour-white body shooting forth through the crown of the head and it began to rise higher and higher, up in the sky. Whenever he found himself pulled down he saw his hands and feet moving themselves as a bird on its wings. This helped him to make another rise. How long this procedure went on he does not remember. Some faint remembrance he has only of the last movement: Whilst moving in the air he found himself advancing high up over the surface of the sea. The moment his eyes were drawn to the sea he got extremely frightened, “What if I fall into the sea?”—and all was gone.

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Thus Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is not of prayers or tears nor of contemplation but of action, dedicated and selfless. All has to be done in a spirit of worship. True worship is inner worship.

To sum up, we have always to be in a state of Yoga. To quote the Mother:

“You cannot do Yoga if you do not take it seriously. It must be a constant, continuous thing, something which never flags. If you forget and relax, you cannot do Yoga.”.

NARAYAN PRASAD

THE SECRET SELF AND THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

PART II—THE SECOND LIBERATION

(Continued from the issue of October)

4

DEVOTION

IN Vedic India there was a time when each act of the day in the lives of the people was a means of devotion to the Lord.

To the truly devout, the whole day was a design for worship, a state of consecration, an occasion for offering one's life to the divine.

The morning began with ablutions and an offering of the newly-washed body and purified being to the sun, the Lord of Life. The first meal of the day was prepared and was first offered to the deity of the house, then taken as consecrated *prasād*. The instruments of work were worshipped as a means of *karma-yoga* and a way to prosperity. And at the end of the day prayers and songs of gratitude were offered up to the Lord for his bounty and protection. No doubt a large element of superstition entered into such daily devotions, but a growing belief and understanding of the occult laws of Nature often led to a pure state of devotion where superstition and its attendant fears were transcended. When any 'right attitude' enters into its 'pure state'—that is to say, a condition of being where the petty interruptions of the lower nature no longer obtain, where the consciousness has risen to a plane of concentration and self-giving—it enters into a state of highest effectivity. It is that plane of consciousness where 'to give' has a meaning which transcends itself and becomes 'offering'; especially does this apply to offering oneself.

The word *devotion* comes from the Latin *devovere*, 'de' meaning 'away,' and 'vo-vere' meaning 'to vow.' It originally meant to vow away one's possessions, one's life, to dedicate by a vow or solemn act or to give up wholly one's life, one's mind to the worship of God.

Such a vow of dedication is not possible to the great majority of human beings because they want so many things. They have this hunger to possess, this fever of acquisition which prevents them from anything more than a casual act of generosity. They little know that this is the key to all their misery or puzzled unhappiness. This inability to give is the secret barrier that prevents them from receiving, and creates a sense of frustration and the vicious circle of more wanting. Psychologically, this wanting, this hunger for possessions is set up as a defense mechanism against the

feeling primordial of insecurity. This need for assurance, this insecurity goes as soon as faith in God is established.

One of the greatest edicts Christ spoke was: "Give all to the poor, come and follow me." It is both a promise and a challenge. It is a promise to be relieved of the "burden" of possessions and a challenge which echoes: "Shall a man not give all to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven?"

When is a man truly liberated? Only when he can say: "I want nothing but the Divine", or when he can say: "I want nothing"? Perhaps this wanting nothing goes beyond communication on the higher levels of consciousness.

As a fact of experience it is certain that when one wants nothing but what the Divine wills, the Divine gives all that one needs. At this point the right attitude is "detachment". Detachment from possessions—what is not yours if all is the Divine and you are the Divine? What is yours if you are God and God is all the world? All depends on the state of consciousness. And here we come to another very strong element of devotion. The *love* which must be an essential part of giving. True love only longs to give to the Beloved; to serve, to adore, to worship. It is only human love that makes a bargain—the 'I won't love you unless you love me' attitude.

Sri Aurobindo says¹ "The true business of man upon earth is to express in the type of humanity a growing image of the Divine. Man starts on the long career of his evolution with four main standards of human conduct. The first is personal need, preference and desire, the second is the law and good of the collectivity, the third is an ideal ethic; the last is the highest law of the nature. Whether knowingly or unknowingly it is to this end that Nature is working in him."

Sri Aurobindo also says:² "...the devotee, the bhakta, if he becomes directly aware of his soul and its dictates, unites his emotional with his psychic personality and changes his life and vital parts by purity, God-ecstasy, the love of God and man and all creature into a thing of spiritual beauty full of divine light and good, he develops into the saint and reaches the highest inner experience."

