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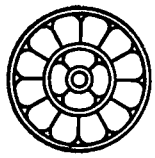
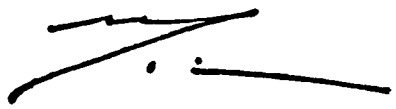


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXIII **No. 8**

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

The Ashram is meant for those who want to consecrate their lives to the Divine.

June 1971

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**

Et quel est le critère de jugement de X? Est-il devenu divin? Seul le Divin connaît la vraie valeur de chacun.

25 Juillet 1971

And what is X's criterion of judgment? Has he become divine? Only the Divine knows the true value of each one.

July 25, 1971

*
**

I disapprove totally of violence. Each act of violence is a step back on the path leading to the goal to which we aspire.

The Divine is everywhere and always supremely conscious. Nothing must ever be done that cannot be done before the Divine.

May 6, 1971

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(*Continued from the issue of August 15, 1971*)

(*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.*)

APRIL 25, 1956

"Beyond the limited human conception of God, he will pass into the one divine Eternal..."

(*The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 147*)

What man calls God is a limited consciousness of God, not the full consciousness of God; so he will go beyond this limited consciousness of God and towards the true Divine.

Sri Aurobindo means that man has a limited knowledge, a limited consciousness and perception and experience of God, *not* the full experience of the Divine, and that he must pass beyond this knowledge and perception and go to the vaster and truer perception.

Sweet Mother, the justification of earthly life...

Yes, the justification of earthly existence is that one is on earth to realise the Divine.

Without that reason earthly life would be a monstrosity.

(*Silence*)

If there were not this supreme reason of rediscovering the Divine and becoming Him, manifesting Him, realising Him externally, earthly life as it is would be a monstrous thing.

Naturally, the more people are unconscious, the less do they understand this, for they do not objectify, they live mechanically according to old habits, without even

becoming aware or objectifying their way of living. And as the consciousness grows, one realises the kind of monstrous hell life is,—life as it is.

And it is only when one becomes conscious of that *towards* which this life leads, that one can accept it and understand it. It is only this *raison d'être* of life which makes it acceptable.

Without that it would truly be a frightful monstrosity.

Sweet Mother, what is a "divine pleasure" ?[1]

It is the pleasure of the Divine.

How... ?

What do you want me to tell you, child? You must live it and then you will know what it is.

It is what is called in Sanskrit Ananda. And we have often said before that to know this Ananda, one must first have renounced completely all human pleasures, to begin with, for as long as a human pleasure delights you, you are not in the right condition to know the Ananda.

It may come to you and you will not even be aware of it.

"A spiritual Truth and Right have convicted the good and evil of this world of imperfection or of falsehood and unveiled a supreme good....But behind all these and in them he has felt a Divinity who is all these things, a Bringer of Light, a Guide and All-Knower, a Master of Force, a Giver of Bliss, Friend, Helper, Father, Mother, Playmate in the world-game, an absolute Master of his being, his soul's Beloved and Lover."

(*Ibid., p. 146*)

Can the Godhead be all these things at a time for anybody?

Yes, and many more.

This is a very short description only!

But here too, if one wants to have this experience, one must not seek in life and among men for these relations, because if one seeks them in the ordinary life, as ordinary relations, one becomes incapable of feeling them as the Divine can give them. And generally, most people, even those with a living soul, seek these relations with the Divine only after they have had the most bitter and disappointing experience in their search for human relationships.

[1] "A Bliss has invaded him and shown that it can make suffering and sorrow impossible and turn pain itself into divine pleasure."

That makes them lose much time, it wastes a lot of energy. And generally, they are already quite worn out and spent, when they reach the state in which they are able to have these relations in all their splendour with the divine Presence.

That leads to much loss of time and a great wastage of energy; but it would seem there are very few who can go straight avoiding all these roundabout ways. Mostly, when they are told that there is a divine joy and a divine Plenitude which far surpasses all they can imagine in ordinary life, they do not believe it; and to believe that they must have, as I said, a painful experience of all that is false, deceiving and disappointing in ordinary relationships.

It is said that example is the best teacher, but in fact there are very few who care to follow an example—specially when the examples surpass them a little too much. They all want to have their own experience; they have the right to it, but that makes the road interminable.

Sweet Mother, if one needs something like a mother's affection or some help, how can one feel it in the Divine, according to one's need?

What exactly do you want to say?

If, for example, one wants to know something or one needs guidance, or something else, how can one have it from the Divine, according to one's need?

By asking the Divine for it. If you do not ask Him, how can you have it?

If you turn to the Divine and have full trust and ask Him, you will get what you need—not necessarily what you imagine you need; but the real thing you need you will get. But one must ask Him for it.

You must try out the experiment sincerely; you must not endeavour to get it by all sorts of external means and then expect the Divine to give it to you, without even having asked Him. Indeed, when you want somebody to give you something, you ask him for it, don't you? And why do you expect that the Divine should give it to you without your having asked Him for it?

In the ordinary human consciousness the movement is just the opposite. One postulates something, saying: "I need this, I need this relationship, I need this affection, I need this knowledge, etc. Well, the Divine ought to give it to me, otherwise he is not the Divine." That is to say, you reverse the problem completely.

First of all, you say: "I am in need." Do you know whether you truly need it or whether it is only an impression you have or a desire or quite an ignorant movement? First point: you know nothing about it.

Second point: precisely, it is your own will you want to impose upon the Divine, telling Him: "I need this." And then you don't even ask Him for it: "Give it to me." You say: "I need it. Consequently, since I need it, it must come to me, quite naturally, spontaneously; the task of the Divine is to give me all that I need."

But if it so happens that you truly don't know what you need and it is simply an illusion and not a truth and that, into the bargain, you ask everybody around you for it and don't go to the Divine, don't create any relation between yourself and Him, don't think of Him or turn to Him with at least some sincerity in your attitude, then, as you ask nothing from Him, there is no reason for Him to give you anything.

But if you ask Him, as He is the Divine He knows a little better than you what you need; He will give you what you need.

Or maybe, if you insist and want to impose your own will, it is possible He may give you what you want in order to enlighten you and make you conscious of your mistake that it was not truly the thing you needed. And then you begin to protest (I don't mean you personally, I am speaking of all human beings) and you say: "Why has the Divine given me something which harms me?"—forgetting completely that it was you who asked for it!

In both cases you always protest. If He gives what you ask and then that brings you more harm than good, you protest. And then, if He doesn't give it, you also protest: "What! I told Him I needed it and He doesn't give it to me."

In both the cases you protest, and the poor Divine is accused.

Only, if instead of all that, you have simply an aspiration within you, an urge, an intense ardent need to find That, which you conceive more or less clearly to be the Truth of your being, the Source of all things, the supreme Good, the Answer to all we desire, the solution of all problems; if there is this intense need in you and you aspire to realise it, you won't any longer say to the Divine: "Give me this, give me that", or: "I need this, that is necessary for me." You will tell Him: "Do for me what is necessary and lead me to the Truth of my being. Give me what you in your supreme Wisdom see as the thing I need."

And there, then, you are sure of not beng mistaken, and He will not give you something which harms you.

There is yet another higher step, but that is a little more difficult to begin with.

But the first is already a much truer approach than the attitude of telling the Divine: "I need this. Give it to me." For, indeed, there are very few people who know really what they need—very few. And the proof of it, is that they are always in pursuit of the fulfilment of their desires, all their effort is bent upon that, and every time one of their desires is fulfilled, they are disillusioned. And they pass on to another.

And after having searched much, been much mistaken, having suffered a good deal, and been very disappointed, then, sometimes, one begins to be wise and asks oneself if there isn't a way out of all this, that is to say, a way to come out of one's own ignorance.

And it is then, at that moment that one can do this (*The Mother opens her arms*): "Here I am, take me and lead me to the true path."

Then everything begins to go well.

(*To be continued*)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1971)

(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.

We are interrupting the sequence of the Talks with a few that were somehow left out. Once these have been published, we shall resume the usual series.)

JUST as sponging started, N prompted P to start the talk.

N: What are these newspaper cuttings you have brought?

P: Cuttings from P. B.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about?

S: You have already seen these reports of his views on Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh!

S (*after a pause*): He says he has plumbed the depths of Yoga. At the beginning he made some foolish exaggerations about the claims of Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: They were not foolish but deliberate exaggerations with plenty of imagination. He wrote with an eye to the reading public.

S: He says he has given up his search after Yoga as he has plumbed its depths.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he wants to include Yoga in the educational curriculum. A queer affair, this European mind!

S: He himself has gone in for several superficial things, magic, occult phenomena, etc. His book on Egypt has a lot of that stuff. He speaks of an Egyptian he found on the top of a hill who prophesied the destruction of Europe.

SRI AUROBINDO: That man 1200 years old, who had an Oxford accent in his speech? There was no Oxford accent at all 1200 years ago. It may be P.B's own Egyptian self and hence the accent. That book on Egypt is...(*Sri Aurobindo began to shake his head*). All the same, he had some sincere seeking for Yoga. It was spoiled by all sorts of people. He ought to have left everything, in the hands of Maharshi.

P: He speaks highly of Vivekananda. He says he would have occupied the same place as Gandhi.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which place? Wardha? (*Laughter*)

P: He means he would have had the same influence.

SRI AUROBINDO: That's a different matter. He doesn't speak of Ramakrishna?

P: No, he speaks of Vivekananda.

SRI AUROBINDO: What was at work was Ramakrishna's inspiration.

S: The idea of starting Yoga courses is rather funny.

SRI AUROBINDO: They have started a school on Raja Yoga in America. But it has nothing of Raja Yoga.

N: In Bombay also there are schools.

S: They are of Hatha Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was in connection with Hatha Yoga that I was at first puzzled. A Hatha Yogi was going about, lecturing that all moderns, including us, were of poor physique, with hollow cheeks etc. The next time I heard of him was that he was dead. (*Laughter*) He tried to be witty also: he used to say that our cheeks were like the Bay of Bengal. (*Laughter*)

P: Bhas started a weekly where he has written two chapters on your life.

SRI AUROBINDO: That was a long-cherished idea of his and he wrote something in English. There he spoke about the Mother also. He asked Andrews to review the book. Andrews said: "I can't review the book. I have known the lady." Then he wrote a book on the Ashram disparaging it and asked Arthur Moore to serialise it in *The Statesman*. Moore said he knew the Ashram, he had been there.

EVENING

N (*fomenting Sri Aurobindo's leg while he lay in bed*): Can feeling the Presence be called being conscious of the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, certainly.

N: Even feeling by the mind?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, even by the mind.

N: One may feel at times the Presence without being conscious of the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the mind can feel just like the other parts and feeling is the beginning of being conscious. (*After a pause*) Why do you ask?

N: Well, we were discussing what could be meant by being conscious and whether it was possible to express the experience in words. If a man thinks that there is a Presence around him, could it be called being conscious?

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, thinking! Thinking is of course different from feeling. But thinking may lead to feeling.

S (*to N*): Why not thinking? One has to begin somewhere and, being human, one can start with the mind.

N: I don't object or question it. My question is whether that could be called being conscious.

SRI AUROBINDO: As I said, thinking may lead to the realisation. The Adwaitins begin with the mind and reach the realisation through it. There are many ways. There

are people who can't meditate but doing work with the right attitude they can establish the contact, and feeling leads to the realisation.

N: But being conscious of the Presence is a realisation?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: I thought it is an experience because it has not yet been established.

SRI AUROBINDO: At least it is the beginning of realisation.

S (*to N*): Why not realisation? When one identifies with the Divine and then comes down, you won't call it realisation?

SRI AUROBINDO: He means that whatever is a passing experience and has not been yet completely established is not a realisation.

S: In the old Yogas they have a term called *sahaj samādhi*, "easy Samadhi"—by which they mean that the Samadhi has become part of one's natural life.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the same as the Gita's *samāhita*, "collected". There are also people who can by will bring down the state of Samadhi whenever they want it, while at other periods they are in the ordinary consciousness. That is an intermediate stage. There are other people again who may have experiences at the beginning and then none at all for 6 or 7 years.

N: Yes, I belong to that group of unfortunate people. (*Sri Aurobindo began to laugh.*)

S: Those experiences are a promise perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

S (*to N*): Don't worry. If you feel you are lonely, I am with you.

N: That is hardly a consolation for me. (*Sri Aurobindo laughed very much.*)

S: No, but in ordinary life people forget their misery when they find others in the same state. They say "There are others like me" and get consolation.

N: That is when they are out of their misery.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, in their miserable state itself they get relief. (*After a little pause and smiling*). Lucretius the Roman poet says somewhere: "It is sweet to sit on the shore and see people struggling in the sea." (*Laughing*) A Christian Father also says: "It is a great joy to see people in Hell being tortured."

Dr. B (*after some time*): Somebody writes that, while in jail, your body was lifted from the ground in meditation. Could anyone see that?

