

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1974

Price : Rs. 1-25

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

The Mother was all for *Mother India* continuing, whatever be the difficulty. We appeal to our well-wishers to co-operate with us.

Owing to the steep rise in paper cost (almost four times) and other increased expenses, we are obliged to make a small raise from next January in the yearly subscription. It amounts only to 50 paise per issue in India. From Rs. 12 it will be Rs. 18 for twelve months. The new overseas rates per annum will be: £ 2.00 and \$ 5.00 instead of £ 1.25 and \$ 3.00.

It will be convenient if the renewal of subscription is made before the next year starts.

The actual cost of each copy to us at present is nearly Rs. 2. With the help of more and more advertisements we hope to carry on with these moderate changes in subscription-rates. We shall be thankful if further advertisements could come our way. Donations of any amount that can be spared will also be greatly appreciated.

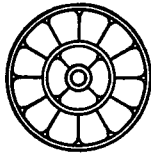
Sri Aurobindo once said about *Mother India* in the early days when it was a fortnightly: "It is my paper." We shall do our utmost to keep this paper going. Will you help us?

Posting Date for MOTHER INDIA :
26th to 28th of the preceding month.

All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

All correspondence to be addressed to:
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002, India.
Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

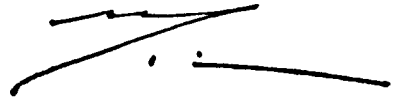


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXVI

No. 10

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER:	
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF A FRENCH INSTITUTE IN PONDICHERY	... 759
YOGA AND EDUCATION:	
A TALK BY THE MOTHER	... 759
THE MOTHER'S COMMENTS ON THE FILM "THE WIZARD OF OZ"	... 760
LONGINGS FOR THE MOTHER	<i>Indra Sen</i> ... 761
THE FUTURE OF THE ASHRAM	<i>Anima</i> ... 767
TWO POEMS:	
CONCRETISE MY ECSTASY	
WHEN THE MASTER IS THE POET	<i>Vikas</i> ... 768
DIMENSIONS (Poem)	<i>Georgette Coty</i> ... 769
A LOOK BEHIND:	
SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY ASHRAM LIFE	<i>M.</i> ... 771
INDIA'S BROAD-MINDED APPROACH TO REALITY	<i>Arnold J. Toynbee</i> ... 775
INDIA AS SHE WAS	<i>From Bhavan's Journal</i> ... 777
ILLUSIONS (Poem)	<i>Pradip Bhattacharya</i> ... 778
LOTUS-FLAME OR SURYAMAN (Poem)	<i>Romen</i> ... 779

CONTENTS

EUROLENGO — A NEW LANGUAGE	<i>Eddie Scambler</i>	... 781
THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE: A SEARCH APROPOS OF R. C. ZAEHNER'S STUDY IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN	<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	... 784
IS ILLUSION (THE MAYAVADINS' CREATIVE MAYA) ITSELF AN ILLUSION?	<i>Kamalendra Ray</i>	... 793
SEVEN LIVES: A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL	<i>Bina Bragg</i>	... 796
“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”: MASS EDUCATION AND ITS LEADERS	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 800

STUDENTS' SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION: THIRTIETH SEMINAR, 21ST APRIL 1974: “IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL”— A SPEECH BY KISHOR GANDHI		... 804
EYE-EDUCATION: BLINKING AND WINKING	<i>Dr. R. S. Agarwal</i>	... 808

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No: R. N. 8667/63

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF A FRENCH INSTITUTE IN PONDICHERRY

IN any country the best education that can be given to children consists in teaching them what the true nature of their country is and its own qualities, the mission their nation is to fulfil in the world and its true place in the terrestrial concert. To that should be added a wide understanding of the role of other nations, but without the spirit of imitation and without ever losing sight of the genius of one's own country.

France means generosity of sentiment, newness and boldness of ideas and chivalry in action. It was that France which commanded the respect and admiration of all: it is by these virtues that she dominated the world.

An utilitarian, calculating, mercantile France is France no longer. These things do not agree with her true nature and in practising them she loses the nobility of her world position.

This is what the children of today must be made to know.

YOGA AND EDUCATION

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

By Yoga, people, specially in the West, understand Hatha Yoga or something worse. In India also, in the middle past, Yoga meant rejection of life due to the influence of Buddhism, Illusionism, etc. It was not like that in ancient times.

In Europe, people felt that the miserable condition of India was due to her rejection of life. Later contact with western people with their false notion of Matter and hypocritical ideas of life along with India's own attitude of the rejection of life, brought about the present degraded state of the country.

Our Yoga does not reject life. We must hammer this idea into their heads.

We will try — no, not try, — we will change the present state of the country. Those who wish to help us in making a new India can help.

In education — that includes technical education also — we shall not blindly follow the western method. The mind of our children will of course be trained, but we shall also develop in them the faculty of intuition and knowledge by identity.

April 4, 1967

(Reported by Pradyot)

THE MOTHER'S COMMENT ON THE FILM "THE WIZARD OF OZ"

On 14-9-1952, just before showing us "The Wizard of Oz" in the Ashram playground compound the Mother made the following statement on the microphone.

A SHORT explanation will surely increase the interest of the picture to be shown to you tonight.

This picture is in three sections, two black and one, the most extensive, in colour. The two black sections (first and last) show how things appear in the physical world; the coloured one expresses a similar sequence of events and similar characters in the vital world, the world where one can go when the body is in deep sleep, when one gets out of the body. So long as you have a physical body, no true harm can happen to you in the vital world, for the physical body acts as a protection, and you can always return into it at will. This is shown in the picture in a classical way. The little girl wears on her feet some magic ruby-red slippers, and so long as she keeps the slippers on her feet nothing wrong can truly happen to her. The ruby-red slippers are the sign and the symbol of the connection with the physical body, and as long as the slippers are on her feet, she can, at will, return to her body and shelter therein.

Two other details can be noted with interest. One is the snow shower that saves the party from the influence of the wicked witch who by her black magic has stopped their advance towards the emerald castle of beneficent vitality. In the vital world, snow is the symbol of purity. It is the purity of their feelings and intentions that saves them from the great danger. Note also that to go to the castle of the good wizard they must follow the broad path of golden bricks, the path of luminous confidence and joy.

The second is when Dorothy throws water on the straw man to save him from burning, some water falls on the face of the wicked witch who lit the fire and at once she gets dissolved and dies. The water is the symbol of the power of purification and no hostile being or force can resist this power handled with good will and sincerity.

Finally, when the good fairy teaches the little girl how to go back home by knocking her red slippers one against the other, she says that nothing is better than home; by "home" she means the present world which is the place of protection and realisation.

As you see, the subject of this picture is interesting and not altogether devoid of knowledge. Unhappily the rendering is not as beautiful and harmonious as it could have been. In the set-up there are some serious faults of taste and many regrettable vulgarities.

LONGINGS FOR THE MOTHER

A Prefatory Note

I learned of the Mother's passing on the morning of the 18th November, 1973 at Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir, Jwalapur (Hardwar), where my normal work lies as given by the Mother in 1958. The impulse that arose within me was to go deep within and be with the Mother to the best of my capacity. I reduced my external preoccupations to the minimum and began to live in that manner and it was profoundly satisfying. In this experience, there were occasional moments of shock and grief too but, on the whole, there was a feeling of inner assurance and a sense of contact and conversation with the Mother. On the morning of the 27th November, as I sat in this contemplation, a move arose to concretise the inner thought and feeling and I wrote out "Our Mother, who is no more, who is ever more." Soon all the ten topics ending with "Mother, we read again Your 'Notes on the Way'" came along. And I read these again and again and enjoyed doing so. I began to do this day after day. I felt that this tended to deepen my inner contact. The next three pieces were written on the following three days, a piece per day. Then I had to go on a short journey and, for about a fortnight, there was no writing. About the middle of December, the writing was resumed and the remaining six pieces were written out. The entire writing was done, on the whole, with ease and simplicity.

To me, all this served to clarify and strengthen an inner contact with the Mother. Many friends, who have read these pieces in typescript, have felt deeply moved and found in varying degrees a greater inner contact.

INDRA SEN

(1)

Our Mother, who is no more, who is ever more

OUR Mother loved us all immensely. Her love overwhelmed us, possessed us. And we loved Her deeply and cherished Her heartily. And we sought to do Her will, we aimed at Her pleasure.

We seek to do Her will now even more, in fact entirely, because She is so silent and would expressly say nothing to us.

Our Mother knew so much, all life and existence, past, present and future, with such clarity and certitude. She permitted us to ask any questions and we asked all sorts of things, past lives, occult powers, other worlds, accidents and what not. And so ready, so clear, so illuminating were Her answers.

But Her thrilling love we remember most. Her sweetness we cherish deeply. And we wish to live and act as would please Her. Her pleasure is our goal.

Our Mother was very powerful. Her realising power was very great. She aimed at high and great things and imperceptibly, as it were, they would assume momentous shape. An International Centre of Education, true to its name, became a simple

affair in quite a short time. And a new township based on a high ideal was not at all too big for Her.

She, in fact, strove for total annihilation of ignorance and unconsciousness and hoped for a continued physical existence, but, it appears, She changed Her strategy to achieve Her purpose, for defeat did not belong to Her will as it did not to Sri Aurobindo's. And as Sri Aurobindo's work advanced after His passing, our Mother's work — which is the same — will, we feel confident, advance ever more after Her passing.

Transformation of nature, end of death and death of ignorance are even in spiritual history inconceivable ideals. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother conceived them, willed them, knew well the pros and cons, and were sure of ultimate victory. But inconceivable too are the hazards of the undertaking.

The Mother could will it all, pursue it and never feel any diffidence about it. So mightily powerful was She Within. We are stunned to conceive of it all. Yet when we are calm and peaceful, we remember the Mother's love and sweetness most. It fills our being and we feel we are for the Mother, we seek Her pleasure, we shall do Her will, now and ever hereafter, and more and more.

We think of the Mother, who is no more and who, we are sure, will be ever more with us and we think of Sri Aurobindo's deep tender regard for Her. We feel transported to contemplate the least casual reference of Sri Aurobindo to the Mother. And how sweet are the Mother's references to Sri Aurobindo!

The Mother is inconceivably powerful and effective, She is illuminating on all issues of life and existence. But for our normal nature, She is marvellously loving, marvellously sweet. We cherish Her heartily and find all the joy of our life in doing so. We pray:

O Mother, Mother Dear, Mother Sweet, we love Thee with all our heart. We seek Thy pleasure. We shall do Thy will.

May we ever enjoy Thy pleasure and Thy love.

(2)

As Thou willst, as Thou willst, Mother

'As Thou willst, as Thou willst' is the refrain. And it is so rewarding, Mother. It gives a contact with Thee. I feel so peaceful and assured and prepared and equal to every call of action. I am clear and sure and move on in life in utter confidence.

'As Thou willst, as Thou willst' is as sweet as a song and I sing it again and again. And as I sing it, the heart throbs more joyously and I feel free from all care and anxiety. All calculations, all pros and cons, all this and that, all manipulations of particulars drop and I live in the unconditioned, the limitless, the infinite and the absolute. I am free and large and wide and above all this finite multiplicity and, as it were, a master of it.

'As Thou willst, as Thou willst' is a wonderful theme. I contemplate it, I meditate on it and feel transported into another realm, a new horizon high and vast, and feel myself the same. All smallness, all narrowness, all littleness drops off. All competitiveness, all fear disappears. And for the time being, I find myself thrilled and exhilarated.

'As Thou willst, As Thou willst', Mother, is indeed a will for the Supreme, the Highest and the Uttermost. It is a will for what Sri Aurobindo wills and what the Divine wills. In seeking Thy will, I find I seek Sri Aurobindo's will as well as the Divine's will. 'As Thou willst, as Thou willst' is a refrain that utterly unifies all higher willing and leaves no disparity or division.

'As Thou willst, as Thou willst', Mother, is a disciple's refrain, who knows the Divine in Thee and the human parts do not distract him. The Divine is the Guru and the Guru is the Divine and thus we approach the Guru and the Divine and grow in divine consciousness.

Mother, grant that we surrender ourselves to Thee utterly, find Thee utterly and live by Thy will utterly.

(3)

Mother, I long for Thee

I long for Thee as I do for nothing else. I desire lots of things, strive and struggle for them, am happy when I get them, am disappointed when I don't. But I long for Thee from deep within and the more I long the happier I feel. The longing itself is completely satisfying. There is no question of getting or not getting anything.

I long for Thee, Mother, and it is so sweet to do so. The longing, which arises from deep down the heart and fills the whole being with peace, is wonderfully sweet. I seek to dwell in it more and more, longer and longer. This sweetness is incomparable. It is exquisitely sweet.

I long for Thee, Mother, and seek to do it more and more. It is a fine occupation superseding other calls and interests. It readily brings Thy Presence. And to be with Thee, to feel Thy nearness, closeness, a face-to-face talking relation with Thee, is indeed wonderful. Mother, Thou art so kind and gracious. Mother, Thou art so willing to come. I hope that I don't disturb Thee much.

Mother, I turn again and again and long for Thee. Whenever I get a little free from external preoccupations, I turn to Thee, long for Thee, cherish Thee and feel so happy. Do I inconvenience Thee by calling on Thee thus at odd hours for odd moments almost irreverently? I am sorry, Mother, but I can't help it. Thou art my rest, my repose, my refuge.