Devotion is the third door leading to the second liberation. It holds the keys to sincerity and surrender.

(To be continued)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

¹ *On Yoga I*, University ed., p. 219

² *The Life Divine*, Amer. ed., p. 803

O SEEKER OF TRUTH

(2)

FAITH

No adventure worth attempting and no realisation worth achieving are possible, if there is no faith, whether incipient or developed, imperceptible or cognisable.

Faith is that intuition of the being which is always there whether one knows of it or not; and when one aspires to know of anything, but fails to know it, it is there to guide and comfort though the results be far or lacking. It is that inherent knowledge one's light of the heart which precedes all other knowledge and realisation.

It comes to caress when no care on our part brings a happy consequence, when all efforts go of fruitless. It comes to assure and to soothe. It comes to lift and give in to one's hand, with the power to hold, that staff of light or of enthusiasm with which one set out on one's journey but which fell for no fault of oneself except that one's power was spent and one's push became poor, except that the path was too dim or dark for and the hurdles of the way too obstinate and hard for one's strength.

Faith is that obduracy of the soul which, even when it is uncertain of the true nature of things, is born of a knowledge which is certain and must yield true and certain results. It is a soft soothing touch or the reflection of an unbending will from some deeper blue in conditions of hardship, danger and adverse process seeking to overpower or strangle the truth of one's being, unable yet to assert and establish itself.

Faith is that beak, or reflection of the beak, of knowledge which projects out of the depths of one's heart and assures or presages the advent of the bird of knowledge which comes to make one fully aware of the cause or course to be followed and for the methods and means to be employed.

It is the straw of support for one to catch when one is in the midst of an ocean shouting for help—and it may indeed turn into a tree and then into a mountain till a bark comes to carry one to the shore or the water of the ocean dries up to clear one's way. It does not ignorantly and idly wait for miracles to happen but endeavours sincerely, simply, leaving everything, means and ends, reasons and results, to the Grace of God whose wonder-working is not unoften, whose compassionate recompense is not unusual, nor unnatural.

If one's sincerity is flawless and invocation true, faith draws forth that hidden hand of help to hold one up when, at the edge of a precipice, driven by a blind desire, or a false promise of some-high and unseen hope, one is being irresistibly impelled to fall over.

When, in moments of difficulty or dark obsession or blockage in headway, there is seen no pin-point of forward advance or opening, no ray of solution, faith breaks open

a gap in the impregnable fortress of obscurity, turns it into a big fissure and then into a full aperture for the light to enter and clear the path of truth, and give firm facility for the soul's victorious striding into the Sanctuary of Light without obscurity.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

CIRCLES

O GRAVE collected lad whose morning brow
Is smoother than the water-polished stone,
You poise above the pool with muttered vow
For failures now or never to atone—

Come, calmly realize your boyish aim:
This pebble must the pool's heart-centre find;
Which done, perhaps in decades hence the same
Abeyance of your ego's thrusting mind,

An unselfed plunging into being's core
Will eddy waves throughout a spheric clime
Whose spread, beyond thought's nicely measured shore,
Devouring space, annihilating time,

Will new-create a life's embosomed goal,
To ripple forth your quietly centred soul.

WILLIAM JONES

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta. Volume One: *The Coming Race* and Other Essays (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 406 pp., Rs. 15).

YOUNG Nolini, as a teenager, was one of the accused (along with Sri Aurobindo) in the Alipur Bomb Case of over 60 years ago. When Sri Aurobindo retired to Pondicherry, Nolini followed him, and he has been there ever since. As secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram for a period of 40 years, he has laboured quietly—almost invisibly—and helped Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to sustain the growth of the Ashram and maintain its high level of apparently effortless efficiency. He has a definite place in Bengali literature, and his writings in English cover a wide spectrum of interests. He is among the most authoritative exponents of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and world-view, and at 80 he wears the look and bears the poise and radiates the wisdom of a modern Rishi.