SRI AUROBINDO: How do I know? I have't seen it myself. (*Laughter*)

S: People ask these sort of questions about you. Someone asked me too and I said: "He is not a magician. He is just as natural as we are." Another person asked if you were living in a cellar and food was being dropped to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is like Kesavananda. He used to live in a cellar.

N (*after another pause*): Due to which opening does one feels the Presence?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the way one feels.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of July, 1971)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in those talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But, in reconstructing from memory, the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

(Some disciples requested a further elucidation of the psychological analysis Sri Aurobindo had given some days earlier. So he obliged.)

I. *The Mental Being:*

(1) The purely mental: Reasoning, creation of mental forms, activity of will, reflection. It seeks to know Truth: "What is it that I must do? How must I do it?" This pure mental faculty has a certain power of perception and vision.

Speech is a mental faculty; it tries to communicate the result of thinking and reason. Though speech is life trying to express itself, it belongs to Buddhi.

(2) The mental-vital—Manas. Emotions, feelings and sensations take the mental form of emotion and mental sensations in the sense-mind (heart); presentiments people get in the heart or sense-mind. That is why Manas is called the sixth sense.

(3) The mental-physical. Here certain habitual mental movements repeat themselves without any act of pure reasoning. Even if there is reasoning, it is mechanical. It goes on moving in its own rounds even when the other parts of the mind are not conscious of it. It goes on mechanically repeating old ideas, samskaras, impressions. There is neither mental, vital nor physical urge in it—nor any creative activity of mind proper.

II. *The Vital Being:*

(1) It is if from the heart down to the navel according to some, or from the navel and below it according to others. In its own nature it is force trying to effectuate itself in life. Its form is desire, which is very useful for life in nature.

It is the vital being which wants to do this and to do that, it always tries to throw itself out.

(2) The thought of the vital mind is something going out straight from the vital being, not from the mind. It accompanies the vital movements, knows them and expresses them in speech or mental forms. It thinks and plans even as the mind does. It is the mind that stands apart and tries to realise the impulse.When Mussolini says, "Italy shall have a place under the sun", it is the vital mind that speaks. It is not primarily an emotion; it is thought straight from the vital; the emotion may follow and the vital mind may then ask Reason to find out and give the reasons for it. It desires by the vital urge without any reasoning.

(3) The physical part of the vital (physico-vital): it is necessary in order to realise the vital impulses on the physical plane. It is that which is concerned mainly with passing events and transitory movements. It is that which is irritated over trifles, which is easily upset. It is exhilarated very quickly and very quickly depressed. It is this which makes one restless. The vital may have the necessary urge but if the physical part is not ready one cannot realise it on this plane.

All this constitutes the vital and it is a very necessary part for the full development. It is the vital which supports the mind in its movements. Without it the mind would not be able to effectuate itself in life; it remains only mental—ideas, principles and ideals.

Q: Must not the mental ideas get the consent of the vital?

Yes, without it nothing can be accomplished.

Q: Is it the mental which draws out the vital force or the vital which calls forth the mental energy?

It depends on what is first in the field. It may be the mental or the vital according to individuals.

Q: If the vital supports the mind, does the mind succeed?

Not necessarily. The vital may consent, may even support the mental being, but it may not have the necessary strength to carry out the mind's ideas in life.

(4) Supermind in the vital : vital intuitions, inspired impulsions. It is something which comes down from above direct into the vital being, not necessarily touching the mind. It is that which gives the correct intuition as to what is to be done. Some people think at once and do the right thing—without any reasoning. All men of genius have that capacity, a sort of half-supramentalised movement in the vital being. They don't commit a mistake in their actions and they can't give reasons for their actions.

III. *The Physical Being:*

(1) Physical Mind. It observes the physical things; though we cannot say it thinks about them, yet it is that which arranges them in a sort of way. It hardly reasons except when acting in conjunction with the higher faculties. It is the end of mind, so to say, like the point of a pen, which is necessary for the work of the mind. When we take a pen and our hand writes something—some word or name—on the paper without our thinking about it, it is the physical mind that does it.

(2) The vital physical is the vital moving in the physical being. It is that which

makes the different organs act and the functions of the physical being are regulated by it. It is that which gives health and strength to the body. It is for this reason that the Upanishads speak of the Pranas or vital breaths moving in the system. They form as it were the nerve-ends of the higher faculties. You can do nothing well if they do not respond and move with those faculties: an example is the activity of a musician. They are the end, so to say, of the inner being through which it expresses itself on the physical plane. They are like the brain which forms the connecting link by which thought can find expression here.

(3) Body consciousness.

(4) Supermind in the physical. Something in the body cells which makes them do precisely the thing necessary for the body. Supposing you take an object in your hand and then without any mental action you know the weight of the object, as it were straight from the physical. That is the Supermind acting.

The body knows what it needs...

The mind has grown at the expense of the vital being and the capacities of the physical being. The mind could have taken up and used these materials which the vital and the physical offer instead of losing them.

Q: To what plane does aesthetic creation belong?

It depends upon different people. Generally it belongs to the vital; style for instance—style for its own sake. But aesthetic creation can be on every plane. Originally all this comes from the Ananda Plane.

If a man is powerful, he can make his vital imagination realise itself. Idealists have not the vital force to put their ideas into life.

The analysis I have given is convenient to understand, but things in their reality are not so cut and dried. They do not work separately, there is a great deal of action and interaction and the being is much more complex in its workings than the analysis shows. *E.g.* the mind goes from above down to every principle but we have cut it down into mental, vital, physical.

Man has a mental being, a vital being and a physical being. His mental being may consist of several mental personalities. Thus, Das in 1905 was a lawyer, all logic in his speeches, direct from his mind. But in the N.C.O. days he changed. Similarly the vital being may consist of several vital personalities. The physical (not the body but the physical consciousness including physical mind) is not so rich in personalities, but in a highly developed being, there may be more than one physical personality. What is meant by the physical personality is that thing which serves the dynamic mind and brings success in action, that which serves the mental being, the vital being, that which serves the aesthetic being....In a developed man these serveral personalities are organised. He is, as it were, a company within himself and he presents a certain front of himself to the world: his external personality or being. This external personality is put forth by him for purposes of this life. But a Yogi who has to exceed and transform this life has to re-organise all; some of the elements of the old personalities may be there but transmuted.

In the average individual the external personality or being is a mixture of the mental, vital and physical. It is almost amorphous in the primitive man, with certain mechanical movements and an ego above them. We may represent the facts like this:

mental vital physical	external personality	a combination of mental, vital and physical elements.

There are some people in whom eight or nine personalities come out in a day. They are not balanced. The case of possession or mediumship is different. There is the case reported in "From India to Mars" of one Helen Smith who in a trance spoke the Sanskrit language and spoke the language of Mars, and who said that she had been an Indian princess in a former life. She seems to be a highly developed person. To explain her by the theory of the subliminal self will not do, for then everything can be explained by the subliminal self. Stevenson's Jekyll-and-Hyde is a crude idea of double personality combined with the moral notion of the Angel and the Devil.

All great men were not moral. From Bilwamangal to St. Augustine all saints had been sinners. Only all did not confess it. They become saints in the later part of their lives. (A saint is not necessarily a yogi.) The explanation is that sinners have a strong vital force in them. They may put that out in action (of desire) or they may resist it. Das was sometimes considered immoral, but he was always strong. Julius Caeser had perfect self-control, and when he indulged himself he did it with his will. Sinners may turn their vital force to serve their mental or moral ideals. It is a sort of gathering inward of energies. It is the capacity for Tapasya of the vital being. (There is an Asuric Tapasya. The Yogi need not achieve this sort of self-control or Tapasya, he has a Divine Control.)

It is owing to the strong vital force in Gandhi that in youth he indulged himself sexually so much, and it is the same vital force gathered inward that is now being put out into action. In the former case it was an unregulated vital force, in the latter it is regulated. Mahomed had a superabundant vital force in him. Isn't he said to have had many wives? It is the same vital force that founded Mahomedanism.

Q: What about Napoleon?

He was not a human being. Some large vital being was acting through him.

But it is not to be supposed that all immoral people are strong. Many are immoral out of weakness. They are driven by the movements of the vital world, helplessly, they cannot resist the temptation.

Regarding double personality: there are several cases of possession which are not to be confused with multiple personality. *E.g.* many murderers, during their trials, give evidence that they were driven by some abnormal force not their own; in ordinary moments, they are perfectly ordinary people. Such cases seem to be possessions by some vital beings.

Regarding physical personality: one's ancestors do count.

In certain cases of persons remembering their past lives, it is the psychic memory or soul,memory, not the vital or physical, that they bring with them; in such cases the past lives are very interesting. Ordinarily some people may bring with them vital and physical memories of their past lives that were simply vital, concerned with the ordinary enjoyments of the vital being. Releasing memory of past lives by hypnosis does not give the real knowledge of the past lives. What the hypnotised subject says is all due to subconscious suggestion.

Karma in the sense of a reaction for action is there in the vital and physical planes. If the child touches fire it burns its fingers. The soul gathers experience on all the planes. When there is detachment, there is no reaction in the soul, but Karma is doing its work there not in the sense of reaction of growing or falling down, but in the sense of action and its fruit.

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

PEAKS' ALLURE

Leaving behind vain strayings along bypaths,
Done with the gravity of desire and strife,
Straight up the high hill light in search of Truth
Is well on way my caravan of life.

Never can I give room to drowse or dark,
Nor ever determined my will ramble or laze,
All of me cupped in my hands of sacrifice
Shall burn flame-white hallowed with love and praise.

No earthly touch can ever drag me down,
Nor the false powers dazzle or divert my gaze,
Ever awake my deep-drunk eyes of light
Shall rend apart the gloom's all-hovering haze.

Unsparing have I given myself for Her,
I have endeavoured headlong or remained steel-still,
I've thoughtless carried out Her littlest bidding,
Unquestioning obeyed Her word and will.

Aloft and onward do I ever march,
And keep alive heart's ache perpetually,
Rising peakward in silent urge my soul
Shall one day stand on Top luminous and free.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

TOWARDS AUROVILLE

AN APPROACH THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S BOOK "THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY"

(Continued from the issue of July 1971)

THE dangerous tendency towards uniformity could best be overcome by a perfect spiritual unity, for it is only then that an utmost play of diversity would be securely possible without any strife or disorder. "While the life-power in man demands diversity, his reason favours uniformity. It prefers it because uniformity gives him a strong and ready illusion of unity in place of the real oneness at which it is so much more difficult to arrive."[17] Moreover, uniformity seems to be the easy and secure way of establishing law and order in society and its unification. No doubt, uniformity quickly succeeds in providing the collectivity more leisure and room for the spiritual, cultural and intellectual pursuits of its members, through the rapid standardisation of its economic, social and political existence, but also soon creates a mass social inertia and social immobility at the bottom which in their turn weaken and paralyze its gains at the summit. A standardised and regimented society, however flourishing and prosperous it might be on the surface, soon finds itself in a situation of utter sterility and degeneracy. The real and secret aim of Nature is to bring about a true unity supporting an infinite variation and a rich diversity. It, therefore, in all her works, insists equally upon unity and upon diversity, and this principle can fruitfully be applied to the human community only when it is able to achieve a real psychological and spiritual unity. "Human society progresses really and vitally in proportion as law becomes the child of freedom; it will reach its perfection when, man having learned to know and become spiritually one with his fellow-man, the spontaneous law of his society exists only as the outward mould of his self-governed inner liberty."[18]

This great ideal may not be immediately practicable, but it would always be well to know the ideal and the best method to achieve that ideal. To bring about such an ideal unification of mankind, peoples all over the world should (may) be allowed to form themselves into large organised and harmonious groupings according to their natural divisions of locality, race, culture or other convenience—free and natural groupings which would leave no room for internal discords, repressions or revolts. Simultaneously attempts may be made at the formation of large or small administrative and economic confederations as a possible means of habituating peoples of different race, traditions and civilisation to live together in a common political family which promotes the principle of variation in a large measure.

It may also be that because of some gigantic revolutions in international thought, and Science being successful in annihilating the obstacles of space and of geographical and mental division, and the coming into power and currency of a radical party of sweeping socialistic and internationalistic doctrinaires seeking to crush out of existence all forms of inequality and group individualism, a world-empire may crystallise out of Nature's many possibles. "But life develops in obedience to its own law and the pressure of forces and not according to the law and the logic of the self-conscious mind; its first course is determined by the subconscient and is only secondarily and derivatively self-conscious."[19] Human society too has been developing accordingly, for in the logic of life, contrary to the logic of reason, the first necessary step in the development of society is determined by the subconscient and it is only in the final stage that the conscious intellect and will of men are called for to complete and perfect it through necessary legislation, military, political, administrative, economic, and social. "The completeness of the process depends on the completeness of the development by which the State and society become, as far as that may be, synonymous. That is the importance of Democracy; that is the importance also of Socialism."[20] For these are the sure signs that a society is getting ready to be an entirely self-conscious and therefore 'a freely and consciously self-regulating organism', or 'the organised self-regulating consciousness by a violent regimentation'. The former is an instance of Democracy, and the latter of National Socialism.