Mother, I long for Thee and the longing is its own reward. But I know also that it pleases Thee and Thou respondest. Thou respondest with Thy Presence, which is all peace, all joy, all hope, all fulfilment. Not usually dost Thou answer in words,

many times Thou indicatest Thy will otherwise. But I am not yet well attuned to Thy ways of silence and am not able to appreciate Thy responses in detail. However, I believe, Thou respondest to every seeking and Thy Presence seems to include all Thy responses.

Mother, I pray:

‘Let my longing for Thee grow ever more, let it grow deeper and wider and intenser and cover up all vagrant seekings for petty satisfactions.’

(4)

How do You do, Mother?

Mother, You are no longer visible, we feel curious and anxious and ask, How do You do? We never asked You, ‘How do You do?’ when You were physically present to us. We wished You, ‘Bonjour, Douce Mère’ and You replied so sweetly, ‘Bonjour, mon enfant’ and, when we were many together, ‘Bonjour, mes enfants.’

But now we feel curious and anxious also and ask, ‘How do You do, Mother?’ and also wish to inquire, ‘Where are You?’ and ‘What are You doing?’ ‘How are You occupied?’ ‘How do You find Your Ashram?’ ‘Is it going on to Your satisfaction?’ ‘Are you pleased with Your disciples?’ ‘What are Your instructions for us?’ — and so on and so forth.

Mother, You once said, ‘I can tell you where Sri Aurobindo is, I can give you His address, you can go and meet Him if you like.’ More precisely, You said, ‘His abode is in the subtle physical.’ Is Your abode too now the same, the subtle physical, from where the work on the gross physical is proceeding? The penetration and possession of the gross physical by the Supramental Power is, after all, now the work and that has to be achieved. May we take Your address to be the same as Sri Aurobindo’s?

But how shall we reach You there? We neither have the necessary discrimination of the different planes of being nor the power of the traveller of the worlds. We, on the other hand, find it much easier to meet You in the heart and occasionally get a visitation from You and Sri Aurobindo as a Presence within or without and feel assured, uplifted and thrilled. We ask and ask and we remain rather puzzled. You once spoke our language, though with lots of subtle overtones, we understood rightly or wrongly, but in any case we took it rather lightly. Now we ask and ask and wait for a response. Surely, you know what we ask, You, in fact, know our heart without our asking and surely You do respond, but we are gross and Your language is now all subtle and we miss Your reciprocations. Or, our grosser parts insist on their own ways of action and reaction and our subtle parts are yet not good enough and we feel lost. Though, in part, lost yet also inwardly assured that our Mother is there, here with us, She loves us, guides us, protects us. We discover this feeling deep within us and feel thrilled, cherish our Mother all the more and seek to do Her will.

‘Mother, how do You do?’ thrills as a question. We accost You, we find You

almost in front of us. And, when we find You in front of us, we ask again, 'How do You do, Mother?' We find You, as it were, smiling back to us and we are thrilled and feel it is nice to ask, 'Mother, how do You do?'

Your smiling back, Mother, is a wonderful response, but turning towards You and asking, 'How do you do, Mother?' is itself so delightful and we wish to ask deep within our hearts again and again, 'Mother, how do You do? How do You do? How do You do?'

Mother, grant us the will and the capacity to turn to You again and again to know about You more and more in the varying situations of life and existence, offer our heart's love to You and seek Your pleasure in all that we do.

(5)

Mother Dear! Mother Sweet!

Mother Dear, Mother Sweet! How much we cherish You, long for You, remember You and enjoy doing so; off and on, on and on, in the day, in the night, during work, in leisure, Mother, You are so lovable, adorable, an attraction by itself.

There was a time when, Mother, I respected You, revered You, admired Your messages and books. I felt You as high and great but did not then confidently open out my heart to You. I respected You, read You, wanted to offer to You something for Your pleasure, also render some service to You but I stood apart, by myself, independently. There was a distance and I cherished adoring and admiring You from a distance, a good safe distance. I wanted to be myself, hold my own, reserved my right to be myself.

Mother, You did not mind it, You approved of it, helped me to grow in my own way and yet helped me more and more.

And then a time came when I began to love too and felt myself getting close and near to You. And this closeness, this nearness was a wonderful feeling! I began to cherish it more and more until being far from You became a positive unhappiness, a discomfort, a dis-ease, requiring an immediate attempt at recovering closeness and nearness. Thus I began to cherish an abiding inner oneness with You and to look upon it as indispensable.

Mother Dear, Mother Sweet, that inner oneness, even as an aim was a wonderful thing. It became central to life as all the varied experiences tended to arrange themselves in a new formation and got filled with the aroma of this marvellous closeness and contact and identification with You. Life then became a pleasure, a joyous adventure, a pursuit of deep discoveries.

But the elements of separation persist and at times turn up rather obtrusively. Then I live as though out of joint, in imbalance, ill at ease and must immediately struggle to get into the balance of wide ease, inner solace and Your deep and felt Presence.

Mother Dear, Mother Sweet, how I wish such occasions did not occur, that I

never got into that separation and isolation! But this too is true that after every separation, the attempt at re-union is intenser and more whole-hearted and the re-union itself fuller, deeper and heartily more satisfying.

Mother Dear, Mother Sweet, grant that Your closeness, Your nearness, Your presence, Your love now come as a realisation, a settled fact of consciousness as an essential element of its nature.

Mother Dear, Mother Sweet, I cherish it as the central fact of life, as its aim itself, as the supreme influence for the entire experience of life. Let it now come, come effectively and make my life full of the sweetness and love and light that emanate from You, Your Being and Your Existence.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

THE FUTURE OF THE ASHRAM

SINCE the Mother's passing away, one often worries about the future of the Ashram — the Ashram-body which has so long been the centre and the instrument of Her work.

But we should not forget in our anxiety that the Ashram is a living body — living and growing — not a finished product. The individual inmates are its cells — cells of consciousness. In a growing living body all the cells do not grow, nor do the same cells continue to live. Many die — new ones take their place — the lucky and the fittest that can keep pace with the movement of the collective body continue. All the while the work of rejection of the old and unfit and assimilation of the new and fit goes on — and at the same time the collective form, the whole, moves forward.

The Ashram was built up by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo with their own consciousness — it was formed with a special aim — and this Divine Consciousness is the soul of the Ashram entity. We, the individuals, are and serve as the outer physical cells in its outer body. So, if some or many cells decompose, they automatically fall out, those that are healthy and can grow continue their life as a part — as a living part — of the collective body.

Yes, the Ashram was formed with an aim, it has a mission — the mission of becoming a representative of the earth-consciousness and of preparing itself for an entire self-giving to the Divine, for a perfect self-consecration to the Divine Will. The rest of the task of the new creation belongs to the Divine.

So, to become or to remain a living cell of this collective Ashram-being, each individual will have to accept and participate in this basic development. One must prepare oneself for the absolute and exclusive self-dedication to the Divine and to the Divine only.

Which cell will live on and how long? It really matters little. The Divine mission will be fulfilled — the Ashram will grow and live on until it realises its *raison d'être*. That alone matters.

In fact, the true being of the Ashram, is, as I have said, a formation made by the Mother with and within Her consciousness. It is there in the subtle world and is overshadowing and penetrating the physical, the outward Ashram as we actually see it at present. The pressure of that inward reality is acting inevitably upon the physical events and circumstances, the lives of those who are here. To hasten that process of descent and infiltration, the collaboration of all is a necessity. The role of each one is thus to find out how best one can collaborate in this work; thus alone one can fulfil oneself and best answer to the Mother's call. The Mother's consciousness is there in everyone; to find it out, to recognise it is the one thing needful. To be sincere, to be faithful, to be one-pointed in devotion and love for Her is the way of happiness and fulfilment.

So?

ANIMA

TWO POEMS

CONCRETISE MY ECSTASY

In a dry and barren space
Devoid of all poetic grace
I pleaded with my distant, withdrawn muse
To send me songs of Truth,
Some verbal harmony that brings
A music from the depth of things.
She answered me according to Her whim,
“If you would sing for Him,
Still yourself, and feel
The melodies of brick and steel.
Build now a temple for The Lord;
Cement, and not the written word.
In life, work, struggle, victory
Enshrine the Perfect Harmony.
Concretize my ecstasy.”

WHEN THE MASTER IS THE POET

PLUCKING lines from sunlit gardens
To the tune of Krishna's flute
Pressing form upon the vision
Seizing light where mind is mute

Through pale words the transmutation
Of the highest space's kiss
When The Master is the poet
Yet a knife to wound with bliss.

VIKAS

DIMENSIONS

FROM where I sit leaning back eased, I look on my world
and wait for the spell to fall upon the hour,
around fivish or six when dusk falls upon the leaves
and the colours begin to put on a different cloak,
the best hour of the day.

Then as I ease unweighed, the magic begins to sit upon my brow.
I enter through a plastic door and we meet at a borderland,
my past and nowadays, and together we plunge toward
the beckoning light, sensed but unknown.

Mostly I shift to where my fondest thoughts live, sacred, large —
for why dream at all if not about unimaginable heights?

There I remain as long as it will let me
and fashion the world to come.

It is familiar, this new life and yet dreamt before. When? Where
has the chain begun? — Walk back the lead, it's yours to try,
all of it, slide either way you like — I try.

Oh, there sits a little girl round seven, now maybe ten,
how warm her dreams, how bravely she scans the skies!
Serene her look as she sits amongst the field flowers in the grass —
there alone unalone, she talks to them of my dreams,
my unbeheld longings of realities which are true.

Little girl, I call, you are familiar, haven't we fashioned this world before?
She looks upon me, wiser than I am now
an adult, oh those eyes of light —

Come, she requests and leads me by my grownup hands in hers,
this is what we will make, you and I, a world made anew
perfect, paradisiacal, grand or don't you know it's true?
How will I tell her that sometimes in the dusty labour my muscles
strain and ache, that the breath gets heavy with the effort
and I forget who else I am, the pictures fade away
and a shadow falls upon my bread?

We know each other; this child and I are one.

"Hither," she says, "listen, this is where your longings live,
they are getting born" —

I walk towards the hall of birth of created thoughts and sounds
and see me shining standing there in utter rapturous joy —
this is my fulfilment, I think, my moment come born,
I am at last new!

All white I stand without a fault, two shimmering wings
are mine, angel-self I became ...

A voice from nowhere, infinitely sweet, finds my ecstasy
and stirs me to attend:

“Child of my own, my own angel-light, I heard you calling —
long have you called. Not unheard, no, your voice was truly
taken down. It pleased me when it pleaded throughout the nights —
‘Call me,’ it said, ‘call me to serve you and a better world,
I long to serve you alone’ — it called”.

I stood in radiant gladness, have my calls been truly heard?

“Caller,” the voice sung to me, “truly calling soul,
your request is granted, to your work proceed —
go now, go forth and take my light and plant it in the dust.”
The voice ceased to sing, I was left alone, my wish fulfilled,
I cast my glance down and beheld two shining wings lie
on either side dropped, then fade.

I looked down and sadness welled up in my heart,
tears came up unasked.

The light has gone out, night settling finds me sitting here
where I waited for the best hour of the day to come ...

“Where is the child who led me?” I cry — “haven’t we been like one?
Just one more moment, just a blink of an eye!”

— Then I glance at my stove waiting, the hungry folks will soon be here,
and think of the labour ahead tomorrow in the field —
the grain to be gathered, the hay to be laid on the ground —
and feel my back ache, my burning hands roughened in the toil —
and remember the birth of the wings — the labour in the dust.

24-6-1972

GEORGETTE COTY

A LOOK BEHIND

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY ASHRAM LIFE

3

It was about noon one day. As soon as I returned from work, Pavitra told me that the Mother had been looking for me and gone away leaving an urgent message. Daily at that hour he used to prepare some salads for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and I helped him in this work. It would be almost unbelievable, if I had not seen it myself, that an *Ecole Polytechnicien* of Paris, an engineer and mathematician, could be such a expert cook, whose dishes Sri Aurobindo relished very much, not to mention the Mother. Of course, preparing salads did not require much knowledge of cooking as such; but that it was an art and called for some refined taste and technique, was very clear to me, observing him doing it for some years.

Near about 1.30 in the afternoon, after finishing all Her interviews, the Mother would come to fetch the salads. Pavitra accompanied Her with the trays up to Sri Aurobindo's dining room, which in those days was at the north-easternmost corner, next to Sri Aurobindo's own room

Now with Pavitra's information, I rushed merrily towards his table to receive the special favour, the message of the Mother. Such a favour was not uncommon in those days, on small bits of papers, just enough to contain a few words, sometimes without a complete sentence, or one single line, written mostly in pencil. This time also there was no departure from the usual method. The dimension of the chit was unforgettably remarkable, just enough to contain one single sentence, if one could call it so, or rather an aphorism. I forgot to give it back to Her in the later days, otherwise it could have had a place in Her book of Aphorisms! She had left this sentence for me: "Montrer l'amitié à un traître c'est devenir un traître" ("To show friendship to a traitor is to become a traitor"). A veritable bombshell! The sweet honey I had expected turned out to be combustible spirit on the point of flaming up. But what an attitude was mine of receiving the Grace! Instead of spontaneously accepting Her indication and admitting my fault, as She always insisted on me to do, my unregenerate nature instantaneously found fault with X who, it was clear, had reported to the Mother my visit to a friend, just about an hour earlier that day.