The first volume of his *Collected Works* (in English) includes five books—*The Coming Race*, *Towards a New Society*, *The Malady of the Century*, *The March of Civilisation* and *The Quest and the Goal*—containing in all about 80 essays, the earliest of which appeared before the Second World War. Collections of occasional essays seldom make good books, and a collection of such collections, after the time-lag of decades, has even less chance of achieving the form and vitality of a book. But there have been exceptions, and Nolini's collection is surely one such exception. The occasions that provoked many of the essays in the volume are now part of history, events (for example, the partition of the country) have overtaken the points of view set forth so persuasively in some of the essays, and there is also a certain amount of repetition, inevitable in a collection like this. But a vigorous and seasoned mind is at play throughout, and the volume is verily "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit". Besides, there is a sense of contemporaneity in many of the essays since, after all, the 'malady of the century' remains the same.

Nolini's central anxiety in the essays here gathered together is how best the future may be redeemed from the burden or shackles of the present, how man may be superseded by greater man, by Superman. Written at different times and in response to different challenges, the essays are nevertheless held together by the same enveloping vision and lucid ambience of presentation. Nolini's forte is an uncompromising succinctness, which however goes with superb self-sufficiency. The subjects range from philosophy and Yoga to politics and poetry, from communism and the other 'isms' (including Vansittartism) to *Hamlet*, Tagore and Sartre. It is not easy to yoke such versatility to proportionate authority, but Nolini seems able to do this because he relates all problems to a common frame of reference, to the same Ground—the integral spiritual vision of a Yogi. The situations, the problems, the provocations may be

different, but the same steady light is directed towards them, and hence there is no confusion, no contradiction. What unfolds before us is the panorama of Nolini's encounters with ideas and events.

The malady of the century is that, by losing contact with his soul, man has come down to the level of the animal. His other faculties—the brain, the heart, the muscle—are still active enough, but these do not converge towards a centre that knows, inspires, informs, organises, directs, achieves. The brain has now become a restless worm that ever pokes the peevish gutter of the unconscious. “We of the modern age know many things—perhaps too many”; and our knight-errants of research do no more soar into the Empyrean, but rather grovel in the grooves of the ant-hill or explore some old curiosity shop or other. Science has made great advances, technology has made a journey to the moon possible, the computer has relieved the brain of some of its traditional responsibilities—yet there is fear in our hearts, there is terror around us. The ‘unthinkable’ visits us in our nightmares, and—who knows?—doomsday may be round the corner!

We needn't, of course, like the Erewhonians, name science as the villain of the piece; we needn't opt for asceticism; we needn't throw up our hands in despair on the assumption that civilisation is doomed. It would be enough if we could re-establish the now lost link with the deeper truths within us:

“To relieve life of this mingled strain and tension, to lift it out of this ambiguity and uncertainty, to free it from this gravitational force that drives it towards what is superficial and external—to endow it with its real worth, we must...first draw back and re-establish, this time consciously and integrally, the lost connection with the soul, the Divine in our being.”

The revolutions in science in our time—notably the shattering of the nucleus and the cracking of the genetic code—have brought fresh air into our knowledge of the physical and biological worlds. The corresponding breakthrough in the world of the mind is yet to be accomplished. Human life has hitherto been functioning—or malfunctioning—on the basis of egoistic separativity. Unless the separatist cage is smashed, there can be no hope for the future. To re-establish the link with the soul, with the Divine at the human core, is verily to be in a position to rebuild human life “on another scale, the scale of unity and infinity, instead of the present scale of separativism and finiteness... One can live here below, live a full life, upon a larger scale, upon the scale of infinity and eternity.” Nietzsche's ‘superman’ was to have gone beyond good and evil and made a virtue of living dangerously; but he wouldn't have gone beyond his own ego. But truly to go beyond good and evil is to re-establish the hot line with the Divine within:

“For beyond good and evil is Nature Divine. Man has to find out this divine nature and dissolve his human nature into that, remould it, reshape it in that pattern. So long as human consciousness remains too human, it will be always branded with the bar sinister of all earthly things. Man has to grow into the immortal seated within mortality, into the light that shines inviolate on the other side of the darkness we live

in. That immortality, that light one has to bring down here on earth and in ourselves, and out of it build a new earth and new human self and life.”

The long saga of earth's evolution has seen life sprout out of matter, and mind out of life. This condition of mentalised humanity is the “realm between,” and must lead on to what may be called spiritualised humanity. Lest this sound too airy, Nolini cites the examples of Rajrishi Janaka, Guru Gobind Singh and Swami Vivekananda who took on the burden of humanity yet tried to break through its limitations and fill ampler spaces with more than human puissance and purposiveness. And Nolini gives us the assurance that if one could persevere and touch this bedrock of “one's inmost spiritual being ..the mind will be wholly illumined, the vital with it will become the pure energy of Consciousness and the physical body will be made out of the substance of the divine being: our humanity will be the home and sanctuary of the Divine.”