The monarchical system played a useful role in the evolution of society. It cracked up and went down when it undertook legislation, social development, ecclessiastical duties, functions which it could not healthily and effectively fulfil. A king may well be an honest and efficient regulator of all the external activities of a developing society but culture, religion and social fulfilment which constitute the expression of the life, the thought and the soul of a society are certainly outside his sphere. "Only the society itself can determine the development of its own Dharma or can formulate its expression; and if this is to be done not in the old way by a naturally organic and intuitive development, but by a self-conscious regulation through the organised national reason and will, then a governing body must be created which will more or less adequately represent, if it cannot quite embody, the reason and will of the whole society. Even a perfect democracy is not likely to be the last stage of social evolution, but it is still the necessary broad standing-ground upon which the self-consciousness of the social being can come to its own. Democracy and Socialism are, as we have already said, the sign that that self-consciousness is beginning to ripen into fullness."[21] But it does not necessarily follow that a true Democracy must come into being, at some time in the future: for man to move individually or collectively to a full self-consciousness is a difficult proposition and is not easy to be achieved so early in human history. Moreover, forces of Socialism seem to be stronger today than those of Democracy. No single individual or system can, however, substitute itself for the soul of the individual and for the soul of a nation. Every form of government contending for such a role must first create a framework for the fullest freedom of the individual and the collec-

tivity and work for their perfect expression. "Even exceptional rulers, a Charlemagne, an Augustus, a Napoleon, a Chandragupta, Asoka or Akbar, can do no more than fix certain new institutions which the time needed, and help the emergence of its best or else its strongest tendencies in a critical era. When they attempt more, they fail. Akbar's effort to create a new Dharma for the Indian nation by his enlightened reason was a brilliant futility. Asoka's edicts remain graven upon pillar and rock, but the development of Indian religion and culture took its own line in other and far more complex directions determined by the soul of a great people. Only the rare individual, Manu, Avatar or prophet who comes on earth perhaps once in a millennium can speak truly of his divine right, for the secret of his force is not political but spiritual. For an ordinary political ruling man or a political institution to have made such a claim was one of the most amazing among the many follies of the human mind."[22] Nonetheless, the monarchical, aristocratic and theocratic elements are present in a perfect society as fulfilling their natural function in a conscious organisation. However, it was these systems of absolutist monarchy, aristocracy and theocracy that were the intermediary steps towards the clear and firm evolution of an intelligently self-governing society of our times. Democaratic states and Democratic Socialism, perhaps, have a chance in the world of today of bringing about a conscious and organised unity among the different peoples and cultures of the earth through the promotion of rational order, regularised efficiency and perfect self-government.

(To be continued)

Compiled by MADHUSUDAN REDDI

[17] Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950), p. 181.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 210.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 210.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-25.

SOME DOCUMENTS ON THE INDIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT AND SRI AUROBINDO

A LETTER

Dear Amal,

Last year, guided by a faint clue while studying the official files on the Indian Revolutionary Movement at the India Office Library, London, I had a mind to go to Cambridge. But, for several reasons, I had to wait until I could make it this time. In addition to King's College, sanctified by Sri Aurobindo's presence, there were some other surprises waiting for me. At the University Library Archives, the Hardinge Papers revealed to me the inside picture of the British colonial policy, of which I shall write elsewhere.

Baron Charles Hardinge of Penshurst, Governor-General of India from November 1910 to April 1916, has left a name in history, as you know, for his able diplomacy and keen political insight. In this collection are the original—mostly handwritten—letters exchanged between Lord Hardinge and the successive Secretaries of State for India (*e.g.*, the Earl of Crewe, Sir Joseph Austen Chamberlain, Viscount John Morley of Blackburn, etc.) on the one hand, and the Governors of the Indian Provinces and other officials on the other.

Though often inextricable from the general papers concerning the revolutionary movement, I am trying to quote a few passages from these documents in which direct mention is made of Sri Aurobindo. For instance, in Book 81, I came across in Vol. I (No 127) a letter dated 28 January 1911 to Hardinge from Sir Edward Baker, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Belvedere, Calcutta, which reads:

> "With reference to what Your Excellency told me yesterday, regarding the view taken by the Secretary of State in regard to the Karmayogin case, I venture to send, for Your Excellency's information, copies of a letter from Lord Minto to me, dated 15th April 1910.
>
> "...I would invite attention to paragraphs 6 and 7 of my letter to Lord Minto. On the 13th January 1910, the Home Department had written officially directing us to consult the law officers whether they consider that a prosecution would prove successful, and suggesting that, if their reply was in the affirmative, proceedings should be instituted against Arabindo Ghose."

Let me remind you that Sri Aurobindo, though released in 1909, never ceased to be considered as "dangerous" by the British Government. In fact, the Bengal Police

had a good deal of hope that they would still be able to convict him along with the majority of the revolutionaries once and for all. At this juncture, Jatin Mukherjee, the next important leader after Sri Aurobindo, sent Birendra Datta-Gupta and Satish Sarkar to do away with Samsul Alam, who was the most active brain working in favour of the Bengal Police endeavours. Satish Sarkar, known as "Kanistha" in Sri Aurobindo's circle (and as Nirvana Swami these days) was a reliable messanger between Sri Aurobindo, Sister Nivedita and Jatin Mukherjee. On January 24, 1910, Biren and Satish assassinated Samsul in the open High Court, during the proceedings of the Alipur Bomb Case sequel. Whereas Biren got excited after the assassination and was arrested, Satish escaped, and went straight to Jatin Mukherjee to inform him about the success of the mission.

When in 1963 I went to Calcutta, having finished the harvest of the research in the National Archives, Delhi, I interviewed most of the important and aged revolutionaries. I was astonished to find the lucidity and accuracy of Satish's statements, which corroborated most of the data I had already collected. According to Satish, Jatin Mukherjee asked him to go to Sri Aurobindo immediately and inform the latter that the work had been done. As far as I remember, Suresh Chakravarty (Moni) has left a good description of the evening when Satish reached Sri Aurobindo's office and reported the said event. Very soon after this incident, Sri Aurobindo received the *adesh* to go to Chandarnagore; whereas Jatin Mukherjee was arrested on January 27, 1910, only to be released after a little more than a year in prison under trial. A complex case was instituted by the Government under the general title "Howrah Gang Case." In Book 117 of the Hardinge Papers (No. 5 dated 15 December 1910), Hardinge, who used to consider Jatin Mukherjee to be equally "dangerous" as Sri Aurobindo, wrote to Earl Crewe, His Majesty's Secretary of State for India:

> "As regards prosecution, I have also spoken freely to my Council and deprecate the net being thrown so wide; as for example in the Howrah Gang case, where 47 persons are being prosecuted, of whom only one is, I believe, the real criminal. If a concentrated effort had been made to convict this one criminal, I think it would have had a better effect than the prosecution of 46 misguided youths."

Again, in Book 81 (Vol. I, No. 133), Baker wrote to Hardinge:

> "As regards press prosecutions and other political cases, not remitted to the Special Tribunal, the sanction of the Governor-General in Council is not required by law or rule. But, so far from the local Government having been addicted to instituting prosecutions to which the Government of India objected, the latter have repeatedly urged us to take proceedings which we considered inexpedient. Thus, when Arabindo Ghose was acquitted in the Alipur bomb case in 1909, the Government of India wrote officially saying that they considered that he ought to have been convicted, and they suggested that I should consider whether an appeal

should not be filed against his acquittal. I did consider it, and decided not to do it...

"In the Karmayogin case, as Your Excellency is already aware, I had decided not to prosecute. The Home Department then ordered me to take the advice of the law officers, and, if they considered that a prosecution would be successful, to institute proceedings against him. Your Excellency has seen the opinions of the law officers and can judge where the responsibility lies. If the Government of India had not intervened, there would have been none of the 'trouble and tribulation' to which Your Excellency refers..."

Hardinge, who was highly esteemed by the King-Emperor himself, came to India with a definite policy, a policy which neither Baker nor Carmichael, as Governors of Bengal, fully understood. In some of his letters to the Secretaries of State, Hardinge became furious with Baker, whom he refers to as his "Bengal Tiger." Here are some extracts from a letter written by Hardinge to Valentine Chirol (Book 81, Vol.II, No. 231, dated 28 May 1911) regarding the Khulna Gang Case, which was a side development of the Howrah case:

"You must not take a narrow view about the Khulna Gang case. I had not been in India a week before I fully realized what a bad case the prosecution had in the Howrah case, and how impossible it would be to obtain a conviction.... Anyhow, when I had been here a week I begged Baker to drop the prosecution, but he refused.

"I begged him at a later date when it was still possible, but he was as obstinate as a mule and could not see farther than the end of his nose. The result was exactly what I had anticipated....

"Nothing could be more injurious than such trials, while it was most unlikely that any good could come out of them....In fact, nothing could be worse, in my opinion, than the condition of Bengal and Eastern Bengal. There is practically no Government in either province, but I am determined to restore order in Eastern Bengal....In the meantime we intend to prosecute any offenders we may catch with the utmost rigour, but by the ordinary law...."

In his letter (Book 81, Vol. II, No. 121) to Baker, dated Calcutta, 30 January 1911, Hardinge took the former to task for not having consulted His Excellency before making certain political prosecutions. Hardinge included an extract from a private letter he had received from Earl Crewe (London 13th January 1911):

"I have your telegram of yesterday on the situation arising out of the Karmayogin case, and cannot be entirely surprised that you and your Government jib at any proposed action....The figures you give of the number of successful prosecutions

compared with the failures are effective as an official answer, but they do not turn the edge of the particular criticism. You remember the Cass case? The Police had warned thousands and arrested hundreds of street-walking ladies without remark, but when they dealt with Miss Cass (who was no better than she should be, I believe), the Government of the day nearly came to grief over the affair. So, too, countless Irish agitators had to assume prison dress, but William O'Brien's breeches became as famous as Joseph's coat of many colours. The ill-luck of this prosecution, therefore, is that Arabindo, dangerous though I dare say he is in fact, is well-known here, and looked on as a high-souled enthusiast, averse to crime, and thus a man who ought not to have been attacked without the clearest proof. In fact, all the material has been supplied for turning him into a hero .."

That in the meantime Hardinge had obtained from the Secretary of State the full power he had been looking for is shown in his Memorandum (Book 117, Vol. I, Part 2, No. II, Paragraphs 2 and 7) dated 11 January 1911, to the Secretary of State:

"Your telegram contains the proposal, firstly, that the Government of India should withdraw from Local Governments generally the discretion granted them in 1907 to institute prosecutions for sedition; and, secondly, suggests as possibly the preferable alternative, that this discretion should, as a result of the Karmayogin case, be withdrawn from the Government of Bengal, which you think might be differentiated from the other provinces on various grounds...

"Prosecutions for sedition should, in my opinion, only be taken up when a conviction is practically assured. In this particular case, considering that the prosecution was principally directed against Arabindo Ghose, any risk of failure should have been examined with more than usual care and avoided....It is impossible to deny that the prosecution was taken up in a more venturesome spirit than the gravity of the step warranted. Such venturesome action can only be justified by the fact that the writings of Arabindo Ghose have produced such a baneful impression on the educated youth of this country that a serious attempt to stop the source was worth making and running the risk of failure..."

I could send you much more of this material, as there is still a great deal of scope for further research, and I hope to see it through to the end. For the time being, if you like, you could publish these extracts for the possible use of our historians.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

TWO ENGLISHWOMEN REMEMBER THE ASHRAM

A BACK-LOOK AT A FIRST VISIT

The article given below was accompained by the following letter to the Editor:

"Parkfield, 67 Holbrook Road, Cambridge, 27th June 1917

"Five months ago we met at Arindam Basu's house. Both my friend Joy and I much enjoyed that afternoon; it was lovely to get to know you after so many years of deriving great pleasure from reading Mother India.

"We are still reaping the benefits from having stayed at the Ashram; for both of us it was an important time and the enclosed is a token of our gratitude for all the help and friendship we received.

"Do you think it would be suitable for inclusion in Mother India *? Some readers might perhaps be interested to know of the reaction to their first visit to the Ashram of two old sadhaks from the West?*

With many kind thoughts,
Yours sincerely,
Edith B. Schnapper"

SOMETIMES when opening a book at random the eye is caught by a phrase or passage that is immediately relevant to one's innermost thoughts. This was the case the other day. In a book on Julian of Norwich, the 14th century English mystic, the following quotation from her writings occurred.