Anyway, I approached Pavitra, but with an unwelcome gloomy face, to help him as usual in his work. Seeing my uncommon dramatic appearance, he asked what the matter was. I narrated the whole incident, which in short was as follows:

A sadhak friend, who had been known to me for long and who had come a year earlier than I to the Ashram, gave me a sudden shock, a week ago, on the road, when he told me that he was leaving the Ashram soon. In those days such a thing was almost unimaginable, specially about one for whom I was all admiration, for he being a rich man's son had sacrificed his promising career to come here and he was a nice young

man of a very quiet nature. I really felt sorry and on my way back to the Ashram I went straight to X and inquired if what I had been told was true. X replied, "Yes", and, on my request, added that for quite some time my friend had been passing through a crisis. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo were continually helping him and giving him directions to follow. As long as he adhered to the directions he was all right and was going on well and normally. But he opened the doors to the hostile forces, paying no heed to the Mother's repeated warnings. As a result, the two very common forces, ego and sex, had blocked his progress and he was no more normal, and lately he had been speaking ill of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and had taken a positively bad turn. So it was better he went away, for that might help him to get cured in time. As he then was, the pressure of the sadhana was too much for him.

To my question whether, as my friend had requested me, I could go and meet him one day, X was quite categorical with his "No". There ended the matter; at least I thought it did. I decided not to meet my friend, though I felt very sorry and somehow could not convince myself about his abnormal condition, which did not show itself, by even the slightest hint, in his talk with me. It is true I had had no contact with him for quite a long time, as each one of us was busy with his work, and in those days unnecessary meetings between fellow-sadhaks were not common. But, to my mind, he was better stuff than I for the sadhana. So why after all ...?

But a week later quite unexpectedly I was face to face with him again on the same road, and this time he almost dragged me to his room which was nearby. Reluctantly I went in, and asked him, "What's up?" He said quite frankly, "I would not hesitate to tell you, but Sri Aurobindo has written to me not to tell anybody, but to go with my individual difficulties kept to myself." I said, "In that case I do not want to know, but I am not convinced that there can be any difficulty which cannot be overcome with the help of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo." He lamented that he could not overcome his. Just at that moment, as if by a joke of God, X was about to enter the house. My friend hinted this to me, and I escaped by his back door, feeling relieved and happy that I had not been seen. That was all that had happened, and I asked Pavitra, "Tell me, what is my fault? Why did X report to the Mother wrongly that I was being friends with the man? How can it be called showing friendship?"

Pavitra, with his natural serenity and poise, very sympathetically told me that whatever be the situation, and whosoever be wrong, when the Mother came in a hurry and left a note, it must be for my good, and I should accept it with all humility and not react in that way. I listened to him respectfully, although what he said was not unknown to me. I also had lectured to others in the same vein. But in my own case, as usual, I forgot everything and could not throw away the reaction of the ego.

Just then the Mother came, rather early that day and, looking kindly at me, addressed me humorously, "Le voilà!" ("So, you are there!"). I said, "Mother, I didn't know..." But before I could finish my sentence She threw almost another bomb, with an angry-sounding voice this time. She said, "You are a liar! I don't want to

listen to you." She went away at once. Pavitra accompanied Her with the tray.

I was enraged too, and all the more against X. What a twist he must have given in his report to the Mother, that She should be convinced I was wrong. What else could I do when somebody requested me to come for a few minutes to him, since he was going away? He might be telling bad things to others, but to me he had told nothing, and I had not gone to appreciate him, rather I disagreed with him, etc. etc.

I went away. In the evening, after the work I did not come to the Mother at Pavitra's place, to report about the day's doings and about the next day's programme, as was usual with me in those days.

Sometime before midday, next morning, She came; I was almost unprepared. This time with a shower of gracious smiles She said, "Alors, ça va?" ("Now, all right?"). With complaint in my tone I said, "Mother, I couldn't sleep the whole night."—"Ah! couldn't sleep the whole night?" She repeated with an air of surprise, "And why?"—"I couldn't understand why you had called me a liar," I said.—"Oh, ho!" She exclaimed with a jocular gesture, patting my head, "You mustn't take my word by the dictionary meaning of it; learn to see what is behind it. I did not mean that you were deliberately telling me a lie, but the falsehood is so well established in the nature that there is a spontaneous move to give just a little twist, and then see things as suits your convenience. Of course, I do not say that you are the only genius in this respect, but that is what most people do all the time, and it is so difficult to change. My child, it is very easy for me to change the nature of circumstances, but very difficult to change the nature of people."

Still I insisted, "What twist did I give in this case? X has exaggerated to you. I heard nothing from the man..." This time the Mother gave a very patient hearing to the whole of my tragi-comedy and then said, "It would have been quite innocent of you if you had not known from X already that the man had turned hostile. X warned you, yet you went, and that makes the thing serious. So, after that, you cannot very well say that you did not know!"—I said I had been quite sure that I would not meet him, but by chance we had come face to face on the road, after a week, and he had almost dragged me to his house. I had not resisted physically but inwardly I had not appreciated him. I added that even at that moment I had not known what had been undesirable in the whole matter.

The Mother said, "You were inwardly against him, which is good, and that is what prevented him from poisoning you. But your vital was in sympathy with him, the so-called innocent sympathy towards an old friend, and it wanted to do good to him. That is why what appeared to you as an unexpected meeting after a week was a quite well-expected recurrence that was to happen. Here is the twist in the consciousness, so that you could tell me so very strangely and spontaneously that you didn't know!"

I still insisted that I had meant I had not known the gravity of the situation, and that before I had finished my sentence I had been called a liar. At this moment the Mother stretched her both hands wide apart on both sides, in a dramatic gesture, and

said, "When you are in front of me, you must face the light like this, but what you did was like that." Here She turned a little, almost giving a twist to Her vertical stance, and continued, "So you missed the light, and felt comfortable in the darkness. Moreover, can you tell me why the curiosity to know about the hostility of another? That is none of your business, you must leave it to the Guru. Even if he has told you nothing, your inner sympathy has opened your door already to that force, and it is an added burden for me now to remove it from you. You say you didn't know, but then why did you feel nervous and run away by the other door to avoid X? Was it not a clear proof that you were fully conscious of doing something wrong?"

At this I said, "Yes, I was surely feeling uneasy all the time I was with him but...". The Mother broke in, "No more buts! Enough of your gymnastics with falsehood. Now take the lesson to be conscious, and with all courage and resolution do not allow Falsehood in any form in your thought and feeling and action."

Much later, I read one of Her messages to somebody: "To come closer to the Truth, you must often accept not to understand."

I understand the meaning of it better now than ever before.

M.

INDIA'S BROAD-MINDED APPROACH TO REALITY

(With acknowledgments to the Indian Council of Cultural Relations we are publishing the closing part of Arnold J. Toynbee's article, "The Spiritual Gift of India".)

If a devout and zealous Shaiva and a devout and zealous Vaishnava would each recognise that the other was seeking truth and salvation in his own way, each might perhaps claim that his own way was the better one, at any rate for himself. But he would not maintain that his own way was the only way that had any truth or virtue in it. He would not contend that his neighbour's way was utterly false and vicious. He would not dismiss it as being not Hinduism, or as being not religion at all. Nor would he maintain that his own form of religion had been revealed, once for all, at some particular time and place.

Let me imagine a Shaiva Brahman, who prided himself on the purity of his Aryan descent, being told in tactless language by an archaeologist that the god now known as Shiva had been worshipped in India already, in the Age of the Indus Culture of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, centuries before the first Aryan had set foot in India and before the first Brahman had performed the first Brahmanical rite.¹ I do not believe that my imaginary Shaiva Brahman would feel as sore and as upset as even the most liberal-minded orthodox Christian cleric would be likely to feel if another tactless archaeologist were to tell him that, centuries before Jesus was crucified, the god who voluntarily sacrificed his life for man's salvation had been worshipped in South-West Asia and in Egypt — and eventually in Scandinavia too — under the various names Tammuz, Adonis, Osiris, Attis, Balder.

If, again, I am right, this broad-minded Indian outlook in matters of religion is shared with Hinduism by Buddhism.

If this is true, it is remarkable, considering that the Buddha's followers do attribute to the Buddha a claim to have discovered the way of spiritual release for all mankind.

This claim that Buddhism is the only right way might look like something Christian or Muslim.

Nevertheless, Buddhist practice has been broad-minded in the characteristic Indian way.

One can verify this in Eastern Asia today. In Japan, most people are both Buddhists and Shintoists. They resort to Shinto for a marriage service and to Buddhism for a funeral service. The two religions co-exist, and they live together amicably.

In pre-Communist China, most people used to be Buddhists, Taoists and Confucianists simultaneously. North-East Asian Buddhism is, of course, the Mahayana.

¹ Editor's Note: Actually archaeologists have found no proof of modern historians' pet theory of an Aryan invasion of India.

In the South-East Asian countries, including Ceylon, Theravada Buddhism is the national religion in the sense in which Christianity can be called the national religion of Britain, and Islam of Egypt. Yet, in practice, Theravada Buddhism has been, I should say, at least as receptive of the previous religions of the land as Roman Catholic Christianity has been in, let us say, Italy.

Christianity has been more receptive of previous religions than its official representatives care to admit. Yet, in spite of this mitigating touch of Hindu-mindedness, Christianity presents a contrast to the religions and philosophies of Indian origin in being, on the whole, exclusive-minded and intolerant-hearted.

Most Christians believe that their own religion has a monopoly of truth and salvation; some Christians feel hostility towards other religions; and some of these, again, have put their Christian belief and Christian feelings into action in times past by trying to wipe other religions off the map.

In showing this militant aggressive temper, Christianity is not unique.

The same temper is characteristic of all those living religions and ideologies that have arisen in the section of the *Oikoumene* that lies to the west of India.

Intolerance is common to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism;¹ and also to the modern Western ideologies that have sprung up in a post-Christian environment: I mean Fascism, Nazi-ism, Communism.

I believe the Zoroastrians have grown out of their original militancy since they migrated to India.

Militancy has been shed by some Christians too, of course. I am thinking particularly of the Quakers, with whom Gandhiji, I believe, felt some spiritual affinity.

But, on the whole, aggressive militancy is, I am afraid, characteristic of all the religions of the trans-Indus family, in contrast to the catholicity of Indian religion and philosophy.

“The heart of so great a mystery cannot be reached by one road only.” Do you remember which of India’s great religious geniuses it was who wrote those words? Was it Shankaracharya? Was it Ramanujacharya? Was it Guru Nanak? But you will have seen through the trick that I am pretending to play on you. If the author of the sentence I have just quoted had been an Indian, the saying would have been thoroughly in keeping with the Indian spiritual tradition.

But, in fact, he was not an Indian saint or sage; he was a fourth-century A.D. Roman Senator, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus.

In Symmachus’s time, Christianity was already the official religion of the Roman Empire, but Symmachus himself had not become a Christian, and the sentence of his that I have quoted was written by him in the course of a correspondence that he was having with the Christian bishop Ambrose of Milan.

In the last decade but one of the fourth century of the Christian era, the Christian Roman Imperial Government was systematically stamping out all non-Christians

¹ Editor’s Note · Only one inscription — the famous “daiva”-inscription — of one single Persian king, Xerxes, seems to have coloured the writer’s mind about Zoroastrianism.

forms of religion throughout its dominions. Symmachus was the non-Christian party's spokesman.

The religious struggle was brought to a point by the Government's deciding to remove from the Senate House at Rome a statue and altar of the goddess Victory which Julius Caesar had placed there more than four hundred years back. Ambrose was insisting that they should be removed; Symmachus was pleading that they should be respected and be spared. Ambrose had the Government's ear, and he had the whole force of its power behind him.

Symmachus's memorable words did not save the pre-Christian religions of the Mediterranean World from being suppressed; but the words have gone on echoing down the centuries, and neither Ambrose nor any of his successors has given Symmachus an adequate answer.

The Roman Government's resort to force was no answer.

I cannot imagine Asoka doing what the Roman Emperors Gratian and Theodosius did.

INDIA AS SHE WAS

YUAN Chwang who came to India in the 7th century A. D. says about her people: "They are of pure moral principles. They will not take anything wrongfully and they yield more than fairness requires. They fear retribution of sins in their lives. They do not practise deceit and they keep their sworn obligation" (Watters I p.171). The Arab traveller Al Idrisi says, "The Indians are naturally inclined to justice and never depart from it in their actions. Their good faith, honesty and fidelity to engagements are well known and they are so famous for these qualities that people flock to their country from every side" (*History* by Elliot. Vol. I, p. 88). The Italian Marco Polo came to India in the thirteenth century. He says, "These Brahmanas are the best merchants in the world and the most truthful, for they would never tell a lie for anything on the earth. If a foreign merchant who does not know the ways of the country, applies to them and entrusts his goods to them they would take charge of these and sell them in the most zealous manner seeking zealously the profit of the foreigner and asking no commission except what he pleases to give" (*Marco Polo*, Vol. III, by Yule, p. 363). Colonel Sleeman, even as late as the eighteenth century, has said, "Lying between members of the same village is almost unknown. I have had hundreds of cases before me in which a man's property, liberty and life depended upon his telling a lie and he has refused to tell it."