K.R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

(With acknowledgements to the Deccan Herald, Bangalore)

Stories of Light and Delight, by *Manoj Das*, published in the Nehru Library for Children, The National Book Trust, New Delhi, India. Price: Rs. 1.50.

SHEER Delight—there you have in two words all that is necessary to say about this collection of short stories. The booklet is richly illustrated by Mario, with some sixty lovely drawings for the nine stories contained therein. Both the stories and the illustrations being equally delightful, they make as perfect a match as John Tenniel's pictures to *Alice in Wonderland*.

Manoj Das's stories in this volume compare well with *Akbar and Birbal* by Asha Bhalekar, and with the enchanting tales about Nasruddin of Samarkand. They have all the charm of the truly Oriental Wit, as well as being fascinatingly positive, without ever in any way lifting a moralistic finger.

If ever you find yourselves left with a bilious taste in your mouth after reading some world-famous short stories, try reading Manoj Das. He might not be world-famous as yet but he certainly leaves you with a happy heart and a friendly smile on your lips; and he will certainly not change the quality of his stories once world-fame is attained, as his writings are in perfect harmony with his own captivating personality.

CARMEN NEVILLE

8 Short Stories edited by *K. B. Sitaramayya*, published by the National Publishing Co. Madras. Price Rs: 2.50.

A **HANDY** volume of short stories, selected with a view to meet the needs of students of the English language. They show as great a variety as they possibly could, and are very judiciously chosen as to style and beauty of language. All the stories seem apt to hold the student's attention and interesting enough to make him look up the meaning of some words still missing in his vocabulary. Humour (R.K. Narayan, Oscar Wilde, Saki and Arnold Bennett) is well mixed with suspense (Will F. Jenkins) and tragedy (Rabindranath Tagore) and two more stories that would not fit into these three categories: "Henry" by Phyllis Bottome on a theme of tiger-taming, that might also hold the student's attention, though the theme has been rather worked to death, and the example given is not one of the best variations; and then: "My Brother, My Brother" by Norah Burge, a fine story with a positive ending (three cheers for the positive ending!) in which the ordeal of the brother stops short just before becoming an ordeal to the reader as well.

The editor has added some very enlightening notes at the end of the book about each one of the stories and their respective authors. These notes also include explanations to the student who might be puzzled with some idiomatic term, or the usage of some name that presupposes common knowledge as to its context, as well as elucidating the meaning of some less common words.

All in all a very useful little book for any Indian student who would like to perfect his knowledge of the English language and become at the same time acquainted with some particulars about eight well-known authors and their styles. In this limited range it enables him to choose further reading matter according to his own preference: Intelligent humour in Indian setting: R. K. Narayan—Sharp wit, very English indeed: Oscar Wilde—Witty stories with surprising ending: Saki—Deep sentimental insight into the inevitability of disaster in Indian life: Rabindranath Tagore—etc etc. Though none of the mentioned authors writes exclusively in the style exposed here, still the student may find just what he expects, guided by this excellent selection made for his benefit by K.B. Sitaramayya.

CARMEN NEVILLE

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

16TH AUGUST 1970

THE Seventh Annual Conference of the New Age Association was held on the 16th August 1970 from 8.30 to 10.20 a.m. in the Hall of Harmony at the Centre of Education. In the beginning a short piece of the Mother's recorded music was played. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman, read out the following answer of the Mother to a question relating to a message of hers on India:

THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE:

"The number one problem for India now is to find back her soul."

QUESTION:

How to find back India's soul?

THE MOTHER'S ANSWER

"Become conscious of your psychic being. Let your psychic being become intensely interested in India's Soul and aspire towards it, with an attitude of service; and if you are sincere you will succeed."

15-6-1970

After that, eleven members of the Association read out a series of extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo compiled under the general title, "India of Sri Aurobindo's Dream."

Then the following five other members of the Association gave speeches on the subjects shown against their names:

Ayati—The Way out of the Modern Dilemma.

Basavjit—The Aim of Life.

Bimala—Some Fallacies and Popular Misconceptions about Rebirth.