> I understood three manners of beholding of Motherhood in God; the first is grounded in our kind making; the second is taking of our kind—and there beginneth the Motherhood of Grace; the third is Motherhood of working—and therein is a forthspreading of the same Grace, of length and breadth and of height and of deepness without end...and all is one Love.

Julian of Norwich? Motherhood in God? Reading these words occasioned an existential leap over the centuries to another country, another climate both materially and spiritually, and an altogether different "ghostly" approach.

We had only recently returned from Pondicherry. Our departure on our first pilgrimage to the East had been preceded, for both of us, by months of intensive planning during which Asuric attacks and unexpected and even miraculous solutions to seemingly insoluble problems gaily chased each other; so much so that we had come to the conclusion that both realms, the Asuric and the Devic had taken a

special interest in our trip. The battle went on unabated until the very last when persistent fog engulfed London Airport and all flights were cancelled. By that time, however, we knew that this was only a last impotent if menacing gesture. From then on all turbulence ceased and we flew out into the silent skies to be finally greeted by unearthly hues of a stupendous sunrise over the endless sweep of the Eastern horizon.

Ours was not a pilgrimage in search of a spiritual home; this we had found long before we ever contemplated a trip to its earthly abode; neither were we in search of a Guru or a teaching, for we knew where we belonged. A link had been forged in our souls and this we could not doubt. Why then did we decide to go? Perhaps because we wanted to see for ourselves; perhaps because we felt a call within that the time had come; for both of us, however, one motive was abundantly clear; we wanted to give thanks for what we had received and all that had happened to us in the far-off Western world since those first intimations of an inner guidance and an inner belonging and commitment.

By logic and reason we should have been complete strangers to the Ashram. In practice, logic and reason only held sway on the geographical level; it took us a little while to find our way about the place and become familiarised with its rules and regulations. These, as we speedily discovered, were the necessary adjunct to the outstanding efficiency, meticulous cleanliness and ordered beauty that pertained to all aspects of life in the Ashram. Moreover, help was freely extended to us from many quarters with the result that any feeling of strangeness was from the first wholly submerged in its exact opposite; the feeling that we had come home, for in every person we met, in different ways and degrees, there was a mutual and entirely spontaneous recognition of a common spiritual ground of our being. Perhaps it was the loving welcome we received from friends we had known before that opened a way to a meeting in depth with our fellow sadhaks, a meeting that was grounded in the immediate knowledge of a common aspiration as members of the same spiritual family. The main channel for this communication and even communion was the look in the eyes of those we met. The opaque veil we knew so well that makes so many eyes impenetrable was here wholly absent. The eyes which scrutinized us were open, radiant and, at the same time, deeply penetrating, seeking an encounter of the soul. This invitation of the eyes was followed by a warm greeting extended to us by the person. It seemed to say, 'You are one of us, welcome.'

So many descriptions of the Ashram had reached us before we set out that we realised that it would be difficult but absolutely necessary to leave behind all preconceived ideas. India herself helped us in our endeavour to be open, unprejudiced and ready to receive. Plunged into the thick of Indian urban life, as we were on our arrival in Bombay, all previously held notions were successfully shattered. It was like being stripped bare and carried away by a tornado-like force that was of the very stuff of life itself. A turmoil of contrasting impressions descended upon us, but, above all, we felt sucked into the orbit of that vast indrawing power that Indian life exerts with such intensity. An underlying oneness appeared to permeate all activi-

ties resulting in a sense of physical and emotional closeness in which barriers between human beings do not exist or have to be erected ever anew only to be swept aside at the next encounter. Having been given this shock treatment, Bombay fashion, which included confrontations with the most exalted beauty and spiritual grace as well as the most abject poverty and squalor, all cobwebs had been truly blown away and we were ready for almost anything. Nevertheless, one pet notion still clung to us; it was our idea that Pondicherry as the home of the Ashram must be a place of quietude and silence. This was exploded the moment we arrived, and was not allowed ever to raise its head again for the whole of our stay. The sound of drums, bells, gongs and transisters descended, greatly reinforced by singing, chanting, the clanging of rickshaw bells and the sound of car horns; to this, nature added her share in the form of a persistent chorus of crows, crickets and frogs that supplied the background noises in this great symphony which, so it seemed to us, was Pondicherry's version of the Yoga of Sound.

However, just as the hub of the wheel stays motionless yet gives rise to the wheel's progression, so the centre of this welter of sound, the Samadhi, was still and soundless. The noises floating in from the outer perimeter here died down and were swallowed by or transformed into vibrations of a higher frequency that are out of reach of the human ear. Outside, the throbbing activities of Ashram — and non-Ashram life, with all its clangour and unceasing motion: inside, the opposite, quietude, peace and a stilling of the senses. It was this contrast that took us by surprize and to which our senses reacted in a most tamasic way; sitting close to the Samadhi we could hardly move and nearly fell asleep, or so it seemed to us. It was like being thrown out of an agitated sea onto a sunlit beach where the sound of the waves could be heard in the distance but were powerless to disturb the prevailing peace and luminous silence.

'How did you come to this Yoga?' this was a question many times repeated on both sides, and often a delightful exchange of past happenings ensued. It was enriched by the rare experience of a spontaneous opening towards one another, by mutual understanding and an intense joy that springs from meeting with kindred spirits. Frequently a common pattern emerged and we discovered that there are certain features of our spiritual quest that belong exclusively neither to the East nor to the West. For some of us the commitment to the Yoga is a gradual process. There is a first call that sets in motion an inner working that is usually veiled to our consciousness, yet exerts a growing influence on our orientation to life. Whether the first intimations of what is happening rise into consciousness through an opening in the heart or the mind does not seem to be of any great consequence except that, as a rule, the mind finds it more difficult to accept and follow the promptings coming from behind the veil. Where the heart would leap ahead the mind asks for proofs before committing itself. We of the West know this only too well.

Others of us find that the surrender to the Yoga is instantaneous. Something in us gives itself and we know where we belong. Such an experience of surrender can happen anywhere; although it is clearly more likely to happen in the Ashram it is

intrinsically independent of time and place. A threshold is passed and one's life begins anew. In this, as one of our Indian friends said wisely, it matters little whether one enters through the Mother or Sri Aurobindo; for the Mother will lead one to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Aurobindo to the Mother.

Another question that we frequently discussed was: can this Yoga be done in the West? It is a question that is of prime importance to Western sadhaks and it often exercises their minds with a great urgency. Just because it is not a problem that immediately affects the Yoga as practised in Pondicherry, it is sometimes not easy to find a sympathetic hearing in the Ashram. Many brush it aside and indicate that if you feel your place to be in the West, it simply means that you are not ready to put first things first and live in the Ashram where alone the Yoga can grow to its full perfection. Some put it the other way round and maintaining that the West is as yet not ready for the unfoldment of the Yoga. Again, many are so deeply absorbed in the inner and outer Ashram life that any concern about outside problems is wholly or partly absent. But there are a few who react otherwise; and to one such fellow sadhak we spoke whilst looking out over the wide expanse of the sea glowing in the evening sun. "Life in the West with all its materialism, unrest and aggression affords an immense challenge to a follower of the Integral Yoga. The difficuties are, no doubt, daunting but if we can rise to it this challenge will imbue us with a strength and endurance not likely to be found under less exacting conditions and the victory won will be proportionately greater and deeper."

Words to this effect were spoken and they were backed by an assurance which we shared wholeheartedly that, of late, the force descending to hasten the work of transformation has gathered such momentum that doubts and faintheartedness, wherever they arise, have no place in the scheme of things any more.

The Mother has made it abundantly clear that the manifestation that has now happened in the Ashram is universal in character; does this not mean that, as the new Force manifests in the earth consciousness, it becomes, by this very fact, universally available? For all the bounty of love, spiritual help and renewal we received by our visit to the Ashram there is perhaps one small thing we can offer in return. It is the assurance that the descent of the Force of the Divine Shakti radiantly concentrated at Pondicherry is yet not confined to that hallowed spot. Wherever the ground has been prepared and mind and heart are open to receive it its touch can be felt and the work of transformation begin.

This means, as we understand it, that some of us are called to do the work of the Divine at the fountainhead, the Ashram, so as to consolidate the descent, to stengthen and broaden its foundation and, by surrender, to implement and individualise the descending force for an ultimate complete transformation of life.

Others of us are called upon to prepare the soil elsewhere; to protect and nourish the first tender shoots of the new awareness, to be open to the touch of the Shakti from above and yet, at the same time, find means of closing ourselves to the constant inrush of forces inimical to the spiritual life. Like pioneers in a largely alien world we struggle

and stumble, often without much outside support, but we know by immediate experience that the inner link with the fountainhead of divine manifestation can never be broken.

We realised this even before we went to the Ashram but now having experienced at first hand the overwhelming potency of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's presence, a new dimension has been added to our aspiration, our surrender and our communion with the depth of our being. A new dimension, too, has been added to the intense feeling of gratitude and love that welled up spontaneously when we were allowed, for a few minutes, to be in the Mother's presence although, at the time, she was only seeing very few people and when, in the company of two devoted sadhaks who had known the Master, we silently paid homage to our Guru in the charged and luminous stillness of his room. This sense of loving gratitude overwhelmed us when we had to say good-bye to our fellow sadhaks before setting out on our return journey. However, the living contact knows no good-byes, it remains intact whatever the distance from 'home'.

EDITH AND JOY

EDUCATION IN INDIA

I

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

"In any country, the best education to give to children consists in teaching them what is the true nature of their country, its particular qualities and the mission their nation has to fulfil in the world, its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a large comprehension of the role of other nations, but without the imitative spirit and without ever losing sight of the peculiar genius of their country." *The Mother.*

A General Consensus

"THE most ingeniously complete machine for murder that human stupidity ever invented, and murder not only of man's body but of man's soul,...the Moloch to whom we stupidly sacrifice India's most hopeful sons...."[1] Such was Sri Aurobindo's first impression of the system of education prevalent in India when he first had a chance to see it at first-hand in Baroda, about eighty years ago.

Have things changed ever so much since? One wonders.

Writing in the *Arya* in 1920, he observes, "All that appears to be almost unanimously agreed on is that the teaching given in the existing schools and universities has been bad in kind and in addition denationalising, degrading and impoversihing to the national mind, soul and character because it is overshadowd by a foreign hand and foreign in aim, method, substance and spirit...."[2]

Earlier, he had occasion to point out some specific defects.

"If the physical training it provides is contemptible and the moral training nil, the mental training is also meagre in quantity and worthless in quality....It trains the memory and provides the student with a store of fact sand second-hand ideas....The easy assumption of our educationists that we have only to supply the mind with a smattering of facts in each department of knowledge and the mind can be trusted to develop itself and take its own suitable road is contrary to science, contrary to human experience and contrary to the universal opinion of civilised countries....To give the student knowledge is necessary, but it is still more necessary to build up in him the power of knowledge. Much as we have lost as a nation, we have always preserved our intellectual alertness, quickness and originality; but even this last gift is threatened by our University system..."[3]

[1] *Induprakash, 1894,* "Bankim Chandra Chaterji"

[2] Reprinted in *Mother India,* April 1955

[3] Old Writtings, published for the first time in *Mother India,* April 1953.

The Net Result

What has been the net result? We have on our hands a population of which seventy per cent is totally illiterate, and therefore almost wholly cut off from the main currents of modern thought and knowledge, even in matters that directly concern their day-to-day living. They find themselves helpless both in regard to the oppressive and ignorant customs which tradition forces on them and the strenuous demands that are put upon them by the rapidly changing economic and political situation; they accept what is offered them by the unscrupulous demagogue or the listless official. Meanwhile their numbers continue to increase at an alarming rate, as they always do among an ignorant and povery-stricken mass, rendering almost nugatory the well-meant schemes of the nation's planners.

Among the so-called educated classes, the unemployment problem is assuming dangerous proportions. Some of the highly educated youth of our nation are being attracted to violence and murder; the rest grumble, seethe with discontent, swell the slums in cities and form a potential danger to the safety itself of the state. All this happens because their education has been badly planned, insufficiently executed, has left them helpless to meet the realities of life, wasted most of their talent, has hardly given them any ideals worth the name, made them apathetic.

A Matter of Priority

Surely, if we are to build a great nation, we must reorganise our education, give it the very first priority.

Instances culled at random from recent world history will show that it is an indispensable need. Leaders of the Japanese Restoration of 1867 were keenly alive to this need. One of the very first things they took in hand within five years of the end of the old regime was to make education free and compulsory for all, boys and girls alike, in a country where class distinctions were more rigid than our caste, and women outside the very highest society had little chance of any formal education. The result was the "miraculous" transformation of Japan within a single generation. The "miracle" was possible because of the sagacity of the men who led Japan during this period.