(From *Bhavan's Journal* Vol. XIX, No. 20, April 29, 1973, p. 43.)

ILLUSIONS

ILLUSIONS breaking
 into fragments of coloured glass:
exposed lies their futile, fragile,
 evanescent beauty,
leaving the home undefended,
 suddenly exposed
to Truth's icy gale,
 Its icicles biting
into the unwilling mind,
 whipping it into consciousness,
bringing it into the merciless cold white glare
 of Truth.
Yes, painful —but for the better.
 A 'fire-ordeal'?
Thus perhaps the soul breaks free
 of attachments.
Ego's grasping pincer hands of desire
 lie smashed by His hammer,
and He breaks to build anew —
 build me in His shape?
Then welcome such blows,
 throw open dwarf self
to His cruel-kind grace-blows,
 cut the roots of the Tree of Desire,
that nefarious slimy python-like cancerous stifer,
 cut it asunder
by the sword of surrender, of non-desire,
 of glad acceptance of His Will,
believe 'All is for the Best' —
 for so it is indeed.

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

LOTUS-FLAME OR SURYAMAN

(Continued from the issue of May 1974)

BOOK I, CANTO II *(contd.)*

THE mist withdrew from nature's travailing breast.
The night of sprawling nothingness was gone,
Leaving the orchard of life released and bright
In the happy sunlight of luminous heart-beats
And wide and thrilled discovery of the soul
Matter could sense an upheaval drawing close,
Stirring like a strange foetus in its caves,
Ready to emerge into the awakened air
And the rapture-sight of a miraculous world.
The skies above came down intense and clear
A harbinger-guest, a space of angel-delight
With a hued tapestry of epiphanies
And cloudless vistas of the leaning unknown.
The gods arose from their long indolent mirth,
Weary of the passionate intensities
And gazed down on the reviving earth in time
And Lotus-Flame, the banished prince of God.
Fulfilled was here the long-awaited tryst,
The waiting of a millennium and of suns
And rising of the emerging universe
Matter could feel its voiceless depths aroused,
Smitten by the call of unsubstantial flame
Far behind the curtained vistas and the peaks
And the lone marvels of soul's eternity.
Life rose a god from slumber and torpor ceased,
An actor roused to face the unimagined play
And the throng of daemons watching its drama's theme
Or a bird thrown out into the magnificent air
With light and heavens for its limbs and breath
And a wide delight of youth and love and song.
A nameless freedom called, a joy to be born
Amid the crowd of many-coloured life
And endless spans of ungrasped ecstasies

And the sheer burning rhapsodies fulfilled.
Winged, from above came down the breath of mystic,
Thoughts hovering on the twilight and the hush —
Harbinger of a greater birth and name.
But too soon must the opposing shade unveil
Its tenebrous claws, the yawn of obscure sleep
Negating all that the soul of Time has built
And the Spirit yearned for through the mask of sense.
Too soon must crumple the edifice of light
And towering splendours of the measureless moon
And white intensities, creators of Life.
And life too fell back into its ancient gulf
Cowering behind the oppressing tide of gloom,
The lifeless eddies from the spectral source,
Too real, stark, to be denied, opposed,
Too stout and strange for the emerging earth.
Like a drowning swimmer, he arose alone
Above the rushing tornadoes of the Nought
And floods of the sheer inconscience ungarbed,
Surprised by the hectic suddenness of assault,
Lifting his god-white arms to the vasts of God.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

EUROLENGO — A NEW LANGUAGE

(Eddie Scambler, a North-England journalist, gives us a very persuasive picture of what seems a real break-through in international communication.)

“KANO VOS KOMPENDAR DIS? IT ISTO UN EXAMPLE DE
EUROLENGO.

At first glance this looks like nothing more than a strange mixture of pidgin bits of three or four European languages.

READ it again more carefully, however, and you will find that this linguistic mixture is fairly easy to understand.

It is in fact “Eurolengo”, a new language developed by Mr. Leslie Jones, of Newcastle upon Tyne, north-east England, which he claims can be understood by people speaking any of about seven different European languages.

A former foodstuffs importer and wholesaler, Mr. Jones, now retired, has had a lifetime’s experience in trading with other European countries and speaks four languages. During World War II, he worked for the British Intelligence Corps because of his knowledge of French and German.

He has spent five years developing “Eurolengo” and claims complete success for his use of it in seven countries. He also claims that it is so far the most modern practical approach to breaking through Europe’s language barriers, of particular relevance for EEC countries.

Simplicity is the keynote of “Eurolengo.” It is based on the Latin content of English and Spanish, the two Western European languages most widely used throughout the world. The initial course teaches some 2,000 words which can be quickly recognised by millions of people and a dictionary of about 25,000 words is in preparation.

There are many difficult sounds in European languages, as so many schoolchildren find when they first tackle a new tongue. Mr. Jones has carefully eliminated these. He has also devised a simple form of phonetic spelling which means that “Eurolengo” is as easy to read and write as it is to pronounce. Double consonants have disappeared.

Learning the correct grammar of a language has always been a big problem, confusing many people in their native tongue as well as in a new language. Mr. Jones has cut down the grammar of “Eurolengo” to less than three pages. Irregular verbs can still bring shudders to grown-ups from their schooldays but in “Eurolengo” all verbs are regular and the beginner has to learn only two to master them all. They are “istar” (to be) and “habar” (to have). After that, conjugation is easy.

Mr. Jones tried the most conclusive method of testing his new language : he took it round Europe with him and spoke it whenever possible, pretending it was the only language he knew. His claims for success are based on this practical testing.

A text book on the “novo lengo” has been published by Oriel Press, Newcastle,

which explains and analyses the language, then follows up with 50 conversational exercises on topical subjects. A "two-way" vocabulary between English and "Euro-lengo" is also included.

Mr. Jones says he has always been interested in foreign languages and has felt for some time that a common language is necessary for a better understanding between nations. This set him thinking about a universal language and he worked on a formula which he thought would be acceptable to all Western European nations. As English and Spanish were the languages mostly in use he would concentrate on them for compiling his words and grammar.

Another factor he considered was that northern European children — Scandinavian, Dutch and German — get such a thorough grounding of the English language that he could apply the Latin side of English to "Euro-lengo." This would make it easy for the French and Italians, as thus many words with which they were familiar could be used.

He also included the Anglo-Saxon derivations of English words entirely, because, he says, "so many of these words are so simple to learn and so expressive."

He points out that the English student of "Euro-lengo" will find he is using many familiar words but adds a warning that he must not fall into the habit of pronouncing them in the normal English manner, or omit to study the simple rules. Speaking the new language, Mr. Jones says, should be a pleasure rather than a chore, and writing it should be simplicity itself because the construction of sentences is a straightforward matter of subject, verb, object, extension.

There is only one gender for nouns so the definite article is always "le" and the indefinite article is always "un". Consequently, adjectives never change gender either and are always placed before the noun unless particular emphasis is required. For example, "un fantastik vista" does not have the descriptive vitality of "un vista fantastik."

By now it should not be difficult for a reader of this article to understand the following explanation of the language:

"It isto le modern metod de komuikacions for mans de komerse, professors and tourists visitant West Europe.

"Le lengo habo un diksionarie de venti mil paroles and dar isto in proses un teknikal diksionarie. It isto kompletlik fonetik and le difisile sonds in le lengoes de West Europe isto omitado. Para skribar 'Euro-lengo,' dar no isto dobel konsonants."

"A un epok, quand le nasions de West Europe isto unitado kortlik in le Komun Market, it isto tres important ke le komunikacions isto developado. 'Euro-lengo' ofro grand avantajes and oportunities para improvar internasional komprension."

The 50 exercises given in Mr. Jones' book *The Language for Europe* cover family relationships and the home, school, the office, the restaurant, and travel formalities. Mr. Jones shows how to cope with "Euro-lengo" when talking about banking, the seasons, times and dates and in department stores.

He also shows how to practise the new language on your doctor or dentist. When

he says “Le plupart de persons habo un teror de un visit a le dentist”, no further translation is necessary.

At present Mr. Jones is driving through Europe in his caravan selling his new language or perhaps, as he would say: “A present, Senior Jones isto kondusarant per Europe in loz karavan vendarant loz novo lengo.”

After studying “Eurologo”, absorbing its few rules, assimilating its vocabulary and practising composition of phrases, one is left wondering why someone did not think of a simple communal language for Europe’s “Tower of Babel” long before this. After all, composers of music managed this successfully centuries ago.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

A SEARCH APROPOS OF R. C. ZAEHNER'S STUDY IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

6 (*Contd.*)

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TEILHARD'S FAITH: THE TRUE NATURE OF HIS CHRISTIANITY — WHAT IS BASIC TEILHARDISM? — WHAT PLACE HAS HIS CHRISTIANITY IN IT? — TEILHARDISM AND THE MODERN RELIGIOUS INTUITION

(1)

As more and more writings of Teilhard's get published, an increasingly clearer picture emerges of the fundamentals of his faith. The most illuminating aid comes from his letters. From the fact that he kept no copies of his communications and destroyed whatever his friends wrote to him we may infer that he expected his own communications to be destroyed by his friends. So he must have written his letters without any thought of their publication. Naturally, then, we may hope to find in them his most uninhibited self-expression — disclosures of his mind and heart free of whatever little reservations of speech he might have deemed desirable in order not to deepen still further the division that already lay between him and his Church and even his own religious Order, the Company of Jesus, except for a few intimate members of it.

We have already drawn upon the two sets of correspondence which have seemed to us to exhibit the greatest freedom and frankness: *Letters to Léontine Zanta* and *Letters to Two Friends*. Now a third set has come to hand, in the original French at the moment, a series of letters to four fellow-Jesuits to whom he felt closest.¹ In English its title would run: *Intimate Letters of Teilhard de Chardin* to Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solages, Henri de Lubac, Andre Ravier 1919-1955, with Introduction and Notes by Henri de Lubac. All the themes dealt with in Teilhard's books are touched upon here in one form or another, just as they are in those two earlier-published series, but the main interest for us of this latest compilation lies in the emphatic and ultimate confirmation it provides of our reading of basic Teilhardism from the previous volumes of correspondence as well as from the various books.

Our reading showed Teilhard to be — for all his attempts to establish contacts with the Church's traditional teaching and with certain passages of St. Paul — centrally unorthodox, formulating a Christianity *sui generis*. It also demonstrated as mostly mistaken and sometimes perverse the attempts of his co-religionist admirers

¹ *Lettres Intimes de Teilhard de Chardin à Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solages, Henri de Lubac, André Ravier 1919-1955*, Introduction et notes par Henri de Lubac (Aubier Montaigne, Paris, 1973).

to assimilate him into established Roman Catholicism and reduce his differences to merely an adaptation of old dogmas to new conditions and climates of thought, so that those differences would amount finally to a matter of nomenclature, a mode of using words. Again, while taking due note of Teilhard's avowals of devotion to Rome, we have stressed a certain inner independence which never really ruled out shaking Rome off. And we have thrown into some relief his constant hope of Teilhardianising Rome by means of his very presence within its orbit. Not that Roman Catholic exegetes fail to record instances of what they consider wrong-headedness on Teilhard's part, but on the whole they discern in him a true son of orthodox Christianity putting in evolutionary terms the traditional Christian religion in order to convert the scientific non-believers amongst whom his lot as a researcher in palaeontology was cast.

How wrong-headed are these exegetes themselves should have been clear from much of Teilhard's correspondence published in the past. Perhaps the most pointed and positive statement by him of his personal religious stance is in a letter from China to Léontine Zanta on January 26, 1936:¹ "What increasingly dominates my interest and my inner preoccupations, as you already know, is the effort to establish within myself, and to diffuse around me, a new religion (let's call it an improved Christianity, if you like) whose personal God is no longer the great 'neolithic' land-owner of times gone by, but the Soul of the world — as demanded by the cultural and religious stage we have now reached.... My road ahead seems clearly marked out; it is a matter not of superimposing Christ on the world, but of 'panchristising' the universe. The delicate point (and I touched on part of this in *Christology and Evolution*) is that, if you follow this path, you are led not only to widening your views, but to turning your perspectives upside down; evil (no longer punishment for a fault, but 'sign and effect' of progress) and matter (no longer a guilty and lower element, but 'the stuff of the Spirit') assume a meaning diametrically opposed to the meaning *customarily* viewed as Christian. Christ emerges from the transformation incredibly enlarged (at least that is my opinion — and all the uneasy contemporaries with whom I have spoken about it think like me). But is this Christ really the Christ of the Gospel? And if not, on what henceforward do we base what we are trying to build? I don't know whether, among the many of my colleagues who are in front of me or behind me on the road I'm travelling, there are any (or even a single one! ... that seems incredible) who realise the importance of the step that all are taking. But I'm beginning to see it very clearly. One thing reassures me: it is that, in me, the increase of light goes hand in hand with love, and with renouncement of myself in the Greater than me. This could not deceive."

We may recall here the comment we made after quoting the passage in an earlier article: "This declaration should settle all controversy. Teilhard is after a new religion, which can stand in its own right. It need not be un-Christian, but it can be Christian only if Christianity undergoes an improvement. The improvement does not lie just in extending, heightening, intensifying what we have been accustomed to as

¹ *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London, 1969), pp. 114-115.