Romen—Whither India?

Sunayana—The Purpose of the Ashram.

The Seminar ended with concluding remarks by the Chairman.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

ANTENOR AND PARIS: TWO FACES OF TROY

A COMMENT APROPOS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S *ILION*

WITH the fate of Troy hanging in the balance, its citizens assemble in the agora to decide upon an answer to Achilles' peace offer. The speeches of Antenor and Paris mark the two poles of the debate which follows. Paris' speech carries the day and can be taken as an expression of the essential Trojan spirit. Indeed, when Paris rises to speak, we are told, "...each man towards him/ Eagerly turned as if feeling that all before which was spoken/ Were but a prelude and this is the note he has waited for always." Antenor's speech, on the other hand, is greeted with cries of mockery and derision, and Antenor himself is accused by some of being a traitor who has been bought with Argive gold. A comparison of these two speeches might thus be expected to clarify our understanding of the life view which underlay the glory and grandeur that were ancient Troy.

Briefly summarizing Antenor's argument, we may mark the following points made in approximately the following order. Troy is defending an evil cause in the present war—*i.e.* Paris' abduction of Helen—and hence faces certain destruction as the Gods cannot be expected to support such a cause. The willingness to war over such an issue is only the most recent of a series of stupid and prideful actions on the Trojans' part: another is the poor treatment they formally accorded their subject nations, who consequently have deserted them in the present crisis. Given these circumstances, prudence decrees that the Trojans swallow their pride (pride is for the Gods, not for things of clay, says Antenor) and accept Achilles' offer. Such surrender need not mean the end of Troy; on the contrary, it would give them time to secretly husband their forces until a propitious moment when the Greeks, grown fat with conquest and jealous of one another, are divided amongst themselves and easy prey for a Trojan uprising.

Prudence and a moralistic sense of determinism are thus the two main bases of Antenor's position: the Trojans' present plight is their punishment for past misdeeds (the abduction of Helen, poor treatment of subject nations). The chief concern of their strategy now, the consideration which must outweigh all others, is survival.

Obviously, it is a mental, or unilluminated mental, consciousness which stands behind these arguments. Moral sense, the tendency to organize things, people, events into neat little categories of good or bad, right or wrong, according to some external criterion is an activity of the dividing mental consciousness whose very principle is that of separation and juxtaposition. The premium which Antenor places upon survival similarly derives from an unilluminated mental realm of consciousness, a consciousness limited to a petty, fragmented view of things, a consciousness plodding along one careful step at a time, quite incapable of "letting go" and casting itself with total abandon into the arms of the Divine in a sudden movement of magnificence.

At first hearing Antenor's contention that physical survival is the very first prerequisite to re-establishing Troy's greatness, and that to fight on in an obviously hopeless cause bespeaks not fine nobility but foolish pride may sound like the clear-eyed wisdom

of common sense. Upon more careful consideration, it is recognized to be not wisdom at all, but ignorance cloaking in rationalizations a failure of the vital will. As Sri Aurobindo writes in one of his letters (*On Yoga II*, Tome II, p. 842):

“Even if I foresee an adverse result I must work for the one that I consider should be; for it keeps alive the force, the principle of Truth which I serve and gives it a possibility of triumph hereafter so that it becomes part of the working of the future favourable Fate, even though the fate of the hour is adverse. Men do not abandon a cause because they have seen it fail or foresee its failure; and they are spiritually right in their stubborn perseverance. Moreover, we do not live for the outward result alone; far more the object of life is the growth of the soul, not outward success of the hour or even of the near future. The soul can grow against or even by a material destiny that is adverse.”

The point of view championed by Paris is, as I have said previously, the very antithesis of Antenor's position. Not for Paris the careful considerations of the prudent schemer. The Gods alone, he argues, know what Fate holds in store for us: from man such knowledge is absolutely barred. Thus it is meaningless to chart one's course of action so as to achieve some pre-planned goal. Rather, the determinant of action must be only the demand of one's being *vis-à-vis* the demand of the moment. Man's greatness lies in fulfilling the former as perfectly as the latter permits, and the achievement of greatness must ultimately be man's sole consideration.