Following the Japanese example, China, within ten years of the humiliating failure through the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 to turn out the foreigner from her soil, revolutionised her entire educational system as a first step towards modernity. She "established a network of modern schools of all ranks, provided for thorough modern education for her princes and nobles, and added to the intellectual education a thorough grounding in military knowledge and the habits of the soldier."[1] Mustafa Kamal could remake Turkey because he made the education of the Turkish masses his personal concern. Napoleon gave France her modern look when he set up her

[1] *Karmayogin*, 1910.

present educational system. England could become a democracy only after Disraeli had decided, "we must educate our masters."

We too must do the same thing now.

The Ultimate Ends in View

But first we must be clear in our minds as to what exactly we want.

If it be our intention to become a second-hand edition of England or Japan or America, nothing could be easier than to take over their systems with whatever slight changes that might fit them to Indian conditions. "To take over the English, German or American school and university or some variation on them with a gloss of Indian colour is a course attractively facile and one that saves the need of thinking and of new experiment; but in that case there is no call for this loud pother about nationalising education, all that is needed is a change of control, of the medium of instruction, of the frame and fitting of the curriculum and to some extent of the balance of subjects."[1] If training our people to be good Indian citizens and patriots be our sole claim to distinction, then also there need be nothing very peculiar about our system, "since the training to good citizenship must be in all essentials the same whether in the east or the west, England or Germany or Japan or India."[2]

Or is it the intention that Indian education in the future must scrupulously follow the pattern of our past, not only in principle but also in all the details, in so far as they can be recovered? "Does it signify that we are to reject modern truth and the modern method of science because they come to us from Europe and go back to the imperfect scientific knowledge of classical India, exile Galileo and Newton and all that came after and teach only what was known to Bhaskara, Aryabhatta and Varahamihira? Or how should the teaching of Sanskrit or the living indigenous tongues differ in kind and method from the teaching of Latin or the living modern tongues in Europe? Are we then to fetch back to the methods of the 'tols' of Nadiya or to the system, if we can find out what it was, practised in ancient Takshashila or Nalanda?"[3]

"Indianism" versus "Europeanism"

It is obviously not the intention that India of the future should become an exact replica of the India that has been. "The living spirit of the demand for national education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or the forms of the system of Nalanda than the living spirit of Swadeshi a return from railway and motor traction to the ancient chariot and the bullock-cart....It is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with,"[4] "The mere inclusion of the matter

[1] *Arya* article, "A Preface on National Education", written in 1920: *vide* note 2.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

of Indian thought and culture in the field of knowledge does not make a system of education Indian. It is not eighteenth century India, the India which by its moral and intellectual deficiencies gave itself into the keeping of foreigners that we have to revive, but the spirit, ideals and methods of the ancient mightier India in a yet more effective form and with a more modern organisation...."[9]

The idea of a true national education challenges the validity of the assumption that it is the European pattern of civilisation that "we have to acquire and fit ourselves for, so only can we live and prosper....It is the civilisation that has long offered itself as the last and imperative word of the mind of humanity. But the nations of Asia are not bound so to accept it, and will do better, taking over in their turn whatever new knowledge or just ideas Europe has to offer, to assimilate them to their own knowledge and culture, their own native temperament and spirit, mind and social genius and out of that create the civilisation of the future. The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution, and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation. When the most advanced minds of the occident are beginning to turn in this red evening of the West for the hope of a new and more spiritual civilisation to the genius of Asia, it would be strange if we could think of nothing better than to cast away our own self and potentialities and put our trust in the dissolving and moribund past of Europe."[10]

"Cultural Integration"

But at this point a question may be raised: where is the necessity of keeping our separate identity when the whole world seems to be coming close together both culturally and in every other way? Sri Aurobindo himself has recognised that "the earth is in travail now of one common, large and flexible civilisation for the whole human race...."[11] But this in his view does not imply that all distinctions will be blurred as is the fond hope of some ardent supporters of "cultural integration". For he hastens to add that into this common civilisation of the future, "each modern and ancient culture shall bring its contribution and each clearly defined human aggregate shall introduce its necessary element of variation. In the working out of this aim, there must necessarily be some struggle for survival. The fittest to survive will be here all that can best serve the tendencies Nature is working out in humanity,—not only the tendencies of the hour, but the reviving tendencies of the past and the yet inchoate tendencies of the future...."[12]

It is here that India can contribute much by preserving her spirit and shaping her educational system in line with that spirit.

[9] *Karmayogin*, "The Brain of India".
[10] *Arya, op. cit.*
[11] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Chapter 6.
[12] *Ibid.*

A National System of Education

But before we examine in detail how that can best be done, let us clear our minds of another persistent notion that might stand in the way. What, it may be asked, can be meant by a purely "national" system of education, when the "mind of man is the same everywhere and can everywhere be passed through the same machine and uniformly constructed to order?" The answer is: "That is an old and effete superstition of the reason which it is time now to renounce. For within the universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation, its commonness and its uniqueness, and between them there stands an intermediate power, the mind of a nation, the soul of a people. And of all these three education must take account if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric, but a true building or living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of the human being."[13]

"The basis of a man's nature," Sri Aurobindo explains elsewhere, "is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfullly because insensibly, and from that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move.... There are souls which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and clime. Let them be free to follow their bent. But the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially moulded into an alien form. It is God's arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future.

"The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education."[14]

Having set forth the basis on which education in India should be organised in order to attain our national ends, we should now proceed to examine the main lines it might follow to produce the best results within the quickest possible time.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

A Correction

Referring to his article "India's National Language", *Mother India*, August 15, 1971, S. K. Banerji writes to the Editor: "If, to 're-educate the Pundits' is 'a rather formidable task', one shudders at the thought of 'co-educating' them...whatever that might mean. I am referring to the last para on page 481. Perhaps an *erratum* would set some minds at rest, don't you think?"

[13] *Arya, loc. cit.*

[14] Sri Aurobindo, *A System of National Education*, Chapter 1.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM OF GOD

A LETTER AND A REPLY APROPOS OF THE ARTICLE "SRI AUROBINDO AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Mother India, *in its issue of December 5, 1970, published "Sri Aurobindo and the Kingdom of God" by Dick Batstone. In one place it carried the following footnote by the Editor: "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.' "*

In the course of a letter to the Editor, the author of the article discussed this footnote. We are reproducing his letter and the Editor's reply in view of the importance, in Biblical exegesis, of the point involved.

Dick Batstone's Letter

1 Baskerville Road, London S.W.18, England. 20 May 1971.

Dear Mr. Sethna,

When not receiving an answer from an Ashramite, I never know whether (a) he has not got my letter because of hazards of the post, or (b) he has got it, but, being so absorbed in a phase of concentrated sadhana, he has simply found it irrelevant and scrunched it up.

Never mind! Let me thank you again for publishing my article. Yes, maybe I should have mentioned Luke 17, Vs. 20-21. It was not exactly that I "overlooked" them—it is the quotation that immediately comes to mind on this topic—but it is again an ambiguous passage and, as you point out, can be translated in different ways. Scholars won't agree on it, and I suppose I took the easy way by not bringing it in!

Otto says Jesus is pointing to the paradox of the future and present aspects of the Kingdom—not only is it the eschatological Kingdom, to come with "flaming lightening, with the appearance of the Son of Man, his angels and the heavenly tribunal", but also it is the here and now Kingdom of power over devils and sickness, and the fellowship of Jesus and his disciples in righteousness, peace, and joy. Always, says Otto, the kingdom is seen as external, transcendent, not immanent, and Jesus has nothing mystical in mind.

Another recent writer, Perrin, says, "...the decisive observation is that if the

word *entos* is to be translated 'within', then we have here an understanding of Kingdom of God without further parallel in the recorded teaching of Jesus."

On the other hand, C.G. Jung in *Psychology and Alchemy* says, "The Western attitude, with its emphasis on the object, tends to fix the ideal—Christ—in its outward aspect and thus rob it of its mysterious relation to the inner man. It is this prejudice, for instance, which impels the Protestant interpreters of the Bible to interpret *entos unim* (referring to the Kingdom of God) as 'among you' instead of 'within you'."

It is a tormenting subject, perhaps best left alone, and the effort used to find the Kingdom for oneself....

With all best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
DICK BATSTONE

The Editor's Reply

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 2, South India. 23 June 1971.

Dear Mr. Batstone,

Living in erstwhile French India I am inclined to tilt my head a little, raise my shoulders and open up my palms and cry, "I am infinitely sorry!" But perhaps the Gallic tendency of "*infiniment*" has a subtle secret affinity to spiritual India, the Aurobindonian India, in that the greatest seeker and manifester of the Infinite in modern times came to Pondicherry to do his Yoga. The affinity may be seen even more openly when we remember Sri Aurobindo saying that the country which he felt to be a sort of second motherland was not England, where he spent fourteen years, but one in which he never set foot in this life: France. And, of course, the affinity declares itself from the house-tops as soon as we take into consideration France's gift of the Mother, for whose presence amongst us Indians we can say to both that country and the Unknown, in the profoundest sense of the adverb, "*Merci infiniment!*"

All this talk of infinity, however, does not mean that an Ashramite is too inwardly or upwardly absorbed to notice, or care for, finite things like friends' letters. No doubt, what concerns him is more the spirit than the letter, but he never makes such a universal sweep of a statement as: "the letter killeth." He does not do it even when he is the Editor of *Mother India*, to whom communications often come in tidal waves, a veritable "sea of troubles" undreamed of in Hamlet's philosophy. And surely the Editor wouldn't do it face-to-face with a bright and graceful undulation of ideas like your latest air-mail.

Maybe it was a bit cheeky of me to write in that footnote that Luke 17:20-21 had been overlooked (or should it be "overLuked"?) by you. I might have guessed from the well-knownness of the verses that you had a purpose in not bringing them in. But I am in a way glad I perpetrated the impudence, for otherwise I should never have received so interesting a discussion.

May I tell you what strikes me in this matter? Otto and Perrin have more support than Jung from the language used by Jesus in general. And, if the emphasis is to fall on the language elsewhere, we must translate our Luke-passage by "the Kingdom of God is among you" rather than "...within you". But here we may attend to a remark of Sidney Spencer's.

"Although there is little," observes Spencer,[1] "in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels which bears a specifically mystical character, yet the total impression which the gospel story leaves upon us is of one who lived in the constant awareness of the divine Presence." And where is this Presence with Jesus? Is it just a supreme Glory from a heaven above, which is now all about him active like an accompanying nimbus since that moment of his life when he was baptised in the Jordan and "he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove" (Mark 1:10)? We may note that at that moment Jesus heard, as Mark recounts (1:11), "a voice from heaven saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' " Here is evidently an intense spiritual awakening or self-recognition, by which Jesus realises his Messianic mission: the divinity he had come on earth to manifest is now no longer latent but dynamic in his person. Spencer[2] refers to the "Western text of Luke 1:22" where "the words are said to have been: 'Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee.' " The event suggested by this text was sometimes described in the early Church as "Christ's second nativity". And, if we may pay heed to an ancient MS of Mark which speaks of the Spirit descending not "upon him" but "into him,"[3] we may have a composite picture of the Spirit alighting upon Jesus from beyond to penetrate him and enkindle his inmost self, and thus equip him for his world-work. But surely in this experience nothing entirely new was given to Jesus? He was already the Son of God: divinity was in him already, born with him, and it was this divinity that was now made to be born again, so to speak, and brought forth into action in the world by the Spirit.

The inner divinity is strongly indicated by the Fourth Gospel: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:10). The transcendent God is immanent here without the immanent God's excluding the transcendent. And with John such a phenomenon has a wide bearing. To him, Christ is the Logos (*à la* Philo), the universal Word, an immanent principle of eternal Life and Light as well as a personal being, the Son of God. It is also "the Light of men" (1:4), "the true light that enlightens every man" (1:9). And the work of Christ as the incarnate Logos, the Word made flesh, is, as Spencer[4] aptly puts it, "to bring to men the life and the light which are the inmost principle of their being."

In view of the Logos-doctrine, which is after all the philosophical core of the doctrine of Christ's Sonship common to the other Gospels, would we be mistaken in

[1] Sidney Spencer, *Mysticism in World Religion* (A Pelican Original, Harmondsworth: 1963), p.214.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 212.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 220

thinking of the Kingdom of God as within men no less than among them in those verses of Luke? It is what is within that shall be among—the outer life manifesting the inner God-principle which is one in all and therefore capable of effecting an outer corporate organised spiritual kingdom. If, behind the language of Jesus's teaching in the Synoptic Gospels, there is a play of genuine mysticism, may we not discern in the Luke-passage one of the glimmerings-out of that background radiance? Jung, with his sense of the "inner man", may be here a better and more illuminated exegete than Otto and Perrin.