Christian: it lies basically in a complete revolution, an entire inversion — the head has to be put where the feet were and *vice versa*: no mere patch-up or expansion along the same line will do. But Christ still remains the core of the new religion, even though the Church's outlook on evil and on matter has to be turned topsy-turvy or taken to a sheer antipodes. And Christ is now the Soul of the world, the Cosmic Person who is the animating principle of all matter: he is as wide as the universe: he is the universe itself in its true inner reality, the One Spirit whose outer stuff, as it were, is the world of matter, the sphere of a difficult, often erring yet ever advancing evolution. There can be no going back on this view, whether or not it agrees with the picture of Christ given by the Gospel. But if we gauge the true temper of the Gospel's Christ — the revealer of love for God's children and of the mystical resort of our whole self to the Divine Infinite — we may be sure he is not negated by this Pan-christism which the trend and mood of our modern age with its discovery of universal evolution demands."

An additional point we may repeat from our earlier article. We are often told, on the basis of several "faithful" confessions by Teilhard, that at no time was there any question of his quitting his Order and his Church. Fearing the possibility of a recantation or a revolt, he¹ once appealed to Léontine Zanta to pray that he might never break either with the Church or his own truth. On one occasion he² even contemplated calmly the possibility of a break: "... I am more and more determined to put my trust in Life, without letting anything surprise me. And then I feel that I haven't the least apprehension about anything that could happen to me, provided that it is 'in the service of the world'." The calm contemplation had for its background a situation which, under ordinary conditions, would inevitably have led to a rupture with the Vatican: "... in my heart I haven't changed, except along the same lines. One consequence of this movement is that I am gradually finding myself more and more on the fringe of a lot of things. It's only thanks to the exotic life I'm leading that this drift doesn't develop into a break." These words 'can mean only one thing: if Teilhard had been in Europe and not in far-away China, the conflict between his own truth and the Vatican's position would have been acute enough to force him to cut himself away from his Order and his Church for the sake of his "new religion."

A third point to make from past epistolary sources concerns the motives for Teilhard's sincere struggle, despite his "new religion", to remain in the traditional fold. In the first place, a strong sense was his that here was an institution founded by Christ himself and charged with a great office. Next, he was deeply enamoured of the doctrine at the heart of this institution that there was a Divine Incarnation, an insertion of the Personal Godhead into matter, and that at the end of time the Resurrected Christ would complete his Mystical Body of faithful followers and form with their spiritually glorified physical beings a Plenitude, a Pleroma, with himself and carry this Cosmic Fullness into the bosom of the Transcendent God. Lastly, he had the conviction that he could bring home to his Church his evolutionary

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

vision of that wonderful doctrine and lift Roman Catholicism out of an old-fashioned interpretation taking no stock of modern evolutionism which, with its view of a unitary and organic cosmos, was to him the truth of truths. It is the last motive that needs underlining. It has been denied, smacking as it may of fifth-column tactics. But the spirit of the fifth column resides in wanting to destroy by stealth what one hates. Here the aim would be to destroy that which would kill what one loves. Granted the vital distinction, we cannot deny Teilhard's faithfulness as partly fed by the desire to hold on because, from outside, it would have been impossible to have any influence for change. In his letters in English to an American woman, Lucille Swann, he states this desire three times.

On March 21, 1941 he¹ writes from Peking: "According to my own principles, I cannot fight Christianity; I can only work inside it, by trying to transform and 'convert' it. A revolutionary attitude would be much more easy and also much more pleasant, but it would be suicidal. So I must go on step by step, tenaciously. I know that the tide is rising, which supports me." Again, from Peking, on June 22, he² declares: "I have well received your long and so good letter in which you urge me to force more strongly my way towards a freer expression of my *weltanschauung*. You must be sure that I understand perfectly your point of view. The only and great difficulty, as I told you many times, is that I am convinced that my best efforts could be useless if I should break with the religious current which the problem is *not* to fight but to transform. On such a battlefield, I can only act *from inside*, and this not by politics, but by sheer conviction. Let us hope." Finally, from Paris on February 8, 1949, we have the words: "Leaving the Order, *à ce point des choses*, would be suicidal, as far as the success of my 'gospel' is concerned. In addition to the bad effect of the gesture on my 'followers', don't forget that my whole spiritual construction is genuinely built on (or rather culminating into) an enlarged and 'rejuvenated' figure of Christ; so that I can do nothing in the way of parting from the 'Church' which is, biologically speaking, the 'phylum' of Christ. The only thing I can do is to work '*from inside*'."

None of the three points we have spotlighted are quite brought into focus by de Lubac in his copious and often extremely competent notes. Here and there they are allowed to emerge, but some counterpoise is always added and the total result in the annotation is a Teilhard with his sharp edges blunted. Fortunately, the text of the correspondence — the major contents of which have already been accessible to Teilhardian students, especially Emile Rideau and Claude Cuénot — offers almost an *embarras de richesse* to whoever is minded to prove de Lubac in error.

The intense disparity between the official Roman Catholicism and Christianity *à la* Teilhard hits us in the eye in a letter to Auguste Valensin from Tientsin on 13 October 1933:³

¹ *Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952* (Collins, The Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1972), p. 155. ² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³ *Lettres Intimes*, pp. 253-4. The original French runs: "A Rome, essaierat-on de s'entendre avec

“In Rome, will they try to come to an understanding with me — or simply make me feel that they are giving me ‘a new chance’ (you are undoubtedly right: there, an oral explanation would be dangerous)? — I am waiting, and I am determined to go towards an agreement with a maximum of sincerity and good will. But, to tell you what I truly think, I rather fear in advance anything that would resemble a pact. There is, between the Roman authorities and myself, more than a misunderstanding of words. All of us dream of one and the same Christ; — and that is the fundamental thing, thanks to which we can remain associates without disloyalty or dupery. But, this capital point set apart, we differ, Rome and I, by two representations of the World, and two practical attitudes towards the World, *which are not merely complementary but contrary*. It is, at bottom, a merciless fight, — between a static pessimism and a progressive optimism. That, you see, is what we should frankly acknowledge, rather than cheating oneself with words. — Under these conditions, can I really hope for, or even desire, an agreement? Would it be frank? And would it be solid? — In the end, I think that the only solution, in my case, is to continue to live as a ‘free lance’, at least for the time being. If the Lord still gives me force and life long enough, I shall perhaps succeed in setting together a more viable spiritual work or in contemplating the advent, in the Church, of a new spirit. — In the meantime, what I can promise P[ère] de B[onneville] is to try (more than I perhaps did in the past) to keep the *maximum* of the traditional views and attitudes of the Church and the Company in my personal constructions. But it would be vain, as you feel it yourself, on the part of authority to want to limit me to scientific research alone, — without ‘philosophy’, as they say. — For me, Science is dead without a certain *spirit* (=the spirit of research, — sacred research): and it is precisely that spirit that they do not want, and whose diffusion they dread.”

Nothing could be more plain, more trenchant, in its admission of an uncrossable

moi, — ou simplement de me faire sentir qu'on me donne ‘une nouvelle chance’ (vous avez sans doute raison: une explication orale là-bas serait dangereuse)? — J'attends, et je suis décidé à aller dans la direction d'un accord avec un maximum de sincérité et de bonne volonté. Mais, pour vous dire le fond de ma pensée, je redoute un peu, à l'avance, tout ce qui ressemblerait à un pacte. Entre les autorités romaines et moi, il y a plus qu'un malentendu de mots. Les uns et les autres, nous rêvons d'un seul et même Christ; — et c'est la chose fondamentale grâce à quoi nous pouvons rester associés sans déloyauté et sans duperie. Mais, ce point capital mis à part, nous différons, Rome et moi, par deux représentations du Monde, *qui ne sont pas seulement complémentaires, mais contraires*. C'est au fond, une lutte sans merci, — entre un pessimisme statique et un optimisme progressif. Cela, voyez-vous, je crois qu'il vaut mieux se l'avouer franchement, plutôt que de se tromper avec des mots — Dans ces conditions, puis-je vraiment espérer, ou même désirer, un accord? serait-ce franc? et serait-ce solide? — Je finis par penser que la seule solution, dans mon cas, est de continuer à vivre en ‘free lance’, au moins provisoirement. Si le Seigneur me donne encore assez longtemps force et vie, j'arriverai peut-être à mettre au point une œuvre spirituelle plus viable, ou à contempler l'avènement, dans l'Église, d'un esprit nouveau. — En attendant, ce que je puis promettre au P[ère] de B. c'est d'essayer (plus que je ne l'ai sans doute fait dans le passé) de conserver le *maximum* des vues et des attitudes traditionnelles de l'Église et de la Cie dans mes constructions personnelles. — Mais il serait vain, vous le sentez vous-même, de la part de l'autorité, de vouloir me limiter à la recherche scientifique seule, — ‘sans philosophie’, comme on dit. La Science pour moi est morte sans un certain *esprit* (= esprit de recherche, — la recherche sacrée): et c'est précisément de cet esprit qu'on ne veut pas, et dont — on redoute la diffusion ”

gulf. Teilhardism and the Roman Catholic faith are “contrary” to each other: the fight between them does not revolve around nomenclature. Teilhard’s is not just a modern phraseology for ancient truths: the fight is far deeper and can give no quarter. Nor did Teilhard find the division into two opposites camps a temporary one. Sixteen years later — on 10 January 1949 — he¹ wrote: “Since I returned from China, I clearly distinguish that I am becoming more and more firm and intransigent about some points of divergence; and this cannot change.” Eight months afterwards (8 September 1949) he composed *The Heart of the Problem*. Cuénot,² drawing privately upon the documents collected in *Intimate Letters*, records in connection with that essay:

“The fundamental theme is:

The urgent necessity for Christian faith in the ‘Above’ to incorporate the human neo-faith in a ‘still to come’. This latter is born (and this is something that has happened and nothing can change) of the objective emergence of the ultrahuman (releasing a neo-humanism, and automatically entailing a neo-Christianity).”

Most significantly, Cuénot³ footnotes the word “neo-Christianity” thus: “By neo-Christianity should be understood a transcending of Christianity.” Clearly, Cuénot’s explanation is inspired by Teilhard’s own phrase after writing the word in question which terminates his report of what he has penned to a fellow-priest in a high position. Teilhard’s phrase⁴ after “neo-Christianity” runs: “I have naturally not used this last word.” The word would obviously be a terrific startler to orthodoxy.

Cuénot continues, quoting from the same letter of Teilhard’s (dated 29 October 1948) to de Lubac:

“The reaction [at Rome] was characteristic:

At Rome they see neither the timeliness nor the reliability of an apologetics based on faith in man. For the Church, the only thing that makes an assured future worthwhile is eternal life.

“To this Teilhard replied:

The synthesis of the two forms of faith in *Christo Jesu* is not an arbitrarily chosen tactical move *ad usum infidelium*. It represents *hic et nunc* a condition of survival for an increasing number of Christians. We have to choose right now between the Christianizing of neo-humanism and its condemnation. The problem is with us now, and time is short.”

The same want of sympathy in Rome with neo-humanism Teilhard⁵ underscores

¹ *Ibid*, p. 383, note 5 “Depuis que je suis rentré de Chine, je distingue clairement que je deviens de plus en plus ferme et intransigeant sur quelques points de divergence; et cela ne peut plus changer.”

² *Teilhard de Chardin A Biographical Study* (Helicon, Baltimore, 1965), pp. 270-1.

³ *Ibid*, p. 271, fn. 2.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 382: “Je n’ai naturellement pas employé ce dernier mot.”

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 377. “ ce centre ou foyer de spiritualisation manque complètement de connexions avec le Monde humain en mouvement autour de lui. Autour de Rome ce n’est pas le rideau de fer, mais un rideau de ouate, amortissant tout bruit des discussions et des aspirations humaines le Monde s’arrête aux portes du Vatican.

when writing, about a year earlier, to de Lubac concerning the Church: "This centre or focus of spiritualisation completely lacks connections with the human World in movement around itself. Around Rome, there is not an Iron Curtain, but a curtain of cotton-wool padding, deadening all noise of human discussions and aspirations: the World stops short at the gates of the Vatican." No doubt, Teilhard was told on 9 November of the same year by a representative of Rome¹: "Do not believe, above all, that we are uninterested in neo-humanism, and do not think that we see only a dilemma: either to admit it or condemn it. We wish first to study it before judging it. Surely, this is normal." But, even as late as October 1954, after a conference organised to mark the bicentenary of Columbia University, Teilhard, as Cuénot² tells us, "noted with dismay the 'immobilist' attitude of too many Christians". Teilhard wrote:³ "... in the course of animated discussions, I was struck by the realization that those who were most vigorous in rejecting the existence in the future of a global ultra-human were in fact Christians (of all denominations)."

Teilhard, optimist that he was, exercised optimism even about the pessimistic stand of the Church whose origin and function he always venerated. But he never forsook either his realistic view of the Church as it actually existed or his effort to convert it rather than himself be converted. Thus on 8 August 1950 we find him⁴ writing to Valensin:

"There is evidently a radical conflict between my vision of God and that of the official authority. But I have always the confidence that we shall converge. I am more and more ardently convinced that there is no issue to the Human except in prolongation of the Christian God. It is solely over the way of conceiving the relations of Christ and the World that the opposition appears. But nobody will take away from my head and heart that 'from my point of view' Christ and the World grow simultaneously. All my effort goes towards maintaining a Christ as vast and organic as the Universe: is this not the very definition of orthodoxy?"