Not for Paris notions of moral causality. The Gods do not reward good and punish evil, terms thrown up by the mind to justify its yearnings, “lures of the sophists draping our passions with virtue.” What the Gods love and reward is greatness—man fulfilling his “swadharma” (for that is what we mean by fulfilling the demand of one's being as perfectly as possible within a given set of circumstances). And for Troy, whose ideal is the warrior, greatness means strength, courage, nobility; not careful, calculating prudence: the lion leap, not the tentative circling of the jackal.

In Antenor we have observed that the dominant mode of consciousness is the mental with its characteristic tendency to divide and categorize experience and to proceed at all times in a deliberate, step by step fashion. In Paris it is clearly the vital (higher vital) mode of consciousness that dominates. Its characteristic note—boundless energy throwing itself into its chosen movement with total abandon—is surely much in evidence in Paris' complete dedication to the warrior ideal of greatness and his contemptuous rejection of all other considerations.

Clearly, then, Paris represents what Sri Aurobindo would have us understand as the essential Trojan spirit: when Paris has finished speaking, the debate is over and nothing remains but to arm and proceed to the field of battle. In Paris the people of Troy have recognized a spokesman of the truth of their own inner being—a warrior calling other warriors to achieve their greatness. This call made and answered, who can say that though her gleaming towers will soon lie in charred ruins, Troy has not triumphed?

A STUDENT

SRI AUROBINDO'S *PERSEUS THE DELIVERER*

AN APPROACH

(Concluded from the issue of September)

THE real tragic character in the play is Polydaon the "dire priest." He is the instrument of Poseidon and in the minds of the Syrian people he was the real sea-monster raging against them. His speeches are everywhere fearful and grim. He seems to be gluttonous and he would wait blood-thirsty for the victims on the sea-shore in the disguise of avenging Poseidon. Scene I of Act II and Scene III of Act IV are the most fearful scenes in the play. In the palace of Cepheus Polydaon is seen demanding Iolaus as the victim, thinking that he has saved Perseus on the sea-shore. Addressing Cepheus in a demanding tone, he says:

Well, king of Syria,
Shall I have justice? Wilt thou be the king
Over a peopled country? Or must I loose
The snake-haired Gorgon-eyed Erinyes
To hunt thee with the clamorous whips of hell
Blood-dripped?

The man who was so serious in avenging the god loses his strength when he hears the fearless rage of Cassiopea, the queen, who says:

I bid thee again
Take heed, drive not a queen to strong despair.
I am no tame-souled peasant, but a princess
And great Chaldea's child.—

Polydaon murmurs in response:

.....see
In the queen's eyes her rage, we must discover
New means, this way is not safe.

Thus the "Ruffian intriguer masking in a priest's disguise" struggles on in, hoping to become king of Syria. This works as the tragic flaw in his character.

Again he appears on the scene grimly demanding Andromeda, the deliverer of the victim Smerdas. The people of Syria give him support fearing the rage of Poseidon.

The people, who had liked and praised Andromeda before, attack her severally while taking her to the altar. Among them, the one kind character is ironically enough, the butcher Perissus. Andromeda feels grateful to him for being so kind to her and he replies in a tender way:

Kind, why should I not be kind? Because I am a butcher must I have no bowels?
 Courage, little Princess: none shall hurt thee but thy sea-monster, and he, I am sure, will crunch thy little bones very tenderly. Never had man-eater such sweet bones to crunch. Alack! but where is the remedy?

In the last great soliloquy of Polydaon we see that the wild madness in him has reached its climax:

I have set Poseidon's rage in human hearts;
 His black and awful influence flows from me.
 Thou art a mighty god, Poseidon, yet
 And mightily thou hast avenged thyself.
 The drama's nearly over. Now ring out
 The royal characters amid fierce howlings
 And splendid, pitiless, crimson massacre,
 A great finale! Then, then I shall be king.
 The clamour of battle roars within the palace!
 I have created it, I am Poseidon.
 Sit'st thou, my elder brother, charioted
 In clouds? Look down, O brother Zeus, and see
 My actions! they merit thy immortal gaze.

At last when the tables are turned against him, he realises his fault, and Sri Aurobindo writes that "his being is withdrawing from the body and he lives only in an inner consciousness and its vision."

I was Poseidon but this moment.
 Now he departs from me and leaves me feeble.
 I have become a dull and puny mortal.

He remembers Poseidon but all has now changed:

...He stands beside me still
 Shaking his gloomy locks and glares at me
 Saying it was my sin and false ambition out-did him.