An eminent student of Comparative Religion, R.C. Zaehner, has some pertinent things to say in the fourth part, "Unity in Diversity—Vedāntin and Christian", of his most recent book.[1] He starts with the Chhandogya Upanishad's two terms *kṣetrajña* and *a-kṣetrajña*, "knower of the field" and "non-knower of the field" and goes on to quote from it the passage (8.3.2): "Just as [a group of people] who do not know the country (*akṣetrajña*) might wander about and pass over a hidden hoard of gold time and again without finding it, so do all these creatures go on day after day without finding the Brahman-world within them, for they are led astray by unreality." Zaehner comments: "To find this treasure within is the overriding passion of Hindu and Buddhist alike; for 'this is the Self, exempt from evil, untouched by age or death or sorrow, untouched by hunger or thirst, [the Self] whose desire is the real, whose idea is the real.[2]' " Then Zaehner turns to Christianity and, saying that "we find precisely the same simile in the Gospel of St. Matthew", he quotes 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field." Zaehner's comment[3] now runs:

"The treasure which Jesus calls the 'kingdom of heaven' is also 'discernment' (*viveka*), the 'fear of the Lord' (meaning almost exactly what Hindus understand by *bhakti*), and the 'knowledge of God' (*jñāna*). For we read in Proverbs on which the passage from Matthew is based:

> If your plea is for clear perception,
> If you cry out for *discernment*,
> if you look for it as if it were silver,
> and search for it as for *buried treasure*,
> you will then understand what the fear of Yahweh is,
> and discover the *knowledge* of God.[4]

"This surely is the Self whose desire is the real, whose idea is the real

[1] *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Oxford University Press, London, 1971), p. 92.

[2] Chhandogya Upanishad, 8.1.5.

[3] *Op. cit*, p. 93.

[4] Proverbs, 2.3-5.

and this is the 'kingdom of God within you'[1],...the true abiding Self anchored in God.... And it is also the 'self' of which Jesus speaks: 'what gain,' he asks, 'is it for a man to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self?'[2]"

The last quotation is from Luke. So, if we follow Zaehner, two of the Synoptic Gospels, of which one is Luke itself, allude to a Kingdom of God which is not only to be formed by a communion of the faithful with Jesus the Messiah but also to be animated by a core of spiritual inwardness in each individual.

To be able to enlist Luke is perhaps the crucial test for my contention, for this Gospel is the immediate context in general of the phrase that is our problem. And I may add a still more direct chapter and verse. Just ponder over Luke 18: 16-17—"But Jesus...said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." A particular inner attitude or state of receptivity, a happy harmonious within, appears to be implied as a prerequisite of the Christ-centred new world which has to take shape.

Perhaps here I cannot do better than bring in Sri Aurobindo, whom the title of your article couples with the Kingdom of God. I shall draw upon the last passage of Sri Aurobindo's booklet on Heraclitus. The passage tries to sum up the drift of the Heraclitean vision, one expression of which is caught in that saying of his, "the profoundest of all Heraclitus' utterances, 'the kingdom is of the child.' " Sri Aurobindo's passage runs: ". ..Force can produce only a balance of forces, the strife that is justice; in that strife there takes place a constant exchange, and, once this need of exchange is seen, there arises the possibility of modifying and replacing war by reason as the determinant principle of the exchange. This is the second effort of man, of which Heraclitus did not clearly see the possibility. From exchange we can rise to the highest possible idea of interchange, a mutual dependency of self-giving as the hidden secret of life; from that can grow the power of Love replacing strife and exceeding the cold balance of reason. There is the gate of the divine ecstasy. Heraclitus could not see it, and yet his one saying about the kindgom of the child touches, almost reaches the heart of the secret. For this kingdom is evidently spiritual, it is the crown, the mastery to which the perfected man arrives; and the perfect man is a divine child! He is the soul which awakens to the divine play, accepts it without fear or reserve, gives itself up in a spiritual purity to the Divine, allows the careful and troubled force of man to be freed from care and grief and become the joyous play of the divine Will, his relative and stumbling reason to be replaced by that divine knowledge which to the Greek, the rational man, is foolishness and the laborious pleasure-seeking of the bound mentality to lose itself in the spontaneity of the divine Ananda; 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' The Paramhansa, the liberated man, is, in his soul, *bālavat*, even as if a child."[3]

[1] Luke 17. 21.
[2] Luke, 9. 25.
[3] Sri Aurobindo, *Heraclitus* (Calcutta: 1947), pp. 560-61.

In the above, Sri Aurobindo makes a combined allusion to Luke 17: 20-21 and 18: 16-17, and endows both with a mystic colour. In an old conversation he is reported to have opined that the Kingdom of God within may denote a moral kingdom.[1] A moral rather than a mystic colour may be more plausible from the surface indications of the Synoptic Gospels; but if the within-ness of God's Kingdom is accepted, there can be no definitive bar to a hint of genuine mysticism, particularly with a cross-light provided by a passage on children, whose innate innocence, free from wrestlings of the will over virtue and vice, would seem to fall outside the moral universe of discourse, and point, as Sri Aurobindo himself says, to a mystic liberation of soul.

If all that I have submitted has any cogency, the question arises: How is the Greek word *entos*, which the Authorized Version translates as "within", to be correctly rendered in its double inner-outer suggestion? "Among," which the original permits, goes to the other extreme. The Revised Version's marginal note for the full turn is: "in your midst." Possibly this is not quite bound to an external sense and may imply each individual's central being, his soul-core, but the usual understanding of "your midst" is "among you." At a pinch I can only propose as a double-toned translation of the entire phrase: "the Kingdom of God pervades you."

Or perhaps we can indicate the double tone more faithfully by putting a hyphen between the two syllables of the Authorised Version's own word, thus: "with-in"?

With kind thoughts,
Yours sincerely,
K. D. SETHNA

[1] *Mother India*, August 15, 1971, "Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk", compiled by V. Chidanandam, p. 452.

THE LOVE-SONG OF...

SWEET summer gleams across the hall
My head falls back...to breathe the dark flower-undulance
And visitors call
With soft sweet-saying word
Bells and crickets are sometimes heard.

Ideas blue and gold and white...colours of myself
A long unradiant drone of talk
Divining the undivine
Someone left suddenly...stealing the flowers at the top of the stairs
It was the mocking of the wine.

An instinct to pause...and tap the untouched spaces of the cells
Tingling out their rhythmic possibility
And summer games play on
"What times! The shifting values of the age!"
I acclimatise as in a hermitage.

Some of these friends seem far from paradise
Seeing not too well through the bottom of a glass
I try to send them something always further ranging
Broadcast across a million stars
I wonder at my newest air
A posturing grandeur that excludes despair.

So many faces where time's been a-haunting
To bitter the dregs of youth's sweet wine
Something old, something cold,
Something grips the crabbit soul
From the heart-hearth shoring out
The frozen childish portraits at the window
Gazing with those deadening eyes
Through the heavy haze of tobacco.

I'd say I've seen them in a mode of laughing
Without a catching wistful scent of love

I think I've seen their shuffling portraits passing
Yet can I share the laughter of a god?
Or my eye is a lying camera
Self-marooned with crooked sextants
On an island-angle of paradise
I blink my disbelieving eyes.

Yes, there is a play of death-in-life
That long macabre tale I've read before
I've seen the passing traffic of a fly on the ceiling
And felt the strong deep grip of fate coming o'er
The unsuspecting laughter and the dark monotone
The dense-dripping reeds on the storm-tearful shore.

Through ancient doors and corridors
The treading streets and old stone roads
And ghosting on our silly way
A moving finger's short transcript
Cardboard in a cardboard play
'Neath the great gold eye of fate
The goings-out and comings-in
Ever hopeful, ever late.

And talk is what the sad heart wills
Intuitive bubbles of the mind to fill
With wit the words that so belie our eyes
And before the enormous judgment...temporise.
Ah! to fold within a rim of bliss
A truth that's in a more-than-human kiss
A holy kernel of the sky and sea and ground
An occult love that such a peace surrounds.

Can they be real, these searching scenes of life?
So vivid, piercing, yet only falsely true
A fantastic theatre of the rash and the demure
A distorting mirror of a caricature
Swaying, portraying our life as ants and flies
Never truer than in its most uncanny lies
To sink the unbuoyed heart in tremendous waves
And of our halflit cowardice make us slaves.

Oh, the passing of a sweet encounter
The momentary blessing of the ready heart
A sweetness makes its little inroads, pressing
On the starred brow that lights the doubting part
These things may come unasked, as if by chance
To hold immensity in an atom's dance
To reverse the terms of life from skin to core
And draw the unmanifest out from where it was before.

But you have deserted my sleepless caravan
Are you not laughing in the face of man?
Misted echoes lead with delicate display
To haunt my living music of felicity
I dreamt here before this golden gate
Of a means to loose its hinge of fate
But you weighed me with the humour of my race
And mocked me with a human face.

Till from the deep sweet substance of ourselves
The heart pleads out its sway and poise
To hold the groundswell of all the world
And flower Thou—bud of all our joys
Like the scenty echo of the heart's delight
Like the muffled flutter of the moth's flight
A piano's clear-tumbled race of keys
Like the great sun sinking in the seas.

STANLEY W. COWIE

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMILNAD'S GREATEST POET

(*Continued from the issue of April 24, 1971*)

XIX

PANCHAVATI is a cool spot under the sheltering shade of five banyan trees. Rama and Sita spend their days delightfully in Panchavati.

One day as they are sitting on the bank of a river, which flows between two cliffs, they see a swan and a he-elephant—and both Rama and Sita smile knowingly.

> As Rama saw a swan,
> gliding to her retreat,
> he turned his gaze to Sita,
> and looking at her gait,
> broke into a tiny smilelet.

And Sita,

> as she saw a he-elephant slaking his thirst
> and majestically treading forward,
> beamed with a fresh-blown smile.

In the next scene, Kamban is going to introduce us to the violent flirtatiousness of Surpanaka, who seeks foolishly to drive a wedge between the ardent lovers. He proceeds, therefore, to capture in another cameo the tenderness of the love between Ram and Sita.

> Upon the river's bank
> sinuous creepers
> fluttered delicately in the breeze,
> and eyeing this flutter,
> the hero of the arched bow
> cast a glance at Sita's nimble waist.

Woman's modesty would not let Sita express her adoration as openly. But the

forest, splashed with flowers of two colours, fills her mind with the bewitching form of Rama—blue body, dotted with crimson eyes, crimson mouth and crimson-tipped fingers and toes.

Sita plunged herself
in the meditation of Rama's form,
as she saw the forest of dark blue-bells,
dotted here and there
with the broad-petalled blossoms of the lotus.

As the couple spend their days joyously in these romantic surroundings, an interloper crosses their lives and forces the pace of events.

A giantess by name Surpanaka reigns supreme over the huge forest near Panchavati.

She had her permanent abode
in this wilderness—
This woman, who could penetrate with speed
any nook and corner of the world:
Savage, scheming Destiny
brought her where Rama lived.

Rama was born to liquidate the Rakshasa race, and Surpanaka was born, according to the Poet, to give support to Rama in the fulfilment of his mission. The meeting of the two is consequently of the most momentous meaning in the epic.

The One, who renounced his Cobra Couch
in days of yore,
at the call of the Celestials
to protect them from the harassing gaints—
It was Him she saw—
the woman, who was to see the end of her race.

As Surpanaka sets eyes upon Rama, she feels that his is a charm she has never seen before. She wonders if he may be Manmada, the God of Love, but she recalls that Manmada has lost his physical body, burnt by the third eye of Lord Siva. Can he be Indra? If he were, he must be having a thousand eyes. She turns over several hypotheses in her mind and rejects them all. She muses:

Manmada, rendered bodiless
by the burning look of Siva,
might perchance have performed endless tapas
and recovered his beauteous form.

Kamban has enjoyed the stateliness of trees and the solidity of rocks with as much admiration as the long arms of warriors. He knows that the human mind derives greater delight from the huge mythical figures of imagination than from the figures perceptible to the senses and limited by the gravitations of the Earth. The trunks of the eight mythical elephants that support the Earth from falling headlong in space must be as strong and long as the human imagination permits. And what a resemblance they offer to the long arms of Rama as seen through the delicious imagination of a love-struck demoness! Surpanaka marvels at them:

His arms!
how well-proportioned and how long!
and how steeped in beauty!
Trees they resemble not,
Rocks are light in comparison.
His azure sapphire arms
are no other
than the trunks of the mammoth elephants,
which, facing the eight directions,
stand supporting the Earth.

With her infatuation comes jealousy. Why should such a handsome figure, who ought to give himself up to the pursuits of pleasure, languish and wilt away in the performance of austerities? His looks have been specially designed to express the infinite variations of love. The God of Tapas must have performed great tapas, indeed, to have enlisted him as his votary. She asks herself:

Why does he torment his lovely body
with the aridities of tapas?
He has eyes, which can portray with never-fading freshness
the infinite nuances of love.
What meditation has Meditation performed
to tempt him into meditation!