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 383-4, note 8. "Ne croyez pas surtout qu'on se désintéresse du néo-Humanisme, et ne pensez pas qu'on ne voie qu'un dilemme: ou l'admettre ou le condamner. On veut l'étudier d'abord, avant de le juger. C'est bien normal."

² *Op. cit.*, p. 360.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Lettres Intimes*, pp. 391-2. "Il y a évidemment conflit radical entre ma vision du Divin et celle de l'autorité officielle. Mais j'ai toujours confiance que nous convergeons. Je suis de plus en plus ardemment convaincu qu'il n'y a pas d'issue à l'humain sinon en prolongement du Dieu chrétien. C'est seulement sur la façon de concevoir les rapports du Christ et du Monde que l'opposition apparaît. Or, on ne m'enlèvera pas de la tête et du cœur que 'de mon point de vue' Christ et Monde grandissent simultanément. Tout mon effort va à maintenir le Christ aussi vaste et organique que l'Univers: n'est-ce pas la définition même de l'orthodoxie?"

"La source de tous les ennuis, en ce moment, est que les théologiens ne voient pas le Monde et l'Homme comme ils se découvrent désormais à nous. Ils nous présentent *un Dieu pour Monde fini* (ou finissant) alors que nous ne saurions plus adorer *qu'un Dieu pour Monde 'commençant'*. J'en suis de plus en plus sûr: toute la difficulté et toute la grandeur du problème religieux moderne sont là.

"Je n'ai aucune envie ni idée de me séparer! Mais je sais aussi que rien, absolument rien, ne saurait me détourner d'une vision en dehors de laquelle je sens que toute ma foi s'écroulerait, — parce qu'elle (cette vision) est née de ma fidélité même à vivre et à penser ce qu'on m'a depuis toujours enseigné."

“The source of all the annoyances, at the moment, is that the theologians do not see the World and Man as they disclose themselves henceforth to us. The theologians present us with a *God for a World finished* (or finishing) while from now on we can adore only a *God for a World ‘beginning’*. I am increasingly sure of it: all the difficulty and all the grandeur of the modern religious problem lie there.

“I have no desire or idea to separate myself [from the Church]. But I also know that nothing, absolutely nothing, could turn me away from a vision, outside of which I feel that all my faith would fall to pieces, — because it (this vision) is born of my very faithfulness to living and thinking what has always been taught to me.”

Teilhard has the feeling that what he has learned of Christianity is in its truth not contradictory of his special vision: he believes he is being truly Christian by holding to a view which runs in the teeth of the official doctrine.

The same stand, which amounts to a simultaneous Yes and No, meets us in a more suave form in a letter he¹ wrote on 8 March 1955, hardly a month before his death, to Jeanne Mortier: “I have never felt more essentially bound to the Church, nor more certain that this Church, by rethinking more thoroughly its Christ, will be *the* religion of tomorrow.”

Everywhere we have two sides juxtaposed explicitly or subtly. Although Teilhard is pledged to the prolongation of the Christian God in the ultra-human, he is convinced that the Church misconceives that God by not realising the proper implications of what it preserves as orthodoxy. Unlike the Church’s conception, this implication is realised by seeing Christ and the World as sharing a single growing vastness and organicity, each in its own manner. Devoted though he is to the Church, Teilhard swears he will never give up his own *weltanschauung*, which is not the Church’s at present but is, according to him, the genuine meaning of its teaching. This Church alone, which now owns his adherence, will develop the religion of the future, yet on condition that it thinks anew, from beginning to end, the role of Christ — a role over which he and the masters of the Church are at variance not just superficially but at the very roots, and whose true form is discerned only by Teilhard. In such circumstances, it is his duty to strain every nerve to bring the authorities round to his “truth”. De Lubac² himself, annotating a letter of as late as 2 January 1955, admits: “Teilhard has not stopped seeking a dialogue with the authorities of his Order; he never gave up converting them to his point of view. In these last years, he became even more pressing.”

Here we may appropriately bring in the evidence of *Intimate Letters* about Teilhard’s finding it necessary to stay within the Roman Catholic fold if he wanted to convert it. He³ writes on 2 January 1927 to his cousin Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 393, note 7. “Je ne me suis jamais senti plus lié, par le fond, à l’Église, ni plus certain que cette Église, en repensant plus à fond son Christ, sera *la* religion de demain.”

² *Ibid.*, p. 451 “T n’a cessé de chercher le dialogue avec les autorités de son Ordre; il n’a jamais renoncé à les ‘convertir’ à son point de vue. Dans ses dernières années, il se faisait même plus pressant.”

³ *Ibid.*, p. 150 “.. Je dois faire mon possible pour secouer l’immobilisme, mais, en travaillant et

“I should do all that is possible for me to shake up immobilism, but by, working and pushing ‘from inside’, I sometimes tell myself that it is perhaps my role, my particular vocation, to find myself shut up in the heart of the ecclesiastical organism with the most anticonfessional and the most desperately human temperament one could imagine.¹ The legitimate fusion of the loves of Heaven and Earth can get established in the Church, I think, only after numerous conflicts of this kind, accepted and surmounted.” About two and a half years later — on 15 July, 1929 — we read in Teilhard’s letter² to Valensin: “I no more feel, — since a long time back, in fact, — either for the Church or for the Company, the sort of naive and filial attachment (have I, indeed, ever felt it?) which is, without doubt, the treasure of many. But I am aware of feeling myself thoroughly tied to the one and to the other for new and higher reasons, — in the sense that I should believe I would be a traitor to ‘the World’, by getting away from the place which has been assigned to me. In this sense, I love both and I want to work, atom-like, to perfect them, *from within*, — without antagonism.”

Besides the disclosure of a reformatory attitude towards the religion whose minister Teilhard was, we have here a beam of light thrown on a commitment central to his life. He is not serving the Company of Jesus and through it the Church because of common religious sentiments. The World, as an all-encompassing, all-governing presence, is what primarily commands his loyalty. He feels he is a Jesuit by the will of this presence and his whole religious service lies in carrying out the Church-transformative mission given him by a cosmic divinity. That divinity is the true Christ to him and what he meant by calling for a rethinking of Christ is the need of the orthodox mind to get steeped in the sense of this divinity and share with modern evolutionists, with scientific pantheists, their urge towards the World’s fulfilment by the revelation and realisation of the ultra-human.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

en poussant ‘from inside’, je me dis parfois que c’est peut-être mon rôle, mon espèce de vocation, de me trouver enfermé au cœur de l’organisme ecclésiastique avec le tempérament le plus anticonfessionnel et le plus désespérément humain qu’on puisse imaginer. La fusion légitime des amours du Ciel et de la Terre ne doit pouvoir s’établir dans l’Église, je pense, qu’à la suite de nombreux conflits de cet ordre, acceptés et surmontés.”

¹ Cf. de Lubac in his Preface (*Avertissement*), pp. 10-11: “He was, by birth, ‘the most anticonfessional’ of men. This means that a certain spiritual anarchy was lying in wait for him.” (“Il était . . . de naissance, ‘le plus anticonfessionnel’ des hommes. C’est dire qu’il était guetté par une anarchie spirituelle.”)

² *Ibid.*, pp. 194-5. “Je n’éprouve plus, — depuis longtemps, en fait, — ni pour l’Église, ni pour la Cie, cette sorte d’attachement naïf et filial (l’ai-je *jamais* éprouvé en fait? ..) qui est sans doute le trésor de beaucoup. Mais j’ai conscience de me sentir foncièrement lié à l’une et à l’autre pour des raisons supérieures et nouvelles, — en ce sens que je croirais trahir ‘le Monde’, en m’évadant de la place qui m’a été assignée. En ce sens, je les aime l’une et l’autre, et je veux travailler, atomiquement, à les parfaire, *du dedans*, — sans antagonisme.”

IS ILLUSION (MAYAVADINS' CREATIVE MAYA) ITSELF AN ILLUSION?

1. ALMOST all schools of philosophical thought including Shankara's Mayavada agree that Brahman is a reality, a Oneness and the only one Reality, but, in regard to the reality of the world, Mayavada differs from the other schools in that while those other schools hold that the world with all its movements is a manifestation of Brahman and therefore real, Mayavada maintains that the world is unreal, for Brahman is, as this school contends, a pure existence — silent, inactive, immobile, featureless, relationless, immutable — a Being which knows no becoming.

2. Now, if, as the Mayavadins contend, the world is unreal, how is it that we actually find it to be existent and very much real? The Mayavadins' reply to this question is, briefly stated, this: The world is no more real than dreams and hallucinations in 99.9 per cent of the cases are; dreams are real to the dreamer so long as he dreams, and hallucinations, e.g., a mirage in a desert, a snake for which a rope in darkness is mistaken, are real to the observer so long as he does not discover that the mirage was an optical illusion, that what he took for a snake was just a piece of rope. As in the case of the dream, the mirage and the snake, so also in the case of the world that we perceive and therefore take to be real; it is, in fact, unreal, an illusion.

3. The next question that immediately arises out of this is: In the above analogies, the dreamer and the observer are real although the dreams and the hallucinations are unreal. But in the case of the world, if it is unreal, man, being a part of it, must necessarily be unreal; yet he perceives it to be real. How can an unreality have any perception at all and that too of another unreality as reality? A man witnessing a theatrical performance on a stage — the man, the players, the stage and the performance none being there? The reply of the Mayavadins to these questions is something like: The percipient human man, the percept phenomenal world and the perception of reality are all unreal, illusions; they are differentials of an elegant, profound, integral illusion; they all appear to be real owing to their being imposed on Brahman, the sole and bare Reality, by Maya. The world, with all its happenings and the man in it, may be likened to a motion picture projected on a white screen, the picture featuring spectators witnessing a realistic play on a theatrical stage of a combined social, political and romantic drama. Here, in the picture, all that has been featured appears to be real, but has actually no reality — neither the social, political and romantic episodes (percept), nor the spectators (percipient), nor the witnessing (perception). The pragmatic world is such a motion picture, Brahman being the white screen and Maya the author of the play-script as also the operator.

4. If the position is so, as the Mayavadins contend, one has to concede that as Maya is, in some way or other, creative and operative, it must be real. The irresistible conclusion that this will lead one to is that —

either, (i) there are two realities, Brahman and Maya, one inactive and the other active,

or, (ii) Maya is Brahman in action or an active, creative and operative power of Brahman.

As both the alternatives are opposed to the Mayavadins' concept of Brahman, MAYA CANNOT BE REAL. This unreality must be an unreality more unreal than the unreality of dreams and illusions, for, an ordinary dream when subjected to scrutiny will betray the reflection of some objects or events often jumbled, confused, miscombined, misplaced in a funny fashion, and an ordinary illusion the examples of which Mayavada itself has given has behind its illusory formation a real object existing nearby or previously seen. Therefore, Maya is more unreal than dreams and hallucinations are, a baseless fiction of the mind, a pure unadulterated unreality. It is indeed real in its unreality.

5. That Mayavada has no solid ground to stand upon can be seen from another consideration. Shankara, the propounder of Mayavada, being a part and parcel of the world which is according to him an unreality, must himself be an unreality and therefore his thoughts and realisations must be unrealities, and consequently Brahman as realised and presented by him must be an unreality, for an unreality cannot realise and present a reality, let alone the Reality. Evidently the theory on the basis of which such a conclusion can be reached must be invalid.

6. Yet Shankara's Mayavada cannot be denounced altogether. For, notwithstanding the reality of the world by virtue of its being a manifestation, becoming, an allotropic modification, so to say, of Brahman in its Immanent Status, — a conclusion reached by spiritual giants like Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo and others on the basis of their own realisation as also on the basis of the Scriptures, — we may say that the world is unreal, first in the sense that it does not exist by itself and in itself, and further in the sense that it is comparatively unreal in the face of the absolute Real. Shankara's Mayavada, Illusionism, may, from this point of view, be regarded just as an exaggerated presentation of this relative unreality. It is this exaggeration that brought Mayavada's own defeat.

7. A question naturally arises as to what impelled Shankara, — an intellectual giant, an erudite scholar, an unquestionable talent, a rare genius, a top-ranking sannyasi, a bright star in the spiritual firmament, — to propound a theory which itself contained materials for its own unacceptability. The reason may be: He realised perhaps one aspect of Brahman, — Brahman in its Transcendent or Supracosmic Status; naturally therefore he took it that this is all that Brahman is, or at least nothing less than this, and, as Brahman is the only Reality, the world must be unreal; to teach that realisation and conviction of his to the religious-minded, truth-seeking people for their spiritual benefit, he propounded the theory of Mayavada; he was reluctant to admit that the world is a manifestation of Brahman, for that was not his realisation. There may be other reasons, too.

8. Incidentally, the Mayavadins' Maya may be likened to the mathematician's "imaginary quantity" and the 19th-century physicist's "ether" (a hypothetical something with irreconcilable contradictory properties). Both these imaginaries had

their uses, for the interesting results deduced with their help were successfully utilised in scientific investigations which ultimately led to what we call marvels of science. Maya, too, had its uses in the spiritual field, although as a firm philosophical doctrine it is untenable.