He dies destroyed by his own evil. There is a dramatic growth in the character of Polydaon: at the time of his death he realises his evil longings and the wrong he has done. This realisation and this awareness, from the point of view of Sri Aurobindo's ideas, seems to be a growth in consciousness, the growth from the primitive and savage mind towards a human mind.

Among the other characters, the king is portrayed in a very realistic manner. He is torn between his god and his daughter, but Cassiopea the queen remains to the end strong and vigorous. The fickle-mindedness of the common people is portrayed in a natural way. They seemed to be happy in the kingdom of Syria but when Polydaon the priest rises against the royal family they all support him, with a burning passion to kill her. It is quite natural that they are afraid of the fierce monster taking revenge on them. When again Polydaon is punished, they all return to the king's side.

The play is constructed on the Elizabethan model. There are five acts in it as in a Shakespearean play. There is a gradual development of plot. The Prologue acts as the key-note in launching the conflict. Act I faces us with the shipwreck and gives the beginning of the conflict, that of Iolaus saving Perseus. In Act II, Polydaon rushes to the king's court demanding Iolaus as the victim. Andromeda frees Smerdas in Act III, and in Act IV she will be taken towards the altar to be offered to the sea, monster; finally in Act V Andromeda and Iolaus will be saved by Perseus, and Polydaon is dead. Perseus is the deliverer of all the people who were put in a dangerous position. Smerdas and Tyranas, are brought to the victim-stand and Andromeda is chained to the cliff to be devoured by the sea-monster, but they will all be rescued. The only tragic incident in the play is Polydaon's death. Even then, he lives a moment of awareness, in a vision of the inner consciousness.

Though there are tragic moments in the play, they are nothing like the disturbances which are found in an Elizabethan tragedy. There are moments, when intense and grim surroundings are portrayed, but they do not occupy the whole play. The language is terse and powerful and certain passages remain in our minds with a haunting effect. The blank verse achieves very revealing poetry. Polydaon at his dying moment struggles in his mind and the conflict in him is well pictured in a long passage.¹ Another such passage is Polydaon's soliloquy in front of the god Poseidon.²

The play can be studied from several points of view. First, it can be termed the romantic love-story of Perseus and Andromeda. This love-story has been strewn throughout the play. Partly it is to seek the love of Andromeda that Perseus plunges into action. Secondly, the play can be studied as the tragedy of Polydaon. The growth of the tragic flaw in the antagonist of the play and the climax to which he reaches and the deterioration of his character is revealed to us. Thirdly, the play pictures a conflict between good and evil. In the end we see the good subduing the evil, the incitement being a concern for humanity and the means being "Love" and "Power". Finally, Sri Aurobindo has woven the idea of the evolution of consciousness into the play. The land, which was a place of horror, murder, and sacrifice of lives for a bad cause which is the ruling motive, is in the end transformed into a place of love, harmony and serenity. Polydaon the opponent of the good forces is made to grow in awareness and he does not die in vain. Realisation comes to him at the end and that is something gained, as Poseus says at the close:

¹ *Perseus the Deliverer* (Ashram Edition), pp. 129-130.

² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

But the blind nether forces still have power
 And the ascent is slow and long is time.
 Yet shall truth grow and harmony increase;
 The day shall come when men feel close and one.
 Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
 Since little by little earth must open to heaven,
 Till her dim soul awakes into the light.

Another distinguishing factor of the play is that it is a poetic drama. T.S. Eliot, in his essay on poetry and drama writes: "Verse plays, it has already been generally held, should either take their subject matter from some mythology or else should be about some historical period, far enough away from the present for the characters not to need to be recognizable as human beings and as therefore for them to be licensed to talk in verse."¹

If a historical or a mythical situation is chosen for the play, the primary reason to employ poetic drama as the medium is the one above mentioned. It takes us to a remote past and prepares our moods for that particular atmosphere. We find elevated from our sole self and it is this state which makes a deep impression on our minds and prepares us for the situations of life, as V. Raghavan points out in his essay, *Aesthetics of Ancient Indian Drama*: "One thus goes out of the theatre with an impression of quiet harmony rather than with a disturbed mind. When T.S. Eliot, therefore, says that the ultimate function of art is to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation, he is voicing the Indian view."