Hot with her desire, Surpanaka loses the lustre of her eyes.

She became like a pale feminine figure
painted upon the sky,
hot and dry;
she planted her gaze
upon Rama's blue shoulders
but found not the strength
to unplant her gaze.

Lustful thoughts induce bold fancies in her mind.

Standing,
she mused,

"I will throw myself
upon the broad expanse of his chest
and become one with it.
Else,

I will die,
even if nectar is given me.
There's no way to survive,
no other."

Musing thus,

she sought to approach him
and stand in front of him.

Valmiki's Surpanaka, who is red-haired, big-bellyed and repulsively ugly, fails, in the heat of passion, to change her form before going into Rama's presence. But Kamban's Surpanaka is crafty enough to use her admitted powers of magic and assume the seductive figure of a lovely damsel before appearing in front of him.

He may think I am a demoness
with curved teeth,
with a stomach in which all sorts of creatures lie in deposit.
So he may resist my advances.
I will embrace him as a maid,
With a Kuyil-seducing sweetness of voice,
with a mouth red as the Kovvai fruit,
with a peacock-seducing grace of movement.

Surpanaka has, by performing penance, obtained great magic powers from the Gods. She now meditates upon Goddess Lakshmi and utters an incantation.

Invoking the Lotus-dwelling Goddess
she uttered an abracadabra
which she had mastered.
At once,

she got a face and body
that out-lustred the Moon

and she appeared,
with a surging aura,
which dazzled the sky.

In a song, which has a lilting rhythm and swing, Kamban ushers in Surpanaka, draped in a glistening and trailing saree, into the presence of Rama.

She comes,
softly gliding like a peacock,
endowed with the eyes of the gazelle,
with lustrous pearls for her teeth,
with honey-petals for her lips,
which rouse the growing delirium of love—
with a body,
which has caught its colour and texture
from the tender, golden shoots
Of kalpaka—Heaven's tree.

It is a pity that nothing of the seductiveness of the original can be decanted into the translation. The ethereal agility of the ballerina has been cunningly recaptured in the *materia poetica* of Kamban, and the beauty, which is made visible in this song, becomes audible in the next.

The tinkling of Surpanaka's anklets, the chiming of the little bells strung on to her waistlet, the clinking of her necklace and the buzzing of the golden bees hovering over the flowers in her tresses—all these competing sounds proclaim, "Here comes a maid!" Rama, who heard this symphony of sounds, turned in the direction of Surpanaka and stared in amazement.

He, who gifts the inner eye of vision and insight
and, through it, rubs out ignorence and mortality,
saw with his two eyes
the woman,
who came like soothing nectar descended from Heaven,
with her waist a-quivering
under the weight of her shapely breasts.

Rama was astonished at the delicate graces of this woman. Thinking she might be a high-born lady, he receives her with great regard.

Then, the woman, who was sunk
in lust's deep desire,
saluted with crimson hands

the feet of the lovely Prince,
and flashing the glittering javelin
of her long, hypnotic eyes,
she cast a look away from Rama,
and stepping, deer-like, aside,
shied a little
and stood coyly at a distance.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

SLEEPING CHILD

THE child in the night, receding into dreams,
Hears in the mind breakage of shores,
Stone-roll and the shaken cliff,
Opening of those sunken doors,
And turns in his bed, holds the pillow,
Nearing the gathering dark below.

He walks where the waves inherit him
And turn him to the fish that shoots
Beyond the houses he has borne, beyond
The parents he begets, down to the roots
The shadows own; and calls it home
Where he is most alone.

Night feet walk unworried in that water,
Walk surely where we surely would fall
If, waking, we perceived the deeps
Our days recede from, surely would fall
If we could move at all. He sleeps
To wake within those speechless deeps.

JON SWAN

(From "Journeys and Return")

AN AMERICAN POET ON KAMBAN

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE ARTICLES OF S. MAHARAJAN IN "MOTHER INDIA"

(S. Maharajan, the author of our series on Kamban's "Ramayana", writes to the Editor: "Mr Edward Lueders, who was introduced by the American Consulate to me as one of the eight distinguished living poets of the United States, went through some of the offprints of 'Kavi Chakravarti Kamban' and recorded his impressions. As you will be interested in his reactions, I am sending you a copy of his statement." We are glad to publish Mr. Lueders's perspicacious comment on the work of the poet as well as on that of his translator.)

IT IS clear to me even from a cursory reading of these excerpts that the Translator is working with both a poet and an epic poem of high calibre indeed. The characteristic reach of the Poet Kamban for cosmic personification in his poetry clearly ties these high and abstract matters to very human detail. It is the world of human experience he deals with, and it is through the exaltation of poetic song that he achieves what all the world's great poetry attempts to achieve,—a marriage of the divine and timeless with the earthly and experiential.

I am impressed by the skill of the translation, which, although it recognises and laments the impossibility of fully adequate translation from the Tamil to the harsh and alien English, still reflects with taste and remarkable verve what is obviously the peculiar quality of the original. His execution into English is effective and welcome. Kamban is clearly a poet the English-speaking world will be enriched by knowing through Mr. Maharajan's careful and loving translation.

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EDWARD LUEDERS,
Madras.
May 10, 1971.

REMARKS ON ROBERT FROST

ASIDE from being one of the best American poets, Robert Frost is unique, at least among those who have written in English, in having been able to write really good poetry on a conversational level. It may be asked why a man should want to do such a thing; and it may be maintained that, while the thing may be worth doing once, just for the proof that it can be done, once is enough. And this may be so, for the one success is the only one we have. As for why Robert Frost felt that it was worth doing, or that it was the thing for him to do—well, it is perhaps wisest to lay it to the World-Spirit without seeking further detail. Frost was apparently the man to do the work when the time was ripe for it to be done. His large public success is indication that there was ripeness there, of a kind: and probably conversational poetry is the kind that is best suited to the dominant aspect of the American character, as "pragmatism" is the philosophy best suited to it. The other, the aspiring, semi-mystical aspect is expressed by a poet like Sidney Lanier, who is loved by a few, and commemorated in some places, but whose success and power is much "underground".

Frost's poems are far from the simple bucolics they are sometimes taken to be, and though most of them use the New Hampshire countryside and its people as their setting, they are most intimately concerned with the never quite resolved dfficulties of the poet's own complex and thorny character. He was never a "practical American", though he may speak to such more strongly than most poets do. He was a genuine poet, and thus an irreconcilable anomaly in a workaday world. Poet that he was, even his simplest work is not really simple after all.

He was a careful prosodist, a very exacting workman. It was not his purpose to be simply "coversational": he wanted to write verse that sounded like a human being talking, but was still quite recognizably verse. He never yielded to the pressure to write "free verse" which was so strong during most of his lifetime: he said that he would as soon play tennis with the net down. Order and form he needed and sought, in his life as well as his work, and order and form he always achieved in his poetry. He enjoyed playing the rhythms of "normal" speech against the necessities of meter: and he succeeded so well at this, that while there are no sublime flights in his poetry there are also no painful sinkings. He never falls into the flatness and banality that was all too close a companion to Wordsworth; and also he is never grossly vulgar and crude and concerned mostly with revolting against discipline, like many contemporaries of ours. His poetry, as I have said, is always genuine poetry, though it makes no attempt on the empyrean.

He respected the older poetry, and never disdained to learn from it (Latin as well as English); but he was interested in doing something that he considered new, that is,

exploiting the "sound of sense". What he has to say on this subject is no doubt as valuable as most things that poets have to say about their own practice: I shall not attempt to unravel it, but will simply say that his practice was a good one, in that it has given us a respectable body of distinctive work that should be rewarding to almost any reader who values poetry at all. Frost talks, he does not sing; but his talk is a kind of music, and a harmony of difficult oppositions.

In his own way he is a master of traditional meters and forms, including blank verse, and he does not always eschew a conventional turn of locution or non-conversational order of words: he can use them for effect without incongruity, as thus in one of his most famous poems:

> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,...
>
> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
> That wants it down.

This poem is a straightforward one; but he is frequently playful and ironic (not to say sometimes spiteful), and unwilling to make himself too clear and easy. He was never really much of a farmer, but he lived for a considerable time on a farm, and he sometimes seems to be saying, "If you want me, you are going to have to work like the farmer getting the stump out, and grinding the scythe, and giving hard application to the rocky ground." And he can be mysterious and ominously powerful as well as plain, as in this poem, based on a recollection of his boyhood in San Francisco. To those who have seen how the waves come on the California rocks even when there is no storm, this poem may have an added power: but such secondary experience I think is hardly necessary, in the presence of these lines:

> The shattered water made a misty din.
> Great waves looked over others coming in,
> And thought of doing something to the shore
> That water never did to land before.
> The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
> Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
> You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
> The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
> The cliff in being backed by continent;
> It looked as if a night of dark intent
> Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
> Someone had better be prepared for rage.
> There would be more than ocean-water broken
> Before God's last *Put out the Light* was spoken.

He wrote no other poems quite of this kind, or if he did they have not been published; but throughout his work there is a strain of apprehension, powerful if not always very evident. His life was a painful one, and it may be called a heroic one: he did bring a considerable measure of order to a nature more chaotic, or forcefully chaotic, than most. If he was never able to come to any high spiritual aspiration, he did have an idea of measure and discipline, and it did keep him above the waves.

He knew the Classical ideals, and indeed probably had Horace in his blood: and while he made no sustained attempt to adapt Classical meters to English, he did once write some hendecasyllabics. Tennyson complained in this meter, "Hard, hard, hard is it only not to stumble!" But Frost did not have that difficulty, because he did not try to trip along in the first place. This is how he does it:

> Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs
> Always wrong to the light, so never seeing
> Deeper down in the well than where the water
> Gives me back in a shining surface picture
> Me myself in the summer heaven godlike
> Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.
> *Once*, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
> I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
> Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
> Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.
> Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
> One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
> Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
> Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
> Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

To conclude, one may say that Robert Frost can be pleasant reading: and that, read closely, he can shed light on what an awful, painful, fearful thing ordinary human life is—and on what it means to strive to be at least genuinely human, if nothing more.

JESSE ROARKE

"LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL"

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1971)

YOGA AND THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

I

WE, the inmates of the Ashram, are not renunciates; Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not ask us to withdraw from the world but to face its problems, relying on God.

Who in this "bitter world' is free from problems? The extent to which one is free from them depends on how one tackles them.

A little difficulty in the vital being[1] of the ordinary man creates a world of troubles, making him restless and agitated. The more he tries to get rid of them, the more he gets entangled. For the unripe Soul life is pain. But those who depend on the Divine look to Him for everything. When, in moments of crises,[2] one raises a call and the response is there, it shows the connection with the Divine is well established. When problems are thus resolved, life's blows seem to turn into blessings.

"A ripened soul does not cry but accepts"[3] good fortune or bad, whatever is sent to him by the Divine. No storm can shake his inner poise. All that comes to him adds a bit of beauty to his life. This turns life into bliss.

Let us now reach the more practical level.

Often we hear people saying, "I can't bear the least noise. It tells upon my nerves and becomes the source of mental annoyance." Once I read in the biography of an American journalist that he lived in a floating ship, far away from the shore, to avoid noise reaching his ears. Could so much restriction on life make one happy?

It is common knowledge that fear attracts the object of fear. Fear increases the trouble tenfold. Yoga teaches us how to get rid of fear. If one learns to stand back, to detach oneself, half the sharpness of the trouble will be over.

Yoga is a tonic to those suffering from mental illness. If one trains the mind to put up with all that happens in life he will get accustomed to stand the storm and stress of life and be content in all circumstances. If one succeeds in treating the problem of evil as a passing phase, a heavy load will be lifted from his mind.

Man thinks he is weak—too weak to stand the might of the adverse forces. At times one feels torn to pieces.

[1] ."(it) likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama" *(On Yoga, II,* Tome II, p. 451*)*.

[2] "If the vital is to be changed it always gives constant trouble" (*Ibid*, p. 438).

[3] *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 203.

Yoga tells us it is *tamas* that makes man think he is weak. Misery is the constant companion of one steeped in *tamas*. A little will-power will help man shake off his weakness. It holds the key to the mystery of life. We find ourselves woefully wanting in this faculty. Man must learn to "awaken the parts that lie unused." There lies a promise of freedom. Yoga is a link that binds man with the Creator. But the heart must be free from lust, wrath and greed to see God.

Nobody wants to see his life's wings clipped by sorrow and anxieties. Man yearns to fly in the air like a free bird. But he must strive to wipe out the root cause of sorrow and stop running after the little joys of life which lead him nowhere.