9. And this is how Mayavada served a useful purpose: For 1,000 years or so after Buddha, Buddhism ruled with full glory and the Vedas and the Upanishads which it did not recognise were shelved, if not thrown into the waste-paper basket. By and by, a reaction against Buddhism arrived, and it was then that Shankara appeared with his new philosophy of Mayavada. He replaced

- (i) the Buddhistic idea of Non-Being, indefinable Nirvana, *by* the cognate Vedantic idea of the indefinable Being, Brahman, and,
- (ii) the Buddhistic idea of Karma¹ being at the root of, being the primal cause of, the unavoidable impermanence and avoidable recurrence of the worldly life which was admittedly a life of suffering, *by* the cognate Vedantic idea of Maya, Illusion, presenting all this non-stop fleeting show.

Further, like Buddha, he stressed that liberation, i.e., escape from rebirth in the world of suffering, was the only thing to be aimed at, although for the achievement of this object he prescribed a process which was different from, but yet similar to, what Buddhism had prescribed. This new philosophy naturally suited the frame of mind the reactionaries had already formed under Buddhistic influence, and they readily accepted it. And as it was professedly based on the Vedas and the Upanishads these were recovered and restored to their proper high place from which they had been pulled down. But for Shankara, they would in all probability have been lost for ever.

10. By the way, Shankara's Mayavada may be looked upon as a revised edition of Buddhism, the old wine in a new bottle with its colour changed, and Shankara himself may be regarded as a Buddhist in the disguise of a Vedantist.

KAMALENDRA ROY

¹ This Karma is practically a substitute for Prakriti which Buddhism did not admit, for that would imply the admission of a conscious Being, a direct opposition of the Buddhistic Non-Being.

SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of September 1974)

CHAPTER VII: PART 2

HE awoke in the alien land to which his parents had emigrated a bare year before from the verdant, hedge-bound meadows of his native England — America. Here both meadows and forests were larger than in the country of his birth, and the very scent of the developing West was in the air, with its electric dynamism of expansion, its impetus to quick wealth, and its boundless confidence in the resources of a virgin land. As a natural consequence, everyone seemed to speak a little more loudly here than they had in the old country, impelled by the new vigour and emphasis of a young, brash nation unencumbered by the older one's shackles that had been hung there by the slow centuries of historical evolution and tradition.

Shackles? Certainly, they had existed — but so had the mellow beauties of age and refinement and it was these that Edward Everton — for that was his name — missed in his new environment. Since a child, he had been of a gentle and retiring nature, a lover of books and of solitude wherever he found it — in the midst of a crowd where he would invariably remain silent, or on one of his interminable walks through the English woods and fields inhabited by none save hares, foxes and badgers. He had never wanted to come to America, but his parents, having inherited a large property there from a recently deceased uncle, had insisted on making the move across the Atlantic, their holdings in England being minimal by comparison. They calculated too that as their son had shown signs of brilliance during his academic career — nothing sustained, of course, but a startling flash here and an unexpected insight there — his talents might have a better chance to bloom in the freer atmosphere of the new world. But they had come close to regretting their choice. No sooner had they taken possession of their estate, Gloucester Downs, in the north-eastern corner of Pennsylvania, than Edward, their only child, fell almost fatally ill. Several times he passed into coma before their eyes, then remained totally bed-ridden, often only semi-conscious or seemingly asleep for several months. Now half a year had passed and today for the first time when neither of his parents was in the room, he sat up, then stood and took his first, faltering, unaided steps to the open window. Outside, spring had just turned to summer and the chestnut trees around the four acres of lawn were in full leaf. He breathed deeply, the fresh air pouring through his lungs and the cells of his ravaged body, and felt almost well. Or perhaps it was not a question of sickness or health. It was, rather, that he had been re-born and, like a child, he was drawing his strength together to learn to walk again, to move, and eventually to go into the world as other people did who had grown up in the ordinary way.

To his parents' surprise, he recovered quickly after that first day. But he knew, and they too soon realized, that he had become different, different not only from his fellow-man in a hundred subtle ways, but radically changed from what he had been before his sickness. Curiously, he seemed taller now, or simply of a greater stature, none could explain exactly how, and he seemed to move in a self-enclosing envelope of overpowering calm. Every room he inhabited became suspended in that calm; every path or street he walked along seemed momentarily a little quieter for his passing. It was as though a presence existed within him that created its own ambience, its own sense of largeness, its own imperative tranquillity wherever he went and it cared little for the distance it brought about between its human vehicle and other human beings. Yet even the distance was of a curious sort for it was not an ordinary aloofness. It could best be defined negatively as a total lack of human garrulity or that usual kind of social herd instinct that drives people to seek each other's company. On the contrary, Edward could live alone, yet those that came to know him well would have sworn that he was the gentlest, most loving soul they had ever met.

Only his parents felt the change in him as an offense, for they did not know what to make of their strangely metamorphosed son, and they had begun to feel acutely uncomfortable in his presence. His mother particularly had always cherished a rigid notion of what she had wanted him to be, and Edward didn't fit her small, orderly image in any respect. It mattered little that he far exceeded it, for his mother's mind was not built to tolerate variations however splendid, and she started to look for means to "settle" her offspring so that he would not disturb her any longer with his aberrations. Of course, her Victorian sensibilities prevented her from expressing her real attitude even to herself, and she could be heard instead telling her husband, "If we don't find something for Edward to do, the dear boy is going to be at a completely loose end."

Edward himself waited for no one to find him an occupation. As soon as he could move out of the house he went in search of one on his own. Within a week he had found what he was looking for, as though chance or fate had already arranged the situation for him and only awaited his arrival to complete the pre-determined picture.

His new place of work was less than ten minutes' walk from his parents' estate, being the neighbouring mansion with lands still more extensive than those of Gloucester Downs. It had been the residence of one of Pennsylvania's oldest families and dated from the turn of the nineteenth century, but had, for the last few years, been endowed as a university. The students still numbered a bare two hundred, but the enrollment was slowly creeping up, and diverse faculties and departments were establishing themselves one by one as both staff and student body swelled.

Here Edward was eagerly welcomed, Oxford-trained as he was, in the capacity of a professor of English literature. Mr. Malthus, the President, immediately allotted him a comfortable room in the great old house, which he used as a study to begin with, and finally as a bed-and-living-room as well. From its windows he could look out upon the rolling lawns of the campus and the few new constructions of dormi-

tory buildings, the new science rooms and dining hall, which could be seen rising up through the groves of trees that stood around the open area in a great quadrangle. Three months of summer remained before the opening of the new term and Edward spent the time making lists of books to be ordered for the library which was still in an embryonic state of development. So absorbed in his work did young Everton become that he spent less and less of his time at home — eventually moving out altogether — and what time he did spend with his family he let pass in increasingly longer periods of silence. At first his mother remonstrated, then railed at him, and in the end resorted to tears, but her son instead of softening, merely became more and more impassive. For he had no interest, nor perhaps even any capacity, to deal with the normal human level of emotional tantrums, games or petty responses. The profound wells of memory and experience within him prevented it, yet he reacted neither with frustration nor anger, but with the gentle silence of a mist-swathed mountain that watches the furious waves of a turbulent and shallow sea dash against its sandy base, fly into spray, and then recede into an inconsequential nothingness.

Finally his parents learnt their lesson and let their son do as he pleased, though he remained to them an enigma they would never understand and a source of a pain they could never wholly erase, so totally had he escaped their grasp.

In September, Edward began his first classes. His students were wealthy, brash and none too serious, and at first they did not respond to the quiet manner and still atmosphere of their new English professor. Yet gradually his spell began to take hold and as gradually their thoughtlessness turned to awe. Finally by the end of the year it had changed into a love so deep that they could find no surface means to express it. Perhaps they treasured most dearly those moments when he read epic poetry aloud to a rapt class and his voice stirred out from some hidden depth of his soul like that of a Homeric bard, or he spoke of those ages that gave birth to the ancient legends; or then again he dwelt upon the wells of national inspiration that gave rise to the splendours of the language. Sometimes when he had finished such a reading or such a lecture he would fall into a strange, rapt reverie in which, in a flash, the power and beauty of the white lion would show through the surface layers of his facial expression. Worlds would seem to pass before his gaze that stopped at no wall or other physical obstruction, but that beamed out to some unreckoned space where none could follow. At such times his students would look at him and most, like his parents, would not know what to make of him, while the few others would be filled with such a wonder and tenderness that they would turn away, embarrassed at the unaccustomed depth of their own feelings.

The months rolled on, as did Edward's classes in English literature, but these now began to absorb the least of his time. For the rest, he plunged into an insatiable search for knowledge, not merely in his own field, but in every other area of human enquiry, and Silent Daughter's gift aided him as a lamp of genius both in mind and heart. After three years, he had acquired such a grasp of the sciences and the new theories of evolution that he was able to write a thesis on the subject which brought

renown not only to himself but to the university that gave him shelter. Offers began to come to him from other institutions of learning but he refused them all. Gloucester was his home and with all the consideration he had received there, he would not desert it.

The same year, as a result of his new eminence, he was requested by the University President to head the new Science and Physics Faculty. So his voice was no longer heard in the English rooms unfolding the epic and lyric beauties of the language, for he accepted the new seat gladly and plunged into his work with fervour. It was then that the dreams began and he had to make the new rule that he would see no one before nine o'clock in the morning. Not even the cleaning woman would be admitted to his room before that time. This was no cantankerous whim; pure necessity compelled him to formulate the stricture. For it took him till that hour each morning to adjust to the reality of Edward Everton after the meditations into which Silent Daughter's occasional visits would immerse him. She would come in all the luminous softness of her actual presence about twice a week, demanding nothing, nor giving any particular instruction, but simply being with her beloved and, as simply, sharing her existence with him. The rest of the mornings, when she had not actually come before him in his sleep, he still felt the necessity to absorb himself in a contemplation through which she seemed always to be subtly present, following along in the wake of his thoughts and urging him towards distant, unexplored horizons with an unseen hand. It was as though she knew the road that man was walking and was about to walk, and wanted like a curious, albeit celestial, child to go with him and illumine the road ahead or cast her beam of light into the little, unexplored wonders that he might otherwise miss by the roadside. Hers was the delight of discovery, the thrilled anticipation of the first one to seek out and peer over the new horizon, or the towering peak of the next mountain on the way. This curiosity and enthusiasm to know she conveyed to her beloved one. Thus in the secluded fastnesses of what would one day become one of America's most eminent universities, the two delved together into the distant possibilities of the universe as man then knew it, their starting point being the closed morning hours of meditation and inner absorption of which Edward Everton never spoke to anyone.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of September 1974)

MASS EDUCATION AND ITS LEADERS (Contd.)

BEFORE bringing this chapter to a close let me give an example of a simple man who could influence a whole town. It was from his tutor that I came to know the ideals he followed and, to some extent, the secret of his success. What singles him out is the fact that in attaining this spectacular success he never resorted to the detestable methods which are usually employed as tactics in his profession.

During his boyhood Dr. K was an average youth who did not know how to use his hands in any form of creative activities. He never accepted the existence of God. It was against his theory and conviction. His tutor held the view that his work was to guide and not to goad, to correct and not to punish. In his early adolescence K had no zest for life. He could not put his heart to anything. Once he considered suicide. Perhaps he never suffered from the turbulence of passion, for just after his marriage in 1953 he came to Pondicherry and developed love for Sri Aurobindo's literature — specially *Savitri*.

“I don't know how the change occurred,” he would say, “but it did occur.” Life now appeared worth living although success was still far off. Gradually he grew to be a man of action, a lover of beauty, but not an ascetic. Fifteen years of medical practice did not help him to save more than Rs. 15,000, but when the call came he gave all he had.

This opened the doors of his sealed fate. Now the pattern of experience changed. Gradually there grew up a new confidence in him. He displayed unusual insight in his professional activities. At times looking at the eyes of the patient he would adjudge that the patient would not survive more than a few days, and his diagnosis would come true.¹ He spoke very little, asked one or two questions, closed his eyes for a moment and wrote out a prescription. It is the brilliance of his diagnosis and the competence of his choice of treatment that made people run after him. He took special interest in children's illnesses. This added much to his popularity. In certain cases he applied his own technique. Thus, when a baby cries, just to silence him the mother usually allows him to have her milk. “No! Only three minutes' sucking every three hours,” K made the general rule in such cases. This helped to regulate the habit of the tiny tot and the mother also felt a bit relieved.

He had no urge for up-and-doing and never hankered for reputation but money came pouring in. He was a man of principles, honest and decent, yet his finances ever remained sound.

According to his teacher, K seemed to be living in the world but not for the world. While at home his body remains there — 1200 miles off — but his heart is in

¹ He was once asked by the Mother to go to Calcutta to make the diagnosis of a case there and report.

Pondicherry. Another thing remarkable about him is that he is always carefree — not attached to family, fame or anything. His is not the cultivated detachment of a Yogi who disdains earthly life but a product of self-discipline, which is a lesson to me. He is ever on the watch over what goes on in him. In this respect, the teacher says, “K is my guru. But he compliments me saying that it was I who instilled in him the idea, ‘Think what moves you, what is the driving force behind your action.’ Once I asked him, ‘Why do you flatter me like that? There are many things in you which are not in me.’ To this he replied in a solemn tone: ‘The idea you implanted in my school-days was your golden gift to me. I treasure and apply it even today in my medical life.’”

The teacher hardly knew that unconsciously he was initiating K into the great *mantra* of the Mother:

“Be conscious. It is unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. You must know why and how you do things, the forces that move you.”