Sri Aurobindo's idea of life is Indian to the core in this play. He believes life is but one act in a long series of movements through which man is gradually evolving towards perfection. "Death is not the end, nor evil; realisation and happiness are the real end." This idea has been concretised in the play. According to Indian Aesthetics, the drama must not confuse the issue of life by posing fresh problems but help transcend the turmoil and chaos and attain composure. Aesthetic gratification is the major aim of Hindu Drama. As this is the case, Indian plays do not indulge in merely creating characters to study the human being primarily for its own sake. No doubt such study helps humanity to a large extent, but the Indian dramatists show us the means to transcend this state of chaos by inducing a spiritual awareness in the minds of the readers. The Indian mind never tries to ignore the tragic side of life, but it uses it as a means towards realisation. Then only does this mind enjoy the happiest moments of its life, as Sri Aurobindo says in his essay on Hindu Drama: "Pity and terror are used to awaken the feelings, but not to lacerate them, and the drama must close on the note of joy and peace: the clouds are admitted to make more beautiful the glad sunlight from which all came and into which all must melt away."

(Concluded)

K.S. LALITHA

¹ *Selected Prose*—T.S. Eliot.

WHEN WILL WE AWAKE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF EYE EDUCATION?

THE body is a gift of God; it needs and is entitled to regular care and attention. The eyes are one of the body's primary instruments. Yet very few people really take an interest in the proper care of their eyes. Usually it is only when the sight becomes impaired that one consults a doctor or an optician; and even then many delay until the defect has become serious.

It would almost seem that we enjoy ill health. Perhaps complaining about our health and seeking advice on medicines, diet, etc. adds interest to our lives. Perhaps the mind finds good health—and the systematic care needed to maintain it—monotonous. I am writing this article to testify to the fact that good eyesight can be maintained without the use of glasses, provided the eyes are properly used and cared for.

Doctor Bates, an American, who died nearly fifty years ago, discovered natural treatments for various eye defects and his many successes are strong evidence that good eyesight can be maintained without the use of glasses. He set a direct example by curing his own personal eye defect, which had reached fairly serious proportions. Generally cure is only possible if there is no physical or organic disease, although even in these cases there can often be much improvement. The treatments have a psychological and mental—rather than a physical—base; relaxation is the method.

Doctor Agarwal of the School for Perfect Eyesight at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry is continuing the Bates method of treatment and trying to encourage a wide-spread interest in proper eye care. Education in this field could alleviate much suffering and hardship.

I speak of suffering and hardship because I have been a victim of defective eyesight for many years. My contact with the School for Perfect Eyesight has opened up a whole new world for me. Had I known how to use my eyes when I was young, I would not have experienced years of mental suffering and strain. I had repeatedly approached doctors and eye specialists only to be told that nothing could be done for my complaint and that I would just have to hope and pray that I would not become blind. They explained that my eyes were good but that the optic nerve was not functioning well, and that nothing could be done about this. Meeting Dr. Agarwal gave me new hope; since then, having faithfully carried out the treatment prescribed, I am beginning to experience its wonderful results.

Many say that the treatment is too long and tedious or complain of being deprived of their glasses. It strikes me that any excuse will suffice to avoid facing the truth and that the problem is really that few people wish to exercise a little self-discipline. For example, the objection is always raised that one has no time for such treatment; but surely it is better to spare a little time now than eventually suffer a burdensome defect or even complete loss of sight. This seems obvious yet few will take any notice. Those

with good sight will say, "Oh! It doesn't affect me, I'll be all right", and those with defective eyesight say, "It is probably all right for some people, but not for me. I am too busy and cannot spare the time." However, I must speak out, for I feel strongly that it is up to all who do realise the importance of eye education to make every effort to arouse the necessary interest in others. Since joining the School for Perfect Eyesight, I have become aware that many students suffer a great deal of mental and physical strain because of defective eyesight. Academic pressure—especially if it is accompanied by a seemingly unsympathetic professor—can have a very trying effect on a student whose eyesight is not good. Moreover, even from a purely economic standpoint, there are so many different types of work which require perfect eyesight without glasses that training in simple care and proper use of the eye should form an integral part of education—not only for children but also for adults.

Far too often we spend all our time and energy in talk yet fail to act, even when action is clearly necessary, as it is in the present case. Let us strive to banish ignorance from this important field by actively supporting programmes of eye education—and not forgetting to apply the principles of proper eye care in our lives.

(Based on a statement of Henry Bell)