"Unnecessarily we make our life complicated and suffer," remarked the other day a noted advocate of Bombay. Twice a year he comes to the Ashram on a pilgrimage. His constant companion on the tour is *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

While at the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo he was struck to see a little one putting together a pair of shoes, which were left apart by a visitor. The boy was chit-chatting with a group of his playmates. He cast a glance at the shoes, moved forward, quietly put them together with his little hands and rejoined the group.

"This is Ashram discipline," muttered the advocate to himself in admiration. This inner discipline cannot be imposed by rules and regulations. He spoke with fervour, "These little ones are our future. In them we shall see life combined with beauty and perfection."

Discipline implies also a certain detachment.

The first thing a visitor from Kanpur did on reaching the Ashram was to send his boy-servant to fetch ice for him, "I can't take water without ice."

Another felt the need of a fan after a stay of only two days: "Can't have sleep without a fan. There is a fan even in the kitchen at our place."

We are not averse to the use of these things. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not breed contempt to riches. But nothing should seem indispensable. An inner detachment is reqiured.

Our point is that man tortures himself with anxieties unnecessarily, for with a little self-discipline they can be easily avoided.

I shall relate some facts about the life of someone whom I have known for more than three decades. It might bring home the value of building discipline in life and truthfulness in business..

D was a man of moderate means but he knew how to shape his future. He mapped out his working life and personal life systematically and adhered to his scheme to the end. Besides being a man of action, he was a man of principle. He took the decision not to accept or pay a paise in dowry either for his sons or daughters and never wavered in his resolution, thus setting an example to others.

His friends were shocked because he paid more than a lakh of rupees in income-tax. They failed to find the necessity of entering all the profits in books. To their thinking it was either stupidity or mere show.

There runs a saying: "Plant the seed of honesty and it will bear you a fruit of

fame." This is amply demonstrated in my friend's life.

The great good that accrues from such honest dealing is that it keeps one free from tension and turmoil. "No mental spinning," says he, "the moment I am off from office. Why tax the brain after office hours? How does it help?" In the 20th century when materialism and luxury are the order of the day it is not easy to cultivate good habits. A daily walk of two miles, a regulated and light diet, no smoking, no club-visiting: this keeps him fit and full of mental health, even after 60.

He has been coming to the Ashram since 1938 or so, but not once has he approached the Mother with a problem. "Why bother the Mother with our problems?" Here he opened a little of his private mind.

He is not even a direct aspirant to spirituality. And yet he is charged with an ideal and recognises the living out of an ideal wherever he sees it: "Those who are themselves alive can give life to others." And so when, on a business tour he pays visits to other God-men, he comes here also. That's all—but in his case it comes to much.

Once he had to make a payment; his money-bag contained Rs. 36,000. When he reached his destination the bag was missing.

After a moment's reflection he said to himself: "No use crying over spilt milk. What is to go will go."

A little later his driver came and handed him the money-bag, saying, "It was found at the back of the seat in the car."

Struck dumb he stared at the driver. "Are there such honest people in this dark age?" The fit master was matched by the fit servant.

These are the qualities that make a true man. They prepare one for Yoga—and in Yoga they must get intensified.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO *by Nirodbaran, Part II.* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price: Rs. 10.

A TWELVE-year cycle is a striking feature of Sri Aurobindo's life. In 1914 he started writing the *Arya* in which he gave to the world a part of the Knowledge revealed to him in his tapasya. A part only, because as he himself said, what was not written was many times more than what was put down. In 1926 he went into total retirement. Till then, though he was not living a public life, he was accessible and he used to meet disciples regularly in the evenings and converse with them. All that ceased in this year and remained so till 1938 when he met with an accident and a few of the disciples were permitted to be with him. This reopened opportunities for talks with him and that phase continued till 1950, the year he withdrew from the physical body.

The first part of the *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* covered the period from December 10, 1938 to February 6, 1939. The second part now before us reports from December 4, 1939 upto February 29, 1940. It was the beginning of the Second World War and naturally the day-to-day events in the War came in for comment. Read thirty years later, these form interesting pages of history and throw light on the forces that were at work behind the scenes. They reveal how Sri Aurobindo looked upon outer events as indications of inner workings on the subtler planes of existence. The talks cover a wide field inasmuch as the Master's gaze was as infinite as his consciousness. Art, music, poetry, politics, philosophy, yoga—all rub shoulders with delightful abandon and it is difficult to lay down the book before completing its reading. Consummate literary artist that he is, Nirodbaran brings to life the whole scene of the Master surrounded by disciples—the disciples wide-awake and alert not to miss a single gesture, a single syllable from his lips—the Master freely distributing the largesse of his wisdom, throwing plentiful flashes of his insight, provoking and joining in good-humoured laughter, inhibited by nothing, interested in everything

Here there is something for everybody. Paintings of Nandalal Bose or Abanindranath Tagore—poetry of Nishikanto, Tagore, Blake, A.E., Yeats, music, eastern and western—War-strategy and personalities, polity, metaphysics and—what is most important to us—valuable remarks on some of the difficulties that often crop up and face the seeker in his spiritual pursuit.

One of the questions that pose themselves to the entrant in spiritual life is of duty, a duty to family and to society. What about the commitments already made, promises yet unfulfilled? Is it right to turn one's back upon them? Is it not a running away from duty and an act of selfishness under the comforting guise of spirituality?

Sri Aurobindo's answer is clear: "One is not bound to keep a promise if there is a call felt for a higher life or if the object or goal of life for which the promise was made has quite changed. Duty exists so long as you are on the moral plane. On the spiritual plane, one has to go where the call of the Spirit leads him. Duty no more binds him."

Then there is the all-important question of effort *vs.* Grace. What is the deciding factor in yoga, self-effort or Divine Grace? Under what condition is it permissible to rely entirely on Grace? Sri Aurobindo explains that effort is necessary. "When one wants something, one has to concentrate one's energies on a particular point." But effort is not all. There are other factors too. "One may have put in a great deal of effort and yet there could be no result because there was not a complete and total sincerity. On the other hand, when the result comes with little effort it is because the whole being has responded—and Grace found it possible to act. All the same, effort is a contributory factor. Sometimes one goes on making effort with no result or even the condition becomes worse. And when one has given it up one finds suddenly that the result has come. It may be that the effort was keeping up the opposite resistance too. And when it is given up, the resistance says: 'This fellow has given up effort. What is the use of resisting any more?' (*Laughter*)." Sri Aurobindo further observes: "Even if there is tapasya, the result doesn't depend on tapasya. As they say, only the Grace of Brahman can give the result."

There is a good deal of popular confusion on the subject of Form in meditation or adoration. Is Form meant for the inferior stages only? Is Presence rather than Form to be sought? Is the Impersonal higher than the Personal? Sri Aurobindo replies apropos of somebody's attitude: "Why does he reject the Form? The Form is very good—unless, of course, he wants to feel the Impersonal Presence. No doubt the Presence which the Mother spoke of is much more than the Form: the Form is only the expression of the Being. Not that it has no value or reality, but the Presence can be felt as impersonal as well as personal." "The Presence may be personal or impersonal. It may be the dynamic Divine with a personal appearance or the still immutable Brahmic Consciousness which is impersonal and universal. Form is only a certain manifestation of the Presence. You can see Krishna everywhere as a Person and feel His Presence in all, while in the experience of the Impersonal you will perceive the One Self in all or the silent Brahman present everywhere."

Then there is the subject of Japa. It is often asked whether Japa done without an active awareness of the meaning of it is effective or not. Scores of instances from the Puranas are cited to affirm the efficacy of mechanical Japa, whatever Patanjali may say (*tadjapaḥ tad arthabhāvanām*, "repetition of the Name and dwelling upon its import"). Sri Aurobindo answers that such Japa can have an effect. "if somehow it touches the psychic being". "If the psychic being is touched and wakens and throws its influence on the other parts, then the Name-repeating will have effect."

"Isn't Japa the same as remembrance?" This is a pertinent question asked by a participant in the talks. And here is the answer: "Remembrance is by the mind."

"You do Japa of a name or some mantra without any mental element in it, while you remember something by your mind." "Remembrance is dwelling on the idea of God or, if you like, his image."

Finally, there is an interesting query bearing upon Sri Aurobindo's own yogic life. Referring to an article in the press, Nirodbaran asks: "Is what he says about the Mother true? He says that what would have taken you 10 years in sadhana was done in 1 year by your contact with her." Sri Aurobindo: "I may have said something like that—not these very words but the same substance."

One remembers what the Mother once said: that the only humble man she met in life was Sri Aurobindo. How true!

M. P. Pandit

THE NATURE OF MIND: *A Philosophico-psychological Study by Dr. H.M. Joshi.* Saurashtra University. pp.312. Price Rs. 12.

From 'seeking mind' to 'seeing soul' is the indication and urge of the book under review. The learned author has displayed a discerning insight in his deep study of various schools of philosophy and psychology. He has wisely accepted the evidence of the yogic psychology of India. The influence of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga inspires and nourishes the thesis.

Yoga is the science of supreme discovery. For one who accepts implicitly the conditions of Yoga, the results are sure and solid, even as in any scientific research, or more so in its own field and level of consciousness. The author has held out the vision of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and other yogas of the past, to the divided world of science and shown how the inadequacy of the rationalistic and empiricistic interpretations of Mind can be transcended and reconciled by widening of the consciousness.

Speaking about the many conflicting schools of philosophy, he says, "A given position in philosophy is usually found to give some satisfactory answer to a few philosophical problems—that too to a certain extent; but with regard to others it faces dilemmas and self-contradictions" (p. xi).

The author's open-minded appraisal of Western schools of psychology and his scholarly criticism of Freud, Jung and others bring to our mind a poem by K. D. Sethna, "Europe Takes a Look." We are tempted to quote here a few lines:

> Above all time he towers...Voronoff
> Will ask: "How can the Omnipotent have no lust,
> When lust is the sole sign of potency?"
> Herr Freud will find the eternity in his eyes
> Haunted by memories of his mother's womb—
> And the oneness with the Ancient of Days
> An outrage dreamed upon his grandmother!...

O pack of learned dolts who waste your eyes
Looking for body, body everywhere,
Will you feel never that He who made clay-form
Can make Himself a little form of clay
To unveil the Infinite which has fathered all?

Apropos "Nature of Mind," there is Mind behind mind, the unexplored fields of consciousness. And in his search for the unfragmented truth the author aptly aims at a comprehensive understanding in which all dilemmas and self-contradictions disappear. Though Mind is made of a paradoxical web, Man is not condemned for ever to its limitations and ignorance. "There is a fundamental process in Nature as a whole that is one of gradual development," writes the author, "an evolution from an absolute apparent absence of consciousness towards a complete manifestation of consciousness. This developing consciousness undergoes certain stages which it always carries with it on its forward march. Therefore the consciousness in man carries with it the principles of matter and life, forerunners of evolution of consciousness. These principles of matter and life become subject to a new principle of evolved consciousness, subjecting Matter and body, life, emotions and impulses. But mind itself is still a limited instrument of consciousness. There is a constant struggle between body, life and mind and this is a complex phenomenon. In general all the phenomena can be explained in terms of struggle for the evolution of higher and still higher consciousness and its power" (p. 205).

Now this evolution of consciousness presupposes an involution of consciousness,—the Supreme Reality, the Sat-Chit-Ananda, without which no evolution could have been possible and life would have been a naked life or a sheer illusion. "Behind Matter is the Sat aspect of Reality, the pure existent," observes the author, in the revelatory light of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga,"Life is consciousness-force in its development. Mind is the pure and real Idea in its manifestation. Ananda assumes the nature of psychic being in the individual when it undergoes the process of evolution" (p.206).

Therefore Man is invited to participate in this vast Yoga of Nature—the principle behind the sacrifice mentioned in the Vedas, and become a conscious and joyous instrument of the Supreme Will, and know That "than knowing which no other knowledge is deemed higher." This is indeed Man's one business here upn earth—to manifest God within himself and be a radiant temple of eternity.It is the true Purushartha which is not very easy, of course. But precisely because it is not easy it is worth realising. If man could land on the fantastic planet Moon, can he not land on the mystery which is himself? What is required is a constant aspiration for the ideal, the Divine and Its power and light and Ananda. This forms the basis. Rejection of all that hinders and obstructs the way is the condition for progress.

"Proper development of consciousness lies in the rejection of Desire" (p.208), opines the author. Desire is the result of weakness and ignorance. Hence to grow

into consciousness and its power is the effective way to eliminate desire. Many traditional yogas resort to forceful suppression of desire which is generally negative in action. Instead a conscious self-control and self-mastery is the Key. But this is beyond the scope of this review as it is not in the scope of the thesis.

The publication is a useful step towards the future beyond the limited horizons of the present. Appendices I & II, Select Bibliography and Subject Index have added to the usefulness of the book to the teachers and the students in especial, and to the interested readers in general.

We wish that for a book of such quality the printing and proof-reading had been much better and more careful.

A. VENKATARANGA

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