In talking with K one cannot fail to mark the quality of his life. Frequent quotations from Sri Aurobindo’s work make the talk not only arresting but inspiring. He is very fond of fun. In his talks I came across fine touches of humour.

When L came under the treatment of K, L was almost a dead man. L’s case was so advanced that it hardly responded to the conventional form of treatment, nor was he considered fit for surgery. Dr. K suddenly developed a soft corner for him and soon they became friends. One day L suddenly expressed his desire to accompany him to the Ashram. K was in a dilemma because the patient used a bedpan and a urinal: how could he consent to take him 1200 miles away from his home? So he wrote all this to the Mother and was told: “He can come with you.”

The Vellore Hospital was quite near to the Ashram, so one day K took him there to see whether surgery was possible or not.

When L’s X-ray was put before the Medical Board the heart shadow was so enlarged that only a little portion of the lungs was visible on both sides.

The doctor gave K a surprised look and asked: “Is the patient alive?”

“He is waiting outside,” K said with a half-smile on his lips.

It is strange that death did not claim L’s body for six more years. Every year he accompanied K to Pondicherry. He started taking interest in the activities of the Sri Aurobindo Centre at his native place and got so engrossed in the sale of books, etc., that to the ordinary eye no physical ailment could seem to exist.

His condition went on deteriorating but the doctor did not tell him anything nor did he ever enquire about his illness. He never allowed himself to be upset nor was there any fear of death on his face.

Seeing his end near, K slept in L’s house for seven nights. On the eighth day he left. But at 7 p.m., L’s wife told the doctor by phone that L’s condition was very critical.

Just on entering the room the doctor found that L’s was having a cardiac con-

vulsion — his tongue was out, eyes staring upward and fists clenched tight. His pulse could scarcely be felt.

After a time the convulsion passed off. Recognising K, L asked his family members to make him sit up. To the surprise of all he sat up with his back absolutely straight, which he had never been able to do for the past six years. The colour of his skin came to normal and all other symptoms of heart-failure vanished although his pulse remained extremely weak.

K had to attend three urgent calls, so he asked the dying person if he could go for half an hour: would he wait till then?

“Yes, please do your work,” he said with confidence.

Thereafter L got an enlarged picture of the Mother hung before him. When K returned he found him staring at the picture. In a quivering voice he heard him muttering: “Why did you give me so much trouble, Mother!”

After a while the doctor asked him: “How do you feel?”

He stretched his arms and to the utter bewilderment of all said in an altered tone: “I am no more in the body. I have no troubles. I am spread everywhere.” The doctor afterwards related: “He was absolutely calm. There was no sign of agony on his face. He had never read a line of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Whatever development was there in his consciousness was through dedicated work alone.”

L remained seated all through the night, talking like a normal man. He had told his wife that he would “go” at 6 a.m., and exactly at 6 a.m. he dropped dead.

The Centre at his native place was never so active before him nor is it today after he is gone.

There may be delay in the coming of God’s benediction but it is never denied. One more marvellous story about one of K’s patients. One day D told him: “Doctor! All is empty there in my heart. Nothing! Nothing is there!”

“Empty! Very fine. Why not fill it with something ineffable?”

“At this blessed moment,” the doctor later explained to me, “there dawned in him an experience which has left an indelible stamp¹ on his life.” There came to his vision a tiny stem of blazing light in the heart. Though the experience was momentary it changed the whole course of his life. Like L, he too is a well-to-do businessman and had all the books of Sri Aurobindo but had never cared to open them. Now he began to read them with interest. There came a new order in his life, in his business. Nothing was there in a haphazard state. Everything was tastefully, gracefully arranged. Such had never been the case before.

If in each town, in each village, at least one person takes up the challenge of life and exerts with all his heart to live the truth, to be honest, how great will be his contribution in moulding the country’s mind towards the flowering of consciousness!

It is ignorance born of unconsciousness that makes us quarrel like dogs for a

¹ “If the soul enters this life with a certain development it must have prepared it in other precedent lives here or elsewhere.”

piece of bread. *So the real target is the opening of the mass consciousness.* According to Roger Savory, “the development of the masses depends on their receiving the right kind of education.”¹ It is by the awakening of consciousness that people will realise their folly. The need of the hour is the creation of the hunger for truth, the burning urge to fight evil. This will lead to a mass movement for spiritual resurgence.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *Prospects*: Quarterly Review of Education: UNESCO, Vol 3 No. 2, Summer 1973, p. 207.

THE TALES OF INDIA

PARTS I, II AND III

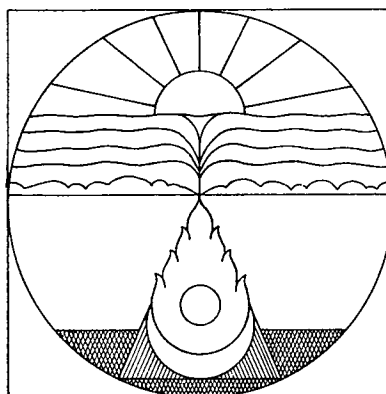
by

DAULAT PANDAY

(LALITA)

Stories that have won much praise both in India and abroad from the young and old alike.

Available from the author and the Ashram.

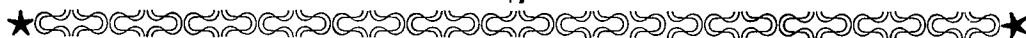


NIGHT AND DAWN

by Peter Heels

Poems attempting to express something of the inner and the higher truth and beauty in their own native word and rhythm. Price : Rs. 12.00

Available from **Publication Department, SABDA**
Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002



Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

THIRTIETH SEMINAR

21st April 1974

THE Thirtieth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 21st April 1974 from 8.30 to 10.15 a.m. in the Hall of Harmony of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. The subject of the Seminar was:

Importance of the Individual

Papers on this subject were read by five members of the Association — Matri-prasad, Maurice, Minoti, Sachchidananda and Savitri M. Two poems of Sri Aurobindo on the subject were also read by Maurice and Kanu.

The programme commenced with listening to a piece of the Mother's music. After that, Kishor Gandhi made the following introductory speech.

Friends,

Our conception of the importance of the individual and the significance of his life depends entirely upon our conception of his true self and nature. If, following modern Science, we consider man to be merely a physical being, with a mind, no doubt, but a mind which is itself a product of matter, then he can hardly have any worthwhile significance, for as a physical being he is no more than a tiny trifling creature with a transient existence in the boundless vastness of the physical universe. As Sri Aurobindo puts it vividly: "he would be only an insect crawling among other ephemeral insects on a speck of surface mud and water which has managed to form itself amid the appalling immensities of the physical universe."¹

If, on the contrary, we consider him to be in his real self and nature a soul, a spiritual being, then his importance becomes immeasurable, his value illimitable, his significance incalculable, not only for his own self but for the whole human race and the entire universe. For then he would not be a petty insignificant creature as he appears to be in his outer physical self but an immortal being as vast as the universe and, in his highest ascension, even capable of transcending the universe and of identifying himself with the Supreme, with God. As proclaimed by the Upanishad in a luminous phrase, man in his essential being is God, *sohamasm*.²

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), pp. 42-3.

² "He am I", *Isha Upanishad*, Verse 16.

The individual, thus, is a double being with a double nature, one material and the other spiritual, and the importance we attach to him depends upon which of the two we take to be his real self and nature. As a material being he is utterly insignificant but as a spiritual being he is of supreme worth. As Sri Aurobindo says: "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything."

But it is not necessary to make a sharp distinction between these two selves of man and arrive at an irreconcilable contradiction between them. For, in a larger more comprehensive conception both of them are necessary stages of man's evolutionary progress, each indispensable at its proper place. Though in his essential being man is a soul, yet in his evolutionary career on earth he begins as a material physical being. But the apparent insignificance of his physical being is not conclusive because it hides within itself his soul-reality. And in his progressive evolution this physical being is destined not only to reveal the spiritual reality which it now conceals, but, undergoing a spiritual transmutation, to become itself spiritualised, divinised, deified. The two selves that man now has will then become unified and integralised, annulling forever their apparent contradiction.

Thus if we consider man's physical being not as it now is in its present appearance but as it is destined to be in its future evolution, then there is no reason to stress its unimportance and insignificance as a purely external materialistic view of it compels us to do. Rather, holding firmly to a clear perception of its future divinity, we should emphasize and strive for the advent of its glorious godhead. As Sri Aurobindo says, "the sons of Death have to know themselves as the children of Immortality."¹

This, in fact, is the real aim of the individual's life and his importance increases in proportion as he becomes more and more aware of it and consciously strives to realise it.

This is the importance of the individual in reference to his own self and his evolutionary destiny. But the individual is not an isolated being nor does he live an isolated life. His being and life are intimately interrelated with those of the collectivity of which he is a member. What is his importance in relation to this collectivity, whether it be his social group or the nation or the whole humanity?

A number of social and political thinkers, both ancient and modern, have put forward the view that the individual is merely a means or an instrument for the realisation of the collectivity's ends, that his life and existence have no significance other than this and that the collectivity is therefore fully justified in entirely subordinating him for its own good. These thinkers invariably minimize or belittle the importance of the individual by reducing him to a mere cell of the collective body.

Without going into details, I shall only state that this immolation of the individual at the altar of the collectivity is, according to Sri Aurobindo, an altogether false and pernicious doctrine, especially in the form which it has taken in modern times of completely suppressing the liberties of the individual by the collectivist state. It is, in his view, a regressive trend fraught with grave danger for humanity's evolutionary

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 610.

future, for this fundamental reason that it is only through the free individual that the collectivity achieves its forward progress. As he puts it:

“The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious: its general mass consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop.”¹

This being the inevitable law of evolution, the collectivity can only move forward on the track laid open for it by the individual pioneers.

This then is the immense importance of the individual in his relation to the collectivity that it is only through him that the human race can realise its divine destiny.

*
**

After this introductory speech, Maurice and Kanu read two poems of Sri Aurobindo bearing on the subject. Then the five speakers were called in the alphabetical order of their names to read out their speeches. At the end Kishor Gandhi read two passages from Sri Aurobindo pertaining to the subject.

The two poems of Sri Aurobindo are reproduced below. Some of the speeches and the two passages will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

THE HUMAN ENIGMA

A DEEP enigma is the soul of man.
 His conscious life obeys the Inconscient's rule,
 His need of joy is learned in sorrow's school;
 His heart is a chaos and an empyrean.
 His subtle ignorance borrows Wisdom's plan;
 His mind is the Infinite's sharp and narrow tool.
 He wades through mud to reach the Wonderful,
 And does what Matter must or Spirit can.

All powers in his living's soil take root
 Hoping to grow and dominate the earth.
 This little creature mind that would be great
 Is Nature's fool and Godhead's struggling birth,
 A demigod and a demon and a brute,
 The slave and the creator of his fate.

SRI AUROBINDO

Collected Poems (Centenary Edition), p. 148.

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 930.

MAN, THE THINKING ANIMAL

A TRIFLING unit in a boundless plan
Amidst the enormous insignificance
Of the unpeopled cosmos' fire-whirl dance,
Earth, as by accident, engendered man:

A creature of his own grey ignorance,
A mind half-shadow and half-gleam, a breath
That wrestles, captive in a world of death,
To live some lame brief years. Yet his advance,

Attempt of a divinity within,
A consciousness in the inconscient Night,
To realise its own supernal Light
Confronts the ruthless forces of the Unseen.

Aspiring to godhead from insensible clay
He travels slow-footed towards the eternal day.

SRI AUROBINDO

Collected Poems (Centenary Edition), p. 163.

EYE EDUCATION

BLINKING AND WINKING

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1974)

ANOTHER case, a patient who had lost much of his vision due to progressive myopia attended the School for Perfect Eyesight. His very way of looking indicated that he kept the lids steady and stared at objects without a blink. Often he suffered from pain and headache. How soothing it was and how helpful when he looked at things with gentle blinking and read the blackboard with short movements of the lids.

All defective eyesight cases should learn blinking if they want to improve their eyesight. Even if glasses are necessary, blinking should be done to prevent further deterioration. Persons suffering from glaucoma have a very strong habit of staring. It is usually very difficult for them to adopt the right habit of blinking. However, if they can be taught to blink frequently in the right way, their glaucoma will be cured or at least much reduced.

The greatest things are always the simplest. Blinking is very simple, and it will be found that a great deal more reading can be done with blinking than without it, and that also the eyes will not be tired.

(Concluded)

The School for Perfect Eyesight

DR. R. S. AGARWAL

SOME NEW PUBLICATIONS:

1. **Mind and Vision** — A handbook for the cure of imperfect sight without glasses, with numerous illustrations. New edition — Rs. 16/-
2. **Yoga of Perfect Sight** — Revised & Enlarged Edition, May 1974—
Paper bound Rs. 15/- Cloth bound Rs. 20/-
3. **Secrets of Indian Medicine** — A guide to a practical synthesis of different systems for eye troubles. New enlarged edition — Rs. 12/- De luxe. Rs. 16/-
4. **Care of Eyes** — A brochure for the preservation of good eyesight — Rs. 2.50
5. **Education des Yeux** — French translation of **Care of Eyes** — Rs. 3.00

Available from: PONDICHERRY-2

1. School for Perfect Eyesight
2. Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency
3. Publication Department